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RELIGION WATCH

A NEWSLETTER MONITORING TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY RELIGION

INSIDE

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

RELIGIOSCOPE
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International students mix studies with strategies for global evangelism

The idea of viewing one's profession and education as a religious vocation and even an opportunity for Christian mission may have fallen out of favor in many Western societies, but no one has told this to the growing ranks of international evangelical students who are not hesitant about bearing witness to their faith while they work. Union University sociologist Roman Williams has studied these new kind of Christian college students, often from Asia, and concludes that they may not be reviving Max Weber's Protestant ethic as much as creating what he calls an "evangelical ethic and the spirit of globalization." Williams, who presented a paper at the late October meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) in Baltimore, attended by **Religion Watch**, conducted interviews and other research in the Boston area among 46 international students from the five countries that send the most students to the U.S.—India, China, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan. About half of these students were Christian before coming to the U.S., but even those recently converted enthusiastically embraced the idea that their educations and future occupations should be based on evangelism and Christian service.

Aside from the formal interviews, students were asked to document their daily lives by taking photos of important places, activities and objects in their lives. The missionary impulse was evident in the way many kept maps in their rooms showing the nations and areas they were praying for and eventually wanted to help evangelize. Williams finds this fervor for combining mission with their vocation as being nurtured through groups back in their home countries, such as the China-based Back to Jerusalem movement and Issachar's Seed, both of which actively encourage participants to use their professional skills to create opportunities to evangelize China and other countries.

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End of liberal era or anti-incumbency mood at American bishops' conference?

The recent election of conservative Archbishop Timothy Dolan to the presidency of the U.S. Conference of Bishops (USCB) reveals a shift in the approach and strategies of the bishops that will have long-term effects on the American church, according to the liberal *National Catholic Reporter* (November 18). In what has been described as part of the anti-incumbency mood in American politics and religion **[see report on the elections in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in the September/October RW]**, the Dolan election marked the first time in the history of the modern conference where the eligible sitting vice-president was not elected. Allen writes that the defeat of Bishop Gerald Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz. punctuates the "end of the 'Bernardin era,' a loose designation that honors the approach of the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago … [which took] a broad and generally progressive outlook on the big cultural issues and enjoyed a conciliatory style within the church." Under Bernardin in the late 1980s and early '90s, individual bishops tended to

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Williams gives the example of a head researcher in China who uses her position to share her faith "with the people who work in my lab. They often leave as Christians." Williams comments that "such use of workplace power for religious ends clearly runs counter to Western standards for employer conduct, but it is an example of how religious and cultural resources are mobilized and deployed by those who have embraced sacralized occupational identities in this particular context." He notes that his sample of students reflect wider trends among American international students. "On a national level, similar methods, programs, and goals are found among organizations that cater to international students. These similarities were observed at the annual meeting of the Association of Christians ministering to International Students and through conversations with students and leaders in the international student track of the Urbana 2006 [evangelical missions] conference."

Religious fervor at low ebb in mid-term elections

The religious divide so evident in previous elections did not make much of an appearance in the recent U.S. mid-term political contests. *The Christian Century* (November 30) reports that the Democrats' strategy of inserting religion into the 2008 elections and capturing a segment of Catholics and some white Protestants was largely absent last month. Liberal leaders say that Democrats "largely retreated to the same old wonky language to explain their policies and the same old strategies to drum up voters—with predictable results." The faith outreach of 2008 was largely seen as a success, which is why activists are puzzled by its recent absence. The party's gains among religious voters have been reversed, with 60 percent of religious voters opting for Republican candidates. Nearly seven in 10 white Protestants voted GOP—a six percent increase from 2008. Similar patterns were found among Catholics, with 54 percent voting for Republican candidates, compared to 42 percent in 2008. Analysts cite the poor economy and weaker national networks (with many religious Democrat activists now working in the Obama administration) for the loss of the faith-based outreach.

But on both sides, there was less deliberate political activism among religious groups. There was a sharp decrease of clergy promoting candidates to their congregations, and fewer voters encountered information on parties or candidates at their places of worship during the 2010 mid-term elections, according to a report from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Among registered voters who attend services at least once a month, only 16 percent said they found political information for the elections at their places or worship, compared with 25 percent in 2006. Just six percent said that their clergy urged them to vote a certain way. Among white evangelical churchgoers, 16 percent said election information was available at their churches, down from 30 percent in 2006. Far fewer Catholics encountered such literature in their parishes, with the rate declining from 21 percent in 2006 to 10 percent in this past election. Of all religious voters surveyed, only six percent said they were contacted by an outside religious group about the election campaign.

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

Knights of Columbus facing decline in Canada

With 75 percent of their members above the age of 51, the Knights of Columbus in Quebec are experiencing a slow decline—a trend that is also seen in other parts of Canada, reports the Swiss-based international Catholic news agency *APIC* (November 28). A Catholic fraternal organization with a worldwide membership of 1.7 million, the Knights of Columbus were founded in the U.S. in 1882 and have been present in the French-speaking part of Canada since 1897. They still number 100,000 adherents in Quebec, but around a third of them are nearing the age of 70 and there are only 4,000 members below the age of 30. Over the past three years, the organization lost 5,000 members in Quebec. The situation does not look much better in Ontario, where there are still 56,000 Knights, but new members cannot make up for the deaths of older members. The aging of the

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movement is an issue of concern to the leadership of the Knights in Canada. They relate the situation to a decline of the interest in religion in general, but point out that the movement is flourishing in other areas of the world: for instance, the growth rate in California is said to be 200 percent per year.

(*APIC*, http://www.kipa-apic.ch)

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submerge their differences in order to provide a united front, often on social issues.

The newspaper adds that the close of the Bernardin era was in line with Pope John Paul's desire for leaner national bishops' conferences addressing a narrower scope of issues. In recent years, the U.S. conference has become more conservative and more splintered, often differing over an agenda dominated by internal matters, such as the liturgy and Catholic identity. Episcopal activity in the public arena has focused largely on abortion and homosexuality, with less attention to other social issues, as can be seen at the recent USCB, meeting where no mention was made of the state of the economy, unemployment or poverty, according to the article. One explanation for the upset was that younger bishops are resisting the system that automatically elevates the vice president to the top position, while others cite allegations against Kicanas for mishandling sexual abuse charges (although somewhat similar charges have been leveled against Dolan). The article concludes that Kicanas's defeat is a sign that more vocal conservatives are making their presence known; trying to moderate these voices may be next on the conference's agenda.

(*National Catholic Reporter*, http://www.ncronline.org)

CURRENT RESEARCH

Megachurches have a significant impact on the growth and decline rates of other congregations, both inside and outside of their vicinity, according to a recent study by Jason Wollschleger of the University of Washington and Jeremy Porter of Brooklyn College. In a paper presented at the meeting of the SSSR in Baltimore in late October, the researchers found that megachurches function much as the superstores, such as Walmart, in making certain smaller stores more competitive while dampening business for others. In examining the religious ecologies (the relationships of congregations with their neighborhoods and with other congregations) in areas surrounding megachurches through using county-level congregational data and a database on megachurches, it was found that congregations that are in different niches to the megachurches, such as mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic and fundamentalist churches, were able to successfully compete and actually grow. In adjacent counties, the same types of mainline congregations were closer to the national average of membership loss.

But the evangelical churches that were in a similar niche and the same county as a megachurch had more trouble competing. In other words, the "presence of megachurches not only restricts … normal evangelical growth, but also leads to significant decline," according to Wollschleger and Porter. One explanation for this is that megachurches offer quality "religious goods" very similar to those provided by evangelical congregations, but are able to deliver them more efficiently. More unexpected was the finding that megachurches negatively affected evangelical churches in adjacent counties due to their ability to capitalize on interstate highways and ease of access to information to draw adherents from a distance, functioning as "destination centers."

Catholic schools are less likely to close in areas with fewer Catholics as well in places where tuition tax credits are in place, according to a new study by Carol Ann MacGregor of Princeton University. In a paper presented at the SSSR conference, MacGregor looked at Catholic school closings from the period 1980–2005. Her findings gave some credence to the idea that religious pluralism stimulates religious vitality, even in non-congregational settings such as schools. MacGregor stated that where the percentage of the population is high, there is more likely to be a school closing. In this interpretation, "Catholic concentrations become lazy and take their institutions for granted."

She adds that a different way of interpreting this finding is that public schools in strongly Catholic areas may function as de facto Catholic schools. Fewer school closings were found in the South, but MacGregor

thinks a "basement effect" may be the cause; closing schools in areas where there are few to begin with may "represent the threat of extinction" that may in some way compel Catholic loyalty. Although the presence of charter or public schools did not affect Catholic school closings, the states that had school voucher legislation showed fewer closings.

▸ **While there have been declines in non-profit donations and church giving since the economic crisis of 2008, the magnitude of such changes has been minor compared to the Great Depression, according to a study of church finances by Marjorie Royle, Dale Jones and Rich Houseal.** In a paper presented at the SSSR conference, these researchers compared financial statistics between the mainline United Church of Christ (UCC) and the evangelical Church of the Nazarene. In both denominations, the value of endowments dropped sharply in 2008, but then rebounded in 2009. They found that decreases were largest in churches that received the least income from member giving. African-American churches were affected more in both bodies, especially when the crisis first hit.

In the UCC, but not the Church of the Nazarene, churches that had been declining financially before 2008 seemed to be hardest hit. But the researchers found that these churches tended to adjust to a lower income by giving less to their denominations. Although figures from the Great Depression were available only for the Church of the Nazarene, the researchers found that indicators such as indebtedness, and changes in income and property ownership were significantly higher in the 1920s and '30s as compared to 2010. But, as during the Depression, recovery among churches may be slow and the impact may be felt even more strongly in the future as churches spend their reserves.

▸ **Religious-based mutual funds that are considered "socially responsible investments" (SRI) are more stable than secular SRIs, most likely due to the former's particular moral orientation, according to a paper presented at the SSSR conference.** The growing field of socially responsible investing has sought to inject a moral tone into the financial market by avoiding companies engaging in what are considered unethical practices and policies, as well as by galvanizing shareholders to advocate for social change in some companies. Religious groups increasingly form a significant part of SRIs. Jared Peifer of Cornell University compared religious SRIs with secular SRIs as well as with religious mutual funds that are not SRIs (Thrivent Financial for Lutherans is the only such religious non-SRI). It has been debated whether secular SRIs are more stable than other mutual funds, but researchers in general have ignored the religious affiliation of such investments.

Peifer found that religious SRI funds are less responsive to lagged performance and experience less volatility than secular SRI funds. Since religious non-SRI assets are also less stable than religious SRI assets, he concludes that the moral attributes of socially responsible fund activity, such as screening morally questionable companies and its practices for its investors and advocating for change, "represent a strong force in producing high levels of asset stability in religious SRI funds." These findings suggest that religious morality can have an "especially potent impact on financial behavior."

▸ **Although a good deal of attention has been focused on the growth of what is called the "new Calvinism" among American evangelicals, a recent poll by the Barna Group finds that the Reformed movement has not greatly expanded among churches in the last decade.** The Barna study finds that the percentage of pastors identifying their church as "Calvinist or Reformed" has remained unchanged for the last decade (31 percent). Pastors who describe their church as Wesleyan or Arminian (stressing free will) are down slightly from 37 percent in 2000. But Barna finds that there has been a growth of attenders in Calvinist churches, which typically drew 80 adults per week in 2000, compared to a median of 90 attenders in the 2010 study. But Wesleyan and Arminian churches also reported growth during this period (increasing from a median of 85 adults to 100 currently). Interestingly, the study finds that a significant percentage of pastors in the charismatic and Pentecostal denominations, which have traditionally been considered Arminian, described their churches as Reformed.

▸ **Chinese-Americans make up the largest unaffiliated population in the U.S., although, unlike many secular Americans, they draw on Chinese popular religion for their strong family lives, according to a paper by sociologist Russell Jeung of San Francisco State University.** Speaking at the meeting of the SSSR in Baltimore, Jeung noted that 39 percent of Chinese-Americans are secular. While Chinese popular religions are undergoing a revival in the Chinese diasporas in many countries, this is not the case in the U.S. Jeung said that there is little structural support or institutional space for Chinese popular religions in American immigrant communities. There is criticism that popular religion leaders have little training in English. Instead, familialism, stressing family rituals and devotion, has supplanted religion for

many Chinese-Americans.

Second-generation Chinese-Americans were also distanced from Chinese popular religion, although there are differences between the Cantonese, who are more favorable to these practices, and the Mandarins, who make up the ranks of science professionals with a stronger secular identity. Jeung argued that Chinese-Americans are distinct from other secular Americans who embrace experiential and materialistic values due to their strong family ties. Their strong sense of family ties and obligations often draws on Chinese popular religion, such as in the area of veneration of ancestors, even as they downplay its spiritual elements.

▸ **A comparative study of congregations in Switzerland and the U.S. finds that American congregations are stricter, more politically pronounced on the left–right spectrum, and tend to link patriotism with religion.** Preliminary findings from the study, conducted by Jörg Stoltz of the University of Lausanne and presented at the SSSR meeting, seemed to show some evidence for the market theory, holding that American congregations behave more like firms than do Swiss congregations. "They go more into evangelizing, they put on more of a show [and] they offer more non-religious goods," Stolz said. American congregations are much less permissive concerning moral values applied to their members, such as prohibiting co-habiting couples from membership/leadership roles (more than 85 percent of Swiss congregations would allow such participation, compared to less than 60 percent of American congregations).

Stolz found that the American pattern of differentiation of religion from the state in the U.S. gave its religious groups a greater tendency to be more politically pronounced and place themselves along the left–right spectrum; far more Swiss congregations described themselves as "moderate." Interestingly, Swiss congregations of almost all denominations tended to have groups that meet in order to discuss politics (50 percent of Swiss mainline Protestant congregations have such a group, compared to about 10 percent of U.S. mainline churches). American congregations dwarfed their Swiss counterparts in displaying the flag in their places of worship. Class differences showed up stronger in American congregations, with affiliation to a certain congregation serving as a social marker, perhaps even being a way of showing a degree of respectability, according to Stolz.

▸ **Declines in religious practice may be related to economic well-being, but not so much because prosperous societies provide "existential security" as much as the way in which consumer and leisure activities tend to replace religious activity, according to Jochen Hirschle of the Fern Universität in Germany.** Hirschle presented a paper at the SSSR meeting outlining an alternative to the prominent theory advanced by Ronald Inglehart and Pipa Norris, who argue that prosperous societies with rising GDPs (gross domestic products) are more secular than poorer ones because they offer "existential security" in which religious "goods" or sources of consolation and reassurance become less important. The researcher finds that although GDPs have risen sharply in Western Europe and the U.S., the general trend toward more security and stability had ended by the 1970s. Even if existential security has not decreased, the evidence shows that it has not increased significantly enough to explain recent declining rates in religious practice, according to Hirschle.

He looks at the variation between the GDPs and church attendance levels in 20 European countries and tests whether the variables of existential security or consumption best explain the drop in religious involvement. Along with GDP to determine the level of existential security, Hirschle uses figures on the number of doctors per 10,000 inhabitants and expenditures on social welfare. He also uses surveys on the frequency of attendance at consumption-related cultural events. As expected, he found that the higher the GDP, the greater the frequency with which the population engages in consumption-related leisure activities and the lower the church attendance level. But neither investment in the health-care system nor expenditures in social welfare accounted for declining church attendance. Yet the effect of the GDP vanished as soon as the measure for the proliferation of cultural activities was included in the analysis. Hirschle concludes that "[t]hese results suggest that the effect of economic growth on church attendance could indeed … be mediated by the spread of consumption activities rather than by the increase of existential security."

▸ **The various traditions or parties in the Church of England, especially Anglo-Catholics and low-church evangelicals, are growing further apart, especially as the former party liberalizes in areas of theology and moral conservatism, according to a report in the bi-annual *Journal of Anglican Studies* (Vol. 8, No. 1).** Authors Andrew Village and Leslie Francis surveyed 5,967 ordained and lay Anglicans and found a breakdown of 42 percent Anglo-Catholic, 40.5 percent "broad church" (meaning those with a religious orientation combining the various traditions) and 17.0 percent evangelical. The sample was drawn from readers of the *Church Times,*

which has a large readership among Anglo-Catholic and broad church members, but Village and Francis note that there were enough evangelical respondents to make a meaningful comparison. They found that there was an overall decline in conservatism in all traditions, but this was less evident among the evangelicals compared with the other groups.

The conservatism found among Anglo-Catholics was more along the line of preserving church traditions, such as the liturgy and an all-male priesthood, while this group was actually the most liberal on moral and theological grounds, such as gay rights. The findings support the perception that the Church of England is increasingly divided, with much of this division caused by the "sharp reduction of theological and moral conservatism among Anglo-Catholics and some broad church members." These divisions were not strongly present among older Anglicans, leading Village and Francis to argue that the Church of England is likely to "enter a prolonged phase in which differences between traditions will become much more marked than they have been for generations." Although the issues go deeper than homosexuality, it is likely that this concern is the "presenting issue that points to a more profound difference in the way that faith is understood and expressed."

(*Journal of Anglican Studies*, http://www.journals.cambridgeorg/ast)

▸ **Stability and even growth rather than decline characterize recent church attendance patterns in Britain, according to the Christian Research Association.** The figures showed Church of England attendance holding fairly steady since 2001 at just under 1.2 million. Catholic attendance leveled off at 900,000 in 2005, while Baptist Union attendance has increased modestly since 2002 to 154,000 attenders. The figures surprised some observers in a society where only about seven percent attend services, but most church leaders acknowledged that it will take more growth to see any significant changes in the churches, according to a report in *Christianity Today* (November).

▸ **Nominal Christians in Great Britain are more likely to see immigrants as a threat than more committed and church-going Christians, according to a study by Ingrid Storm of the University of Manchester.** In a paper presented at the SSSR meeting, Storm analyzed attitudes toward immigrants based on the 2008 International Social Survey and other data from 2000, such as the British Social Attitude survey. She found that nominal, non-practicing Christians were more likely to say that immigrants were a threat to society than both practicing Christians and the unaffiliated. Storm said that this tendency of nominal Christians to have a high level of "xenophobic" attitudes may be due both to their largely cultural attachment to Christianity. They are skeptical about religion and yet have a cultural Christian identity—ingredients that could lead to seeing Muslims, the main British immigrant group, as a threat.

Religious music develops its own niche in secular Europe

Europe may be secularized, but a paradox is that religious music by members of the clergy or religious orders seems to be enjoying wide popularity, reports the Catholic news agency *APIC* (November 19). A group of three French priests stayed at the top of French hit parade for nine weeks and sold 500,000 CDs. In Ireland, a music group called "The Priests" has sold two million recordings since 2008. Not only "modern" music is presented. Gregorian singing attracts an audience well beyond the pews of Catholic churches, although few people are familiar with the intricacies of Gregorian songs. A recording from a Cistercian monastery in Austria has sold one million copies since 2008. A recent recording by the choir of a French convent worshipping according to the pre-Vatican II rites had already sold 30,000 CDs ten days after its release. According to marketing experts interviewed by the French Catholic daily *La Croix*, we are currently witnessing the development of religious feelings and escape from the stress of daily modern life being turned into successful market niches.

(*APIC*, http://www.kipa-apic.ch)

Europeans groomed for red hats and papacy?

Europeans outnumbered other cardinals recently elected by Pope Benedict XVI, making it look "more and more likely that his successor will be a European, if not an Italian," reports the British Catholic magazine *The Tablet* (October 30). In late November, Benedict gave the red hat to 11 new European cardinals, as well as four Africans, two Americans, two Latin Americans and an Asian. Eight of the Europeans are Italian and a high number of 13 currently work or have worked in

the Roman Curia. Veteran Vatican affairs observer Giancarlo Zizola said that "[o]ne cannot recall in the last decades of the 1900s such an impetuous affirmation of the 'Roman Party'." Since his election in 2005, Benedict has given a "disproportionate number of Europeans top positions in the Vatican and red hats in the college of cardinals," writes Robert Mickens.

Because cardinals (under the age of 80) elect, and are usually elected as, successors to the papacy, the high numbers of Europeans are not insignificant, although Mickens notes that the 23 voting cardinal positions that will open up in the next two years could change things. Most of those recently elected are moderate conservatives, although there are doctrinal hardliners, such as Raymond Burke, a strongly pro-life American bishop who denied communion to pro-choice politicians. The more conservative and Rome-based magazine *Inside the Vatican* (November) breaks down the ideological divide as follows: nine conservatives, seven on the more liberal side, with the remaining number not placed firmly in any camp. The magazine notes that most of the conservatives favor restoring the Latin Mass to greater prominence in the church.

(*The Tablet*, 1 King Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0QZ, UK; *Inside the Vatican*, PO Box 57, New Hope, KY 40052-0057)

Emerging schism in the Serbian Orthodox Church?

Conflicts over the suspension of a popular bishop may be bringing the Serbian Orthodox Church close to the brink of schism, according to several reports. The former Orthodox bishop of Kosovo, Artemije, who was deposed from his position last May, has been reduced to the status of a monk by a decision of the majority the Holy Synod in November (21 voted for, six against and seven abstained, according to German newspaper *TAZ*, November 25). But Artemije has refused to accept the decision and has attempted to take control of a monastery in Kosovo along with a group of monks supporting him. Before being expelled by police, he celebrated the liturgy (despite his suspension) and declared that his goal was to restore "order, peace and unity" in his (former) diocese, Serbian channel B92 reported (November 20). Artemije was suspended and deposed from his position earlier this year on the basis of accusations of financial mismanagement. He strongly rejects the accusations and claims political intrigues are the actual cause of his deposition. He describes the sanctions taken against him as devoid of any canonical basis.

His opponents say that Artemije's actions are breaking the unity of the church. The situation is a complex one, reports Jean-Arnault Dérens on *Religioscope* (November 24). In contrast with several other bishops, Artemije consistently opposed first the communist regime and then Milosevic. In Kosovo, where Serbs have become a minority, he was among the few who advocated cooperation with the provisional authorities and ethnic Albanians after the 1998–1999 war. However, after the severe riots in March 2004, during which many churches and monasteries were damaged or destroyed in Kosovo, Artemije refused to cooperate with international organizations for rebuilding purposes, stating that rebuilding without guarantees of a return to a normal life for Serbs in Kosovo was meaningless. This irritated the government in Belgrade, which was eager to strengthen relations with the international community.

Artemije's independent attitude toward political authorities earned him the respect of many of the faithful. His charisma also attracted many young intellectuals. Observers note that there may be a serious possibility of a schism, although the church apparatus is out of Artemije's control. It is difficult at this point to assess the extent of support for Artemije: a group of 80 monks is said to be at the center of the pro-Artemije movement. Whatever the impact Artemije and his followers will have, it is quite interesting to see how support for him has developed: Serbian monks in Kosovo became Internet-savvy quite early, and websites and forums have over the past few months become a major tool for Artemije supporters to spread their views (B92, July 4).

(*Religioscope*, http://www.religion.info; B92, http://www.b92.net; *TAZ*, http://www.taz.de; *Courrier des Balkans,* for translations from Serbian media into French, http://balkans.courrier.info)

Opting out and switching churches made easy in Europe

Membership in state churches in Europe, often involving paying a church tax, is sometimes portrayed as a static condition that

one escapes only in death. But the practice of opting out of membership and church taxes is not only becoming easier, but more people are exercising a degree of choice on the matter. The Helsinki-based newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (October 14) reports that a "record number" of Finns resigned from the Evangelical Lutheran Church over a two-day period after a gay rights panel discussion on TV featuring a church bishop was aired. During and after the show, called *Gay Night*, which dealt with gay rights issues, including the rights of same-sex couples to marry in church, up to 2,633 people resigned from the church. The resignations were made on a website designed for this purpose. About 90 percent of all resignations from the church now happen through the Internet.

Meanwhile, Italians are not dropping out from paying church tax as much as redirecting their donations. *The Tablet* (August 28) reports that a growing number of Catholics dissatisfied with their leaders in Italy are rewarding the Waldensian Church with their church tax money. The Waldensians, an Italian Protestant group with roots in the Middle Ages, showed a record 14.8 percent increase in people paying their church taxes to them, while the numbers of people designating sending their tax donations to the Catholic Church dropped for the second year running.

African independent churches and the spirit of development in South Africa

African independent churches (AICs) are among the fastest growing sector of Christianity in South Africa, but it is only recently that their significant role in development is being grasped, writes Barbara Bompani in the current issue of the *Journal of Religion in Africa* (No. 40). AICs, representing one-third of the population of South Africa, blend African traditions with Christianity, particularly of the Pentecostal variety, including large denominations, such as the Zion Christian Church, as well as independent congregations. Scholars and theologians have tended to view AICs as backward and apolitical, with poor members and few resources (many AICs are based in private homes), but Bompani argues that these churches have pragmatically developed structures and organizations that meet members' social needs. Savings and investment clubs, usually started up informally by AIC members and featuring prayers and hymn singing and charitable services, not only increase participants' financial resources, but also teach them how to budget their expenses.

Eligibility in these mutual aid clubs is determined by the public recognition by other members of a person's reliability. The independent churches "act as groups that focus on the reformation of the individual and family life, and are political in the way they concern themselves pragmatically with local community issues like housing, unemployment, health care and education …. These issues are at the center of sermons and teaching in the churches," Bompani writes. She further argues that AICs are "bridges that allow modernity to be represented in older cultural forms," as can be seen in the call for members to "discover [their] Africaness through the Bible" and retain African traditions of childbearing and family life.

(*Journal of Religion in Africa*, Brill Publishers, http://www.brill.nl)

Most religious Pakistanis not supportive of violence in the name of Islam

In recent years, Pakistan has been especially associated with terrorist activities allegedly motivated by Islam. However, a recent analysis published in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (September) shows that most Pakistanis do not approve of such actions, although those with extreme Salafi views tend to show more understanding of Islamically motivated acts of violence. Co-authors Karl Kaltenthaler, William J. Miller, Stephen Ceccoli and Ron Gelleny outline the different source of jihadi terrorism in Pakistan: sectarian groups (Sunni jihadis attacking minority groups such as Shi'a and other "heretical" Muslims seen as "unbelievers"); anti-Indian groups (aimed at ending Indian rule in Kashmir and attacking targets in Kashmir and India itself); and Pakistani Taliban (Pakistani Pashtuns sharing the same ethnic background with Taliban and originally reacting to Pakistani military operations to root out Al Qaeda fighters who had found refuge on Pakistani territory).

The proliferation of jihadis (though originally supported in several cases by Pakistani intelligence) has led to a rise of violence in the country, which first targets the Pakistani state. However, it is difficult for Pakistan's leaders to

eradicate the jihadis entirely: for instance, the ISI (Pakistan's intelligence services) relies on them for a proxy war against India in Kashmir, a very popular cause in Pakistan, the authors note. Surveys show that average Pakistanis are concerned about the problem: 79 percent of them rank terrorism as a "very big problem" in their country, nine percent as a "moderate problem", while only one percent say it is not a problem at all. This pattern is seen most strongly in cities. Only three percent of Pakistanis believe that Islam sanctions attacks on civilians, while 83 percent say that Islam opposes such actions. Regarding the issue of terrorism in general, 55 percent say that terrorism is never justified, while 7 percent believe it is often justified, 8 percent sometimes justified, and 11 percent rarely justified.

When questions are asked about specific targets, there is a low level of support for attacks on civilian targets in general; however, attacks against Indian targets are "often justified" (government institutions, 15 percent; public places, 11 percent; families of Indian military personnel, 13 percent) in the eyes of more Pakistanis than attacks against Pakistani targets such as Shi'a (only 5 percent). An analysis of the situation shows that support for terrorism is driven by ideas more than by material interests. Mainstream religious Pakistanis are not supportive of terrorism, but extreme Salafis are. The research shows that dislike for secularism and advocacy for a greater role of *sharia* in society among mainstream Pakistanis are not correlated with a greater support for terrorist activities. Thus, it is not Islamic religiosity itself that shapes attitudes toward terrorism in Pakistan, but specific views on Islam, including extreme Salafi orientations.

(*Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Taylor & Francis Group, 325 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19106)

FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

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

■ The November issue of ***First Things*** magazine features a survey that attempts to rate the strength of religion in U.S. colleges. The survey's ratings, based on informal surveys of students and such "objective" factors as whether religion majors are offered and religious associations are active on campus, are likely to be contested, yet they show some interesting patterns. The ratings include secular schools "least unfriendly to faith," with the top five being the large research universities of Princeton, Duke, Virginia, Chicago and Stanford; while the most secular schools include the smaller teaching colleges of Reed, Vassar and Bard, along with the larger Brown University. The survey also lists the "least" and "most" Catholic schools, with the more conservative newer Catholic colleges, such as Ave Maria University in Florida, making the "most" list, while the "least" tend to be colleges on the liberal end of the spectrum, usually Jesuit institutions.

For more information on this issue, write: *First Things*, 35 E. 21st St., Sixth Fl., New York, NY 10010.

■ The tri-annual journal ***Studies in World Christianity*** devotes its current issue (No. 3) to Eastern Orthodox diaspora communities around the world. The articles focus on less-known Orthodox diasporas—the Orthodox churches in Japan, Korea, South Africa and India, as well as the smaller bodies in the U.S. and Europe, such as the Coptic and Ethiopian churches. The challenges of assimilation and immigration run through most of this issue. The Coptic Orthodox Church in the U.S. has shown steady growth, with second-generation members promoting and preserving Coptic art, music and spirituality, helped along by new Coptic studies programs in American universities. An interesting article by Stephen Hayes reports that the variety of Orthodox churches in South Africa—with origins in Greece and Cyprus, with smaller groups from Russia and Eastern Europe—have been in the country for close to 100 years. But even up to the fourth generation, these churches have remained ethnic enclaves, with services still held in the their language of origin.

For more information on this issue, write: *Studies in World Christianity*, Edinburgh University Press, 22 George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9LF, Scotland.

■ In the new book ***Beyond the Congregation: The World of Christian Non-Profits*** (Oxford University Press, $24.95), Christopher P. Scheitle suggests that the many Christian parachurch organizations in the U.S. represent a different and more vital "religious market" than that found among congregations. Scheitle defines parachurches as organizations

that are neither churches nor denominations, but fulfill many specialized religious services that congregations often cannot provide. The growth of parachurch groups has been steady, and the author finds that their expansion intensified (doubling in registrations) during the period of Protestant disaffiliation (1974–2006). This shift toward non-denominational Christianity has also diminished support for denominational benevolence. He studies 2,000 parachurches and classifies them according to their various functions and purposes, such as publishing, relief and development, and evangelism, which is the largest sector of Christian non-profits.

Scheitle provides a wealth of data on parachurch groups showing that they are more efficient and goal-oriented than congregations, yet they overlap in resource pools and activities (with, not unexpectedly, non-denominational Protestants most likely to rely on such outside resources). Those congregations claiming a strong theological identity that build strong ties among members are the most effective in competing with parachurches. Scheitle concludes with an examination of parachurch–state relations and how public funding affects these organizations. Even most of the larger non-profit parachurches do not take public funding, yet many groups not focused on social activism lobby on issues as diverse as anti-gay rights and legislation relating to Sudan.

■ ***America's Four Gods*** (Oxford University Press, $24.95), by Paul Froese and Christopher Bader, traces much of the disagreements and conflicts among Americans on moral values and other "culture war" issues to their conceptions of God. These sociologists find that the degree to which Americans believe that God interacts with the world and stands in judgment of humanity shapes a person's cultural and political worldview. From these responses—mainly drawn from the Baylor Religion Survey—Froese and Bader tease out four different conceptions of God—both judgmental and interactive; non-judgmental and loving; judgmental but disengaged; and distant.

Believers in a judgmental and engaged God are more likely to be leery of academic scientists and tend to divide the world into good and evil; while those who hold to a distant God see no conflict between religion and science. Americans with lower incomes tend to believe in a judgmental God and agree that faith-based social services are the most holistic way to address injustice, while those with a more beneficial image of God believe government can best address economic inequality. The authors agree that people can change their images of God, although trying to coax a person to adopt one's own conception of God can lead to as much conflict as the social positions with which it is associated.

■ ***Religion Crossing Boundaries*** (Brill), edited by Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard, looks at how African Christianity is not strictly a phenomenon of the Global South, but rather is shaped by global networks and transnational links among immigrants, reverse missionaries (those attempting to evangelize the West), religious trade between various parts of the Global South, and nationals. All of these border crossings add up to what Adogame and Spickard call a "religious cacophony" on the congregational scenes both in Africa and in diaspora communities. Several of the chapters suggest that national identity is retained and translated during these migrations. An account of a woman leader in Nigeria shows how a symbolic Nigerian identity is used to build her church's transnational presence as members adapt to residence in the U.S. and Canada.

"African Christianity is not strictly a phenomenon of the Global South, but rather is shaped by global networks and transnational links."

A chapter by Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu shows how the expansion of ties between charismatic/Pentecostal leaders and members in Africa and the diaspora has led to the appropriation of modern media technology. Fears of negative spiritual influences in many forms of African Pentecostalism travel along these paths of migration, and the media provide a space—through prayers over the Internet, for instance—where people can express and come to terms with these concerns, which are often intensified through the struggles of immigration. The practice of anointing material objects for blessings and prosperity is also carried over to the virtual worlds of webcast services and videos that are globally circulated.

This anthology shows how these transnational religious dynamics take place between African countries and between Africa and the diasporas. This can be seen in an examination of how transnational contacts by local Pentecostal leaders in Benin, Nigeria

and Togo serve to increase the status and legitimacy of their ministries among other Africans. Other chapters include a study of emerging women Pentecostal leaders in Kenya and how their transnational ties give them opportunities for global leadership, and an examination of the "Bonnke effect," meaning the widely popular ministry of German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke, and how his crusades in Nigeria has strengthened the role of Pentecostal churches in this society and beyond.

■ ***Religion and Politics in Russia*** (M.E. Sharpe, $32.95) provides an informative and colorful portrait of diversity and change in Russian religious groups—from indigenous to recently imported. The political dimension in this anthology, as explained by editor Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, comes into play as the Russian political authorities attempt to manage this diversity and in some cases manipulate it to their own ends. Such "over-management" tends to overlook the fact that each faith contains its own diversity, including "folk," hybrid, ethnic and "Europeanized" versions, that cannot easily be represented on the political level. Another trend that is evident in most of the traditions profiled in the book is the growth of revivalism or "fundamentalism," not only in Russian Orthodoxy and Islam, but also in such unexpected places as the shamanic and Buddhist communities of Eastern Russia. "Extremism becomes particularly potent when the idioms of nationalism and religious identity are joined in us/them hate language, including but not limited to anti-Semitism and its uneven, possibly increasing cultural acceptance among ethnic Russians," Balzer writes.

The book is unique as most of its contributors are Russian rather than Western scholars, and thus have unusually good access to their sources. This can be seen in an in-depth anthropological study of the remaining Old Believer communities, as well as Sergei Filatov's and Aleksandra Stiopina's chapter on Lutherans in Russia and how they occupy a unique niche between Westernizing evangelicals and the Russian Orthodox Church. Filatov and Stiopina argue that Lutheranism's historic presence in Russia, which also maintains Western connections, and its moderate and liturgical nature have won it a following among young people and educated and influential Russians.

A chapter on Roman Catholicism chronicles the rise of the informal groups of converts that in one case grew into an organization known as Militia Dei, which models itself on knightly orders of the Middle Ages (such as the Knights Templar). The order works in religious education, but also criticizes official church authorities for liberal positions in their relations with other religious organizations and for weakening political conservatism. Several chapters on Judaism suggest that the religion has encountered continuing obstacles—from a shortage of rabbis to a lack of infrastructure—with non-Orthodox communities facing the greatest struggle as they try to liberalize on such issues as sexuality and intermarriage in the face of an increasingly conservative culture.

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

1) A recent controversy about women rabbis in Orthodox Judaism has helped create a new rabbinical council, known as the **International Rabbinic Fellowship (IRF)**, and has fanned the flames of a reform movement in Orthodoxy. The fellowship is one of part of a network of groups and *yeshivas* that seek to create a more egalitarian form of Orthodoxy that is open to the leadership of women, if not necessarily their ordination. The movement, known as "open Orthodoxy," started several years ago, but has been reinvigorated by the conflict, which developed when an Orthodox synagogue in New York appointed a woman as a rabbi—the first women to be appointed to such a position in this branch of Judaism. The appointment caused such a wave of opposition and controversy in most quarters of Orthodoxy that the woman's title was changed to rabba, a less objectional feminine term used in Israel, and the offending rabbi, Avi Weiss, promised no further female ordinations.

But the way in which the Rabbinic Council of America (RCA) reaffirmed its opposition to the ordination of women during the controversy and criticized dissenters has led synagogues and other groups open to such innovations to join the fellowship. Since its start last year, the group has gained 150 rabbis from around the world and permits RCA members in its ranks. Jewish historian Jonathan Sarna sees the formation of the IRF as a step toward the establishment of a new Jewish denomination, with two separate movements using the term "Orthodox." Critics of the RCA say it has moved toward centralization and bureaucracy and no longer upholds the ideals of modern Orthodoxy.

(Source: *Moment*, November/December)

2) The **Take Back Yoga** campaign represents an attempt by American Hindus to claim their trademark on an increasingly interfaith and generic spiritual practice. Similar attempts at retrieval have been undertaken by Hasidic Jews seeking to reclaim the Kabbalah from alternative spiritual entrepreneurs and by American Indians critical of New Age appropriations of their practices and rituals. The campaign is the brainchild of the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), a small organization pressing for Hindu rights throughout the world. It asks practitioners to acknowledge yoga's debt to the faith's ancient traditions. The campaign was started by an online debate between officials of the Minneapolis-based foundation and spiritual leader Deepak Chopra and other yoga leaders and enthusiasts, who argue that yoga is a universal spiritual practice that developed long before Hinduism became a religion. The HAF's campaign has drawn the support of Hindu leaders, with one official saying that the campaign reflects the Americanization of the faith, as second- and third-generation Hindus are trying to reclaim their heritage.

(Source: *New York Times*, November 28)

About Religion Watch

Religion Watch looks beyond the walls of churches, synagogues and denominational officialdom to examine how religion really affects, and is affected by, the wider society.

It is through monitoring new books and approximately 1000 U.S. and foreign periodicals (including newspapers from across the country, as well as newsletters, magazines and scholarly journals, as well as the Internet), and by first-hand reporting, that *Religion Watch* has tracked hundreds of trends on the whole spectrum of contemporary religion.

Published every two months, the twelve page newsletter is unique because it focuses on long-range developments that lead to, and result from, world current events.

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

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

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

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