March-April 2010
volume 25 number 3

RELIGION WATCH

A NEWSLETTER MONITORING TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY RELIGION

INSIDE

Page two
Faith-based investing benefiting from economic downturn

Page five
Prestigious universities feel the evangelical effect

Page six
Demand to restore Nepal as a Hindu nation gaining momentum

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

RELIGIOSCOPE
This is a publication of Religioscope Institute

American religious revival—academically speaking

The health of American religious life may be under debate, but most indicators suggest that the study of American religion is flourishing. In particular, both the disciplines of history and sociology are drawing new scholars on religious topics as well assigning a more important role to religion, according to recent studies. *Christianity Today* (March) reports that there is a new surge in the study of religious history after decades of neglect. The magazine cites an annual survey of members of the American Historical Association showing that 7.7 percent of respondents selected religion as one of three areas of interest. This was higher than the 7.5 percent who chose cultural history, which had ranked first for 15 years. One observer notes that such self-identified believers who are also well-respected historians, such as George Marsden, Nathan Hatch and Mark Noll, have "helped propel wider academic interest in religious history" and lent it legitimacy.

Over the past three decades, sociology has been treating religion as a significant mover in society, from areas of health to education, rather than as something that is shaped and influenced by other factors, according to a new study. Sociologists David Smilde and Matthew May write on the *Immanent Frame*, the blog of the Social Science Research Council, that a "strong program" in the sociology of religion has emerged, meaning that religion is treated as what sociologists call an "independent variable"—something that acts on or influences other factors or variables (for instance, the role of religion in affecting education outcomes). In examining articles in major sociology journals (general and specialized publications) published over the last 30 years, Smilde and May find an increase of those dealing with religion, suggesting that the subdiscipline of the sociology of religion is "healthy and vibrant." More significantly, it is the way that religion is being treated that stands out: at the beginning of the 30-year period, religion was commonly treated as a variable or factor influenced by a social process. In the last five-year period, "over half of all articles had religious processes as their independent variable."

Moreover, those articles viewing religion as autonomous (or as an independent variable) in relation to other factors tended to portray such religious outcomes as positive, with negative portraits of religion representing less than five percent of all articles on religion in the 1998–2002 period. Yet in the 2003–07 period, there was a growth of negative articles, which the authors attribute to the mood surrounding 9/11, the sex abuse crisis in the Catholic Church and the controversial administration of George Bush.

Meanwhile, a study in the *American Sociologist* (March) finds that a degree of "parochialism" exists in the sociology of religion in the U.S. The authors, Stephen C. Polson and Colin Campbell, examined the content of two sociology of religion journals from 2001 to 2008 and found that issues and topics limited to those of the societies in which the journals were published predominated—the inclusion of non-Western societies in studies of both journals was only 17.4 percent. While expecting that there would be more attention paid to Muslim societies after 9/11, the number of Muslim studies actually declined in

2004–05. Overall, 9.8 percent of the articles were on Muslims; of these, 35 percent were non-comparative studies of a Muslim community that resided outside of the West. Because the sociology of religion is one sub-field influenced by the larger discipline, Polson and Campbell speculate that American sociology as a whole may be even more parochial.

(*Christianity Today*, 465 Gunderson Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188; *Imminent Frame*, http://ogs.ssrc.org; *American Sociologist*, 11 Main St., Germantown, NY 12526)

Christian right adapts to tea party conservatism

Social conservatives and the Christian right are taking on the rhetoric of the tea party activists, who form the main opposition to President Obama's healthcare reform initiative and stimulus spending. The *Los Angeles Times* (March 11) reports that social conservatives are exploring the "morality of debt and the risks to religious freedom posed by growing government. Like the tea party activists, they reverently invoke the Founding Fathers, but emphasize the role the founders' faith played in their writings." The mainstream of today's conservative movement as expressed in the tea parties and last month's Conservative Political Action Conferences stressed economic issues far more than moral-religious ones. But new groups started in the last year have sought to build new bridges between fiscal conservatives and social conservatives. Newt Gingrich co-founded Renewing American Leadership, which states "that the strength of American capitalism and government lies in their Judeo-Christian roots," writes Kathleen Hennessey.

Ralph Reed, former head of the Christian Coalition, recently founded the Faith and Freedom Coalition, which aims to boost voter turnout among evangelicals and was already active in New Jersey and Virginia Republican victories in elections for governor last November. Lee Edwards of the Heritage Foundation said that the greater willingness of the new generation of the Christian right to compromise and work together with differing groups can be seen in their embrace of the tea parties, although both sides have reservations. Social conservatives say they will support the tea parties as long as activists don't start advocating for abortion and against traditional marriage. Some tea party leaders, meanwhile, fear that social issues, apart from those concerning the economy, will only distract conservative activists.

Faith-based investing benefiting from economic downturn

Since the economic downturn of last year, faith-based investing has shown new growth, reports the *Long Island Catholic* newspaper (March 3). The recession has "prompted investors to question their financial advisors and the huge mutual fund names they trusted for so long. As result, many are gravitating towards the faith-based investing universe that is made up of about 100 mutual funds with a value of about $31 billion," writes Kelly Cinelli. She adds that "many are seeking advice from their religious advisors on matters of both spirituality and money," and that the growth of faith-based groups during the recession has been "fantastic." The Epiphany Faith & Values 100 Fund (a Catholic mutual fund) saw a 77 percent increase in assets during the recession. Another fund group, MMA Praxis Mutual Funds (coming from an Anabaptist background) launched a new investing option, the Genesis Portfolios.

(*Long Island Catholic*, 2000 Centennial Ave., Suite 201, Box 9000, Roosevelt, NY 11575)

Hindu temple rituals online find demand among the faithful

Services offering Hindus "surrogate" *pujas* (or offerings to a deity) and other rituals as well as streaming webcasts of temple ceremonies from India are becoming more widespread, reports *Hinduism Today* (April/May/June). Several virtual *puja* services are run from India with a global clientele. EPrarthana.com allows customers to pay a charge of $9 to order an *archana* (a special *puja* conducted for an individual by a temple priest) performed for them in a south Indian temple and to the deity of their choice. After the company performs the service, it sends the customer the "Prasad" and other offerings. There are also temple services specializing in north India temples, writes Madhuri Shekar.
One American customer had a friend who became seriously ill and through EPrarthana ordered a 14-day *puja* to be conducted for him at the Vaideeshwaran Temple in India over the Internet. Such webcasts, as well as on-demand videos, of ceremonies in Indian temples are increasingly popular. The company E-Darshan broadcasts videos from over a dozen temples in south India. "For those who do not wish to miss a live broadcast, the site's Twitter feed provides instant updates to followers," reports Shekar.

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

CURRENT RESEARCH

While scholars have found that many Americans are "believing without belonging," there are many who belong to religious groups but don't believe, according to sociologist Darren Sherkat. Writing on the *Immanent Frame*, a blog of the Social Science Council, Sherkat writes that many scholars are "somewhat dismissive" of trends in disaffiliation, arguing that Americans still believe, even if they don't belong to religious institutions. But Sherkat writes that "there are far more people who belong to religious groups but not do not believe than there are people who believe but don't belong." People have belonged to religious institutions not just because of belief, but for a whole range of social reasons (such as family and friendship ties). Sherkat looked at data from the General Social Surveys from 1998 to 2008 and found a connection between the two trends of believing without belonging and belonging without believing.

In focusing on beliefs in the divine authority of the Bible and "personal gods," Sherkat found that 12 percent belonged to religious institutions in 1998, but didn't hold to these institutions' beliefs, while that rate dropped to under 11 percent in 2008. In contrast, the percentage of Americans who "believe but don't belong" increased from 3.3 percent (in the authority of the Bible) or 3.5 percent (in a personal god/gods) to 6.7 percent or 6.5 percent, respectively, between 1988 and 2008. The fact that those who belonged but did not believe decreased suggests that "non-believers are becoming less likely to belong to religious groups for social reasons, and this probably also explains why more believers also choose not to belong—social norms mandating religious ties are receding." **(Sherkat did not count as believers those who view God as a spiritual force—disqualifying many of those falling into the "spiritual but not religious" category.)**

Members of the Millennial generation (those born in 1981 or later) show higher rates of disaffiliation than earlier generations, yet they remain fairly traditional in religion, according to a Pew Research Center survey. One in four adults under the age of 30 are unaffiliated, calling themselves "atheists," "agnostics" or "nothing in particular." Only 19 percent of those over 30 describe themselves as such, and around 14 percent of those in their 40s and 50s. In fact, Millennials are significantly more likely to be unaffiliated than members of "Generation X" were at the same age (20 percent). These young adults also attend religious services less than older Americans, and fewer say that religion is important to them compared to their elders. But young adults' beliefs about life after death and the existence of miracles are about the same as those of older people, according to the survey. There are also similar

rates of those Millennials claiming they pray every day and believe in God with absolute certainty to those of their elders. These patterns suggest that some of the religious differences between younger and older Americans are not entirely generational, but result in part from religion becoming more important as people age.

(This study is available at: http://www.pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=510#introduction)

A study of surviving American spiritual communal groups and how they have changed over a 46-year period finds more differences than commonalities, with external changes being as important as internal changes. An article by Timothy Miller in the journal *Nova Religio* (February) looks at five case studies of communal religious groups that have lasted since their establishment in the 1960s and 70s—the messianic Christian group Twelve Tribes; the Eastern religious-oriented The Farm; the meditation-based Divine Light Mission; Ananda, an Indian-oriented spiritual group; the Tibetan Buddhist Shambhala Mountain Center; and the New Age Renaissance Community. Miller finds as many trajectories as there are communitarian groups; some, such as the Renaissance Community, have notably declined, while the Twelve Tribes and the Shambhala Center are still flourishing.

Miller notes that the usual factors, such as leadership turnovers and the maturation of membership, have change these communities, but external developments can also have a significant impact. Most notably, zoning regulations may be radically changing the future growth and existence of communal spiritual groups. Ever-more stringent zoning laws, forbidding multiple dwelling units, have put some communes out of business entirely (such as the Israel Family of Washington state). "The widespread public fear of new religious movements takes a particularly heavy toll on communal groups," Miller writes.

(*Nova Religio*, University of California Press, 2000 Center St., Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223)

A range of networks and open channels of communication created between governments and Muslim communities and other multicultural policies may have made the difference between the unrest in Denmark over the cartoon controversy in 2005 and 2006 and the more benign Islamic response to a similar incident in Sweden. That was one of the conclusions of a preliminary study by Emily Bech of Columbia University on religious identity and immigrant incorporation in Scandinavia. Bech, who was speaking at a Columbia seminar in late February attended by **RW**, traced the similarities in waves of immigration and the establishment of multicultural policies in Sweden and Denmark starting in the 1970s. But this changed as Denmark adopted a number of restrictive policies, such as language requirements (at the tenth grade reading level), mainly under the influence of the conservative Danish People's Party. The differences were also reflected on the popular level; although both Sweden and Denmark register low rates of personal religiosity, in a Eurobarometer survey, 33 percent of Danes agreed that citizens should share the same religion, compared to 17 percent among Swedes. When the controversy over the cartoons caricaturing Mohammed broke out in Denmark in 2005 and 2006, protesting Danish Muslims found few channels to express their grievances or to engage in dialogue with the public or the government; the prime minister and ambassadors of Muslim countries refused to meet with increasingly angry protestors. There were also few support networks among Muslims, along with a greater representation of "fundamentalists" in the Danish Islamic community, according to Bech. In contrast, when another offensive cartoon was published in 2007 in Sweden, long-established Muslim organizations took the lead in responding. The way in which the controversy was framed tended to "tone down the response," with Muslim leaders arguing that it would not be appropriate to ban the offending publications. The Swedish prime minister visited a mosque and met with 20 Muslim country ambassadors. Bech said that the disestablishment of the Church of Sweden in 2000 and the fact that, unlike in Denmark, Muslims groups receive public funds along with churches may also be a contributing factor for the different response in Sweden. Bech, however, does see an emerging official emphasis on encouraging "democratic and social citizenship" in Denmark.

The correlation between education and religious belief is weakening and even being reversed in Britain, according to recent survey research. An article in the *New Scientist* (March 3) cites the 2008 British Social Attitudes Survey as showing, for example, that about 25 percent of men between 25 and 34 claiming "no religion" have degrees, compared with around 40 percent of those describing themselves as religious. For women and other minorities in the same category, the differences were

less marked, "but the trend is the same," write Lois Lee and Stephen Bullivant. This finding appears to contradict findings showing a positive correlation between lack of belief in God and education, as shown in the 2005 World Values Survey, but even in that case the effect was weaker among those with a higher education. A recent study of Oxford University students shows a high rate of disaffiliation (49.6 percent) and atheism (48.9 percent).

University of Manchester demographer David Voas says that one reason why a greater number religious people are degree holders may be that "better educated people have typically reflected on religion and have the self-confidence to come down decisively, on one side or the other." It may also be that the relationship between education and non-belief may be stronger at first, and as this perspective spreads across the population, the education levels associated with it may average out.

(http://www.newscientist.com)

Prestigious universities feel the evangelical effect

The tendency of prestigious American universities to have large and strong evangelical campus ministries is also the case outside the U.S., particularly in university contexts that represent a challenge to conservative Christians, writes Edward Dutton in the *Chronicle Review* (March 12), the weekly magazine of the Chronicle of Higher Education. Dutton found burgeoning evangelical campus ministries and a tendency of Christians to become more fervent in their beliefs as they attended Ivy League universities and such prestigious British schools as Oxford and Cambridge. In contrast, he cites research showing that Christian students who attend Christian colleges tend to become more liberal during the process of their education. Dutton speculates that it is the challenge of living the faith in the pluralistic and sometimes hostile environment of these universities that leads to such fervent belief.

In his research into Christian groups at Dutch universities, Dutton found a more lenient attitude among Christian students. "The main Christian student group at Leiden University, for example, is relatively liberal. Some members admitted to having premarital sex, getting a bit drunk and accepting evolution as truth," he writes. Because most Dutch universities, being equally prestigious, attract local students who tend to be of the same background, there is little of the pluralism and pressure that would draw Christian students to band together. In contrast, the University of Oxford draws students from public and private schools and from different social classes and religious backgrounds. The challenges of this pluralism, as well as the stress from exams that cannot be retaken, lead to a high rate of depression and suicide, but also of conversion to Christianity. "Non-Christian students are far more likely to become Christian at Oxford than at other universities, especially if they are from a modest background," according to Dutton.

> "Christians tend to become more fervent in their beliefs as they attend Ivy League universities"

(*The Chronicle Review*, 1255 23rd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037)

Creationism making inroads in Switzerland

A few years ago, it was unusual for newspapers on the European continent to publish articles on creationism, except when reporting about North America. In recent years, however, there has been an increase in reports on creationist activities in Europe too. The Swiss weekly *L'Hebdo* (February 4) has attempted to document the impact of creationist theories in Switzerland. Beside creationist ideas within evangelical congregations, journalist Julie Zaugg identifies two creationist associations in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, each with some 300 members. In the German-speaking part, the leading Christian creationist group is called Pro Genesis (founded in 2001), with some 600 to 800 members. It would like to create a creationist theme park in Germany and has already gathered money for that purpose, but it is still very far from the 200 million euros that would be needed.

However, Zaugg rightly remarks that membership in creationist associations is not the most adequate way of measuring the impact of creationist views in Switzerland. According to a 2005 survey, around a quarter of Swiss people did not believe in evolution, a percentage similar to that found in other European countries, except highly secularized areas such as France and Scandinavia. Besides Christians, creationist believers also include Muslims. Some creationist activists would like to see creation taught beside evolution in classrooms. The proposal is unlikely to find wide support, but among young teachers in some areas of Switzerland, there are some (although clearly a minority) who actually hold creationist beliefs. In 2007, a schoolbook containing a passage putting creationist and evolutionist views at the same level was withdrawn by school authorities in the canton of Berne. Aside from that, however, there seems to be no reported cases of controversies about creationist teachers: teachers with creationist views tend to refrain from expressing their beliefs too openly (while being open when questioned by pupils), except in a few, small Christian private schools that teach evolutionist and creationist theories side by side.

Demand to restore Nepal as a Hindu nation gaining momentum

The landlocked South Asian country Nepal is going through a bumpy transition from being the world's only Hindu kingdom to a secular republic. In *Nepalnews.com*, Sijan Raj Baral, a Fulbright Fellow at Kent State University, Ohio, writes that support for the restoration of Hinduism as the state religion has suddenly grown. In April 2006, Nepal adopted an Interim Constitution after a fierce seven-week protest against the Hindu monarchy by Nepal's Maoists and major political parties, the culmination of a decade-long civil war by the extreme leftists. But four years later, Nepal's right wing, which seems to have rapidly gained strength, wants Hinduism back as the official religion. The Constituent Assembly, formed in May 2008 when the monarchy was formally eliminated, is to draft the new constitution before May 28 this year, when the Interim Constitution expires. But the Assembly is unlikely to honor the deadline due to a lack of consensus. On February 22, the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) staged a rally in Kathmandu demanding the restoration of Nepal as a Hindu nation on the premise that secularism was not brought in through a referendum. Though a tiny party, the action crippled life in the capital—an indicator that it received huge support.

On March 1, a popular Nepali godman, Kali Baba, began a nine-day Hindu ritual, threatening to commit suicide if Nepal was not restored as a Hindu nation. Not only did he hit the headlines, he was also visited by deposed King Gyanendra. On March 22, a right-wing Hindu group, Bhisma Ekata Parishad, seemingly formed in recent months, held a general strike in western Nepal demanding the same thing. Apparently, it is people's disillusionment with politicians for causing uncertainties after the establishment of democracy that is raising hopes that Hinduism can be a solution. But for the deposed king, his protégé RPP and powerful right-wing Hindu organizations in India—which are well connected with their counterparts in Nepal—it is an opportunity to reinstate the religion that alone legitimises a monarchy in the 21st century.

Roughly 80 percent of the 28.5 million people in Nepal are Hindu. But the reinstatement of Hinduism is feared not only by Buddhists, Muslims, Christians and indigenous communities, who together form around 20 percent of the population, but also by Nepal's lower caste Hindus. Over one-quarter of Hindus in Nepal are Dalits, formerly "untouchables," and the country has more than 100 ethnic groups. Having little representation in the Constituent Assembly, these communities are understandably nervous. Besides neglecting and persecuting these minorities and restricting their freedom to proselytize, the monarchy enforced the hierarchical caste system during its rule.—*By Vishal Arora, a New Delhi-based journalist*

(*Nepalnews.com*, P.O. Box 876, Durbar Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal)

Worldwide Orthodoxy facing new internal and external challenges

In the context of speculations about a "holy alliance" between the Roman Catholic Church and the Moscow Patriarchate around common ethical concerns and in reaction to secularizing tendencies

in Europe, journalists François-Xavier Maigre and Nicolas Senèze have attempted to summarize current challenges for the Orthodox Church worldwide in the French Catholic daily *La Croix* (February 7). The Russian Church has been enjoying a renewal, but the situation remains fragile, since regular church attenders make only a very low percentage of the Russian population. The challenge for Moscow is how the opening toward the West will develop. Similarly, in Serbia, the opening toward the West is more concretely presented as European integration—the election of the new patriarch, Irinej, being considered as a positive sign. The process might be linked to significant gestures of reconciliation between Catholics and Muslims in the Balkans. In Ukraine, the key issue is the reunification of the Church, divided into three jurisdictions since the 1990s. Divisions are also present in the Holy Land: the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is one, but resentment of Arabic faithful toward the mainly Greek hierarchy is running deep. For the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the improvement of its relations with the Turkish state, and especially the reopening of its theological school in Halki (closed by the Turkish authorities since 1971), is vital. The Patriarchate of Antioch finds itself confronted with current trends within the Muslim world: it wants to build a relationship with Muslim neighbors on the basis of a shared Arabic identity and to avoid the development of Christian ghettoes. The Patriarchate of Alexandria has become a strongly missionary-minded church in sub-Saharan Africa, beyond the original nucleus of some 300,000 faithful in Egypt (not to be confused with the much larger Coptic Patriarchate of Alexandria), meaning that its evangelistic work across Africa should continue and grow. Finally, in Western Europe (as well as North America), the organization of the Orthodox Church as a local church, and not as an addition of several expatriate communities, is the major challenge, but such trends are far from being systematically encouraged by mother churches that also rely on the diaspora (including financially) and are sometimes equally concerned about preserving the respective national identities involved.

FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

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

■ The protests and strikes surrounding the conservative makeover of **IslamOnline**, one of the largest and most well-known Muslim Internet news and opinion outlets, may suggest new kinds of media battles unfolding in Islamic societies. In mid-March, long-simmering tensions between staffers and the board over control of content in the Cairo, Egypt-based website led to a mass walkout and strike of employees and the likely replacement of the staff with conservative Muslim content providers. IslamOnline, established in 2000, had a reputation for moderation and for covering a wide diversity of issues in English and Arabic, dealing with sensitive issues such as pornography addiction and homosexuality, and employing non-Muslims and openly secular staffers. *The Times* of London (March 17) reports that the situation changed several months ago when there was a shakeup on the board of the Islamic Message Society, the new owners of IslamOnline, resulting in a cut-back in the coverage of secular issues. The more conservative tone was evident when the new board objected to an article on Valentine 's Day reprinted from another newspaper. After widespread resistance to the editorial changes, the staffers were told that their contracts at the Cairo office would end after March, leading to the walkout.

■ Following the interruption of the publication of *ISKCON Communications Journal* a few years ago, the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) no longer had an academic journal of its own. But the void has now been filled with the launching of ***ISKCON Studies Journal***. The first issue, dated May 2009, has recently reached our offices. The journal's subtitle reads, "researching ISKCON and related subjects," and the first issue does indeed include contributions both by ISKCON and non-ISKCON authors, such as Jesuit Francis Clooney's article on "Tradition and dialogue." The issue also contains an article on interfaith relations, thus showing how ISKCON attempts to position itself as a participant in this field.

Of special interest for scholars of contemporary religious movements will be an article by the director of ISKCON's conflict management system, Braja Bihari Dasa, on schisms in ISKCON. Beside an analysis, it provides a useful summary of different types of schismatic movements within ISKCON: the presence of a charismatic leader appears to have been a key factor "in creating a last-

ting schismatic group." The author feels that, in the long-run, schismatic groups will rather prove beneficial to ISKCON, since competition has forced ISKCON leaders to look at a range of issues—and to cultivate humility. Interestingly, dialogue between ISKCON and one schismatic group started in 2007. Yadunandana Swami's history of education in ISKCON will also be of interest to scholars. Moreover, the issue includes a book review section.

For information on *ISKCON Studies Journal*, contact: ISKCON Studies Institute, 63 Divinity Road, Oxford, OX4 1LH, U.K., http://www.iskconstudies.org

■ The winter issue of the Lutheran theology journal ***Dialog*** is devoted to hymns, bringing together interesting research on a neglected area of religious scholarship. Particularly noteworthy is a comparative study of traditional hymns and contemporary evangelical praise and worship (P&W) music. Ethnomusicologist Gesa Hartje finds that early hymnody (less the case for today's hymns) and P&W music have similar meanings and function for their users—they both tend to become "permanent companions of everyday and devotional life," in effect creating their own theology. The way in which a praise song repertoire is disseminated (via the radio and concert tours) helps form an "imagined community" for the evangelical beyond the local congregation, just as hymnals had a similar unifying function for denominational churches.

Hartje concludes that hymnals are now including P&W songs, while evangelicals using contemporary music are also accepting hymns into their repertoires. Another article looks at how the changing content of hymnals illuminates the changes in the theology and social position of Lutheran churches in the West. Danish hymnologist Peter Balsev-Clausen notes that the very high percentage of new hymns in the recent worship books of German, American and Scandinavian churches (61 percent of the hymns in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America come from the 20th century) may suggest an uncertainty both about tradition and renewal and growth: "only frequent churchgoers have a chance to learn them, let alone come to see them as genuine expressions of their own faith and Christian practice." Clausen finds that since the 19th century, there has been growing emphasis on the importance of the church and sacraments in hymnals (particularly in Germany and the U.S.) and a corresponding decline in hymns about everyday life, breaking with the Reformation tradition of hymns serving as a bridge for the Christian between the Sunday service and home-based devotions.

For more information on this issue, write: *Dialog*, 61 Seminary Ridge, Gettysburg, PA 17325.

■ Disasters and how they affect believers, as well as how religious groups function under such crises, is the theme of the current issue of the journal ***Religion*** (April). The introduction to the articles provides an interesting overview of research on how religions and their followers have interpreted natural hazards, specifically about how their theodicies (explanations given for suffering) often say as much about them and their relationships with their respective societies as they do about the disasters. The issue provides several case studies of various religions in different cultures responding to natural disasters, with most contributors agreeing that religions can serve as resources for disaster prevention and relief. Particularly noteworthy is the case study of Buddhists in Thailand who responded to the 2004 tsunami and how this disaster led to the formation of new rituals, such as "counterfeit funerals" for those missing, and revived older ones, such as communicating with ancestors. Other case studies look at Christian, Islamic and syncretistic (Muslim-Buddhist, in this case) interpretations of disasters and how their theodicies changed in the process.

For more information on this issue, go to: http//www.elsevier.com

■ ***Ancient Faith, Future Mission*** (Seabury Books, $22), edited by Steven Croft, Ian Mobsby and Stephanie Spellers, provides interesting examples of how mainline Protestantism, in this case Anglicanism, is investing in experimental church and worship forms to reinvigorate its own tradition. The book is the result of a Church of England-initiated program in 2004 called "Fresh Expressions" that later spread to British Methodists and then to Anglican and Episcopal churches in other countries. The program has its roots in attempts to recover the worship and sense of community of the early church, which includes Celtic Christianity, the "new monasticism" (intentional communities with a strong contemplative and social justice thrusts), Anglo-Catholic practices and the post-modern "emergent" church phenomenon. The contributors provide accounts of some of these efforts, which are seen by their participants as a way of reaching the huge and growing unchurched population (especially in England). Only time and research will tell whether these efforts make any progress in that direction, but the book does give the reader a sense of the diversity of these experiments and how they developed. They range from the now widespread "U2charist," services, with the music of the rock group U2 and offerings devoted to world hunger, to the mystical Christian movement Contemplative Fire.

The transitional nature of these ex-

periments is best exemplified in the group Vision in the city of York: It started out as a ministry to club-goers and used a mixture of dance music and preaching, then moved to Celtic spirituality and is now housed in an evangelical, charismatic church, adapting an "ancient-future" (a common phrase in fresh expressions) service blending the Latin Mass with multimedia and hymns sung to "trip hop" and ambient dance backings. In another chapter, Phyllis Tickle, a chronicler and proponent of emergent Christianity, notes that Anglicanism (whether in name or not), because of its tolerant and liturgical nature, has increasingly become a seedbed of the mixing of ancient-future spiritual practices for "post-modern" Christians around the world.

■ In 1997 a group of concerned Catholic priests founded Asociación Tepeyac in New York City, an umbrella organization comprising 40 "*comités guadalupanos*" (Guadalupan committees) based in parishes in the five boroughs of the city. Tepeyac was created as a response to the increasing number of Latino Catholics (mainly Mexicans) filling the pews of Catholic churches around the city. In ***Guadalupe in New York*** (New York University Press, $23), Alyshia Gálvez studies two such committees, attempting to make sense of the ways in which immigration and religion intersect each other. Her contention is that immigrants provide a privileged site to study religious beliefs and practices, just as religion is a good point of entry to analyze immigration. The book looks at the modes in which devotional practices devoted to the Virgin of Guadalupe among Mexicans in New York serve as the means by which individuals and groups change, form communities, and produce a greater understanding as recipients of rights and dignity. *Guadalupe in New York* juxtaposes the ways in which these two different communities of faith have dealt with the immigration status of many of their members. The book also traces their formation and looks into the modes in which the Guadalupe image has been used as a device for social mobilization and identity creation among the immigrant population.

Gálvez looks at two public manifestations organized by the committees and Tepeyac: a representation of the Passion on Good Friday and the Guadalupan Torch run, a transnational event that starts in Mexico City and ends in New York and celebrates the Virgin of Guadalupe feast. She defines citizenship by relying on Hannah Arendt's notion of the right to have rights. The term is an infelicitous choice, since Arendt specifically coined it as a legal and political category to define those who, under totalitarian regimes, have lost their citizenship (mainly the Nazi case under the Nuremberg laws). Thus, it is not a soft, cultural process, but a hard, legal and political one. Unfortunately, Gálvez organizes her study around the notion of cultural citizenship, leaving aside the political and legal problems faced by immigrants and focusing on their belonging to a community of faith. Yet the book successfully shows how religious identities fluctuate. By analyzing how Mexican Catholics who travel to the U.S. change their religious practices and usually become more deeply involved in religious-based social initiatives, a feature of American society but not of the Mexican one, Gálvez makes an important contribution to the study of both religious identities and the challenges of immigration.—*By Marisol Lopez-Menendez, a doctoral candidate in sociology at the New School for Social Research*

■ Bringing together history and ethnographic interviews, ***Transcendent in America*** (NYU Press, $23) argues that Hindu-inspired meditation movements are a distinct type of new religious movement, even if their followers and leaders may repeat the "mantra" that they are "spiritual but not religious." Author Lola Williamson examines the history and current trends in the Self-Realization Fellowship, Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Siddha Yoga, all groups that share Hindu-based meditation practices and guru–disciple leadership structures. It is the latter that has been charged with encouraging abuse in these groups, most notably Siddha Yoga and its many cases of sexual abuse of young women by gurus. She adds that the belief in perfection by these groups tends to create cultures of secrecy where problems, abuse and even crimes (including a murder in 2003 in TM) tend to be ignored or covered up.

"Belief in perfection tends to create cultures of secrecy where problems, abuse and even crimes tend to be ignored or covered up."

Meditation itself is found to be an ambivalent practice, giving many practitioners a sense of inner peace, but also falling short of the states of enlightenment and supernatural abilities promised by leaders. Williamson also cites a study showing that long-term TM practitioners complained about more psychological disorders than those who had discontinued the practice. The author sees Hindu-inspired meditation movements as likely modifying their authoritarian structures but also remaining as a viable alternative to mainstream religions.

■ ***Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe*** (Volume 1, Ashgate, $29.95), edited by Anders Backstrom and Grace Davie, is a comparative study of how religious institutions and beliefs interact with welfare systems in eight Western European nations (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Germany, England, France, Italy and Greece). Rather than focusing mainly on impersonal structural and political arrangements between church and state, the contributors ably show how questions of religious identity and belonging are central in understanding the welfare–religion relationship. This is done through employing the interesting method of assigning researchers to one mid-sized city in each country and letting them tell the story of how churches and welfare interact on the local level (and ultimately on the national level). The contributors also trace the historical relations between welfare arrangements and churches, but they also make it clear that the religion–welfare encounter is ongoing; although not much attention is given to non-Christian groups. The contributors note that church–state arrangements (such as state churches and official secularism) have shaped the administration of welfare throughout Europe, even in cases when churches have been edged out this sphere by government.

But there are signs of reversal. In Sweden, an economic crisis in the late 1990s led to more privatization and thus a new church-based welfare initiative, which was assisted by the disestablishment of the Church of Sweden in 2000. In Finland, similar tight economic straits have moved the Lutheran church to greater involvement in welfare provision and in the process it found renewed public support. The French case showed the most secular welfare system, but even there Catholic agencies perform hidden functions, such as dealing with the homeless or asylum seekers, and sometimes even receive government funds. The researchers forecast a greater role for religious groups in welfare provision, not only because of financial strains in most systems and aging populations, but also because of the more personal approach and cultivation of "local knowledge" that characterize these groups. Yet, at the same time, the secularization well advanced in most of these countries means that churches are struggling to sustain their core functions, let alone welfare ministries, and that welfare recipients may not be very receptive to a faith-based approach.

■ Since 9/11, much has been written on Salafi Islam, although such works have focused on this orthodox school of thought's influence on Islamic radicals and fundamentalists. The new book ***Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*** (Columbia University Press, $35), edited by Roel Meijer, broadens the field, suggesting that Salafism is too diversified to be described as a single religious movement. Salafism is generally known as a movement to purify Islam and bring it back to its "authentic" foundation based in the Koran. But the contributors make it clear that Salafis are divided both theologically and politically around the world. Although closely associated with political Islam, or Islamism, Salafism has often failed on that front and has taken a non-political turn, which could mean anything from stressing personal achievement and individualism in France to embracing radicalism and moving to transnational jihadi networks on the Internet or engaging in Shia–Sunni rivalry and conflict. The introduction notes that the more Salafism is globalized, the more diverse it becomes. It now has a "toolbox" function, being "hijacked by other issues, such as the politics of identity in Europe, the anti-imperialist movement in the Middle East and Asia and sectarianism in countries like Iraq and Lebanon," writes Meijer.

> **"Korean evangelicalism has been experiencing a steady decline of members since 1995."**

■ Given the fact that the largest evangelical congregation (approximately 200,000 members) is located in Seoul, Korea and 26 percent of the whole population (more than 50 percent of the religious population), are Christians, Timothy S. Lee's new book, ***Born Again: Evangelicalism in Korea*** (University of Hawaii Press, $40) is long overdue. Lee seeks to explain why a country with a long Confucian tradition converted itself to a Christian country. He writes that evangelicalism succeeded in Korea because it, first of all, provided an alternative world view of salvation when the Confucian order of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) was beginning to collapse in Korea. And when Japan colonized Korea between 1910 and 1945, Christianity became a symbol of nationalism in the fight against Japanese colonialism. After the division of Korea in 1945, a narrative of anti-communism played an important role in expanding evangelicalism in South Korea. Lee further argues that aggressive proselytization efforts by American missionaries in Korea contributed greatly to the phenomenal increase of evangelicals in the country.

However, Lee also adds that Korean evangelicalism has been experiencing a steady decline of members since 1995. This is due to a deteriorating respect for evangelical clergy by the people, dissent over evangelicalism's exclusive beliefs in relation to other religions, and numer-

ous social and political scandals involving evangelical church members. Although Lee's views of evangelical success in Korea are shared by many scholars in the fields of theology and sociology, there are several areas that need further clarification. For instance, Lee's assertion that there is a cultural symbiosis between the shamanistic yearnings for material wealth and the proclamation of God's blessings of spirit, health and prosperity as preached by some Korean Christians may be problematic, since countries such as China, Japan and Hong Kong with similar shamanistic tradition are not as interested in Christianity as was Korea.—*By K.T. Chun, a doctoral candidate in sociology at the New School for Social Research*

■ In her book on Pentecostalism in Nigeria, ***Political Spiritualities*** (University of Chicago Press, $24), Ruth Marshall traces the long history of missions in the country, but notes that it was only in the last two or three decades that the first wave of evangelical growth took place through such American groups as Scripture Union and denominational missions. These evangelicals tended to practice a strict separation from "worldly" activities, although this changed drastically in the 1980s and 1990s when prosperity teachings became the Pentecostal trademark. Marshall writes that the prosperity gospel came from Pentecostals in the U.S., but it accompanied and answered dilemmas caused by the economic boom in Nigeria during this time, such as the growth of individualism and the deterioration of the kinship structure. Many Pentecostals were no longer willing to forsake the wealth and influence of mainstream society, even after Nigeria suffered a steep economic decline in the 1990s. In fact, the poverty and the related high rate of political corruption and violence in the country only propelled Pentecostalism into a more prominent place in Nigerian society. It was during this time that Pentecostal churches became actual financial empires; the laws (and lack of laws) encouraged prominent clergy to establish their megachurches as businesses where their earnings would be inherited and controlled along family lines.

Although not unique to Nigerian Pentecostals, their other emphasis on miracles, "spiritual warfare" and battling demonic influence has a special meaning in a society where occult ritual crimes and killings are common. In such a situation, Pentecostals can face suspicions—often fanned by rival preachers and churches—that they are colluding with evil forces in their miracle working—an accusation that had led to cases of mass violence. The fear of the Islamic revival in the north of the country has likewise been cast by many Pentecostals as a force for evil that has to be excluded from the "Christian nation." Marshall sees the Pentecostals' exclusiveness and the rivalry between churches, lacking any cooperative structure, as reflecting the atomization and near entropy of the nation itself. But she is also critical of anthropologists who see Pentecostalism mainly as an oppressive Western import that is preventing "authentic" African traditions and politics from developing. She argues that the Pentecostal revival, for all its faults, has allowed Nigerians to recreate and seek to free themselves from a collective past that carried its own forms of subjection and domination. Marshall concludes that it is the growing number of Pentecostals, such as Tony Rapu of This Present House–Freedom Hall, who are trying to create a third way between the strict separatism of the earlier wave and the prosperity gospel of today and who may best be able to create a civil society with a degree of justice for all of Nigeria's citizens.

■ While much has been written about the various forms of fundamentalist religion and postmodernism (or relativism) and their social and political ramifications, the new book ***Between Relativism and Fundamentalism*** (Eerdmans, $17) is unique in that it relates the two phenomena and then tries to chart a middle course between them. Editor Peter Berger, who has recently written a good deal on this middle ground between ideological extremes, brings together sociologists and theologians to analyze the current polarized situation and then propose alternatives. In the first part of the book, both Berger and sociologist James Davison Hunter argue that modernity both undermines traditional beliefs and multiplies choices while encouraging (at least for a minority) reactions of radical certainty, on one hand, and radical skepticism, on the other, which imperils civility in society.

On a more institutional level, Grace Davie provides a chapter on how Britain captures a middle ground of sorts between the strong secularism of Europe and the religiousness of the U.S. In particular, she argues that the Church of England encourages both tolerance and, being a state church, public religion and belonging, even if on a vicarious level for many. The last half of the book offers resources that could provide a middle ground based on Jewish discourse, Catholic social teaching, evangelical moderation between liberal and fundamentalist Protestantism, Lutheran theology, and a Parisian émigré school of Eastern Orthodoxy. For instance, Berger provides an original interpretation of Lutheran theology and how such teachings on "faith alone," the "two kingdoms," and Christians being simultaneously sinners and saints accommodate moral and political moderation.

CONTACT

EDITORIAL OFFICE:
Religion Watch,
P.O. Box 652,
North Bellmore,
NY 11710

PHONE:
(516) 225-9503

FAX:
(516) 750-9081

E-MAIL:
relwatch1@msn.com

WEBSITE:
www.religionwatch.com

EDITOR:
Richard P. Cimino

ASSOCIATE EDITOR:
Jean-Francois Mayer

BUSINESS OFFICE:
Religion Watch,
P.O. Box 18,
New York,
NY 10276

E-MAIL:
subs@religionwatch.com

March-April 2010

volume 25 number 3

© 2010 Religion Watch

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.

Since January 2008, Religion Watch is associated with Religioscope Institute (Switzerland) and its bilingual website (French/English), Religioscope - www.religion.info, which makes available more than 1,000 free, original articles.

Subscribe

- ❍ New subscription
- ❍ Renewal
- ❍ $ 33 ($ 36 for libraries)
- ❍ $ 20 for electronic version (PDF, via e-mail)

Name:
Address:
City: ZIP Code:
Country:
E-mail:

Payment:

- US cheque
- or **pay online via Paypal** – you can use your credit card with Paypal, it is simple and safe, visit our website: http://www.religionwatch.com/subs.htm

Send with payment to our business and circulation office:

Religion Watch
P.O. Box 18
New York
NY 10276, U.S.A.