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RELIGION WATCH

A NEWSLETTER MONITORING TRENDS IN CONTEM

25TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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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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Muslim movements find success and challenges in reaching out to American underclass

Islamic groups and movements are meeting with some success in attracting prisoners and inner city dwellers, though only after a period of decline and trial and error, according to two studies published in the current issue of the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* (June). The two groups that are most effective in this area in the last two decades are rivals and even antagonists in the Muslim world—the Sunni Salafis and the Shi'as. The Salafis are African-American Muslims who follow the strict Wahhabi tradition from Saudi Arabia. In the mid-1990s, Wahhabi Muslims targeted inner cities with their teachings, frequently offering scholarships to students to study the religion in its Saudi birthplace, writes Shadee Elmasry. The Salafis became a powerful force in American Islam during this time, but by the new millennium rivalries and competition among the leaders within the movement and then 9/11 brought a sharp downturn to the movement. Elmasry writes that it was particularly the isolationist and exclusive practices of the Salafis, requiring distinct dress and separatist lifestyles, that discouraged upward mobility among its poor members and cooperation with other Muslims, as well as led to abuses in the leadership. The author notes that the Salafis have recently rehabilitated the movement and are particularly effective in drawing prominent rap artists to its ranks. Elmasry concludes that "one is hard pressed to find any organization or movement besides the Salafis that is focused on the inner-cities. Thus, by default the Salafis will continue their success (if not dominance) over this sector of the American Muslim community."

In another article in the same issue, Liyakat Takim finds that the smaller Shi'a black Muslim movement has kept a low profile, yet has achieved currency among

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Hipster faith—breaking out of the evangelical ghetto or filling a new niche?

The emergence of "hipster Christianity" is creating a new space for young evangelicals in urban areas seeking to break out of the Christian subculture, but such believers may have trouble reaching out beyond their demographic. *Christianity Today* magazine (September) features a cover story on "hipster faith," reporting that this "subculture of young evangelicals" is in rebellion against the Christian youth culture marked by contemporary Christian music, entertainment-oriented megachurches and Christian right politics in favor of authenticity, strong community and social activism. If all of this sounds familiar, it is because the younger generations, starting with Generation X in the mid-1990s, have sought alternatives to baby boomer-oriented churches for similar reasons (with some calling themselves emergent or postmodern). Today, many of these young evangelicals have gravitated from the campus and small towns to urban areas and are attracted to churches that serve their age group and sometimes strive for non-conventional settings and shock value. Brett McCracken writes that the tendency to upset religious conventions can be seen in holding services in a bar or, in

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blacks in American prisons. Due to its dependency on the Shi'ite immigrant community, black Shi'as have yet to forge a strong identity and have met charges of heresy from their African-American Sunni counterparts. The anti-American stance of Shi'ism from Iran and its strong protest-social justice thrust has been a draw to African-American converts who feel marginalized and discriminated against in the U.S., writes Takim. Most prisoners who have joined the black Shi'as have done so through their own seeking rather than from a concerted effort by Shi'as to target such a population. In fact, inmates who have converted complain that Shi'ite mosques and leaders often do not respond to their inquiries about the faith. Black Shi'ite prisoners have reported discrimination (not allowing the different diet of Shi'as) and violence carried out by Sunni inmates, sometimes with their imams' approval.

(*Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs,* 4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 4RN, UK)

Lutheran parochial schools suffer from demographic shifts and identity crisis

The Lutheran parochial school system, one of the most extensive in the U.S. aside from the Catholics and the Seventh Day Adventists, is in crisis, not only due to the long-term demographic shift from urban areas to the suburbs, but also because of these schools' loss of their Lutheran identity, writes Paul Robert Sauer in the *Lutheran Forum* magazine (Fall). After the Catholic Church and the Seventh Day Adventists, Lutherans, particularly in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, have maintained the largest parochial school in the U.S., and, like the Catholics, have faced sharp declines in enrollments and the number of schools in recent years. Sauer reports that since 2003, the number of Lutheran elementary schools has declined from 1,036 to 945. Last year nine Lutheran high schools closed, and five more are slated to shut their doors after the end of the 2010 school year. The ones that have remained open are under serious financial duress, particularly urban schools—nearly all the Lutheran schools in Detroit, Los Angeles, Chicago and New York have either closed or are in danger of closing. The Lutheran exodus from cities, which has been taking place for decades, explains only part of this decline.

Sauer writes that there is also a "diminishing brand identity among the Lutheran schools. Whereas poorer families with lifelong connections to the Lutheran church might make the financial sacrifices necessary to send their children to a Lutheran school, the populations who have replaced those Lutherans might share the initial poverty of those who left but lack the deep-seated connection to Lutheranism." For such families, the current economic crisis has moved Lutheran education, and parochial education in general, into the "non-essential expenditure category." There is also a shortage of teacher candidates, with the Concordia university system cutting back on education programs, which were once its strongest field. Sauer adds that those schools that have managed to stay open—usually in urban areas—find themselves with predominantly non-Lutheran students and even teachers and staff. Sauer adds, however, that such investment in urban schooling has led to students moving into church life, especially if the congregation is intentional about such a development. He sees another possibility in Lutheran charter schools, though that may also curtail any religious content being offered.

(*Lutheran Forum*, P.O. Box 327, Delhi, NY 13753-0327)

The giving gap narrowing between American synagogues and churches?

The differences in financial practices between synagogues and churches remain far apart, although there are signs of convergence, according to series of reports in *Forward* (September 15 and 22), a Jewish website. Traditionally, Christian churches have raised funds by using explicitly religious language, calling worshippers to give as an obligation to God. In contrast, synagogues speak more in business-oriented

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the case of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, offering frank sermons on sex.

McCracken notes that the drive for authenticity in these churches can also take a traditional and no-frills approach. Resurrection Presbyterian in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY—the international center of hipster culture—conducts a quiet and dignified service with classical Protestant hymns, even if almost the whole congregation is under 35. In contrast, some churches are also appropriating "hipster sensibilities in a utilitarian 'staying relevant' way. These wannabe hip churches—largely of the suburban, megachurch, and 'contemporary evening service' variety—dress themselves in the accoutrements of hipsterdom not because they understand or value it, but because they are terrified of being … left behind," McCracken adds.

The impact of these churches in their neighborhoods is uncertain. The article cites theologians and observers questioning whether the hipster and emergent churches can reach out beyond their white middle-class demographic. This point is confirmed by research by **RW's** editor on the impact of gentrification on the churches in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The evangelical churches, most of which were established by church planters to reach the hipsters, have grown faster than other congregations. Yet these churches had difficulty attracting unchurched hipsters, not to mention those from the neighborhood—such as Hispanics—outside of the predominant young adult, white demographic. These congregations mainly grew by drawing on the network ties of evangelicals moving into this neighborhood.

(*Christianity Today*, 465 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188)

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terms. Concepts of religiously motivated giving for Jewish causes are more common outside of the synagogue context. Jewish officials are concerned that the traditional practice of paying annual dues may not be sustainable in the near future, with younger generations having a "free stuff" mentality. At the same time, research has found that those churches emphasizing the practical benefits and services provided by congregations during their fundraising pitches actually raise more money than those emphasizing religious duty, according to James Hudnu-Beumler of Vanderbilt University Divinity School.

Although American Jewish synagogues pay their rabbis much more than churches do their pastors and priests, the former give far less of their annual budget to their denominational organizations than do churches. An earlier survey by *Forward* found that the median amount of money raised per member by synagogues was nearly identical to the median amount raised per church member, despite the fact that synagogues require dues while churches rely on voluntary giving. But the differences came in how these congregations pay their clergy and in the level of support they give their denominations. There is a wide disparity between the salaries of rabbis and Christian clergy—the median salary for rabbis of medium-sized synagogues ranged from $137,000 (Conservative) to $146,582 (Reform). The salaries for ministers and priests ranged from a low of $25,000 (for Catholics) to $95,000 (although salaries for large synagogues and churches are proportionately larger).

But synagogues give far less of their annual budgets to their denominational organization than do churches. Conservative congregations give between 2.5 percent and 3 percent of a synagogue's budget. Orthodox synagogues usually give less than 1 percent of their budget to denominational agencies. At first, Reform synagogues resemble mainline Protestants, giving somewhat less than 8 percent of their budgets to the denomination. But it is actually less because only half of this amount goes to the denominational organization, with the rest going to the Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the rabbinical school of the Reform movement. Mainline churches give anywhere in the range of 10 percent (ELCA Lutheran and American Baptist) to 35 percent of their budgets (some African Methodist Episcopal churches). But Protestants may be moving in the direction of organized Judaism, with churches giving less to national offices, not to mention the growth of non-denominational churches that are independent of larger structures.

(http://www.forward.com)

CURRENT RESEARCH

▸ **Thirty years ago, Americans were more likely to think of God as a friend rather than as a king; in 2008, the reverse was true.** That is one of the preliminary findings of a paper presented by Rebekah Peeples Massengill and Conrad Hackett at the August meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR) in Atlanta. The researchers found that among those born before 1940 or after 1970 there was not significant movement toward the king image of God. But there was significant cohort change among the baby boomers (those born in the period 1940–69) away from the friend image and toward the king image of God. For baby boomers, this growth occurred among most religious groups, although it was strongest among evangelicals. Among those born between 1940 and 1969, preference for the king metaphor appears to be unrelated to education. The researchers are in the process of exploring various hypotheses to explain this shift.

▸ **Religious intervention may help abusive men confront the behaviors and attitudes that lead to violence in marriage, according to a recent study.** The study, presented at the annual meeting of the ASR, surveyed 1,200 abusive men who sought treatment at two faith-based programs, as well as interviews with 100 men over a period of several years. Only 54 percent of abusive men who were mandated by the courts to enter an intervention program had finished it, compared with 66 percent of those who had enrolled voluntarily with the referral and support of a pastor. Those who were mandated by the court to attend and yet received the support of a pastor had the highest completion rate of 84 percent. Barbara Fisher-Townsend (University of New Brunswick) said that a belief in God and a sense of hope in a brighter future were necessary for many of these men to change. The study also found that faith-based treatment can also discredit harmful theological ideas that women must submit to such abuse, as well as provide resources that allow men to envision a different future.

▸ **On many measures of religious practice, Jews from the former Soviet Union (FSU) look like their American-born counterparts, contradicting the assumption that these recent immigrants are not adopting the American way of practicing the Jewish religion, according to sociologist Ira Sheskin of the University of Miami.** In a paper presented at the meeting of the ASR in Atlanta, Sheskin found that when it comes to home-based religious practices, there are few sharp differences between FSU and non-FSU Jews. Using data from the National Jewish Population Survey (2000–01) and his own community studies (2000–08), he found that those from the FSU are more likely to keep a kosher home (15 percent versus 14 percent) and are just as likely to hang a *mezuzah* on their doors (67 percent), while 71 percent attended services in the past year, compared to 60 percent of non-FSU Jews (although those from the FSU attended services less frequently). It is true that they tend to identify more strongly in the ethnic sense than the religious sense and are less involved in the Jewish community, but Sheskin said that in other respects, Jews from the FSU are becoming like other Americans.

▸ **If one pays attention to Muslims in the West outside of religious institutions like mosques or Islamic organizations, many are found to follow a pragmatic approach to their religion, according to Nadia Jeldtoft (Copenhagen University), who delivered a paper at the conference of the CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions) in Torino, Italy (Sept. 9–11), which RW attended.** Jeldtoft said that most research tends to focus on organized or activist Islam, although this is only one particular expression of Muslim identity and runs the risk of making Muslims "all about Islam." In contrast, her research observes "everyday lived religion" at a micro level, looking at Muslims who may also visit mosques or attend communal events, but are not dependent on institutionalized settings for negotiating their identity. Jeldtoft bases her observations on a series of interviews conducted in Denmark, Germany and the U.S. with Muslims of different national backgrounds. Most of these Muslims have a low level of practice, although they are well aware that a great deal of Islam is about practicing. Yet they think that it is not important to practice in order to feel that they are Muslims, and that Islam is more about intention than what one does.

Jeldtoft added that a number of her interviewees reconfigure practices so that they make sense for them, e.g. meditation instead of praying, fasting on random days, or inserting elements from other religious traditions in their practice. Regarding Islamic dietary regulations, one of Jeldtoft's informants revealingly stated: "For a while, we tried to buy *halal* meat, but it was very difficult. So I just decided: A chicken is a chicken!" They are of the opinion that "Islam has to fit with your life"—thus revealing a strong focus on individual interpretations and "an orientation toward one's own ability to make personal judgments," while authority, dogma and tradition are not given a central

place. According to Jeldtoft, there are several possible explanations for such attitudes. Muslims may be becoming more like the majority populations in Western countries. They may also be related to individual strategies of members of a minority group facing critical majority discourses about their religion: a privatized religion becomes less visible.

The well-known view that American Jews, particularly the younger generations, have grown more distant from Israel is not supported by survey research, according to the journal *Contemporary Jewry* (September). Issues such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and increasing disaffiliation from Jewish institutions were said to have caused this rift between Jews and Israel. But researchers Theodore Sasson, Charles Kadushin and Leonard Saxe analyze two decades of surveys of American Jews and find that from the late 1980s to recent years, no significant decline is evident in such distancing from Israel. There is detachment from Israel among Reform Jews and Jewish young adults, but at the age-related differences are comparable to those reported in the past. The researchers argue that young adult attitudes are due more to life stage than generational differences. Intermarriage was also found to have a negligible effect on negative or distanced attitudes toward Israel. Sisson, Kadushin and Saxe forecast that the future may actually be brighter for American Jewish–Israel relations due to recent investment in young adult travel to Israel through such organizations as Birthright Israel.

(*Contemporary Jewry*, Springer, 233 Spring St., New York, NY 10003)

The way in which the Western media translate, edit and report on radical Islamic texts may be preventing adequate responses to such threats, as well as appealing to a minority of readers and viewers who are vulnerable to jihadist messages, according to the journal *International Affairs* (July). Researchers Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin look especially at the "security journalism" that has become visible since the July 2005 bombings in London and how its reporting on jihadist texts is received by a Muslim audience. Hoskins and O'Loughlin conducted focus groups interviews with British Muslims' exposure to media reports of translated texts from radical Muslims, such as Osama bin Laden and other Al Qaeda leaders, and found that they were often of two minds regarding such messages.

The media tended to edit out the nuances of these jihadist productions, relying on selective translations that were reduced to "short, aggressive outbursts." The Muslim respondents "rejected the jihadist texts while affirming the perceived historical injustices and struggles to which these texts refer. From this we have inferred that any media representation of Muslim suffering could activate emotional responses and potentially trigger an urge to take action …."

(*International Affairs*, Blackwell-Wiley, 111 River St., Hoboken, NJ 07030)

Vodou in Haiti emerges stronger after earthquake and conflict with evangelicals

After last January's earthquake in Haiti, and a resulting conflict between evangelicals and Vodou practitioners, Vodou has found a more prominent place in the nation's public life, writes Leslie Desmangles in the magazine *Religion in the News* (Summer). At least before the earthquake, some reports noted a decline in Vodou [see the article on charismatic Catholics in Haiti in the July/August RW], but the disaster compelled the practitioners of the syncretistic religion to come out of the "closet," especially in the face of attacks on and criticism of their faith. Many of the evangelical churches blamed the earthquake on the influence of Vodou (along with American televangelist Pat Robertson). Desmangles writes that the earthquake "changed the face of Protestantism in Haiti by accentuating its millenarian dimensions." Many evangelicals saw the disaster as a sign of the end times and vigorously preached on this theme, as well as attacking Vodou influence, in open air meetings. The houngans—Vodou priests—conducted rituals in proximity to the evangelicals; in one instance, evangelicals attacked the participants in the rituals by throwing stones at them. The Vodouistes (Vodou followers) responded to the accusations of blame by claiming that all Haitians were responsible for the earthquake as it was a punishment on them by their ancestors for not providing a proper burial to the country's freedom fighter and first president, Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Desmangles, a Trinity College anthropologist of religion, notes that Vodou provides no adequate framework for explaining such disasters, largely

because it teachings regarding the soul and its state after death are ambiguous. In the evangelical attacks against Vodou, the elected head of the religion, Max Beauvoir, publicly defended the faith and vowed war if the attacks did not stop.

Protestant clergy later condemned the attacks, but Beauvoir's response represented the first time in its history that Vodou affirmed its public presence in Haiti. Desmangles adds that the encounter may have initiated a new era in evangelical–Vodou relations, encouraging tolerance among devotees of both traditions. He adds that it may be more difficult for evangelicals seeking to spread their teachings to attack Vodou, which was linked with respect for Haitians' ancestors and history. Desmangles concludes that the quake is also "likely to push Catholic clergy further along the liturgically syncretistic road that they have been traveling." He notes one prominent parish during the Eucharist imitating the Vodou ritual of pouring libations of water at the start of their ceremonies to acknowledge the saints and spirits—"an event that heretofore would have been unthinkable."

(This issue of *Religion in the News* can be downloaded at: http://caribou.cc.trincoll.edu/depts_csrpl/RINVol13No1/contents_vol13n1.htm)

French megachurches' small yet growing influence

Although there are few megachurches in France, they are influencing the broader evangelical movement in the country and possibly even the Catholic Church, according to a recent study by French researcher Sebastien Fath. In a paper delivered at the August meeting of the ASR in Atlanta, Fath reported that there are only four genuine megachurches in France (which have at least 2,000 to 4,000 attenders). They are all charismatic or Pentecostal and three of them are in the Paris suburbs. There are also around 30 new evangelical Protestant communities that are experiencing fast growth, some of which are approaching 1,000 regular worshippers. Several younger evangelical churches that started in the 1990s and 2000s also take their cues from the megachurch "recipe for growth."

The trend in French Catholicism toward stressing its visibility, whether in pilgrimages or by building huge churches and cathedrals, may be related to the megachurch phenomenon. Fath said that one bishop has even visited American megachurches. These new parishes embrace a pattern similar to the megachurch with their "emphasis on large attendance, modern equipment, multiple activities and a relatively high level of commitment from lay leaders and ordinary worshippers." Fath finds that the French megachurches and the Protestant community in general are too much of a minority to become almost the "mini-towns" and all-purpose social centers—with schools, shops and media companies—that they are in America. But in varying degrees, they are in tension with wider French society and isolated from other Protestant churches, even if they maintain strong transnational ties with fellow believers, especially in Francophone countries and America. The way in which these churches form a definite niche causes suspicion in French society, with its strong republican tradition, "which is hostile to intermediary communities" that pose a threat to "what is expected today of religious correctness, diversity, tolerance, pluralism and openness," Fath notes.

(Fath's paper can be downloaded from: http://frenchwindows.hautetfort.com)

Anthroposophy's world center under financial pressure

The General Anthroposophical Society, an esoteric movement based on the teachings of Rudolph Steiner, is facing cutbacks at its spiritual center, even as the group is experiencing new growth at some places. The society will need to reduce expenses by 8 to 10 percent, since it is no longer able to cover all the costs for operating the Goetheanum—the spiritual center of the Anthroposophical Society worldwide near Basel, Switzerland—reports the *EZW-Newsletter* (August), based on information published in German Anthroposophical periodicals. The Goetheanum is supported by Anthroposophists around the world: the currency exchange fluctuations (weaker U.S. dollars and euros against Swiss francs) has an impact on real income and does not make it easier to plan a balanced budget. The Anthroposophical Society, founded in 1912 with 3,000 members, currently numbers slightly less than 47,000 members, with established national societies in

50 countries (it also claims smaller groups in 50 more).

"Without growth in the membership, and commitment to such development in core country societies, or the development of significant new sources of income, potentially disruptive reductions of traditional activity areas for the Goetheanum will likely take place," warns the 2009–10 report of the General Anthroposophical Society. While the Anthroposophical Society has long had its stronghold in the German-speaking areas of Europe, it is also present in most other European countries, including a renewed presence in Eastern Europe following the end of the communist regimes there. Torin Finser, general secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in the U.S., said in a recent interview that "for the first time in many years membership is on the increase" in America. Through its endeavors in various fields (Waldorf schools, Weleda medical products, biodynamic agriculture, eurythmy, etc.), Anthroposophy has had an impact going far beyond its numbers.

(*EZW-Newsletter*, in German. The issue mentioned here as well as older issues can be downloaded from http://www.webmart.de/newsletter/detail.cfm?kid=41596&catid=12; the 2009–2010 report of the General Anthroposophical Society can be downloaded in English from: http://www.goetheanum.org/uploads/media/JB2009_EN_04.pdf.)

Political crisis in Maldives may fuel growth of extreme Islamism—an analysis

The nascent multi-party democracy in the Maldives, which, like Saudi Arabia, claims to have a 100 percent Muslim population, has plunged the country into a political crisis that may help Islamist extremists to gain a foothold in this Indian Ocean archipelago. The 300,000 citizens of the Maldives are all Sunni Muslims, but they practice Islam like Egyptians do—"pragmatic" Islam, as some Maldivians identify it. The former Maldivian president, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who ruled the nation with an iron fist for 30 years until 2008, kept religion and its institutions under his control. He was particularly known for his aversion to Wahhabism, a strict form of Islam known for insisting on adherence to "pure" Islam. However, he could not insulate the country against the wave of Islamism following the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Gaining strength quietly in some Maldivian islands over the years, homegrown extreme Islamists exploded a bomb in Malé, the capital, injuring 12 tourists, in 2007. Gayoom responded with a harsh crackdown on "unofficial" mosques and groups. Terrorist groups from Pakistan were believed to have motivated Maldivian youth to launch the attack.

In 2008 a strong people's movement against Gayoom's authoritarian regime led to the nation's first multi-party presidential elections. A democracy activist known to be a liberal Muslim, Mohamed Nasheed, emerged as the winner, as he had promised major political reforms. With Nasheed's victory, the cultural and religious atmosphere became more liberal. Mosques were given more freedom and preachers from abroad could now come for public meetings. A flip side of this freedom was that Wahhabism began to grow once again. Many Maldivians today sport long beards and wear the outfits and skull caps that mark Wahhabi Muslims. Nasheed's regime acknowledged the growth of extremism, but instead of using force, he sought to check it with counselling and rehabilitation programs. Nasheed's liberal policies angered opposition parties, most of which are conservative. In 2009 the main opposition party led by Gayoom, the Dhivehi Rayyithunge Party (DRP), won a majority in the parliamentary election (the Maldives follows the presidential system of governance) and took on the government by adopting a policy of non-cooperation in parliament. As a result, President Nasheed alleged helplessness in introducing reforms.

The tussle between Nasheed's Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and the conservative DRP and its allies peaked in June 2010 over Education Minister Dr. Mustahafa Luthfee's plan to make Islam and the national Dhivehi language optional in school curricula for senior students. This led to intensified conflict between the opposition and the MDP, with members of the former being arrested on allegedly trumped-up charges, as well as to an outbreak of violent street protests. The peace talks between the government and the opposition—often mediated by the UN and Western diplomats—have virtually failed. While Nasheed may not find it too difficult to survive the clash, which may carry on until the next elections in 2013, the ensuing weak governance and policing can benefit the extremist groups that have long wanted to promote their

ideology and recruit youth for their war against the West—*By Vishal Arora, a New Delhi, India-based freelance writer*.

Orthodox schisms in the Caucasus complicated by international political and religious factors

While not recognized by any "canonical" Orthodox Church, the independent national Orthodox Churches created in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the past twenty years are benefiting from political considerations that go far beyond themselves and—in the case of South Ossetia—from the willingness of foreign Orthodox groups to offer them assistance, writes Kimitaka Matsuzato in the *Journal of Church & State* (Spring 2010). Once part of Georgia, both territories seceded, believing their identities were threatened by Georgian nationalism—South Ossetia (with a population of 70,000) in 1990 and Abkhazia (with 200,000) in 1992. In both cases, this led to wars between the seceding entities and Georgia, the last one in 2008 in South Ossetia. They received support and recognition from Russia and several other countries. But the Moscow Patriarchate refused to extend the borders of its "canonical territory" to include the Orthodox population of these small states. The church insists that they remain in the territory of the Orthodox Church of Georgia and that they find a solution through negotiations with the Georgian church authorities. There are good reasons for this attitude: the Russian church does not want to weaken its own position on the issues of Ukraine and Moldova, where it faces competition by Ukrainian autocephalists, in the first case, and by a Romanian-affiliated diocese, in the second case.

> "The case of Orthodox independent national Churches created in the Caucasus shows how minor groups manage to play with wider issues."

While both Abkhaz and South Ossetian Orthodox would have welcomed an affiliation with the Moscow Patriarchate, the groups have sought to establish their own church structures as an alternative. They have followed different strategies. In Abkhazia, those pressing for independence were until recently satisfied with the attempt to establish an Abkhazian Diocese (although they have claimed since 2009 to have re-created an ancient, local Catholicosate, thus marking a decisive break with the church in Georgia). More importantly, they are only looking for a solution from official Orthodox churches, avoiding groups in the grey zone of various Orthodox schisms. The consequence, however, is that they have no bishop to this day, a severe limitation for the future prospects of an Orthodox community. In contrast, the South Ossetian Orthodox activists, facing the refusal of the Russian Orthodox Church to incorporate them in 1992, turned first to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. While they were accepted, divisions within that body regarding rapprochement with Moscow led the South Ossetians to turn to the "moderate" branch of Greek Old Calendarists (i.e. conservative Greek Orthodox who refused the introduction of the new church calendar in 1924), where they were accepted in 2003.

The Greek Old Calendarists consecrated the leader of the South Ossetian group as a bishop in 2005. This was obviously not approved by the Moscow Patriarchate; church officials (including the new Russian patriarch, Metropolitan Kirill) have criticized this action. Matsuzato notes that a number of Russian clergy are sympathetic to the South Ossetians' and Abkhazians' aspirations to religious independence from Georgia; they were also impressed by the courage of South Ossetian clergy during the August 2008 war with Georgia. The case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia provides a quite interesting case study of the dynamics of Orthodox schisms today, as well of the ways in which minor groups manage to find their ways of playing with wider issues that have little to do with their own immediate concerns.

(*Journal of Church & State*, Oxford Journals, 2001 Evans Road, Cary, NC 27513, USA)

FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

■ *The password for the archives at the RW website (at: http://www.religionwatch.com) remains:* ***Activist***

■ This issue marks the 25th anniversary of ***Religion Watch.*** We are glad to still be publishing at a time when many publications have folded or have revamped themselves into websites and blogs. As big fans of print, we hope to continue publishing the paper version of the newsletter, as well as expand our electronic presence. The newsletter has come a long way from 1985. Back then it was produced in eight pages on a Commodore 64 computer. This editor did everything from writing and editing the newsletter to dealing with the printer and to folding, stamping and mailing each issue, not to mention dealing with renewals and the formidable task of finding new subscribers. Since 2008, RW has come under the welcoming umbrella of the Religioscope Institute of Fribourg, Switzerland. We knew that the newsletter had found a home when the institute's founder and director, Jean-Francois Mayer (a longtime subscriber and contributor to RW), was as committed to the print edition as this editor, which he demonstrated by redesigning its layout with some expertise.

RW is also now an international publication in every sense of the word. The newsletter is still edited on Long Island, NY, but then it is sent off for copy-editing to Cape Town, South Africa (to the capable hands, and eyes, of Alex Potter). From there it goes to the Religioscope Institute in Switzerland for layout and production of the pdf version. Next, it goes back to New York to circulation director Pavlina Majorosova (when she is not in Prague), who sends out the electronic version and distributes the printed copy to the printer and mailer (not to mention efficiently dealing with subscriptions and renewals). We also have an increasingly international readership and have broadened our coverage to include more trends in religion from around the globe. To keep RW publishing in this changed media environment requires a steady stream of renewals and new subscribers. We ask readers to help us in this endeavor by referring RW to friends and colleagues, as well as recommending it to their public libraries and university libraries. We have placed the first issue of RW (September 1985) on our website, hoping readers will enjoy the look back to a time when megachurches were called "superchurches" and Nicaragua was a front-burner issue in religion and society. We thank readers for their continued support and interest.

■ The current issue of the journal ***Religion, State and Society*** is devoted to the religious situation in Ukraine, a former Soviet republic, which many have viewed as among the most religiously vibrant and pluralistic in the region. The issue looks at most of the religious expressions in the republic, as well as providing an interesting overview of survey findings on Ukrainian religion. Using data from the early 1990s to 2008, sociologist Victor Yelensky finds a varied picture of religious affiliation and practice in the country, with the western half more devout. He sees the patterns of religious practice starting to resemble those in Western Europe and Central Europe. But what is striking is the high rate of belief. The 15–29 age group is the least atheistic—in marked contrast to young adults in Western Europe. There is also a high level of confidence in churches among the young (largely because members of the 55–60 age group, which is the least religious, were socialized during the era of greatest scientific progress and confidence in secularism).

Yelensky also finds that there is a high degree of support for a prominent role for churches in society; even prominent athletes and entertainers will emphasize that they belong to a church. Protestantism has been said to be burgeoning in Ukraine, but the situation is more complex, according to another article by Viktoriya Lyubashchenko. While all Christian and non-Christian groups are growing, Protestant—mainly Pentecostal and charismatic—growth is not as vigorous as 10 years ago. These churches face the problem of a brain drain to the West (mainly the U.S.), as well as a division between older Protestant churches who want to retain a Ukrainian identity and new charismatic movements with global ties. One interesting case study of the former group is that of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, which seeks to awaken the spirituality and consciousness of the Ukrainians by using the slogan, "Through Reformation to Ukrainization!" Other articles deal with Islam in the Ukraine and the competition that exists among the different Orthodox jurisdictions—an ongoing trend that will prevent a dominant national church from emerging.

For more information on this issue, write: *Religion, State and Society*, Taylor Francis, 4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4RN UK.

■ A new book, ***Religion, Families and Health*** (Rutgers University Press, $34.95), brings together 20 recent studies on the issues included in its title, suggesting that this new area of scientific inquiry has come into its own. Editors Christopher G. Ellison and Robert A. Hummer argue in the introduction that it

was only in the 1980s that religion's affect on health and family outcomes gained the interests of academics, leading to a spate of research studies during the 1990s. Even today, journals specializing in family issues rarely focus on religion (only 11 percent of the major family journals included any religious variable at all, according to one study). The strength of the book is that it covers a wide range of religions and ethnicities that were neglected in earlier research, including Mormons, Hispanics and African-Americans, Arab Christians and Muslims, and newer immigrants, both in the first part on religion and families and in the second part on religion and health outcomes. The chapters include findings showing that both the denomination one is raised in and the frequency of religious attendance during the teen years and young adulthood are related to the timing of premaritally and maritally conceived first births; the newly found link between childhood religion and early adult wealth accumulation; and the closer ties that exist between religious fathers and their adult offspring. The more controversial section on health (with several critical studies appearing in recent years challenging the religion–health connection) tends to maintain religion's beneficial effects on health outcomes (especially for the middle-aged), while acknowledging that few studies have investigated the negative health effects of religion.

■ While young people have long been held up as a secular vanguard, a new book, ***Religion and Youth*** (Ashgate, $34.95), suggests that the reality is more complex, with a good deal of interaction taking place between youth cultures and institutional and non-institutional religion and spirituality around the world. Editors Sylvia Collins-Mayo and Pink Dandelion have collected diverse and stimulating contributions on topics ranging from British trance clubbing to European Protestant confirmation students and teenage witchcraft. But the comparative and quantitative chapters are especially noteworthy. Christian Smith's chapter on the "moralistic therapeutic deism" that he found among American youth is set against British and Australian studies of this age group, showing both similarities and differences. While Smith sees American youth as grafting this alien religious mindset on to their nominal Christian faiths, in contrast, Michael Mason views Australian youth as more likely moving toward secularism.

Most of the contributors seem to agree that young adults are moving to a spirituality based on social relationships, including through the media, rather than in institutions. Linda Woodhead provides a fitting epilogue to this sobering book, arguing that youth are no longer primarily socialized in religion by their families, but rather through real and virtual social networks. She concludes that "what we are witnessing is not so much the decline of religion as the decline of a particular form of (European) confessional Christianity and of those forms of secularism which represents a reaction to it."

■ Although it is an anthology, ***Religions of Modernity*** (Brill, $154), edited by Stef Aupers and Dick Houtman, presents a single voice in arguing that modernization has not pushed aside mysticism and spirituality as much as relocated the "sacred" to "deeper layers of the self and the domain of digital technology." The book is part of the debate that has broken out in the sociology of religion about whether we are witnessing an ongoing transformation from conventional, institutional religion to New Age or "self-spirituality," or whether this development is just an ephemeral prelude to further secularization. Linda Woodhead, an advocate of the former view, reviews the literature and academic debates and concludes that sociologists too easily agree with the rhetoric of New Age practitioners that they are individualistic seekers rather than adherents of a new religiosity socialized and coached in particular discourses and practices.

The rest of the book consists of a less-theoretical look at how alternative spiritually has, without much difficulty, integrated and utilized technology to its own ends. Noteworthy chapters include a study of the New Edge, the technological counterpart to the New Age movement that unfolded in the 1990s (although it had its beginnings in the San Francisco Bay area of the late 1960s), the affinity between magic and computer technology, New Age-based companies in the Netherlands, and how the Protestant work ethic has mutated into an "ethics of sensitivity," where work is no longer done "to the glory of God, but to the glory of the Self," writes author Kirsten Marie Bovbjerg.

■ Many books and articles attempting to understand the role of the church in Orthodox countries focus on polarizations between tradition and modernity, and many Orthodox discourses follow the same approach. The authors of ***Orthodox Christianity in 21st Century Greece*** (Ashgate, $99.95), edited by Victor Roudometof and Vasilios N. Makrides, have taken a different path and examine what the editors describe as "the hybridization of the Greek Orthodox tradition as it responds creatively to the challenges of late modernity and postmodernity." Indeed, the Greek Orthodox Church is not fixed in the past, but the innate Orthodox respect for

tradition means that tradition needs to be invoked even for legitimizing modernization and changes, since being branded an "innovator" is the reformer's worst nightmare. Anastassios Anastassiadis shows this in the case of the late Archbishop Christodoulos (1939–2008), who—according to Anastassiadis' understanding—developed an aggressive "nationalist" discourse as a counterweight to his transformation of the church. The Orthodox Church "uses a lot of pre-modern arguments and modes of thought," but this does not mean that Orthodoxy is incompatible with modernity, argue the editors, reminding their readers about the difficulties the Roman Catholic Church experienced with similar processes. Tradition and modernity are intertwined.

Eleni Sotiriu's chapter on the position of women in Greek Orthodoxy makes it especially clear how Orthodoxy approaches modernity on its own terms. Sotiriu describes women as "traditional modern," while discussing Greek Orthodox attempts to reactivate the female deaconate. A striking instance of contradictory trends at work in the Greek Church today are the "Free Monks," a Greek rock band of black-robed Orthodox monks, studied by Lina Molokotos-Liederman (see RW, September 2003). Their purpose is to actively engage Greek youth. Beside recordings, a website (http://www.freemonks.gr) and video clips, there are summer camps, books and two magazines for young people. The message is anti-globalization, anti-drugs and anti-materialism, with anti-Western undertones. They are strong defenders of Greek identity. They promote a rather conservative agenda "by using progressive and contemporary means," while they convey an anti-globalization message through global means and the use of "key components of Western modernity and globalization." Molokotos-Liederman see the Free Monks as an illustrative case of selective modernity "that takes on tradition and modernity."

> "Greek Orthodoxy approaches modernity on its own terms."

An important element to be taken into consideration, which is emphasized in Victor Roudometof's chapter, is the synthesis that emerged in the 19th century, making Orthodoxy an integral element of Greek identity; at the same time, by showing how the Orthodox Church in Greece is the product of 18th and 19th centuries developments, he makes it clear that it is not "the relic of an immutable tradition." Archbishop Christodoulos, Makrides writes, supported a new public role for the church, aspiring to make church and state equal partners and advocating church intervention in public debates and affairs, something that politicians resented, although they could not ignore the Orthodox factor in Greek society and political culture. But demographically, Greece is becoming less of an Orthodox country these days. This is not because many Greeks are leaving the church, even if they are non-practicing, but is due to growing immigration, with immigrants now making up about 10 percent of the country's resident population, report Dia Anagnostou and Ruby Gropas. Both state and church have become aware of the need to make adjustments to a multicultural society. One of the merits of the book is to underline the internal diversity of Greek Orthodoxy: there are many Greek Orthodox voices. It also offers strong evidence for a "multiple modernities" approach. It will prove to be a useful tool for any reader wanting to understand Greek Orthodoxy beyond clichés.

■ Although there is little consensus about what the term "postsecularism" means, the new book entitled ***Exploring the Postsecular*** (Brill, $185), edited by Arie Molendijk, Justin Beaumont and Christoph Jeden, is the most comprehensive and informative account of this intellectual debate. As RW reported in the May/June issue, post-secularism theorists hold that secularism is in crisis and that society is moving toward a more open position in relation to religion and spirituality, a development that is particularly evident in cities. The first part of the book shows broad agreement among the contributors that modernization and postmodernity fail to provide meaning and civic involvement in the public sphere, but there is more debate about whether this means religious revitalization or the emergence of a more secular, non-institutionalized spirituality (which may not be so different from secularization) to fill this vacuum.

The chapters dealing with the connection between religion and cities are among the most interesting in the book. Considerable attention is paid to the new role of faith-based agencies in filling the social gaps as European welfare states encounter limits. The reinsertion of religion into the public sphere by the large number of Muslim immigrants to Europe is also covered in several chapters. Sociologist David Martin provides the reader with a grand tour of the world's nations, regions and cities, seeking to show how geography affects the expression and distribution of religion and even the relations of church and state. Martin concludes that if postsecularism and its privatized spirituality cannot find expression in urban spaces, its impact may be negligible.

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

While observers may assume that American metaphysical groups are aging or declining, Christ Church Unity (CCU) in Orlando, Florida is one example of a fast-growing church in this tradition, reports Philippe Murillo (Toulouse University, France). Founded in 1939, and now described as "the fastest growing Unity church within the American metaphysical tradition," it has tripled its membership since 2008, from 150 to 526 members. This development is linked to the arrival of a new minister, Rev. Alice Anderson, in June 2008. CCU new members come from a variety of backgrounds: Catholic, Baptist and Methodist primarily. New members report being disillusioned with denominational religion and find in CCU an environment adequate to a "spiritual but not religious" approach. The theme of "soul growth" is central to Rev. Anderson's message. Moreover, the fully dedicated youth and family ministry that CCU offers may also play a role in its growth and contribute to explaining why two-thirds of the adults it attracts are below age 45. According to Murillo's analysis, CCU answers longings for an open spirituality: more amorphous spiritual paths, "in which boundaries do not apply, nor do dogmas or rules," seem to be enjoying a growing attraction in America's religious landscape. Apparently, one could add when looking at the CCU, the recipe for success is to combine the offer of a "non-judgemental, diverse, non-denominational spirituality" with the creation of a dynamic, welcoming structure.

(Source: A paper by Philippe Murillo delivered at the 2010 conference of the CESNUR—organized jointly with the Italian Sociological Association—in Torino from Sept. 9 to 11).

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.

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