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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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Financial crisis following in the trail of the prosperity gospel?

The prosperity gospel has been accused of many things, but being a significant cause of the financial crisis has not usually been among them—at least until Hanna Rosin's much publicized cover story in *The Atlantic* magazine (December). Rosin found that the areas most affected by the housing foreclosure crisis are often the same places, mostly in the Sunbelt, that are home to large churches preaching the message that God promises prosperity to faithful believers. She thus concludes that the teaching that wealth was within their reach led many struggling believers to take on high-risk loans and mortgages for homes that they could not afford.

Rosin notes that many of the largest churches preach prosperity: 50 of the largest 260 churches in the U.S. are of this persuasion, according to research by Kate Bowler of Duke University. Rosin also cites a Pew survey showing that 73

percent of all religious Latinos in the U.S. hold to some form of prosperity teaching, and many black Pentecostal churches preach the message—the same demographic groups effected by the foreclosure crisis. More significantly, Rosin shows that banks and churches had often teamed up on housing issues prior to the crisis, with the former often being invited to church financial empower seminars to counsel economic responsibility, but, at the same time, would encourage house ownership. In Baltimore, Wells Fargo often sent its bank officers to speak at church-sponsored “wealth-building” seminars. “They would tell pastors that for every person who took out a mortgage, \$350 would be donated to the church, or to a charity of the parishioners’ choice,” Rosin reports.

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Faith-based social services endure in Obama era

Faith-based social services are not likely to be rolled back by President Barack Obama, even if he may put a more liberal spin on such policies, writes Lew Daly in the journal *Policy Review* (October/November). Daly notes that almost year after his election, Obama has not aggressively sought to “restore the pre-Bush status quo by shutting down the White House faith-based offices Bush established and by repealing Bush administrative actions on religious hiring rights and other controversial matters.” It is not so much Obama's cautious

approach that is behind the failure to restore stricter church–state separation policies as much as the vastly transformed terrain of social welfare that has developed in the last four decades since the policies of the Great Society. Daly writes that the welfare system had been restructured and contracted out by the government to non-profit social service providers; the main contention was whether religious groups could receive the same funding as their secular counterparts.

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Since the 1980s, the Supreme Court has increasingly expanded the degree of government support that religious service providers can receive (even as the court has ruled against religious content and speech being accommodated by the government). Thus, Daly ar-

gues that the “Bush-style faith-based initiatives will survive fundamental constitutional challenges,” and there may eventually be a greater willingness to put up with increased religious content in government funding if faith-based services are found to be more effective than their secular counterparts, argues Daly. Obama’s sup-

port for religious hiring may be an acknowledgement of a “new church–state order in areas of social need, evolving as the purposes of government and the social mission of religious groups have converged.”

(*Policy Review*, 21 Dupont Circle NW, 310, Washington, DC 20036)

Megachurches in the vanguard of desegregating churches

A gradual “desegregation of the megachurches” in the US is taking place, reports *Time* magazine (January 11). While the proportion of American churches with 20 percent or more minority participation has remained at about seven percent for the past nine years, that figure for evangelical churches with over 1,000 attending has more than quadrupled (from six percent minority participation to 25 percent in 2007). Some of the country’s largest churches are showing this burgeoning racial diversity, such as Joel Osteen’s Lakewood Community Church in Houston, with al-

most equal proportions of black, Hispanic and a category including whites and Asians, and Willow Creek, a pioneering megachurch with 20 percent minority participation (considered the threshold when a congregation is considered integrated).

The move to high minority participation is the result of deliberate and long-term strategy. Bill Hybels of Willow Creek “deconstructed his all-white institution” though a process of preaching on racial themes and including minorities in leadership and small group structures. But the changes in Willow Creek may suggest that

there is a limit to efforts at racial diversity. Organizational shifts in the congregation resulted in the disbanding of small groups dealing with racial issues. The promotion of minorities tended to stop when it reached the level of pastoral leadership. One young adult minister who started his own multiracial church said that Hybels stands at the “tipping point” where the dominant white group feels threatened by the growth of minorities. Yet census projections suggest that all clergy will encounter a situation by the year 2050 when the U.S. will contain no racial majority.

Charter schools continuing or competing with Catholic schools?

A growing number of Catholic schools are opting to become charter schools rather than close their doors permanently, reports *Commonweal* magazine (December 4). The declining state of Catholic education, particularly in inner cities, is convincing bishops in the dioceses of Washington, DC, Miami and Brooklyn to convert up to 16 parochial schools to

charter schools—and more are likely to come, writes Paul Moses. Charter schools are public schools paid for by the government, yet are independent of local school districts and can be run by non-profit or for-profit groups. In New York, the possibility of opening charter schools was rejected by Cardinal Edward Egan, but across the river in Brooklyn, the plan was

accepted as a way to run values-based schools by non-profit boards, “likening them to Catholic social service agencies and hospitals that help the public with the aid of government funding.”

Many critics, however, see charter schools as competing with parochial schools, in effect cutting into the Catholic market in inner cities by offering free education along

with such trappings as plaid uniforms and an emphasis on discipline and ethics. Research has shown that it is a distinct “inspirational ideology” that contributes to the success of Catholic schools, as well as discipline and high standards. So far, the seven charter schools that have opened in

Washington have not reduced enrollment in the Catholic schools, Moses reports. He concludes that “It may be that the values-based but non-religious charter schools will catch on and—much like health care and social services—become a ministry of the 21st century Catholic Church

But if the charter school option becomes the easy way out in the midst of financial and public relations crises over failing schools, it could lead to the end of the tradition of providing Catholic education to the poor.”

(*Commonweal*, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 405, New York, NY 10115)

New Christian Science fellowships get cold shoulder from mother church

The recent formation of Christian Science fellowships is raising challenges to the standardized practices in Christian Scientist churches. The independent Christian Science newsletter *The Banner* (winter) reports that two unofficial fellowships that have formed in Chicago and Chesterfield, Missouri have been trying to get formal recognition in the directory of the *Christian Science Journal*, although without much success. That may be

because these fellowships are not using the church’s manual with the teachings of founder Mary Baker Eddy. Instead, they are interspersing denominational sources with personal remarks and reading from unofficial manuscripts during services.

Writer Andrew Hartsook adds that a blog put out by the Chicago fellowship listed reasons why people stop attending Christian Science services (which are

showing steady membership losses). They included: no social activities, feelings of guilt for drinking on Saturday night and having medical treatment, and use of the King James Version of the Bible. Recommendations included: use of small groups, more relaxed services with guitar music and praise hymns, opportunity for dialog, and less of an emphasis on healing.

(*The Banner*, 2040 Hazel Ave., Zanesville, OH 43701-2222)

Churches serve as launching pads for Christian films

Churches are becoming more involved in making films for “faith-based audiences,” reports *Charisma* magazine (January). Christian film producers and directors are teaming up with congregations to make films that stress both high quality and production values with a strong viewer base, writes Adrienne Gaines. The success of the films *Facing the Giants* and *Fireproof*, produced by Sherwood Baptist Church, has convinced other congregations to sponsor such upcoming productions as *Letters to God* (sponsored by First Baptist

of Orlando, Florida), *The Grace Card* (Calvary Church of the Nazarene in Memphis, Tennessee) and *To Save a Life* (New Song Community Church, near San Diego). The latter film deals with teen suicide; other films seek to address similar relevant issues or draw on Hollywood themes, such as the new film *Paranormal* based on the box office hit *Paranormal Activity*.

Church sponsorship often entails selling tickets and concessions to congregants and keeping a portion of proceeds from the film and

advance DVD sales. Other arrangements have the films shown in churches before or after their theatrical or DVD releases to promote product sales. Although the trend of church-made films is not likely to increase the number of Christian offerings at theaters, the competition provided by more films being produced is hoped to drive up the quality of Christian films that obtain a theatrical release, says Larry Frenzel of Birchwood Pictures.

(*Charisma*, 600 S. Rhinehart, Lake Mary, FL 32746)

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The Imminent Frame (December 23), a blog on religion from the Social Science Research Council, asked several contributors to comment on Rosin's article, with most claiming that the piece was thought-provoking, yet superficial. Sociologist Michelle Dillon argues that immigration and population instability may be more

relevant than prosperity gospel churches in the high rate of foreclosures in such Sunbelt states as Florida and Arizona. "These factors make it harder for individuals to find protective buffers against many persuasive get-rich-quick sales agents and schemes in contemporary society. In unsettled times, unsettled people are vulnerable to siren calls, however well

veiled ... [The prosperity gospel] is one among several elements in our entrepreneurial culture promising salvation through short-term investments and wishful thinking that defer the debts of accountability and responsibility toward others."

(*Atlantic Monthly*, 600 New Hampshire, Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20037; *The Imminent Frame*, <http://blogs.ssrc.org>)

Second-generation couples feel Unification Church changes

Second-generation members are feeling the winds of change in the Unification Church, even as the movement faces an uncertain future as its founder enters his tenth decade and the church's business ventures face economic turmoil. The *Washington Post* (January 3) reports that the children of the original members of the Unification Church have tended to embrace a less radical version of their faith, especially in the area of marriage. Most of their parents were matched by founder Sun Myung Moon in ceremonies in the 1970s and '80s. "Church officials estimate there are 21,000 active Unificationists in this country, including 7,500 blessed children, who members believe were born free of original sin and have a special spiritual status. A significant number of blessed children live in the Washington area, long a hub for Moon businesses and church lobbyists," reports Michelle Boorstein. Second-generation members' own beliefs "run the gamut from those eager to follow in their

parents' footsteps to those who haven't attended a Unification worship service for years." Some have opted for a more moderate stance, choosing fellow Unificationists to marry, although opting out of matched arrangements.

Others get their parents to match them. Boorstein writes that "This somewhat more conventional approach to finding a spouse became possible in 2001 when Moon made the dramatic announcement that parents could match their own children. This was driven both by Moon's age and what church officials say was a natural evolution of Unificationist theology, one that sees Moon as a parent (he is called 'True Father' by members) who established the rules and lineage and now is passing the parental responsibility of matchmaking to individual mothers and fathers." Parents use websites with photos and biographical profiles to search for the right spouse or attend "matching convocations," during

"which they walk around with buttons showing the age and sex of their child (blue buttons for people with sons, pink for those with daughters)."

Not all young Unificationists support the more liberal marriage practices. They debate on private websites (including one called "Something in the Unification Church Needs to Change") whether it is theologically acceptable for an outsider or newcomer to marry a blessed child and what that means for the pure lineage that Moon had preached early on was mandatory for erasing sin. With Moon turning 90 in February, it is not clear how the movement will survive beyond him; Moon's son, Hyung-Jin, now leads the religious part of the movement. But Moon's children "are at odds over how to run the church's business empire, including the money-losing *Washington Times*, which laid off 40 percent of its staff this past week," Boorstein adds.

CURRENT RESEARCH

► **A new study by the Pew Research Center Forum on Religion and Public Life finds that 64 nations have high or very high restrictions on religion. The most overall cases—and highest level—of religious restrictions are in the Middle East and North Africa, while the Americas have the lowest rate.** The survey looked at both societal and governmental restrictions—two dynamics that do not always work in tandem. For instance, China has high governmental restrictions on religion, but has a moderate-to-low range of social restrictions or hostilities, while Nigeria follows the opposite pattern. Because some of the most restrictive countries have high populations, nearly 70 percent of the world's population live in countries with high rates of religious restrictions. Iran, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan and India have the most restrictions when taking the two measures into account, while Brazil, Japan, the U.S., Italy, South Africa and the UK have the least. Tensions between religions were reported in 87 percent of countries; 64 percent (126 countries) experienced physical violence. Religion-related terrorism caused casualties in 17 countries, nearly one in ten worldwide.

► **The high rate of secularity in the Czech Republic is due less to demographic factors and more about the low level of religious socialization in the recent history of the country, according to a new study in the journal *Social Com-***

pass (December). Sociologists Dana Hamplova and Zdenek R. Nespor note that many scholars holding to the secularization thesis have viewed the high rate of non-affiliation and religious involvement among Czechs as a result of modernization expressed through high levels of education and urbanization, as well as their communist past. Based on survey data collected in 2006 and compared with findings from the Czech censuses and the International Social Survey, Hamplova and Nespor find that a fairly high proportion of Czechs believe in some element of “alternative religiosity”; over half of respondents from 1999 and 2006 believe that fortune telling can predict the future and that some form of supernatural power exists.

The researchers found that demographic factors (belonging to a specific sector of the population) did not have a significant influence on whether a respondent professed a traditional or alternative religion. More important was the degree of religious socialization of the respondent. Religious socialization, particularly in the smaller Protestant churches, not only increased the probability of believing in religious traditions, but also the probability of believing in supernatural phenomena. There was, however, hardly an effect for those raised in the Czechoslovak Hussite Church and a moderate effect for those brought up Catholic. An interesting difference was also discovered between those who attended church often (at least once a month) in childhood and those attending occasionally. Those attending often were more likely to hold more conventional religious beliefs (involving heaven, hell, and prayer) in adulthood, while infrequent attenders had some interest in the supernatu-

ral, but it extended only to beliefs such as fortune telling and astrology. Since these patterns of socialization are often tied to Czechs' historic relations (such as involving church-state ties) to the various churches, Hamplova and Nespor conclude that such attitudes are more important than modernization in explaining the nation's secularity.

(*Social Compass*, Place Montequieu 1 / Boîte 13, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium)

► **Researchers are paying new attention to the grey areas between active belief and secularism; they have even coined the term “fuzzy fidelity” to describe this position.** That label is especially applicable in England, where one-quarter of the population believe in God (if tentatively) and attend services (if occasionally), while a “third have none of these traits, and in between we find the fuzzy faithful,” writes demographer David Voas in the newsletter *FutureFirst* (December). Voas cites the work of researcher Abby Day who divides “religious nominalists” into the categories of “natal nominalists,” whose Christianity is a matter of family heritage and who tended to attend church when they were young; “ethnic nominalists” who tend to use the label “Christian” to describe their cultural heritage, often to distinguish themselves from Muslims and others; and “aspirational nominalists”, who describe themselves as Christian, more usually as Church of England, for the sake of respectability.

Belief-wise, the fuzzy faithful may hold to a mélange of beliefs (often Eastern-derived) as well as draw on conventional Christian beliefs; a smaller percentage may consider

themselves spiritual seekers. For the fuzzy faithful throughout Europe, religion is seen as relatively unimportant, with any actual involvement in religious institution due to social reasons or rites of passage, Voas concludes. An article by Ingrid Storm in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (December) finds different kinds of fuzzy believers in various parts of Europe. In Scandinavia, the pattern of “belonging without believing” (maintaining membership of and even paying taxes to churches while not being active, aside from rites of passage) still holds, while in England, believing without belonging is the most common pattern, as the churches are increasingly less important in holding rites of passage.

(*FutureFirst*, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Ave., Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PW)

► **Research by Norwegian television channel TV2 indicates that more than 100 Norwegians converted to Islam in 2009, reports the *Islam in Europe* blog (December 24).** Interestingly, the Roman Catholic Church—a minority group in Norway—reported a similar number of conversions during the year 2009. Since there is no central registry of converts to Islam, TV2 gathered its data from mosques and Muslim organizations around the country. Demands put on converts seem to be less high in the Muslim community than in the Roman Catholic Church, where people must go through a year of teaching before being admitted. All that is needed for new Muslims is to recite the profession of faith sincerely: “The practical duties like prayers and alms will come eventually,” said an imam who converted 14 people in 2009.

The number of converts to Islam is a debated issue in several countries across Europe, due to a lack of research and of reliable statistical sources. Moreover, the topic can easily be used as a propaganda argument both by Muslim groups and movements opposing “Islamization.” And there is also the problem of a number of people converting formally for the sake of marriage, since a Muslim woman is not allowed to marry a non-Muslim. According to data compiled by the editor of *Islam in Europe* (January 17), which should be considered an estimate, there could be currently a total of 5,000 converts in Denmark, up to 100,000 in France (although the figures might also be lower), 80,000 in Germany, 3,500 in Hungary, 1,000 in Norway, 25,000 in Spain and 5,000 in Sweden.

(<http://islamineurope.blogspot.com>)

Liberation theology persisting, but shifting to Protestant hands?

Liberation theology has remained active enough in Brazilian Catholicism for Pope Benedict XVI to recently reissue harsh criticisms against the theological movement at a recent meeting with Brazil’s bishops at the Vatican. *The Tablet* magazine (December 12) reports that Benedict reiterated the criticisms he had made of liberation theology 30 years ago that its Marxist orientation was causing divisions and sapping the church of vitality. He was particularly concerned that Catholic universities were teaching such “deceptive principles.” But Robert

Mickens writes that liberation theology in Brazil today has a more ecumenical flavor. After the Vatican started challenging Catholic liberation theology in the 1980s, “Protestants, especially Lutherans, started to embrace its ideas.” Just in November, one of Brazil’s leading Lutheran theologians, Walter Altmann, said liberation theology’s “death certificate has been written prematurely.” He said that while some liberation theologians may use Marxist concepts, the thrust of the theology is centered on compassionate identification with the poor and their struggle for justice.

(*The Tablet*, 1 King Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0QZ, UK)

Growing numbers of Latino-Americans attracted by the Orthodox Church

Although there are still few Orthodox clergy able to develop a ministry in Spanish or Portuguese, Archbishop Jonah, metropolitan of the Orthodox Church of America (OCA), said in an interview with Miguel Palacio in *Pravoslavie.ru* (December 21) that there are more and more people from Latin America, especially of local Indian descent, feeling called to Orthodoxy. “American Indians may become the largest ethnic group in the American Orthodox Church,” he said. While Greek and Antiochian parishes in Latin America tend to minister primarily to people of

Orthodox descent, Metropolitan Jonah emphasizes the priority of his Church to develop missionary work among local people. In the Mexican Exarchate of the OCA, which was organized in the 1970s, he reports that hundreds of people were brought into the church over the years and that, “not long ago,” 5,000 Indians from the Veracruz State were received in the Church. Thousands of people in Guatemala, mostly of Indian descent, are asking to be accepted in the Orthodox Church.

According to the metropolitan, liturgy, icons and the veneration for Virgin Mary as practiced in the Orthodox Church are primary factors in attracting Latinos to Orthodoxy. But he also emphasizes the loss of influence of the Roman Catholic Church, due to its long association with the upper social classes. The disillusionment has benefited evangelicals and other religious groups, and apparently now also the Orthodox Church. However, the metropolitan does not feel that this could lead to conflictual relations between Orthodox and the Catholic Church, and feels there could even be some collaboration.

(<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/33241.htm>)

Middle East: Not the best place for atheists—but the Internet helps

Atheists are usually very discrete in the Middle East, reports the *Café Thawra* blog (January 13), published by Joseph Daher and Paola Salwan. There are rare cases

of open expressions of atheism, such as the Syrian philosopher Sadik Jalal al Azm, who claims to be “the only atheist intellectual in the Arab world” and dares to speak openly on the issue. An emeritus professor at the University of Damascus, he has always refused to emigrate, despite threats, and often appears on TV shows across the Middle East to speak on various issues. In Saudi Arabia, it is forbidden to declare oneself an atheist. In other countries, most atheists do not dare to share their opinions with members of their families. Consequently, Daher and Salwan observe, “as in all the modern underground networks,” the use of the Internet has become a primary tool for expressing atheist opinions and getting in touch with like-minded people. There are now Arab atheist Facebook groups, blogs and forums.

(<http://cafethawra.blogspot.com>)

Improved prospects for Syriac Christian minority in Turkey?

A recent visit to eastern Turkey by the dynamic Turkish foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, has given some hope of progress for the Syriac Christian minority in eastern Turkey. Davutoglu, a former university professor, who had presented a paper at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Houston in the year 2000, is currently reshaping Turkish foreign policy. In recent decades, there had been a strong emigration of Syriac Christians from that

area, where they have lived since the times of early Christianity: their number is reported to be down to 3,000. Beside the troubled situation in the area, including the Kurdish insurgency, they have often felt on the defensive, and there have been fears that the Christian presence could be erased from the area over time and their churches would finally be turned into museums.

Davutoglu’s visit was part of a wider project of “tearing down walls” between foreign and domestic policy in border areas: the Ambassadors’ Evaluation Conference was held in Mardin, where the remaining Syriac Christians are mostly concentrated. Davutoglu acknowledged the decrease of the Christian population, while expressing hope that the trend could be reversed (*Today’s Zaman*, January 11). The foreign minister pledged to help Syriacs to sustain their culture, religion and language (*Hürriyet Daily News*, January 11). The visit paid by Davutoglu to Syriac Christians is considered important because it might be one of the signals of coming changes in Turkish official attitudes toward Christian minorities in the country, especially for developing their own educational facilities in order to preserve their legacy. This would be one more change brought by the AKP, the moderate Islamic party currently ruling the country and enforcing a variety of reforms domestically, as well as making Turkey a more active player in regional politics.

FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

■ The password for access to the RW archives, at: www.religionwatch.com, is: **Present**.

Correction: The correct date for the issue of the *Christian Century* cited in the report on clergy sexual abuse in the November/December issue was October 20.

■ Operating in multi-faith contexts abroad poses new challenges to military chaplains, writes Dennis R. Hoover (Institute for Global Engagement) in the introduction to an issue of the *Review of Faith and International Affairs* (Winter 2009) devoted to “The Past and Future of Military Chaplaincy.” Besides their traditional roles, should chaplains contribute to the training of military personnel in the knowledge of religions? Should they play a diplomatic role? Do they need a new type of training? Some of these issues for chaplains, such as finding a balance between service to God and service to their nation, are not new, remarks Pauletta Otis (Marine Corps University). Other challenges may be related to a new type of conflict, dominated by irregular warfare and insurgency. Otis mentions that new types of training for U.S. military chaplains are currently being developed, with the Navy, Army and Air Force chaplaincy schools being colocated in South Carolina by 2010, where there will be a Center for World Religions. There are currently around 3,000 active-duty U.S. military chaplains.

In earlier times, says U.S. Army Chaplain Corps historian John W. Brinsfield, Christian clergy were interested in converting people to Christianity. But from the time of the Vietnam War, chaplains were brought to the platform as instructors in world religions. The pluralization of religious life in the U.S. also encouraged such efforts. There has

been an increasing trend for chaplains to act in liaison function with local religious leaders of various faiths. However, adds Douglas M. Johnston (International Center for Religion and Diplomacy), caution was soon advised, for fear that chaplains acting in such functions might be misperceived as intelligence agents in religious garb. Here again, new directives soon to be issued will attempt to find a balance between the prohibition of activities that might compromise the non-combatant status of chaplains (e.g. identifying targets) and permission to provide command and staff with religious insights.

Chaplain Timothy K. Bedsole suggests that the “insider” vantage point of chaplains “can help to correct an often over-secularized military,” especially chaplains trained in world religions. In another article, Miroslav Volf (Yale University) writes on how chaplains can be agents of peace in theaters of war; a ministry of reconciliation “is beginning to be recognized as a complementary role for deployed chaplains”—something also connected to the fact that armed forces are more and more engaged in peackeeping and peacemaking missions. From such an angle, all soldiers actually come to be seen as potential agents of peace.

For more information, write: *Review of Faith and International Affairs*, Institute for Global Engagement, P.O. Box 12205, Arlington, VA 22219-2205; <http://www.RFIAonline.org>

■ “Satanism and Satanism Scares in the Modern World” is the main topic of the December issue of *Social Compass* (December). The subject has attracted the attention of several sociologists over the past two decades; the contributors make a special effort to look beyond the English-speaking world. Contributions show several sources for Satanist activities, from (rationalist) LaVey’s Church of Satan to the Black

Metal musical scene and some more occult types of groups. Some articles note the “pick and mix” nature of Satanism. In all cases, the spread of the Internet has certainly helped the diffusion of Satanic views, as well as networking among people attracted by Satanism, but a few active groups pre-date it. Except for international organizations, a number of groups born in different countries tend to be ephemeral. As might be expected, the contrast is striking between the real numbers of identified, professing Satanists and rumors about Satanism. In France, for instance, Olivier Bobineau (French National Center for Scientific Research) states in his article that there are about ten active Satanists affiliated with international Satanist organizations and a hundred more unaffiliated, regularly practicing Satanists. People arrested for certain criminal activities in which such symbols were used (e.g. the desecration of cemeteries) in France were all younger than 30 and none of them was associated with a stable Satanist organization.

There have been similar cases of criminal activities (including a few murders) by small bands of young people in some European countries, usually cases of “wild Satanism”, not infrequently associated with the use of drugs, rather than organized Satanism, concludes Massimo Introvigne (Center for the Studies of New Religions) in his report on the Italian situation. In Denmark, estimates by Titus Hjelm (University College London) and three co-authors indicate 800 self-declared Satanists, partly affiliated with regional, Scandinavian organizations. In Norway, few of the 400 subscribers to a Satanist online forum are members of Satanist groups, and many of them anyway do not participate often: Satanism seems to be more “a philosophical perspective on life among a few young people.” In Finland, while the

number of Satanists is small and no stable organization has emerged, there are two small publishing houses specializing in Satanist literature. What seems to come across frequently is “reactive Satanism, where the aim is to shock, often without any personal commitment to a Satanic worldview.” Again, as is the case in France, this seems to clearly show that there is a kind of “cultural Satanism” or the use of Satanic symbols that is more widespread than fully fledged Satanism.

For more on this issue, write: *Social Compass*, Place Montesquieu 1 / Boîte 13, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.

■ **Dark Green Religion** (University of California Press, \$24.95), by Bron Taylor, looks at the diversity of nature-based and environmental ideas and practices and attempts to demonstrate how they form the contours of a new religion. While there have been many works showing the implicit and explicit spiritual concepts behind environmental activism and philosophies, Taylor goes somewhat further, arguing that scientific narratives, especially those drawing on neo-Darwinian naturalism, also reveal elements of this new spirituality (although acknowledging that the neo-Darwinists would object to such spiritual and religious designations). He looks at four main types of “dark green” religion: spiritual animism, i.e. those who believe in a spiritual force in nature or at least observe nature-based rituals; naturalistic animism, i.e. those who claim kinship with non-human life; Gaian spirituality, which holds that the earth has a spiritual consciousness; and Gaian naturalism, which is suspicious of supernatural accounts of the earth, but still holds to the view that it is a self-sustaining life system.

Taylor fleshes out these typologies with interesting case studies—from how surfing and other outdoor

sports are viewed by participants as religious practices to the globalized environmental movement as expressed in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. In fact, he sees the Earth Charter that originated from the summit as putting forth a new “civic earth religion.” Far from a disinterested study, Taylor views the alleged decline of traditional religions not as secularization as much as this new natural religion replacing older more outmoded ones.

■ The recent publication of ***Atheism and Secularity*** (Praeger, \$104.95), edited by Phil Zuckerman, is part of a new wave of academic interest in atheism and secularism in general. The two volumes cover both the theoretical and conceptual issues of non-belief and secularism, as well as their various atheist expressions around the world. The first volume seeks to explain who the atheists and unbelievers actually are through survey research, while also attempting to challenge existing theories and research about the role of religion and secularism in American society. This twin focus can be seen in a nuanced study by Frank Pasquale of the different orientations of those in organized secular groups; he finds that a significant percentage don’t sign off on a completely naturalistic worldview [see Sept./Oct. RW for more on this study]. In contrast, Gregory Paul launches a free-wheeling, 58-page attack on the idea that religiosity and social and economic well-being have anything to do with each other. He does this by comparing the economic and social security levels of developed countries and finding that the U.S. is among the most “pathological” (in terms of crime, lack of healthcare, etc.), which he then correlates with a generic concept of religion or “theofaith,” defined as a “superficial primitive and dysfunctional condition.” In any case, Paul claims that religion is de-

clining rapidly in the U.S. through the influences of science, evolution and education.

Other chapters in this volume include studies on secularism and its effect on children, and atheism and sexuality. The second volume, which examines atheism around the world, includes a comparison between “fundamentalists” and atheists in the U.S. and Canada; a study by Sam Bagg and David Voas on how Britain has arrived at a “complex secularity,” as the growing rate of disaffiliation, attitudes of religious indifference, the prominence and respectability of atheists in the public sphere, a secularizing culture, and a tolerant Church of England have created a secular, if not atheistic, nation; a look at how atheist societies in the former Soviet Union have shifted from discrimination against religion (under communism) to promoting human rights; and an interesting account of how close church-state relations led to stronger secularist organizations in Norway than in other Scandinavian countries. The chapters on India and China appear to take on a more biased tone, especially as the latter explains the alleged success of the Communist Party’s “scientific atheism,” while overlooking such challenges as the massive growth of Christianity in the country.

■ Without much publicity or notice, the Russell Sage Foundation has published an important two-volume work on evangelicals and politics in the U.S. entitled ***Evangelicals and Democracy in America*** (\$49.95 per volume), edited by Steven Brint and Jean Reith Schroedel. The books bring together the leading scholars on evangelical political involvement, as they retrace the historical path to renewed activism and present current research. Noteworthy contributions include a historical comparison by Phillip Gorski of evangelical politics with similar movements of the

past in Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and England; a study of the “traditionalist alliance” by John Green, who notes that the coalition among various conservative Christian activists is likely to survive even as its mainly white base may hinder its impact (as seen in the last election); a chapter by Brad Wilcox on how evangelical activism has changed the public discourse on family issues, even if its avoidance of economic issues will hamper its long-term influence; and Julie Ingersoll’s treatment of the unrecognized impact of Calvinist-based Christian Reconstructionism on evangelical political involvement. A theme of several chapters is the cyclical nature of evangelical political strength in the U.S., which may be an improvement from treatments of this movement that tend to forecast either inevitable decline or triumphant growth.

■ **Write These Laws on Your Children** (Beacon Press, \$27.95), by education professor Robert Kunzman, presents a first-hand examination of conservative Christian home-schooling participants and their related activism for this cause. By “conservative,” he is referring to fundamentalist Protestants who are also politically conservative, a group that, whether it constitutes two-thirds, one-half or even less of a proportion of home schoolers, has, he writes, a “disproportionate” effect on public perception and rhetoric around home schooling. He pays special attention to the Home School Legal Defense Association, founded in 1983, a group that has maintained a high public profile in its attempts to dominate the policy environment surrounding home schooling. Kunzman also looks at the political activism by home schoolers themselves in the “Generation Joshua” movement. Based on six years of research among practitioners and apologists for the Christian home-schooling

movement, Kunzman provides fairly detailed accounts of conservative Christian home schoolers residing in various states (California, Tennessee, Oregon, Indiana and Vermont).

Class, the educational level of parent teachers and apparent educational methods vary among these case studies, ranging from a self-aware, highly conscious former teacher who challenges each of her four children with patience and encouragement of problem-solving and critical thinking, to an anti-social backwoodsman who relies on a whip to ensure compliance from his ten children. As in public schooling, school stances range from structured to chaotic and from student-centered to authoritarian. In interviewing teachers and students, Kunzman finds that most home schoolers rely on materials produced by conservative Christian companies. Cost considerations and parental disinclination to take advice preclude use of teachers’ manuals, which results in frayed instruction in areas where the parents’ own education is weak.

Whereas Kunzman is concerned with the extent to which alternative points of view are presented, acknowledged and examined, his conservative Christian interviewees are interested in them only as material against which they may strengthen their case for a literal, Biblical reading of human history and earth science, which typically comes from the material provided by conservative Christian companies. None of the families interviewed gives serious consideration to the possibility that evolutionary theory might be true. Knowledge, in the home-schooling world, comes from God, as represented in particular, literalist interpretations of the Bible, and is not subject to questioning or debate. There is, predictably, little tolerance of dissent and respect for minority values and rights.

Although parents concede that ultimately their children will think for themselves, one senses that they would be saddened and deeply concerned about any drift towards secular thought. – *By Jane Kelton, a New York-based writer*

■ Economist Eli Berman approaches the religious dimensions of terrorism in unique and provocative ways in his new book **Radical, Religious and Violent** (MIT Press, \$24.94). Berman uses religious economy theory to explain terrorist activities and how various movements make the transition to espousing violence and suicide. In fact, he makes a connection between violent and non-violent “radical” groups (meaning sects) and how their tendency to maintain strong mutual aid provisions can give them “the potential to be potent providers of coordinated violence, including terrorism, should they so choose.”

Berman discounts the main theories of terrorism, which stress psychological and theological motivations, and focuses on their practices of altruism and sacrifice for an in-group of fellow believers. He looks at a whole range of peaceful and non-peaceful groups, including Hamas, the Jewish Underground, Old Order Amish and the Hell’s Angels, attempting to demonstrate that they all tend to demand sacrifice from members and also give them benefits, while seeking to control defections. Berman argues that these groups’ ability to create “defection-resistant mutual aid organizations” gives them an advantage in recruiting people who aim at high-value targets, specifically in the case of suicide attacks. Berman concludes his readable book by recommending policies to thwart religious terrorism, such as advising governments to provide welfare alternatives that break up the exclusive hold of some radical mutual-aid organizations.

■ The appearance of a specialized book such as ***Fundamentalisms and the Media*** (Continuum, \$29.95), edited by Stewart Hoover and Nadia Kaneva, is a good indicator of the new scholarly attention that is being given to the relationship between the media and religion in general. The contributors to this volume see the various kinds of fundamentalist movements' involvement in the media as a prime example of the way religious identity, action and community are being created and sustained by media technologies. Because of (at least) American fundamentalists' early use of the media—from print to radio to television broadcasts—the editors suggest that such “mediation” is central to understanding this form of Christianity. It is more difficult to attribute the importance of the media to “fundamentalist” versions of Islam and even Catholicism (as is the case with the chapter on Opus Dei and its handling of the Da Vinci Code controversy).

While about half of the book covers media theory and how it relates to the definitions and practices of fundamentalism, there are several chapters that would be of interest to those outside the media studies field, including the role of media spokesmen, such as the Family Research Council, in conservative Christian activism; the different ways in which the concept of the church are expressed among fundamentalists on the Internet; and how the Christian media in India take many of their cues from American evangelical televangelism and the ways in which this tie plays into Hindu-Christian conflicts.

■ Religious identity has a stronger effect on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in war-torn and developing countries than might be expected, according to the new book, ***For the Love of God*** (Kumarian Press, \$24.95), by Shawn Teresa

Flanigan. The author conducted interviews with the leaders and staff of NGOs in Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Bosnia-Herzegovina, including international and secular as well as local and faith-based organizations (FBOs). Flanigan looks at the extent to which the operation of NGOs in these societies mirrors their religious and ethnic divisions. As might be expected, it was the local FBOs that were most likely to serve their particular sect and ethnic group. Much of these divisions may be geographical; in Lebanon, the segregation of Muslims, Druze and Christian communities leads organizations to serve primarily members of a single “sect.”

But even international NGOs untouched by local conflicts and committed to inclusive social services have to deal with clientele who act more in terms of group identity. Flanigan also finds that an FBO's commitment to proselytizing and evangelism may cause distrust among clients of other faiths (a trend especially evident in Sri Lanka, with the growth of evangelical NGOs), particularly when they are sole service providers. Another factor that may limit the effectiveness of some Christian NGOs in reaching beyond their faith is their tendency to rely on church referrals (where clergy would approve and recommend people to health and social services) to gain clients. Flanigan concludes with recommendations for FBOs seeking to expand their outreach in conflicted areas, such as advocating a strategy of joining local groups with international NGOs.

■ From her unique vantage point as an evangelical anthropologist, Miriam Adeney's recent book, ***Kingdom Without Borders*** (IVP Books, \$18), provides close-up snapshots of the Christian believers, congregations and organizations flourishing in the Global South. The

book brings together Adeney's fervent evangelical faith with her observations and encounters with believers ranging from “Christian Sikhs” to a community of “Hindu-background oral learners,” who comprise 2,000 small churches that have formed in India between 1997 and 2003, coming to Christianity through radio Bible stories. She also provides noteworthy accounts of Christian believers (many prefer the designation “Jesus's people”) who meet clandestinely in Iran, worship like Muslims and celebrate Islamic holy days, and explores the thriving microenterprise movement where thousand of churches and missions, along with secular agencies, make loans for people to start small businesses. Adeney has no central findings or theoretical conclusions, but her documentation of the “global flows” of Third World Christianity and the way they are reconfiguring old patterns of associating and outreach (i.e. Hindu-background Christians serving as missionaries in Muslim countries and the “contextualization” that is necessary in such missions) makes the book fascinating reading.

■ In her new book, ***Shamans, Nostalgias and the IMF*** (University of Hawaii Press, \$49), anthropologist Lauren Kendall marshals impressive ethnographic evidence to show that shamanism in South Korea is alive and well and even flourishing under modern capitalism. Kendall returns to the site of fieldwork she conducted in the 1970s in order to observe modern-day shamans in their exorcist-like rituals. Shamanism, once considered anti-modern, demonic and even anti-democratic, has been rehabilitated to serve as a national icon and a symbol of rural authenticity. But now the religious dimensions of modern shamanic practice have either been dismissed or judged inauthentic because of their abbreviated and professionalized

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nature. Kendall finds that there are more shamans than ever in Korea, with the growth of shaman schools, training curricula, and rival associations vying for students and clients and asking the highest prices. The demand base for the shamans has likewise modernized, with clients seeking financial gain and security (especially after the financial hardships of the late 1990s), and even ancestors are perceived to demand repayments for past deprivations. There also appears to be an affinity between those working in small business and the frequenting of shamanic services. Although the book is difficult to read at times, with an over-supply of details on shamanic practices, Kendall does show that modern shamanism both maintains traditions and effectively adapts to the ambiguities of Korean economic life.

■ **Transnational Transcendence** (University of California Press, \$24.95), edited by Thomas J. Csordas, focuses on the interrelation between globalization and religion. An important aim of this book is to challenge the view that international contemporary religious manifestations are secondary to the primarily economic phenomenon of globalization. Csordas introduces various ways in which the globalization of religion takes place, including how the local religious imagination takes up the encroachment of the global economy and technology, and how religious influence moves in a reverse direction, from the margins to the metropolis. In Csordas's article on "Global Religion" he argues that when he began to study the international expansion of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the 1970s, the dominant global theory—world system theory—was not sufficient to understand the logic of this religious development, which he calls the "religious multinational" analogy.

Csordas compares the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in three nations to establish the movement's evidential difference from economic globalization. India's Catholic population tends to be concentrated regionally in the southwest, and the renewal exists in relation to Hindu and Muslim traditions. Brazil is a predominantly Catholic nation where the renewal interacts with strong existing local spiritual traditions. Nigeria is an ethnically diverse country where Catholicism is strongest among the Igbo people and the renewal exists in relation to traditional religion in the local setting and within the Christian-Islam dynamic on the national scene. All three have their historical process and structural consequences, which contribute to the religious dimension of a global social system.

In Peter van der Veer's chapter on "Global Breathing" he compares yoga and qigong as historic and political phenomena that are intimately related to the construction of modernity. Both body exercises are connected to conceptions of cosmology, bodily health and mind. In both cases, a politics of difference emerged that had to assert historical pride in one's national civilization against imperial projects in different periods. Today, these two practices are genuinely widespread and can be seen as context-independent elements of an incipient universal culture, and at the same provide a compelling study on globalizing Asian spiritual-somatic practices under the national construction of civilization and cosmopolitan modernity. *Transnational Transcendence* in an original and powerful volume for readers who are interested in ethnographic and comparative studies of the global "return of religion." - *By Weishan Huang, a research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen, Germany*

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

There are not many conscientious objectors in Turkey (although the numbers are said to be rising), but 33-year-old **Enver Aydemir** is one such dissenter who refused to serve due to his Islamic beliefs. Already arrested and detained a first time in 2007, Aydemir was rearrested in late December and is considered to be the first person in Turkey to give religious grounds for refusing to serve. This

"Muslim objector" does not want to be called a "conscientious objector," yet a collaboration has nevertheless been developing between supporters of Aydemir and anti-war activists, who are mostly on the political left and sometimes atheists. A Facebook group created to support Aydemir, with more than 3,000 members already, has been launched by a Turkish anarchist and gathers people of diverse ideologies. Both Turkish and international human rights organizations—such as Amnesty International—consider Aydemir as a prisoner of conscience. (*Hürriyet Daily News, January 11*)