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newsletter monitoring
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around the world,
particularly looking at
the unofficial
dimensions of religious
belief and behavior.

RELIGIOSCOPE

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Business and competition driving China's Muslims, Buddhists and Christians

Buddhist, Muslim and Christian groups are finding new ways to overcome government restrictions and obstacles as they expand in urban China, according to scholars speaking at a session of the August meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR) in Denver, which **RW** attended. A paper by Yuting Wang of the American University in the Arab Emirates looked at the mushrooming Muslim businesses in urban China, interviewing 65 Muslim businesspeople in five cities across the country. She said that Islam in urban China has been contained within the boundaries of ethnic Hui quarters, perpetuating the foreignness of Islam in the eyes of the Han Chinese majority. But in recent decades these enclaves have been converted into business districts that attract rural Muslims in search of business opportunities. These newcomers are “bringing new vitality into urban religious life” and “expanding the traditional Islamic space in urban China.” Because the social policy limiting families to one child does not apply to ethnic communities, Muslims can have more children, thus making these business enclaves larger and more attractive to Muslims outside of them.

Businesses are also playing a new and important role in expanding Buddhism in China's cities, according to Weishan Huang of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversities. Huang looked at the Tzu Chi movement, a humanitarian Buddhist group based in Taiwan, but with a growing global membership of millions. The movement spread in China through the transnational links of Taiwanese investors and business professionals who

started companies in cities such as Shanghai. The increased indigenization of the membership has been rapid and most new converts are Chinese.

Huang said that after Tzu Chi gained legal recognition in 2008, members in China have in some cases worked side-by-side with local governments on relief efforts. But even after obtaining legal status, they nonetheless have to practice their belief in hidden ways. In her research in Shanghai, Huang finds that municipal regulations forced Tzu Chi missions from home-based meetings into business sectors. In one case, Huang found a storefront space that had been converted into a gathering place for all Tzu Chi activities in a particular district in Shanghai. Every Tuesday a study group gathers in this commercial space, where members watch video clips and listen to senior commissioners' lectures about environmentalism and Buddhism, she added.

In another paper, Graeme Lang of City University of Hong Kong argued that even with government restrictions, competition is also driving religious growth in China. Lang and his co-author, Kimkwong Chang, found that Protestants, who are among the fastest-growing groups in China, are known for their creativity and independent approach that can reach a segmented population, as well as for their involvement in social services. Buddhist temples have borrowed some of these evangelical practices, such as holding summer camps and featuring brief Buddhist teaching sessions that are similar to the evangelism carried out at Protestant church cafés.

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Catholics have also adopted Protestant techniques, such as singing Christmas carols in the streets and passing out evangelistic tracts. Lang said that even Muslims, particularly those outside of ethnic

communities, fear losing members to Protestant churches and have sought to learn from Christians, borrowing their segmented approach and using advertising and music in an attempt to keep their youth in the fold. Lang said that

he was most surprised by how other ideological groups such as the Communist Youth League have also borrowed from the Protestants in their use of study groups and summer camps.

Charismatics using prayer as a weapon for social and political change?

Judging by the October issue of *Charisma* magazine, prayer and politics are being increasingly joined for many charismatic Christians as they enter the election season. The issue is devoted to the topic of praying for America, but it is noteworthy how prayer is linked with political concerns relating to the 2012 elections. While publisher Stephen Strang writes that America's problems have spiritual roots, he sees the crisis in terms of an "all-out attack on our Christian values in the culture and even in government. We now have a president who seems to be moving toward some form of European socialism."

Much of the issue of *Charisma* looks back to the Washington for Jesus prayer rally in 1979 as the inspiration for a similar kind of prayer movement needed for an

even more secularized nation. One major gathering seeking to recreate the earlier event is the America for Jesus rally held in late September in Philadelphia. Jonathan Cahn, a Jewish Christian author best known for his prophetic best-seller, *The Harbinger*, writes that unlike Ronald Reagan being the answer to the earlier prayer gathering by his revitalising of America in the 1980s, the presidency of Barack Obama represents more of a judgement against the country and its role as a "leading superpower."

An article by Tommi Femrite portrays America as becoming a "Satanic stronghold," because every facet of the country—family, government, religion, business, education, media and entertainment—has "drifted farther and farther away from God's standards." As one example of this

decline, she writes that "Politicians are mocked and rebuked for uttering Jesus' name in public, and our current president has already declared that America is no longer a Christian nation." Femrite draws on the "seven mountain" theme that has become influential in the apostolic movement in the U.S., which seeks to restore New Testament practices and leadership to today's church. This teaching holds that the "seven mountains" represent the seven spheres of society mentioned above that the Christian is called on to seize and transform. Instead of using prayer to petition God for change, Femrite writes that Christians are called to engage in prayer as an intercession in declaring God's rule over society.

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

Canadian evangelicals show stability and the emergence of fundamentalism

In reviewing the state of evangelicalism in Canada in the last two decades, theologian John Stackhouse finds patterns of both stability and change, especially the emergence of fundamentalism. Writing in the *Evangelical Studies*

Bulletin (Summer), Stackhouse notes that evangelicals still represent about 10 percent of the Canadian population since two decades ago, while the percentage of self-professed Christians has dropped by about 10 percent (and is likely

to decrease further in the forthcoming 2011 census) and mainline Protestants have hemorrhaged a high rate of "members, dollars, and cultural influence." With Catholics, evangelicals have been able to retain their young people

and even show some small increase through immigration and the evangelism of non-churchgoers.

Institutionally, in the last 20 years, Briercreech College and Seminary and Trinity Western University have become the leading Canadian evangelical educational institutions. Canada has developed its share of megachurches, particularly in British Columbia's Fraser Valley (to the east of "spiritually dry" Vancouver) and southern Ontario, where the multi-site Catch the Fire Network (which emerged from the Toronto Blessing revival of 1990s) is among the largest. But the largest megachurch is Springs Church in Winnipeg,

which belongs to the Word-Faith (health and prosperity) movement. But the most noticeable change in two decades is the emergence of an American-style fundamentalism, best represented by Charles McVery, "who openly emulates Jerry Falwell from his Toronto-based Canada Christian College and political organization (the Canada Family Action Coalition)," writes Stackhouse.

Some have linked this new politically interested fundamentalism to evangelical Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative Party, but "there was little fire under all that smoke." Stackhouse attributes this trend to a reaction against the "increasing seculariza-

tion of public life." The questions of whether preaching against homosexuality will be subject to "hate speech" laws and whether Christian institutions can continue to receive public funds while insisting on hiring only Christian staff "all simmer on the stove of legislative and judicial consideration." It remains to be seen whether evangelicals will become a reactive force against such de-Christianization or "adopt a carefully considered posture of cooperation with increasingly varied neighbors in a new, genuinely multicultural common life," Stackhouse concludes.

(Evangelical Studies Bulletin, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL 60187-5593)

CURRENT RESEARCH

► **Lay leaders and other non-clergy are more influential than pastors in encouraging political involvement among congregations, according to a study by Lydia Bean and Brandon Martinez of Baylor University presented at the ASR meeting in Denver.** Using the Baylor Religion Survey, the researchers find that lay leaders, such as Sunday school teachers, in evangelical, mainline, and Catholic traditions are "significantly more politically active than other regular attendees; evangelical lay leaders are more conservative on moral issues than others in their churches." In contrast, lay leaders in mainline and Catholic churches were more likely to value social justice. Catholic lay leaders were

more likely to be economically liberal than other members, while mainline lay leaders tended to stress working for the "common good," although they did not lead on specific social issues. Bean and Martinez did find that pastors have a role in church politics, but it is largely one they exercise in collaboration with lay leaders.

► **Conservative Protestant opposition to theories of climate change is driven more by politics than theology, according to John Evans of the University of California at San Diego.** In presenting a paper at the American Sociological Association in Denver based on an analysis of the General Social Surveys for the period 2006–10, the researchers found that opposition to climate change among conservative Protestants is more influenced by conservative and Republican politics

than religious beliefs. However, the tendency of conservative Protestants to oppose the idea that scientists should have a role in influencing public policy was more strongly influenced by religious beliefs. In this case, the Republican variable had little effect. Evans argues that conservative Protestant opposition to scientists having a role in shaping public policy involves the long-term "moral competition" that exists between the two communities in shaping ethical values.

► **Maintaining beliefs in American Indian religion and Christianity served as an important deterrent to taking drugs among urban Indians, according to a paper presented at the American Sociological Association.** The study, led by Stephen Kulis of Arizona State University, found that American Indian youth,

most of whom now live in cities rather than their tribal communities, who adhered to native beliefs were the most likely to have anti-drug attitudes, norms, and expectations. Affiliation with the Native American Church and following Christian beliefs were the most associated with lower levels of drug use.

The study, conducted among 123 American Indian students in a large Southwestern city in 2009, also found that spirituality—both Christian and American Indian—played an important part in students' lives, with more than 80 percent saying it held some importance for them. But a general sense of spirituality divorced from these traditions was not found to have a deterring effect against drug use. The paper also found that possessing a sense of belonging to both American Indian and Christian cultures may foster the integration of the two worlds in which urban American Indian youth live.

► **Contrary to recent claims, the American working class has maintained its religious beliefs compared to college-educated Americans, according to a survey by the Public Religion Research Institute.** Recent books and studies have argued that blue-collar Americans have shown a significant decline in religious affiliation and beliefs, but the new survey finds that 36 percent of working-class Americans identify themselves as evangelical Protestants, while 19 percent see themselves as mainline Protestant or Catholic. Sixteen percent say they are religiously unaffiliated. In contrast, 21 percent of college-educated Americans are evangelical, 23 percent mainline Protes-

tant, 23 percent Catholic, and 21 percent unaffiliated. One-third of both the college-educated and non-college-educated attend church weekly. Only 19 percent of working-class Americans call themselves “liberal” compared to 28 percent of their college-educated counterparts, and the former show a high rate of belief in American exceptionalism.

► **The connection often made between anti-homosexual attitudes and religion in Africa is not as strong as it is often portrayed as being, according to a study by John Jay College researchers.** In a paper presented at the ASR meeting in Denver, Amy Adamzyk, Lauren Purdis, Chunrye Kim, and Matthew Moore looked at the media treatment of homosexuality in the press in Uganda, South Africa, and the U.S. They found that across the three nations, religion is one of “many frames evoked in discussion of homosexuality,” but this is found in only 12 percent of the press articles. The most common association is in conjunction with an entertainment figure, such as Ellen Degenerous. But the common portrayal of Africans using religion to address homosexuality and linking it to Western influence was not borne out in the study. In fact, the U.S. is more likely than Uganda and South Africa to frame discussions about homosexuality in religious terms. They also conclude that references in the public press to the West in Uganda and South Africa in relation to homosexuality are minimal.

► **Both Muslim and Catholic countries show strong support for democracy, but the former show a significant deficit in**

support for democratic civil values, such as tolerance and personal freedom, according to a study in the journal *Politics and Religion* (August). Recent research has shown that Muslim countries show strong support for democracy and that, contrary to expectations, individual religiosity is found to have a significant positive impact on the desire for democracy in both types of societies. Researchers Man-Li Gu and Eduard J. Bomhoff find that the recent World Values Survey (WVS) confirms the widespread support for democracy among Muslims. But they find that support for democracy in Catholic countries “stems from a pro-democratic culture that embodies certain distinct attributes,” such as freedom of expression, tolerance of diversity, mutual trust, and an emphasis on gender diversity. Citizens in Islamic countries, in contrast, endorse the concept of democracy, but more in terms of its economic benefits and security and less concerning the aforementioned civil values. Gu and Bomhoff conclude that such instrumental and, hence, conditional support may decline when citizen expectations are not realized, for example, in the times of economic downturn or social unrest.

(*Politics and Religion*, <http://www.journals.cambridge.org/>)

► **Restrictions on religion have increased in the five major regions of the world, according to a new study by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life.** Even the two regions where religious persecution had been declining—the Americas and sub-Saharan Africa—showed a rise in restrictions on religion. Those countries with

high or very restrictions on religious beliefs and practices increased from 31 percent in the year ending in mid-2009 to 37 percent in the year ending in mid-2010. Restrictions also increased in countries that began with low or moderate restrictions and hostilities, such as Switzerland and the U.S. During the latest year covered by the study there was also an increase in the harassment or intimidation of particular religious groups.

► **The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has become an influential tribunal of last resort in ruling on the freedom of new religious movements in Europe, although it may show a “double standard” in its rulings involving newer members states, such as in Eastern Europe, according to James Richardson of the University of Nevada at Reno.** Richardson presented a paper at the ASR in Denver examining jurisprudence concerning religious and ethnic groups in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe.

He finds that other constitutional courts often use ECHR rulings as precedents in their own rulings. There have been more cases of religious freedom violations of minority faiths in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe. Such groups as the Jehovah’s Witnesses have won two-thirds of the cases brought before the ECHR—similar to the pattern found in the U.S. and Canada. In contrast, Islam is not faring too well, with the ECHR tending to take a narrow view of the religion.

► **While the media played up the rise of the non-affiliated, the new Australian census also reveals how persistent religion is in the country.** *Pointers* (September), the newsletter of the Christian Research Association, reports that the census shows that the number of Christians identifying with a denomination has grown from 11 to 13 million, while the general population has grown from 13 million to more than 21 million people. Although immigration is a factor in such growth,

particularly from Asia, there is also some growth among smaller groups due to evangelism, such as Baptists and Seventh Day Adventists. More than 60 percent of Australians identify with Christianity, with an increasing number not specifying a denomination.

The proportion of people choosing the non-affiliated category grew from 18.7 percent to 22.3 percent of the population. This does not necessarily mean a growth of atheism, although the rising number of Australians ticking the “no religion” box in the census compared to previous surveys may signify increasing confidence fed by atheist activism. Along with a growth of non-Christian immigrant religions, Egyptian Copt immigrants are the most rapidly growing Christian group and are now the most highly educated of all such groups in Australia.

(Pointers, CRA, P.O. Box 206, Nunawading LPO, VIC 3131, Australia)

Swiss religious developments show both rapid changes and the continuing impact of historical churches

Both diversification of religious life and a growth of unaffiliated people have been the main changes in the religious life of the Canton of Fribourg (Switzerland), according to a report by Religioscope Institute that was publicly released on September 24. Being headquartered in Fribourg,

Religioscope Institute was commissioned last year by the cantonal government to prepare a report in order to answer questions asked by the cantonal parliament. Key findings of the report confirm to some extent trends observed by other recent research projects in Switzerland, based on detailed local observations, including interviews with representatives of all religious groups active on the territory. The bilingual (French and German) canton used to be a stronghold of Roman Catholicism in Switzerland from the time of the Reformation, while being surrounded by cantons that had opted

for the Protestant faith in the sixteenth century.

In recent years, due primarily to immigration from neighboring cantons, it has experienced the fastest demographic growth of all Swiss cantons: its population is currently nearing 300,000. The first consequence has been continuous growth in the number of Protestants. Along with Roman Catholics and Jews, they enjoy so-called “public law” status, entitling them to teach catechism at state schools and to collect “church taxes” from their faithful through state tax authorities. But

other religious movements have developed in the canton. Thirty years ago there was no Muslim prayer place in the canton and only two (German-speaking) evangelical churches. Today there are seven public Muslim prayer places, nine "European" evangelical churches and four African evangelical churches. Muslims are estimated to number around 10,000 and evangelicals more than 2,000. International and inter-cantonal migration appears to constitute the major factor in that growth: most Muslims are of foreign origin and more than half of all evangelicals come from other cantons or other countries.

Migration also benefits the Roman Catholic Church: its percentage has decreased in the total population of the canton, from 86 percent in 1960 to 65 percent today; but it has grown in absolute numbers. Some 10 percent of the canton's Catholic population is of Portuguese descent, to which people of Italian and various other descents should be added. However, the most rapid growth rate is that of people without a religious affiliation. Across Switzerland, unaffiliated people now make up 20 percent of the total adult population (in Fribourg, a lesser percentage, but nevertheless already more than 35,000 people). Over the years to come, considering the deep decline in religious practice and the transmission of religious beliefs, as well as a secularized environment, the percentage of unaffiliated people might still grow. What is unclear is how far a passive affiliation of a large percentage of the population with historical churches can maintain itself for much longer, with churches being seen as resources

for major individual and collective life events. Christianity could also be a cultural identity resource, especially if concerns about Islam's presence in Europe remain strong or grow.

(The full 100-page report can be downloaded as a PDF file either in French: http://religion.info/pdf/2012_09_Religions_Fribourg_rapport.pdf or in German: http://religion.info/pdf/2012_09_Bericht_Religionen_Freiburg.pdf)

'Sacrificial Lutheranism' bolstering Germany's economic resilience?

Lutheranism may be institutionally weak in Germany, but its ethos of moral responsibility and sacrifice may be a significant factor behind the nation's economic resilience and stability, writes Harvard University historian Steven Ozment in the *New York Times* (August 12). Although religiously diverse and politically secular, the current German emphasis on frugality and responsibility in its fiscal policies harks back to the model of the "sacrificial Lutheran society" envisioned by Martin Luther. The charitable practices established during the Reformation made care for the poor a civic obligation (establishing "common chests" in most towns), while each recipient had to pledge to repay the borrowed amount.

German chancellor Angela Merkel, the daughter of a Lutheran pastor likewise draws on this sensibility, for instance, in her refusal to support so-called euro bonds. Her opposition stems less from the refusal to help the undeserving

poor than from the conviction that it would not help the poor to take responsibility for either themselves or their neighbors. Ozment argues that Germany's austerity model includes the Lutheran view of social responsibility, teaching that grace and faith empower a person to act in the world, "taking the worry out of his present and future life." He concludes that the steady advance of Islam and "unrelenting economic pressure from their neighbors" have led Germans of all backgrounds to "find 'a mighty fortress' for themselves in their own Judeo-Christian heritage."

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood faces a dilemma in its relations with Shiite Islam

While historically seeking to downplay religious differences between Sunnism and Shiism and rather to emphasize Islamic unity, the Muslim Brotherhood has been showing concerns about the spread of Shiism in Egypt, writes Jacques Neria in *Jerusalem Viewpoints* (No. 591, Sept.-Oct. 2012). According to estimates, there might be one million Shiites in Egypt (one percent of the total population). Part of the Shiite population is made up of the descendants of Iranians who came to the country in the nineteenth century. Another part is made of Muslims who converted from Sunnism to Shiism after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, many of whom are former members of Islamist groups. Although there is no available statistical data, there might be up to dozens of thousands of converts. They are re-

ported often to disguise themselves as part of Sufi groups.

Famous institutions, such as Al-Azhar University, had attempted to bridge the gap between Sunnites and Shiites for the sake of Islamic unity. After the revolution in Iran, however, fears of Shiite exports and Iranian plots surfaced in Egyptian government circles. Moreover, after initial sympathies for the Iranian revolution, many Islamic activists became disappointed, perceiving it as a channel of Persian nationalism. Many political factors deepened the divide, especially after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. In 2009 there was a wave of arrests of Shiites, who

were accused of conspiring or of promoting Shiite doctrine in a way disparaging to Sunni beliefs. Shiites started to demand their rights after the 2011 revolution in Egypt. Some of their representatives do not only want full freedom to open their own places of worship, but also a quota in parliament.

But Shiites continue to face various problems and constraints in their attempts to develop organizational structures in Egypt. Iran has been careful, since it does not want the development of Shiism and associated reactions to compromise its promotion of the cause of Islamic unity. Salafi Muslims are strongly anti-Shia and the

Muslim Brotherhood is torn over the issue. It would prefer to avoid becoming entangled in the controversy, since it is divisive for the "Muslim nation". It accepts Shiites as Muslims, but conversions to Shiism—especially from its own ranks—are not easily accepted. President Mohammad Morsi, himself a member of the Brotherhood, has sent signals of a confrontational policy toward the Egyptian Shiite minority should its members affiliate with foreign countries such as Iran.

(Jerusalem Viewpoints,
<http://www.jcpa.org>)

FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

■ The password for access to the archives at the **RW** website, at: <http://www.religionwatch.com>, remains: **Eye**.

■ The article "Growing Acceptance of Black Jews by the Jewish Mainstream" on page 2 in the July-August RW was mistakenly cut short. The final sentence of the article should read: "Today, black Jews see themselves as reaching out to and educating other African groups who identify as Jews."

■ The current issue of the **Bulletin** of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture (No. 36, 2012) is devoted to the question of why Pentecostalism has failed to take root in Japan in the midst

of the faith's success in other Asian countries, particularly Korea. At a conference devoted to the theme at the institute earlier this year, Andrew Kim (Korea University) stresses that one-third of the Korean population is Christian, while only one percent of Japanese embrace Christianity. He also remarks that elements frequently associated with Pentecostalism, such as faith healing, prophecy and other "gifts of the Holy Spirit", are commonly found across Christian churches in Korea, not only in Pentecostal denominations.

Kim identifies Shamanism as one of the key factors in the success of Pentecostalism in Korea, while in Japan popular religion, along with some of its manifestations such as Shamanism, has been linked with Shinto and its history of conflict with Christianity. Shamanism encouraged Koreans to

accept spiritual phenomena (speaking in tongues and healing were already familiar practices). While Kim admits that a number of features of Pentecostalism attract people in completely different settings, he stresses that spiritual phenomena among Christians are much more prevalent among Korean than among Western churchgoers, for instance.

Mark Mullins (Sophia University, Tokyo) is not convinced by the explanation of Shamanism as a major reason for the impact of Pentecostalism in Korea. But he primarily pays attention to reasons why Pentecostalism failed to develop in Japan in the same way that Christianity in general was not successful in quantitative terms. According to him, it was first an issue of bad timing: Pentecostalism arrived in Japan at a time when local new religions

had already saturated the market with experience-based religion. Its association with foreign origins also had negative connotations in the Japanese context. Moreover, the exclusivist orientation of Pentecostalism clashed with the tendency of Japanese religion to take on a combinatory approach. Over the past two centuries Japan went through several waves of indigenous, experience-based new religious movements.

It is true that there was an opening for Christianity after World War II, but its association with the occupying forces tended to confirmed its foreignness. There was nevertheless a short period when conversions to Christianity increased, but enthusiasm soon rapidly decreased. "Most Japanese who experienced with Christianity at the time later joined more indigenous new religions." Regarding Korea, according to Mullins, the growth of Christianity after the war parallels the development of new religions in Japan. But in Korea, Christianity was not seen as a threat, but rather associated with liberation; moreover, many Korean Christians had been active in the independence movement under Japanese rule. Regarding the future, however, this is not the end of the story: Kim reports indications of a decline in the membership of Protestant Christianity in Korea, based on available results of the last census.

For more information on this issue, write: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 18 Yamazato-chō, Shōwa-ku, Nagoya 466-8673, Japan, <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp>.

■ Sociologist Anson Shupe finishes his series on clergy malfeasance and abuse with his new book ***Pastoral Misconduct: The American Black Church Examined*** (Transaction Publishers, \$27.50). Written with Janelle M. Eliasson-Nannini, the book is likely to be controversial in its argument that certain features of the black church tradition and African-American clergy lend themselves to deviant behavior. The authors make it clear from the start that black clergy are not more prone to misbehavior than other clergy (there are far more cases of non-black clerical abuse and misconduct), but the particular structure of the black church and its clergy-parishioner relationships allow opportunity for particular kinds of misbehavior that also marks other minority religions. Shupe and Eliasson-Nannini focus on the way the minority status of black churches born of a history of prejudice tends to move members to seek to protect, and in some cases excuse, their clergy even in cases of misconduct.

Using case studies of well-known black clergy engaged in acts of malfeasance—including Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, and, more recently, Pentecostal Bishop Eddie Long—the authors look at other factors that allow for clergy misconduct, including the way churches are built around loyalty to charismatic figures and, more controversially, the way in which the mainstream media “look the other way” in regard to the transgressions of black clergy, whether because of “white guilt,” fears of being called racist, or just the perception that such acts

are local and do not constitute a national problem in the way that the Catholic priest sex abuse crisis does. The concluding chapter offers proposals for identifying and dealing with clergy malfeasance that Shupe has outlined in his other studies on the topic, including the importance of public accountability of the pastor in preventing such incidents and the dangers of clergy assuming a “prophetic” role (rather than a priestly one) that removes them from the everyday management of the congregation and elevates their status in the eyes of their followers.

■ Josh Packard’s ***The Emerging Church: Religion at the Margins*** (FirstForum Press, \$59.50) provides an in-depth examination of the organizational dynamics of the Emerging movement. Packard portrays this diffuse movement as being marked by a concern that churches create more authentic services for the post-Christian seeker based on a strong sense of community and worship, as a response to the homogeneity and standardization of megachurches in American society. The “dechurched” who join the Emerging churches (they do not attract large numbers of unchurched) often describe their reasons for leaving their previous congregations in terms of dissatisfaction with a lack of community and inclusiveness rather than over theological issues (in fact, there is a fairly broad theological pluralism in many Emerging congregations).

Packard challenges the rational choice model of paying costs and receiving benefits in congrega-

tional belonging: one thing that that marks the Emerging church movement is that members are “looking for a specific way to organize religion regardless of the costs and benefits.” Yet it takes a good deal of work and commitment to keep these churches going, largely because there are few guaranteed services or benefits for members, which forces people to construct their own faith systems. It is the improvisational (or “conversational”) and open-ended nature of Emerging churches that represents their overriding ideology, appealing to a distinct subculture of “unsettled” people (although not all are young: many of these congregations are “filled with the retired and elderly”) tuned into concerns with diversity and questioning. Whether these churches’ ongoing resistance to institutionalization can be sustained over time is a key question for the survival of the Emerging movement. But Packard concludes that the “DIY spirit” of this movement creates its own niche in the religious market that may be self-perpetuating.

■ The new book by Kathleen Kautzer, *The Underground Church* (Brill, \$163), provides a rare in-depth and fairly unbiased treatment of liberal and radical Catholic groups and movements in the U.S. It is based on extensive fieldwork among such reformist groups as Corpus (consisting of former priests), Dignity (gay Catholics), Women’s Ordination Conference, and Voice of The Faithful (a group that formed in response to the priest sex abuse crisis in the American church), as well as more radical

groups that have made a complete break with the church (such as schismatic parishes and some radical feminist groups).

In tracing the histories of these groups, Kautzer notes how they have gradually evolved from optimistic efforts aimed at reform of the church based on a liberal interpretation and appropriation of Vatican II to a far more contentious and eventually pessimistic stance regarding the possibility of significant change in the church. Of course, the level of demands for liberal reform varies with each group. The author shows that the Voice of The Faithful (VTF), the most moderate of the groups she studied, was able to exert pressure on dioceses and other church structures to make some policy changes, at least on the pressing issue of clergy sex abuse (although the pope’s pro-active stance has since steered the issue away from the VTF). Kautzer concludes that “Many reformers have grown weary of the fruitless battle with church hierarchs, who increasingly respond to reformers with harsh rhetoric and punitive measures.”

She documents a broad decline in membership and resources for most of the reform groups. The independent communities are drawing liberal Catholics who are pessimistic about change in the church on such issues as ordaining women priests, acceptance of gays and lesbians, and lifting the requirement of celibacy for priests. These organizations (which have graying memberships themselves) include Roman Catholic Womanpriests, which functions as a seminary for

women priests, and new networks of independent Catholic parishes, including the Ecumenical Catholic Communion and the Catholic Diocese of One Spirit.

■ Although we neglected to review *The Religious Question in China* (University of Chicago Press, \$27.50), by Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer, when it was published last year, it deserves some mention, as it is one of the most thorough books to be published on religious issues in China. The authors try to provide a comprehensive overview of how the “religious question” arose and persistently resurfaced as one of the central issues in the history of modern China in the period 1989–2008. From the May Fourth movement to the Mao cult, China has experienced a radical transformation of its anti-traditional and secularizing project. Unlike previous scholarship, this book focuses on more than a single religious tradition or Chinese society. Aside from covering multiple religious entities and Chinese societies, it also includes overseas emigrant societies. In the structure of its discussion of religion, the book purposely treats religious practices together rather than discussing them separately along conventional lines (such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam).

The authors also pay attention to China’s recent integration into the global religious sphere in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by examining both the importing of foreign religions to China and the exporting of Chinese religions to the world. The authors push at the limitations of a static view of decline and re-

vival of religion in the republican and post-Mao eras and instead focus on the changing relationship between religion and Chinese society. One of the interesting features of this book is that it does not seek to provide a definition of what “religion” is, while most scholarship is eager to define or redefine what “Chinese religions” are or to differentiate them from Western categories.

Goossaert and Palmer’s achievement is to apprehend religious practice in the context of an open system in which all elements are in constant interaction with one another and with their broader social, political, and economic environments. Elements of the system include the sum of individual needs, memories, and desires. This is a must-read book for scholars interested in the study of China, religion, or religion in Chinese societies.

—By Weishan Huang, a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversities in Germany.

■ **The Muslim World in the 21st Century** (Springer, \$189), edited by Samiul Hasan, deals with mainly secular and demographic developments, but does so uniquely by using Muslim identity as the key variable. In other words, the contributors look at a wide range of social indicators in Muslim-majority countries—from democracy (and the “democracy deficit”) and development to biophysical resources and power configurations. The findings offer sober facts on poverty in these nations. Of the 48 Muslim-majority nations, only 12 have

ever achieved a high score on the Human Development Index. One chapter finds that Muslim-majority countries are relatively poor, yet adds that regression analyses do not yield a “robust pattern of coefficients with respect to a particular religion, including Islam.” The book’s efforts to find common patterns in Muslim-dominated countries stretching from sub-Saharan Africa to Asia simultaneously reject cultural explanations for poverty (which would address religious influences) in favor of the particularities of geography, history, and global economic forces. Aside from its limitations (and cost), the book provides a wealth of statistics and descriptions of international Muslim organizations.

■ Unlike some other books that use “post-secular” in their titles, **Mapping Religion and Spirituality in a Postsecular World** (Brill, \$133) focuses more on case studies and informed accounts of actual religious and spiritual developments rather than ponderous discussions of what the ambiguous term might mean. The anthology, edited by Giuseppe Giordan and Enzo Pace, does demonstrate how the idea of the post-secular—at least in this case meaning the emergence of non-institutional spirituality that can take various public expressions—applies most closely to Europe. The contributions attempt to map this new situation where the “boundaries between the sacred and the profane are constantly redefined.”

Some of the case studies are clearly in the sacred or religious

realm—charismatic Catholics in Italy, a Sufi small group, and the mystical Jewish group surrounding self-proclaimed Israeli prophet Yaakov Ifargan. But some of the other chapters show interesting examples of groups straddling the sacred-secular boundaries, including the interesting case of a “fundamentalist” Confucianism, which has revived worship of Confucius, even to the extent of calling for a monarchy; a study of the relation between prayer and human rights; and a study of “everyday” spirituality among Swedes that often means getting in touch with one’s higher self.

■ Jenny Trinitapoli and Alexander Weinreb bring a wealth of statistical and qualitative data to bear on the relation of religious communities and believers to the spread of the HIV infection in Africa in their new book **Religion and AIDS in Africa** (Oxford University Press, \$29.95). The sociologists seek to challenge the widespread view that religious beliefs and communities have unwittingly assisted in the spread of the disease through their resistance to preventative sex education, but they also show that the relationships between various faith groups and the disease is not strictly about sexual behavior. The authors, whose work is mainly based in Malawi, show there are differences in the relation between religiosity and HIV depending on faith tradition and even gender. For instance, they find that while religious women in religious villages are the least likely to test positive for the disease, religious men in religious villages are the most likely to get

AIDS. The difference may be explained by how men experience less social sanctioning from religious leaders and fellow believers for engaging in risky sexual behavior. In fact, the book finds that men who are “most likely to be infected may be increasing their levels of religious involvement as a strategy for avoiding HIV.”

Trinitapoli and Weinreb also complicate the idea that African religious leaders share a common perception of AIDS as a judgment of sinful behavior. Although this is a popular view, they find, for instance, that the fast-growing Pentecostals, who are thought to be the most embracing of this

idea, actually were least likely (compared to such groups as Muslims, Catholics, and African Independents) to say that the sexually immoral deserve the disease. As for the prevention of AIDS, the authors find that the “ABC plan” (abstinence, being faithful, using condoms) is often effective, although there are many anomalies --- condom use tends to be lower among Muslims than other religious groups, even though Islamic leaders don’t prohibit the practice (condom use among Catholics is at a similar rate to other believers). The book points to other non-ABC strategies that some religions

employ, such as encouraging early marriage, being more accepting of divorce (its increasing frequency limits spreading AIDS among married couples) and discouraging alcohol use. The last chapter is the most interesting as it turns the tables to look at the effects of AIDS on religion. The authors find that religious switching has grown, favoring those groups that stress prevention and healing ministries (notably Pentecostals and African Independent Churches). They also find that the growth of “born again Christianity” tracks closely with the spread of the disease in rural communities.

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

1) **Gospel brunches** are attracting a growing clientele to their blending of church and entertainment functions. These brunches are booming in Washington, DC, where the gatherings are hosted by nightclubs and theatres, because they offer both the musical offerings of area choirs and soul food. The brunches are clearly viewed by these venues as a way to drum up business, and the events draw a cross-section of secular and religious people. Some brunchers see their involvement as a substitute for church, at least on an occasional basis, even though no preaching is included in the performances. The concept of the gospel brunch was first popularized by the House of Blues nightclub chain, but Washington has become a center of the phenomenon. **(Source: *Washington Post*, September 28)**

2) **David Jang** has emerged as one of the most controversial figures in Asian and non-Asian evangelical circles for his alleged claim to be a messianic figure. In the last five years, Jang has gained wide influence in American and global evangelical ministries through the several institutions he has founded, including the San Francisco-based Olivet University, such popular online publications as *The Christian Post*, and the campus ministry known as Apostolos Missions. In his and his associates’ teaching ministry it is reported that Jang revealed that he is a messianic figure who will foreshadow the return of Christ, which he calls the “Second Coming Christ.” These allegations have been serious enough for a number of mainstream evangelical organizations in Korea and China to sever ties with Jang. American evangelicals have been more divided about whether Jang actually holds this teaching. Former members claim that the core members of Jang’s ministries believe he is the Second Coming Christ, although even critics acknowledge that the Korean-born church leader has backed down

from his claim in recent years. Because Jang is in negotiation with the Southern Baptist Convention to take over one of its prominent conference centers in New Mexico, he is undergoing new scrutiny by the National Association of Evangelicals. **(Source: *Christianity Today*, September)**

3) The **Aramaic Maronite Center** in Israel is a small, yet prominent voice in seeking to revitalize Aramaic, the ancient language spoken by Jesus, as a way to unite and mobilize Christians in the Middle East as “one nation” and prevent further emigration of this population from Israel. Aramaic has been preserved in the vernacular in parts of Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, while Aramaic prayers are still used in the liturgy of the Maronite Church in much of the Middle East. But the language has come close to extinction in Israel, which has several thousand Maronite Christians. The center is led by Shadi Khalloul, a teacher in the village of Jish, who has led the way in making the language an approved part of the formal school curriculum by Israel’s Ministry of Education. Inter-

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estingly, textbooks are imported from the Netherlands and Sweden, which has the strongest Aramaic teaching program and receives government support. **(Source: *The Jerusalem Post*, September 12)**

4) The founding of the **International Association of Religion Journalists** (IARJ) represents the first time reporters covering religion from around the world have banded together as a group. The IARJ, which has already grown to 400 members in 2012, was founded to give support to journalists in parts of the world where religious, press, and political freedoms are in jeopardy, as well as to foster knowledgeable and objective

reporting on religion when it is often dismissed or seen as too controversial. The association sees the growth of interest in religion reporting as stemming from the critical role that faith plays in people's around the world. The IARJ is entering into partnership with the Association of Religion Data Archives, a database of survey research on religion, to give journalists access to up-to-date information on world religion. A corresponding IARJ website in Arabic will be introduced soon. The association's 17-member steering committee includes representatives from six continents. **(Source: *Ahead of the Trend*, <http://www.TheARDA.com>)**

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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