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

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## Hispanic-Islamic conversions and convergences

Latinos are increasingly interested in Islam and, judging by the current issue of *The Message International* (November/December), the publication of the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), Muslims are returning the favor. The issue, half of which is in Spanish, is devoted to Hispanics and Islam, and cites the recent American Mosque 2011 study which showed that the number of Latino converts has been steadily increasing since 2000, "more so than any other racial or ethnic group." Similar trends are said to be taking place in Mexico and further south in Central and South America. The ICNA, which is a Muslim umbrella organization, is said to be among the few Islamic organizations providing services for this demographic, such as publishing educational material in Spanish and holding Spanish sessions at its large annual conference. An editorial stresses that Islam is an "integral part of Latino history and culture" and that His-

panics who choose to become Muslim are "merely rediscovering and embracing their past." The "testimonies" of conversions to Islam in the issue often cite the influence of the Latino American Dawah Organization, which reaches out to Hispanics and promotes a "greater appreciation of the legacy of Islam in Spain and Latin America."

The presence of Islam in Latin America is becoming enough of a concern among evangelicals to help launch a satellite Christian network to battle such influence, according to *Charisma* magazine (January). The magazine reports on televangelists Bill and Carrie McDonald and how they expanded their Unison TV Network via satellite to reach a viewership of 400 million Hispanic viewers. The broadcasting of the Muslim-based network Al Jazeera and, more recently, an Iranian Spanish-language satellite

▶ Continued on page two

## New spiritualities of the afterlife

The idea of the afterlife is being reconfigured through the New Age culture of personal well-being. Extraordinary experiences claimed by proponents of near-death experiences and lucid dreaming provide material to support this redefinition, eliding questions of salvation and traditional notions of heaven and hell, writes Raymond L.M. Lee in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* (Vol. 28, No. 1). With the contemporary fragmentation of central questions, alternatives to the traditional views of the hereafter are being offered.

A search for improving physical and mental health through holistic activities "must inevitably confront questions

which deal with the end of life." The quest for well-being continues beyond the life in the here and now. Key texts on New Age notions of dying have been Stephen Levine's *Who Dies?* and the books by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. In this view, death is "a gateway to knowing the Self." The afterlife is thus redefined "as providing an enriched ground for seeking the Inner or Higher Self." In such a detraditionalized perspective on death, concerns for salvation lose relevance. The afterlife thus becomes aligned with the spiritualities of life.

(*Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Taylor & Francis, 325 Chestnut Street, 8th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19106)

► Continued from page one

channel that would create an “open door for the Muslim culture to be ushered right into Latin America. As a church we need to get in on this battle,” says Bill McDonald.

Whether or not Latinos are being targeted as a special mission field by Muslims, the shared history between the two groups has created a unique approach to Islam and immigration in Spain and Portugal. In her new book *Al-Andalus Rediscovered: Iberia's New Muslims* (Columbia University Press, \$25), journalist Marvine Howe provides an in-depth account of the recent Muslim immigration to Spain and Portugal and the historic Islamic influence in this region, giving the reader a sense of how past and present may be related. She argues that the continuing Muslim (mostly African, but also Middle Eastern and some Asian) immigration and growing acknowledgement of their unique Islamic history have set Spain and Portugal apart from the rest of Europe in how they deal with their Muslim migrants. Howe portrays both societies as moving away

from interpreting their pasts as one of Catholic supremacy over Islamic aggression, most obviously illustrated by the Inquisition and the expulsion of Muslims. Scholars have actively sought to reconstruct the historical record to show the contributions Muslims made to Iberian culture, especially in the arts and language.

This conciliatory stance toward Islam was complicated by the increasing incidents of extremist Islamic terrorism in Spain since 9/11, more specifically the bombings of commuter trains in Madrid in 2004. Howe notes that such groups as al-Qaeda viewed the country as a launching pad for terrorist activity in the rest of Europe. Yet unlike many European countries, the terrorist threat did not generate large-scale anti-Islamic sentiment in Spain, even if there was a backlash against the rising tide of African Muslim immigrants. Howe writes that because the Muslim community in Portugal is smaller and more integrated than in Spain, the former country has had even less conflict over Islam of the kind reflected in the headscarves controversy in France.

The book is most interesting in its explanation of how the Iberian model of integrating Muslims into society has been something of a success story, standing in sharp contrast to most other European countries. Both Spain and especially Portugal see themselves as countries of immigrants and therefore have an obligation to help other immigrants. To facilitate this welcoming approach both countries have developed governmental and non-governmental organizations (often with ties to the Catholic Church) that advocate for and deliver services to immigrants and work with Muslim groups. Both countries have made deliberate attempts not to create parallel societies or ghettos that isolate Muslims from society, as has been the case in other countries. Howe concludes on the challenges facing Iberia that there is little agreement among Muslims about which group should represent them to their governments, and the severe economic downturn has spawned more negative attitudes toward Muslim immigrants, particularly in Spain.

(*The Message International*, 166-89<sup>th</sup> Ave., Jamaica, NY 11432; *Charisma*, 600 Rhinehart Rd., Lake Mary, FL 32746)

## Conservative evangelical colleges turn down the political volume

The strongly conservative economic and political tone of conservative evangelical colleges, particularly those most active in Christian Right causes, are taking the emphasis off politics and concentrating more on theology, reports *Christianity Today* (December). The change is most evident at The King's College in New

York, which appointed conservative writer and speaker Dinesh D'Souza as its president in 2010 and had a strong political thrust, upholding “biblical competition” and “seeking prosperity” as guiding principles. D'Souza resigned in 2012 after reports surfaced that he had appeared with his fiancé while still legally married to his

wife. The resignation also brought a de-emphasis on political activism and resulted in the above principles being taken off the college's website.

Similar changes are taking place at other evangelical colleges that “have positioned themselves as conservative in more than just

theology.” Patrick Henry College, which blended political activism with classical studies, has experienced some disillusionment with politics, which resulted in a conflict between faculty and administration several years ago. “I see that happening across the board.

Christian activists who get involved in politics soon find that things are not so simple as getting Christians elected,” says Gene Edward Veith, provost of the school. Historian Allen Guelzo says that many more schools used to have explicit ties with cultural

and political conservatism, with some trying to “return to the center . . . . There are many pressures against being known as a conservative institution.”

(*Christianity Today*, 364 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188)

## Separatist mood emerging in American Buddhism?

A movement of American Buddhists, mostly converts, who are seeking to create an alternative to the predominant white Buddhist community is emerging. The *Huffington Post* (December 11) reports that Buddhists from native American, Hispanic and African-American backgrounds have organized separate faith communities or “*sanghas*” in various cities in this fledgling movement. Known as People of Color Sang-

has, participants say that they feel excluded from white-led Buddhist groups and in turn prohibit whites from participating in their rituals and meditation services. Most of the converts to Buddhism have been white and while there have been attempts to integrate with Asians or “ethnic” Buddhists, the former camp tends to stress meditation more.

While those in the people of color

movement also are mediation-oriented and acknowledge that ideally Buddhism is color blind, they claim that an exclusive European white cultural style marks many convert *sanghas*, despite the talk and policies of “diversity” they adopt (such as the growing number of “diversity councils”). In its place, People of Color Buddhists want to integrate their traditions into Buddhism, such as native American rituals.

## Quakers show loss at the center, growth on the edges

Quakerism is growing at its conservative and liberal edges, but showing decline at its moderate center, according to an analysis of Quaker denominational membership figures by Richard H. Taylor. In a paper presented at the November meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Taylor looked at the history of the various Quaker bodies and their membership and growth rates, most recently reported in the Religious Congregations and Membership Study (2010). He found that the greatest losses in the Quaker community have been in the centrist Friends United Meeting (FUM), while the evangelicals (many of whom had left the FUM) and liberals have seen growth. By

2010 over one-third of all reported Quaker members are in the Evangelical Friends Church International (about 28,000 members). While this body has reported losses in rural areas, they have made up for it with their Quaker mega-churches, such as the Yorba Linda Friends Church and the Rose Drive Church—both in the same town in Orange County, California.

At the same time, the liberal, non-pastoral unprogrammed groups (holding to silent worship), represented by the Friends General Conference, now have more meetings than any other Quaker group—almost 400 exclusively in this body and another 200 having

dual affiliations (since they don’t have pastors, the meetings can be started much easier than other Quaker groups). Although their membership lags behind the evangelicals, the fact that non-programmed meetings don’t have clear membership requirements may mean that many more people are involved in liberal Quakerism than reported. While the growth “from the edges” has taken place since the 1950s, the pattern is still evident today: the Indiana Yearly Meeting is currently in a dispute that will “probably cause it to rupture along liberal-conservative lines.” Taylor concludes by asking if “this is the future of other centrist old-line Protestant denominations.”

## CURRENT RESEARCH

▶ **More than eight in ten of the world's people identify with a religious group, although the unaffiliated are the third largest religious group after Muslims and Christians, according to a study by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life.** The report estimates that there are 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children around the globe—2.2 billion Christians, 1.6 billion Muslims, 1 billion Hindus, nearly 500 million Buddhists and 14 million Jews as of 2010.

▶ **The Southern Baptist Convention has shown a larger growth of African-American congregations than any other ethnic group in its drive to become a more diverse church body.** New data from the SBC's North American Mission Board (NAMB) showed an 82 percent increase in African-American congregations since 1998. Hispanic and Asian congregations grew by 63 and 55 percent respectively. There are an estimated 3,400 black churches in the SBC, and last June, the denomination elected its first African-American

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president, Fred Luther. Despite the growth of these ethnic congregations, officials from the NAMB noted that there are still a “variety of ethnic groups in North America with no Southern Baptist presence among them.”

(*The NAMB report can be downloaded from:*

<http://www.namb.net/nambblog1.aspx?id=8590124402&blogid=8589939695>)

▶ **Frequent church attenders are less likely to choose romantic partners from another race, according to research cited by Christianity Today.com.** The blog cites Samuel Perry of the University of Chicago who found in data from the 2007 Baylor Religion Survey showing that about 50 percent of those who attend church only once a year or never said they had dated a person of another race, whereas only 27 percent of those who attend church weekly or more said the same. But Perry also found that those who pray and read the Bible more often were likelier to date outside of their race. The blog cites another study from Joshua Tom and Brandon Martinez of Baylor University showing that religious affiliation alone made no statistically significant difference in whether someone was in an interracial marriage—except for Catholics, who were twice as

likely to be in such a marriage, especially if they were frequent attenders. The growing Catholic Hispanic population may be the reason for the Catholic difference. In conclusion, the research finds that being in a church with few others from differences races makes a difference in choosing romantic partners.

(*Christianity Today.com,*  
<http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctliveblog/>)

▶ **The proportion of the British (England and Wales) population reporting that they had no religion has increased from 14.8 percent in 2001 to 25.1 percent today, according to the 2011 British census.** Those identifying as Christian decreased from 71.7 percent to 59.3 percent during the same period. The religion question on the 2011 census was the only one that was voluntary and 7.2 percent of the people did not answer that question. Christianity is still the largest religion (claiming 59.3 percent of the population), while Islam, as the second largest religious group, has grown the fastest, from 3.0 percent to 4.8 percent. London was the most diverse region, while the north-east and north-west of England had the highest proportion of Christians; Wales had the highest proportion of people reporting no religion.

## Catholicism in France regaining public face

The Catholic Church in France “has returned vigorously to the public scene” after decades of invisibility, according to an article in the magazine *Inside the Vatican*

(January). Opposition to a law on same-sex marriage and gay adoption is being led by the archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Andre Vingt-Trois, who started a controversy when he publicly issued a prayer praising the importance of both mothers and fathers in raising children. The uproar was fanned

by the newspaper *Le Monde* when it defended the prelate. When gay marriage obtained the approval of the Council of Ministers last fall, Vingt-Trois protested publicly to political leaders, saying that the measure would represent a radical change to the nature of the sexes and procreation.

The cardinal's views fed into a mood of resistance against the government and led to protest marches drawing hundreds of thousands in Paris and other cities. Writer Sandro Magister notes that the protests have included Catholics and non-Catholics, including secularists, such as feminist philosopher Sylviane Agacinski. The protests may reflect changing attitudes about gay marriage and adoption, as both measures have lost support in 2012. On the day of the protests Pope Benedict XVI encouraged the French bishops to "pay close attention" to any legislation challenging the protection of marriage between men and women. Magister concludes that "The archbishop of Paris is no longer a general with an army. The bishops are with him too. They have elected him as the president of the Episcopal conference."

(*Inside the Vatican*, via delle Mura Aurelie 7c, Rome 00165, Italy)

## Catholics prosper in Scandinavia

While the Catholic Church has experienced growing disaffiliation and disaffection in much of Europe, Catholicism shows a measure of growth and vitality in the largely secularized societies of Scandinavia, reports Britain's *The Tablet* (January 19). Fredrik Heiding reports that while the numbers of seminarians and new vocations to the priesthood are modest—producing 31 seminarians out of 282,000 Catholics—they stand out from the declining seminary enrollment and vocations in the rest of Europe. Several of these candidates to the priesthood are

converts: the greater public role of religion in Scandinavian countries encourages the search for a spiritual and ecclesial home, according to Heiding. The fact that the church is less intertwined with national sentiments and structures and is freer to manifest its views, regardless of public opinion, makes it an attractive alternative to the Lutheran Church of Sweden (which, even though now independent of the state, still reflects its positions).

The church has also taken a number of initiatives that have developed the community and encouraged vocations. These include a strong network of young Catholics in Norway and Franciscans building an attractive youth network in the Gothenburg region of Sweden. There is also the recent establishment of the first Catholic university in Sweden since the Reformation; the university also includes a new seminary, which means that priestly formation no longer has to take place in Rome. Heiding adds that it is the non-established and intimate nature of the church in this region that is behind much of this vitality. "Because the Catholic community is small, a type of family network has emerged. The Catholic Church as an organization is—perhaps surprisingly—rather horizontal, which reflects Scandinavian management culture at large . . . . The bishops often know the faithful by name, and although titles are used, conversation quickly moves into the more familiar second-person pronoun."

(*The Tablet*, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY UK)

## Mount Athos's monasteries take pragmatic stance on technology

Communications technology, including mobile phones and the Internet, are gradually making themselves felt on Mount Athos, the spiritual and monastic center of Eastern Orthodoxy, although it does not seem to be affecting monastic life. The monks living in the 20 monasteries and 12 other church communities (known as brotherhoods or "sketes") on the "holy mount" are "confronted with the ever-growing and dominating power of technology on a scale never experienced before," writes Lukasz Fajfer in the journal *Social Compass* (September–December). The pace of the introduction of technology—from electricity to cell phone usage—is uneven in the various monasteries and does not necessarily correspond with which community is the most "modern" or ascetic: some of the more traditionalist monasteries have adopted electricity for practical reasons (refusing outside assistance, they may depend on their own hydroelectric plants). Fajfer notes that there are no specific guidelines on the use of technology, although a large group of monks on Mount Athos see a contradiction between the spiritual life and reliance on technological conveniences.

Just as many monks viewed the building of roads to the monasteries as making the world too accessible, they are leery of being overly connected to the outside through communications media. But cell and landline phones are now widely used, if only to coordinate work and workers within

and between the various communities. Today at least 14 monasteries and most *sketes* also use computers, although there is an attempt to limit them for office use. Yet a few monasteries use the computer to connect with and give advice to people outside of Mount Athos or engage in legal matters for self-preservation, including such social media as Facebook. Fajfer concludes that the use of technology on Mount Athos does not bear out the stereotype that the more traditionalist a monastery is the less it will use these means. The monasteries' practical approach to technology reflects the Orthodox relation to modernity, attempting to protect the core of its spirituality and disciplines without rejecting modernity entirely.

(*Social Compass*,  
<http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal200920>)

### Swiss evangelicals show growth and competition

Academic interest in and journalistic curiosity about the development of evangelical churches in Europe continues, as evidenced in recent publications. The Swiss weekly *L'Hebdo* (January 10) devoted its cover to the growth of evangelicals, summarizing the results of a newly published research book by Jörg Stolz and a team of scholars at the University of Lausanne (*Le Phénomène Évangélique*, Labor et Fides). In Switzerland, evangelical believers of all types represent nearly 3 percent of the population (in addition to a portion of the faithful with evangelical leanings in the established Reformed Church). While

this seems to be modest at first sight, evangelicals as a whole are not declining (in contrast to mainstream churches) and are committed. In absolute numbers, there are more evangelicals than Reformed worshipping every week, although the latter still make up 28 percent of Swiss residents. Eighty-seven percent of evangelicals in Switzerland attend church at least once a week.

According to the researchers, a main advantage of evangelicals is their competitiveness: not only do they know how to market their message, but they also have varied offerings for modern people, relying on social networks. A strong sense of belonging characterizes more than 96 percent of evangelicals, and community feelings are strong, with few evangelicals marrying people outside of the fold. A much stronger emphasis on values (e.g. moral values) also contributes to a sense of collective identity. While a number of Reformed believers who move to another place let their affiliation lapse, evangelicals usually will reaffiliate with another local congregation. The researchers distinguish among three types of evangelical groups: conservative (10.7 percent), charismatic (32.5 percent) and classical (56.8 percent). About a third of converts come from non-evangelical backgrounds, and this is even more the case with charismatic congregations: half of their members were not raised in evangelical families. Evangelicals of the charismatic type are reported to be especially innovative, refashioning constantly what they offer. Influences of the charismatic style and beliefs can be found in evangelical churches of other types as well.

### New catechism confirms ecumenical opening and changes in the New Apostolic Church

Available first in German, the long-awaited new catechism of the New Apostolic Church (NAC) was officially released on December 4, 2012 and signals important developments in this largely European denomination, reports German Protestant theologian Kai Funkschmidt in the journal *Materialdienst der EZW* (January). Although the church maintains its belief in the special mission of its "apostles" for humanity, the new catechism attempts to formulate an ecumenical, open approach at a time of membership decline in Europe, where a number of church buildings have been sold. The catechism replaces a previous book that was published in 1992 and had only undergone minor changes since then. Summarizing the doctrine of the NAC, the new catechism is eight times longer than its predecessor. Parts had been made public in 2010 and 2011, leading to lively debates within the church, something that was itself a novelty in a hierarchical organization such as the NAC.

From the perspective of outside observers, the ecumenical opening represents the most significant development in the doctrines of the NAC and has also been emphasized at the release event. While the NAC had earlier presented itself as the true church of Christ, it is now spoken about as if it were one church among other denominations, although it still believe in the specific mission of its "apostles" for all Christians and the need of its ministry to deliver sacraments—with the excep-

tion of baptism: everybody who has been baptized in the name of the Trinity is considered as a Christian. The fact that the current doctrines of the NAC are now clearly explained will also help it to progress in dialogue efforts with other Christian denominations initiated in recent years.

Funkschmidt remarks that one should also pay attention to what is not mentioned or no longer taught in the new catechism. For instance, there is no mention of the ordination of women—which means the issue is still open, and “apostles” themselves concede that such a future development cannot be ruled out. Another important topic is that the Chief Apostle is no longer introduced as “the Representative of the Lord on Earth,” who can receive “new revelations;” the catechism now states that the Holy Spirit can provide “new insights” to the Apostle on topics that are dealt in the Scriptures while not being fully unveiled. Funkschmidt writes that the new catechism reflects the current stage in the ongoing ecumenical development of the NAC. Whatever the next steps will be and however fast it evolves, one could add that the NAC thus shares similar developments in other denominations in recent decades. It remains to be seen if such a process will manage to avoid divisions within the church, as often occurs in denominations going through significant transformations.

(*Materialdienst der EZW*, Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen, Auguststrasse 80, 10117 Berlin, Germany, <http://www.ezw-berlin.de>)

### **Tibetan Buddhism attracting different types of audience, various types of commitment**

While researchers writing on Buddhism in the West often—and correctly—distinguish between “ethnics” and “converts” as two different types of practitioners in Buddhist organizations in the West, there are also tensions “between those who value the traditional authority located within the lineage and those who value the rational authority located within the wider western culture,” writes John Stephen McKenzie in the current issue of *Fieldwork in Religion* (Vol. 7.1). McKenzie researched the Rokpa International in Scotland, where ethnic Tibetans are few (mostly monastics), and identified five categories of Buddhists: “lineage-trained Tibetans” are ethnic Buddhist who lead the organization and are primary power holders; they derive high status from their position in the lineage and attempt to preserve tradition, while being willing to adjust to an extent varying among themselves.

There are also, however, “lineage-trained Westerners,” some of whom have been ordained, enjoying a legitimacy derived from their degree of training, and association with famous teachers, knowledge of the tradition, but also status in secular society (e.g. holders of a PhD). Over time, recruitment procedures of those ordained have become stricter. Some active converts are lay Buddhists, described by McKenzie as “Westerners in lineage-adapted training,” who come to rely strongly on a teacher more than on literature through their practice, and

also strongly identify with the tradition and the organization; they may play an important role as volunteers and occupy minor influential positions. Then there are “Westerners adapting lineage training,” who mix their interest for Tibetan Buddhism with elements of other religions or alternative beliefs, from Christianity to New Age; they may be regulars, but remain eager to select and retain their independence in relation to the role of teachers. With their greater commitment to Western cultural values, they can access neither higher teachings nor power positions, but their financial contribution to the organization may be important in some cases.

Finally, there are “non-lineage trained spectators,” who visit centers without having an interest in becoming involved, but also provide a source of income to the organization, and in some cases may commit themselves at a later stage. McKenzie’s typology points to the utility of the sociological concepts of authority, power, and status for understanding the practice and development of Buddhism in the West. It also helps to understand the role played by different types of participants and their interdependency.

(*Fieldwork in Religion*, Equinox Publishing, Unit S3, Kelham House, 3 Lancaster Street, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S3 8AF, UK, <http://www.equinoxpub.com/FIR>)

## FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

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

**Alternatives.**

■ RW's editor and associate editor have issued a review of 2012 religion on the **Relioscope** website at: [http://religion.info/english/articles/article\\_594.shtml](http://religion.info/english/articles/article_594.shtml). Because RW now comes out bi-monthly (and thus a month into the new year), we decided to feature the annual review on the more frequently issued Relioscope site.

■ **Ecologies of Faith in New York City** (Indiana University Press) looks at how congregations interact with their neighborhoods in ways that are applicable beyond its New York contexts. The book, co-edited by RW's editor, Nadia Mian, and Weishan Huang, is largely the result of research from the Ecologies of Learning Project, founded by urban religion scholar Lowell Livezey, who led the way in studying how congregations are effected by neighborhood change, yet also exercise a degree of agency in these urban processes. The book's nine contributors examine the way congregations deal with the three major dynamics in New York City (and in global cities in general)—gentrification, immigration and entrepreneurial community development.

These themes are fleshed out in chapters dealing with subjects such as the "Disneyfication" of Times Square as reflected in the life of two evangelical churches; a survey of how congregations deal with neighborhood change (and defy secularization) in the "hipster" capital of Williamsburg, Brooklyn; the new religious movement Falun Gong and its relationship to Chinese immigration; the "Brazilianization" of evangelical churches in the New York area; and how the entrepreneurialism of a congregation generated social capital for members and neighbors in Manhattan's East Village.

*RW readers can receive a special discount price of \$25 for the book (regularly costing \$32), postage paid. Please send payment to: Religion Watch, P.O. Box 652, North Bellmore, NY 11710.*

■ The Institute for American Values has issued an in-depth report on divorce and its impact on personal religious and congregational life. The report **Does the Shape of Families Shape Faith?** brings together 13 studies on the effect of divorce on religious communities and basically concludes that by the time they reach adulthood, the children of divorce are markedly less religious compared to those from intact families. But the report does show some interesting anomalies: the children of divorce are "surprisingly likely to feel that they are more religious now than their parents ever were." While far less institutionally involved than their counterparts from intact families, the children of divorce were the "leading edge of a generation that considers itself 'spiritual but not religious.'" The ethnographies of children of

divorce suggest that their spiritualities are often characterized by loss or suffering. The report also looks at how the children of divorce feel rejected by congregations and offers advice about how congregations can build better relationships with them.

*The report is available at: <http://www.centerformarriageandfamilies.org/shape-of-families>*

■ **America's Blessings** (Templeton Press, \$19.96), by Rodney Stark, makes the case for the practical dimensions of religion in the U.S., as he reviews hundreds of studies showing the benefits of religious faith. In his usual readable and direct style, Stark takes issue with academics and journalists who denigrate or downplay the positive role of religion in areas ranging from charitable giving to mental and physical health, family life, sexuality, education, employment, and high culture. He is no less critical of those who claim that the U.S. is becoming more secular, arguing that the increase in non-affiliation does not suggest a growth in secularism or atheism (4 percent of Americans disavowed a belief in God in polls in 1944 and 2007). On crime, Stark writes that criminologists have largely ignored religion's preventative role. He tracks down rarely used self-reported data on crime from the General Social Survey showing that those who never attend church are about four times as likely to be picked up for criminal activity as are those who attend weekly. The effect is not just on an individual basis—high rates of religiosity in cities also create "moral communities" that tend to keep crime rates down.



Stark reports that greater degrees of religious commitment and involvement also create stronger families (in measures ranging from fertility to parent-child bonds and, contrary to some scholarship, a *lack* of violence). He uncovers similar patterns in sexuality, mental health and even politics (showing a correlation between sexual pleasure, general emotional well-being and “good citizenship” and greater rates of religious faith) and seems to enjoy “debunking” experts who predict or claim contrary findings. Other scholars are sure to criticize some of the findings Stark recounts or argue that there are also documented negative outcomes of religious belief and practice, but the gist of the book is that on balance, religion provides the far more benefits to Americans, including the atheists among them.

■ In his new book ***Military Chaplains and Religious Diversity*** (Palgrave Macmillan, \$85), sociologist Kim Philip Hansen portrays such clergy as living on the razor’s edge between commitment to their own faiths and military and government demands for respect for religious diversity, and religious freedom and neutrality. Hansen does an interesting job of tracing the history of the military chaplaincy in the U.S., noting that the ministry has faced added responsibilities, especially since the war on terrorism, such as serving in reconciling and cross-cultural capacities (e.g. acting as liaisons with Muslim leaders in combat areas). There has thus been an “about face” in how the military recognizes the importance of religion. Although

most of the book is based on ethnographic interview with chaplains, Hansen provides a snapshot of the constituencies the chaplains serve: religious “nones” are more highly represented in the military (at 25.5 percent) than among civilians, while Catholics (20 percent), Baptists (15 percent), and other Christians (30 percent) predominate among the believers.

Contrary to the much-publicized controversies over chaplains trying to Christianize the military, the 34 active-duty chaplains that Hansen interviewed—whom he says are fairly representative of the military chaplaincy—stress the collaborative and cooperative nature of their ministry—accommodating a wide range of faiths out of necessity and in respect for military personnel’s religious freedom (he provides an interesting account of how Mormons were accommodated in a joint Protestant service). But the more conservative chaplains, such as Missouri Synod Lutherans, stop short of cooperating with other groups and resist efforts to maintain a generic ministry, raising tensions among the chaplains. Others refuse to refer personnel to denominational meetings they disagree with, such as facilitating Wiccan services (although there is more cooperation with Islam and Muslims).

It is the ambiguities between proselytism (forbidden by the military) and evangelization that has raised concerns about chaplains “Christianizing” the armed forces. The divide among them is strongest in the context of counseling and the extent to which chaplains raise specific

religious concerns, the evangelicals being most likely to bring up their specific faith concerns. The “culture wars” among chaplains is magnified by a clear pattern (especially in the Navy) of deploying more mainline Protestants and Catholics than evangelicals to minister to the troops.

■ In the book ***Whatever Happened to Islamists?*** (Columbia University Press, \$27.50), a diverse collection of scholars look at how political Islam has failed, giving way to new forms of activism and Muslims relating to the state. Edited by Amel Boubekeur and Olivier Roy, who has charted Islamism and new forms of Muslim piety for the last two decades, the book expands on recent work done on “neo-fundamentalism,” which is less concerned with strictly political issues “targeted by Islamists, and rather focused on the spirituality of individual believers.” Such religious individualism, aided by the process of globalization, opens the door to a new kind of entrepreneurialism, as seen in the attempt to Islamize businesses, taking a more decentralized approach to political activism, and adopting new social media and an “Islamic culture of consumption.”

In a chapter on the changes in Islamism, Roel Meijer writes that the totalizing approach aiming for a complete Islamic state exemplified by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has given way to movements embracing more pluralistic and democratic values, including the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. The new activism may not even be “exclusively based on the

question of religion but aims to normalize political Islam as an ethical ideology that can be shared by anyone," writes Boubekur in another chapter. Other interesting contributions include a look at "heavy metal" Muslims—young people who are far from conservative in lifestyle, yet often religious—found in Sunni and Shia Islam from Morocco to Pakistan (although its base seems to be in Egypt); and an examination of "corporate Islam" in Malaysia that blends charity (*zakat*) with profit making.

■ ***The Social Significance of Religion in the Enlarged Europe***

(Ashgate, \$114.95) represents an ambitious attempt to apply a unified theory of secularization to the very diverse dynamics active in different European countries. The concept of an "enlarged Europe" is clearly in play in the book, edited by Detlef Pollack, Olaf Muller and Gert Pikel, as it offers comprehensive studies of a wide range of Western and Eastern European countries. The book is a result of the Church and Religion in an Enlarged Europe study, which conducted surveys in Germany, Ireland, Portugal, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Russia, Poland and Finland—thereby including Protestant, Catholic, and multi- and bi-religious societies. While most of the countries show some slippage in formal religious participation, the differences stand out more than the commonalities.

The Catholic societies of Poland, Croatia, Ireland and Portugal have retained strong levels of religious identity compared to the other nations (although Finland is less secularized than other Protestant countries, even though it shows

low church attendance), but at the same time there is a widespread growth of religious "individualization"—meaning eclectic and non-institutional spiritualities. Several contributors suggest that new religious movements exist alongside established churches rather than competing with or serving as alternatives to them. In the conclusion, the editors arrive at the concept of "differentiated secularization," which allows for a continuing loss of religious vitality due to modernization "at different levels, at different times and at different speeds." At least in the case of Europe, they claim to find little support for the market theory, which holds that a decrease of regulations on the "supply" of religious services and institutions will increase demand, although they make more allowance for individualized religion and spiritualities co-existing with secularization.

■ Originally coming out of a colloquium in 2009 at Monash University, ***Flows of Faith: Religious Reach and Community in Asia and the Pacific*** (Springer, \$139), edited by Lenore Manderson, Wendy Smith and Matt Tomlinson, is a collection of essays on how religion is being transformed in the wake of globalization. The volume reflects on such transformations by giving attention to the societies of Asia and the Pacific whose dynamism is driven by urbanization, migration and tourism. The contributors, most of whom are based in Australia, demonstrate the growing interest in religion and transnationalism. The collection's strength lies in the diversity of the cases, religious traditions and societies covered, ranging from Bosnian Muslims in Australia to Methodist practices in Fiji. The concept of religion, as far

as the collection is concerned, embraces both the historical traditions of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam and such new religious movements as Hare Krishna, Brahma Kumaris and Falun Gong.

The volume's ethnographically rich chapters offer substantive themes relative to religious transformation. These themes include belief, practice, identity, conversion and even the construction of religious space. But more broadly, the chapters can be seen to be addressing three broad questions. First, what strategies or responses does a religion employ as it interfaces with new environments and different kinds of people? As the experience of Brahma Kumaris shows, asserting purity as the ideal for every member has become essential as its rituals and principles are brought to other parts of the world. The case of the new religious movement Falun Gong, in contrast, shows that revisions can be carried out depending on circumstantial exigencies. Christianity, for example, was originally criticized by Master Li, Falun Gong's spiritual leader. But since Falun Gong's suppression by the Chinese government in the late 1990s, Master Li has drawn from the Book of Revelation to interpret the oppressive great red dragon to be the Communist Party.

The second question concerns how religious expansion occurs in Asia and the Pacific. The Nan Tian temple in Wollongong is an example of how Buddhism is making its presence felt and relevant to the locals in Australia. Accompanying the images in the temple are explanations, for example, that present Buddhism as a rational belief system and not merely a form of superstition. To the New Testament Church (NTC),

the occupation of sacred space was also important when it built its temple on Mount Zion in Taiwan. The move legitimized the spiritual validity of the NTC by reappropriating the mountain as a holy place where, interestingly, practices with arguably Chinese origins, such as geomantic principles, may have been introduced.

The last question that the volume addresses concerns the role of religion in political life. In Bali, the influx of tourists has dramatically altered the cultural and physical landscape of the island. But instead of resorting to fundamentalism, the Hindu movement of Ajeg Bali has called for the revitalization of the community's values and political institutions in dealing with social change. But perhaps a more decidedly political outlook can be found among the members of the Dead Sea Canoe Movement, who are calling for the establishment of theocracy in the Solomon Islands.

Because of the way the book is organized, the reader is left to discern the emergent themes and their connections to each other across the various chapters. The opening chapter also warrants a

more elaborate discussion of the volume's key concept: What is transnationalism? How one answers this question has implications for methodological and analytical approaches. If the volume, for example, seeks to address the question of how religion flows beyond borders, then why are many of the case studies still focused on the nation state? Methodological nationalism is certainly one area that the volume could have engaged.—*Reviewed by Jayeel Serrano Cornelio, a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Germany and at Ateneo de Manila University, the Philippines.*

■ The relationship between national belonging and religion is explored in a wide range of contributions in *Religious Identity and National Heritage* (Brill, \$142), edited by Francis-Vincent Anthony and Hans-Georg Ziebertz. The editors note that the rise of globalization has led to “de-territorialization,” which breaks down the bonds between national identity and religion, although multicultural populations can hold multiple loyalties and

nationalities that do not preclude these connections, particularly among immigrants. In any event, most of the contributions suggest the salience of national belonging to religious identity.

Chapters include a study of how Palestinian Christian and Muslim youth relate to national identity and how the former are less religious, but more engaged in social action; an examination of how the visitors to cathedrals in Britain may be reaffirming their national identity, but such visits reach many more on an emotional-spiritual than an intellectual level; and an important multi-national study on the rite of confirmation and its relation to national identity. Unlike other measures, confirmation rates have remained remarkably stable, even if confirmation has declined in more secularized countries. Researcher Frederick Schweitzer writes that confirmation is “one of the major programs in these countries that contribute to the maintenance of civil society by fostering social commitment and pro-social attitudes in general and by introducing people to the meaning of voluntary work.”

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

Within a few months of each other, **Florida Institute of Technology (FIT)** and **Texas A&M University-Kingsville** were among the first secular U.S. universities to create housing specifically for Catholic stu-

dents. With the cooperation of the Diocese of Orlando, FIT broke ground for the Martyr Star of the Sea Catholic Student Residence in December. In October a Catholic residence hall was dedicated at Texas A&M's Thomas Aquinas Newman Center. Matt Zerrusen of the Newman Student Housing Fund at FIT said that “Fifty percent of students on college campuses lose their faith by the time they graduate” and called the new facilities “pioneers” for what could become “authentic Catholic campuses inside secular ones” nationwide (Source: *America*, January 21–28).

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## 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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