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RELIGION WATCH
A NEWSLETTER MONITORING TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY RELIGION

INSIDE

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

RELIGIOSCOPE
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The Tea Party movement as the 'new Christian lite'?

The Tea Party movement has weak ties to evangelicals and the religious right, even though much of its rhetoric shares some commonality with religious conservatives, according to research presented at the meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA) in Las Vegas in August, which **RW** attended. In a survey of 1,800 Tea Party groups, Tina Fetner (McMaster University) and Brayden King (Northwestern University) found that the movement does not have strong ties to the religious right or to evangelical churches. Counties with large numbers of evangelicals showed no special association with the movement; in fact, the more churches there are in a county tends to crowd out Tea Party involvement. The most important predictive factor for whether a county had a large percentage of Tea Party involvement was whether it had a conservative history with a high voting rate for President George W. Bush and a high rate of foreclosures and bankruptcies and other indicators of economic inequality.

In another paper, however, John Bartkowski of the University of Texas at San Antonio found that along with economic and political grievances, there were also cultural issues that included religion in the movement, at least on the level of rhetoric used by its leadership. Bartkowski examined 77 Tea Party websites and found that 63 percent referred to religious grievances, the third-highest category after political (81 percent) and economic (78 percent) grievances. These religious elements could be explicit, citing God or Jesus, or generic, mentioning "creator," or they could be more veiled, stressing, for instance, "traditional family values" that would draw in religious right sympathizers. Bartkowski said that the websites show how religious rhetoric "is very cleverly woven into the tapestry of this movement." Some sites "hedged their bets" and stressed inclusivity on one page with veiled references to conservative religious themes on another. Bartkowski concluded that the Tea Party represents the "new Christian lite," building alliances with religious conservatives, but not identified with the religious right.

Sizing up 9/11's effect on Muslim–Christian relations

The effects of 9/11 on religious communities has both strengthened and weakened relations between Muslims and Christians. Up until 9/11, there were clear signs of cooperation between conservative Christians and American Muslims on moral and social issues—a coalition that has more or less broken down. A large segment of evangelicals have since become more antagonistic to Islam both on a political and theological level [see July/August RW]. At the same time, conservative critics charge that the growth of Muslim–Christian relations among more liberal Christians has encouraged a new syncretism and relativism, even coining the term "Chrislam" to target such interfaith activity. Even if exaggerated, these claims do point to real changes that have taken place on the interfaith front. This could be seen in the current issue of the Christian left maga-

zine *Sojourners* (September/October). One article features a church that invited Muslims to share worship space after 9/11, while another explores the possibility that many Christian and Islamic doctrines are compatible. These divisions over Christian–Muslim relations tend to mirror the American culture wars, but the situation is somewhat different abroad, particularly among missionaries.

In *Christianity Today* magazine (September), veteran missions scholar Dudley Woodberry writes that since 9/11 there is "increased resistance and receptivity to the gospel among Muslims, and increased hostility and peacemaking among Christians." He has found that more Christian conversions take place in those Muslim societies where there is a high degree of militancy or where Muslim factions are at odds, even though persecution may develop. Peacebuilding efforts have expanded alongside evangelization programs. "Evangelical missionaries such as the Southern Baptists have, in general, opposed the negative stereotyping of Muslims in favor of a more cordial attitude," Woodbury writes.

But 9/11 raised a new set of issues for missionaries. Security has become a key concern, with missionaries now receiving training in this area. The new concern for integrity in working with Muslims has led to greater transparency in mission agencies. Most noteworthy has been the increased number of students who want to be missionaries to Muslims and the diverse approaches to these missions. Some have stayed with the traditional method of requiring converts to make a clean break with Islamic culture, while others try to adapt the Christian message to Muslim surroundings: "There are even imams in places like East Africa who preach from the Bible in their mosques."

(*Christianity Today*, 465 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188; *Sojourners*, 3333 14th St, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010)

Conservative Jews working with intermarried go below the radar

"Faced with the prospects of losing members because of a hostile environment for intermarried couples," Conservative Jewish synagogues are giving non-Jewish spouses membership opportunities, even if they face disapproval from denominational leadership, reports *Forward* (September 9). Although the national Conservative leadership opposes membership rights for non-Jews, these dissenting congregations are going beyond the usual efforts to accommodate intermarried couples by offering limited voting rights to these couples. In these cases, non-Jews still cannot take leadership positions. Conservative Judaism has occupied the middle ground between opposition to intermarriage found in Orthodoxy and the Reform movement's wide accommodations to the practice.

The denomination's Rabbinical Assembly prohibits its rabbis from officiating at interfaith weddings. But other policies regarding the place of intermarried couples in Conservative synagogues are vague, leading the assembly currently seeking to revise its policies. But over the years, the exclusionary attitudes both in synagogues and in the leadership have caused "an exodus of intermarried couples from Conservative synagogues to Reform ones," writes Naomi Zeveloff. But things began to change in Conservative synagogues in the early 2000s, when the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs initiated a campaign to integrate intermarried couples. Since then, "an untold number" of synagogues have upheld a vague understanding of membership—letting intermarried couples vote, although officially maintaining restrictions—while some are even more openly challenging any restrictions.

CURRENT RESEARCH

▸ **Religion is becoming "de-institutionalized" among America's working class, according to a paper presented by Bradford Wilcox at the meeting of the ASA in Las Vegas in August.** In an analysis of the General Social Survey (GSS) and the National Survey of Family Growth, researchers found demographic, economic and cultural factors influential in the downturn of working-class participation in congregational life. The decline is most significant for white working-class people and is "part and parcel of the marginalization" of this class in American society. The rise of male unemployment among the working class may make some feel that they don't belong in church if

they don't have a good job. The demographic reality that working-class people are less likely to be living in intact families may be another factor in discouraging them from going to churches that stress the traditional family. The researchers found that members of the working class are less likely than in previous years to embrace traditional attitudes toward sex and divorce.

▸ **Since 1991, American women have become less likely to attend church and see their faith as important in their lives, and they also hold less orthodox Christian beliefs about God as creator and the Devil as a real person, according to a report on religious change in the U.S. by pollster George Barna.** The *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* (August 2) cites the study as showing that most women still believe in a personal God (70 percent) and personal Devil (56 percent), and claim that their faith is very important to them (63 percent). But all those rates have slid, according to Barna. However, 44 percent of American women—6 percent higher than 1991—report a spiritual change that remains important to them, an experience that Barna calls being born again. Women's church attendance has decreased by 11 percent during this time, thus they are having religious experience outside of church or Sunday school.

▸ **Muslim apostates, i.e. those who leave Islam either for another religion or no religion, have varied reasons for leaving the fold, often depending on whether they are men or women, according to a paper presented at the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR) conference in Las Vegas.** The study, conducted by Sean Currie of the University of South Florida, examined 60 narratives of apostates from Pakistan, the U.S., Malaysia and India found on the websites ApostatesofIslam.com and Faithfreedom.org, two of the major sites collecting such testimonials. The most frequent themes of the apostasy narratives involved the apostates' skepticism, concern for the truth, philosophical objections, and their views of Islam as being intolerant, oppressive, hypocritical, sexist, violent and exerting control over one's life. Men were most likely to leave the faith for philosophical and theological reasons, while women left for purposes of "liberation" and to regain control of their lives from what they believed was an intolerant and oppressive religion. Women experienced more cases of divorce and negative family relations over their apostasy than men, who tended to leave the religion earlier in their lives.

▸ **Heterodox and esoteric spirituality are practiced more widely in Russia than traditional Orthodox Christianity, according to a study in the journal *Social Compass* (September).** In the first large-scale survey on the extent of heterodox religion and spirituality in Russia, researcher Demyan Belyaev found that heterodox religiosity has become the "dominant form of religiousness and involves at least 45 percent of the population, compared with 40 percent for traditional (Christian) religiousness and 10 percent for scientific materialism." The study defined heterodoxy as embracing alternative practice and teachings, such as astrology, ESP, reincarnation and magic.

The majority of people questioned agreed with 13 of the 18 elements of the heterodox worldviews on which they were queried. Women, young people and more educated people were more likely to hold esoteric beliefs than older and less educated Russians, although because old people are less likely to have received a higher education, it was difficult to draw a correlation among these factors. While there is a significant degree of mixing traditional with heterodox religiosity (27 percent of the respondents), Belyaev notes that more people are involved *only* in heterodox religiousness than those involved *only* in Christian religiousness.

(*Social Compass*, http://intl-scp.sagepub.com)

▸ **Germans are more likely to have negative and intolerant views of religious minorities and be personally unacquainted with them compared to other Europeans, according to a study by University of Munster researchers.** The paper, presented at the ASR meeting, compared attitudes toward religious minorities in Germany, France, the Netherlands, Denmark and Portugal through surveys of 1,000 residents in each country (allowing for East–West differences in Germany) in 2010. The researchers found that while the majority of French, Dutch and Danes think positively of Muslims (62 percent, 56 percent and 55 percent, respectively), only 34 percent Germans in the West and 26 percent of Germans in the East do so.

The researchers found that the low level of contact Germans have with such religious minorities may be a key factor in such differences (40 percent of Germans in the West have such contact, compared with 66 percent of the French, who had the most favorable view of Muslims). Germans were more likely to favor restrictions against religious minorities; only 49 percent think all religions should have the same rights, compared to 72 in Denmark, 82 percent in Holland, 86 percent in France and 89 percent in Portugal. Compared to other Europeans, Germans' images of Hindus, Buddhists and Jews were also more negative.

▸ **In a new study of religious restrictions worldwide by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, it was found that there has been an increase of such restrictions in 23**

of the world's 198 countries (12 percent), a decrease in 12 countries (6 percent) and stability in 163 countries (83 percent). Among the 25 most populous countries, restrictions against religion between mid-2006 and mid-2009 increased in China, Nigeria, Russia, Thailand, the United Kingdom and Vietnam. These increases were mainly due to rising levels of social hostilities involving religion. In Egypt and France, the growth of restrictions was mainly the result of government restrictions. The rest of the 25 most populous countries did not experience substantial changes in either dimension of religious restrictions. The region that showed the greatest increase of religious restrictions was the Middle East, with one-third of its countries imposing greater restrictions. Social hostility to religion increased most in the European countries of Bulgaria, Denmark, Russia, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Social hostilities have also been rising in Asia, particularly in China, Thailand and Vietnam. (For a copy of the report, visit: http://pewforum.org)

▸ **A study of religion on university campuses in England shows a higher proportion of Christians than in the general British population, but also less of an evangelical presence on campus than might be expected.** The paper, presented at the August meeting of the ASR, was conducted by researchers Mathew Guest, Kristin Aune, Rob Warner and Sonya Sharma, who studied 14 universities and colleges and 4,500 respondents. The survey found that 23 percent of respondents considered themselves religious, 30 percent spiritual, 35 percent non-religious, and 12 percent were not sure. Fifty-two percent of students identified with Christianity, compared to 44 percent in the general population. Thirty-six percent reported no religious affiliation, compared with 51 percent of "nones" in the general population.

The Christian students were not predominantly associated with evangelicalism—35 percent considered themselves "mainstream" Protestants, 29 percent Catholic, 19 percent evangelical and 19 percent Pentecostal. While evangelical churches and the evangelical campus ministry known as Christian Unions show the most growth on campuses, there is a "low level of affinity" with evangelicalism among Christian students, said Mathew Guest, one of the researchers. In fact, 50 percent of Christian students never go to church. Any Christian commitment shown by these students is usually acquired in their pre-college years. It was found that 79 percent of Christians said that their religious commitments stayed the same over the course of their college education; in contrast, 34 percent of Muslim students said they have become more religious since attending university.

Scandinavia a 'secular heaven'? Not so fast

In the past few years, such countries as Denmark and Sweden have been viewed as laboratories demonstrating not only that secularism is alive and well, but that such societies are more prosperous and healthier than religious ones. But such a claim ignores both the changing religious situations in Sweden and Denmark and the Christian influences that have strongly shaped these countries' social ethos and economic practices, write Kjell Lejon and Marcus Agnafors in the Lutheran journal *Dialog* (Fall). Lejon and Agnafors (both of Linkoping University in Sweden) engage American sociologist Phil Zuckerman's 2008 book *Society without God*, which argues that secularity, particularly as it is found in such societies as Denmark and Sweden, is strongly correlated with (if not a cause for) impressively high levels of societal health and well-being.

The authors argue that Sweden and Denmark are not so much secular as different in the level and kinds of religious belief from such countries as the U.S. The 149 Swedes and Danes Zuckerman studied did not measure up to his criteria for religious belief because they were not concerned with sin and did not hold to a "literal, punishing or forgiving God of the Bible." But for the average Scandinavian, "sin is simply seen as secondary to the idea of a loving God," nor do they hold to the same idea of God as Americans; the same rhetoric is common in Scandinavian churches. Lejon and Agnafors cite a recent focus group study (by Ina Rosen) of Danes showing that while they did not respond to traditional, "routinized" religious language, once the religious concepts were "unpacked" for them, an unexpected three-quarters of them claimed to be believers.

Zuckerman's and others' portrayal of these Scandinavian societies as "secular heavens" downplays the way they are becoming "post-secular," with both atheism and religion returning to the stage, es-

pecially in Sweden. The authors write that there is a growing interest in Christianity, with some well-known figures in the Swedish cultural establishment (Elisabeth Sandlund and Goran Skytte) writing of their conversion experiences. In comparing 1994 to 2007, one study finds a new openness to discussions of question of faith and Christianity. Lejon and Agnafors conclude that the idea that Danish and Swedish individual secular values are writ large on the political level where secular policies are then enacted to promote prosperity, social well-being and democracy ignores the strong religious (Lutheran) that have shaped the welfare state, literacy and equality in these countries.

(*Dialog*, 61 Seminary Ridge, Gettysburg, PA 17325)

Orthodox journalism in Russia moves toward professionalization

There have been increased efforts toward professionalizing Orthodox media in Russia in recent years, reports Anna Briskina-Müller (University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany) in *Religion und Gesellschaft im Ost und West* (October). Although some media do not always manage to find a tone different from the older, Soviet-inherited style, some new projects attempt to convey a more modern view of the Church. In the late 1980s, there was as yet no religious journalism in the Soviet Union and Orthodox media were either pious or official publications. Suddenly, freedom of expression was available, but everything had to be built from scratch. When a first meeting of Russian journalists writing on religion was organized in 1996, fewer than 10 people attended.

Official Orthodox media work within the Moscow Patriarchate used to be divided among several departments and there was no dedicated media department. After the current Patriarch Kirill took over as head of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), one of his early decisions was to establish a Synodal Section for Information (SINFO) in March 2009. The goals of this unit are not only to improve the quality of church reporting, but also to bring some level of supervision over content. There have also been initiatives such as the creation of a video canal on YouTube. Some efforts have been made in the field of journalistic training, as well as monitoring errors made by the media on the Church and responding with corrections and clarifications. In order to win over the (sometimes critical) Orthodox bloggers, the Patriarch has already twice invited bloggers to join him during his official travels and report on events in their blogs. In fact, very few Orthodox media are under Church control.

Currently, there are around 1,000 registered Orthodox media in Russia, showing great differences. Briskina-Müller cites the example of Portal-Credo.ru, which presents itself as an independent news agency that reports critically on the ROC. But its main editors actually belong to Orthodox groups that have separated from the ROC and thus report in a way that suggests that "true believers" are looking for alternatives to the "official" Church. Besides official ROC media and others that are critical, there are also a number of church-friendly media (some independent, some less so) that strive to provide exchanges of information and reliable analysis, although they will usually prefer to avoid some topics that might be too sensitive. Regarding secular media, while they were rather eager to report on the Church in the years after the end of communist rule and were also initially quite interested in Patriarch Kirill's reform efforts, they tend to provide less coverage today, except regarding some of the Patriarch's official appearances or when something extraordinary happens (e.g. miracles).

(*Religion und Gesellschaft im Ost und West*, P.O. Box 9329, 8036 Zürich, Switzerland)

Revival of polygamy among Muslims in Britain

There is an unexpected rise in polygamy among Muslims in Britain, reports *The Australian* newspaper (September 27). Using figures from the Islamic Sharia Council, the BBC Asian Bureau reported that for the first time, polygamy is now among the top ten reasons for divorce, as wives decide that they can no longer tolerate competing with one another. Out of 700 applications for divorce in 2010, 43 cited polygamy as the reason. Polygamy is illegal in Britain, but Muslim men can take a second, third or even a fourth wife under Sharia law in a ceremony known as the *nikah*.

There are three main reasons for the growth in polygamy: the increasing number of young Muslim men who want to practice a more orthodox or conservative form of

the religion (these marriages have the lowest rate of success); when a first marriage fails and the husband does not want to have an extra-marital affair, he will marry a second woman he is attracted to; and a small group of men whose parents live in the country of origin and marry a women from the community there to help look after them. Because these marriages are not recognized in Britain, there is a growing concern that wives in polygamous marriages are unaware that they have no legal rights. The Muslim Council of Britain advises all those who marry only under Sharia law to have a contract in place setting out who is entitled to what.

Islamic healing serves as alternative to Southeast Asian Muslims

A growing number of Muslims in Southeast Asia are turning away from Western medical care in favor of Islamic medicine (or "medicine of the Prophet"), a loosely defined set of remedies based on the Quran and other Islamic texts, according to the *Guardian* newspaper (September 26). The trend in Islamic treatments is often associated with "fundamentalists" who charge that Western, chemically laced prescriptions aim to poison or defile Muslims with medicines made from pigs. There have also been reports that members of terrorist groups have been involved in Islamic remedies as healers and sellers, and that some clinics are used as recruiting grounds for extremist causes. But the newspaper reports that most of those seeking out Islamic clinics, hospitals and pharmacies appear to be moderate Muslims, "reflecting a rise in Islamic consciousness worldwide." "Islamic medicine carries a cachet that, by taking it, you are reinforcing your faith—and the profits go to Muslims," says Sidney Jones, an expert on Islam in Southeast Asia with the International Crisis Group.

The industry is also going high-tech and employs modern advertising methods. One university is developing an application for mobile devices to query what Islamic remedies are recommended by teachings known as *hadiths*, which, along with the Quran, make frequent references to diseases, remedies and healthy living. In Indonesia, Islamic alternative healing increased soon after a government promotional campaign in 2009, says Brury Machendra, owner of a clinic in suburban Jakarta. Only one such clinic existed in the area two years ago, but now there are 20, with 70 others waiting for permits. Machendra says most Indonesian Muslims don't doubt conventional medicine, but the health services are so poor and expensive that many people seek out alternatives. Some doctors are trying to bring Muslim elements into the Western tradition. His clinic offers herbal medicine, a bloodletting treatment known as *bekam* and exorcisms in which a therapist places a hand on a patient's head while chanting verses from the Quran. He acknowledges that clinics such as his benefit from militant Muslims telling "people not to go to infidel doctors and say that buying Western medicine is forbidden." Jemaah Islamiyah, an Al Qaeda-linked militant network, is said to have connections to some herbal manufacturers and to operate many of the country's Islamic medicine clinics, according to Jones. But the clinics are aimed more at building solidarity among Islamists rather than recruiting militants.

Suicide attacks gaining wider legitimacy among Muslims

Due to continued propaganda by various Islamist groups and *ulemas*, mainstream Muslim perceptions of what constitutes legitimate "martyrdom operations" in war seem to have gained wider latitude, writes independent scholar Shireen Khan Burki in the journal *Terrorism and Political Violence* (September-October). In Muslim tradition, there had been a strong taboo against suicide in any form. This underwent a gradual re-examination, however, following the advent of unprecedented suicide attacks since the 1980s, Burki observes. Some people considered as scholars attempted to distinguish between such sacrifice operations and suicides, provided some rules are respected (such as pure intent or inflicting losses on the enemy).

Several leading Islamic scholars (both Sunni and Shia) have consistently condemned any type of suicide attacks. Others, however, have come to justify them in some circumstances (notably Palestinian resistance against Zionism) or have vacillated between condemnation and justification, especially in situations where there is considerable military imbalance. Most Muslims continue to reject

the legitimacy of suicide bombings in any case. However, the fact that a percentage (varying from one country to another: up to 39 percent in Lebanon, 34 percent in Nigeria, but 20 percent in Pakistan or Egypt, according to Pew polls) expresses support for the use of suicide attacks in defense of Islam "suggests a disturbing evolution in thought on behavior traditionally considered *haram* [non-permissible]." The fact that Muslims often fall victims to such attacks obviously hurts the Islamist case; but there has been increasing support, according to Burki, for operations targeting non-Muslims. On the other hand, the lack of a strong response by many people in the clerical establishment and the contradictory opinions among them have served the Islamists. While jihad followed clear rules of engagement, the ambiguities regarding suicide attacks have opened a door to "anarchical jihad."

(Terrorism and Political Violence, Taylor & Francis, 325 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19106)

Japan's new spiritual fad: pilgrimage to power spots

In 2010, many Japanese sought to gain access to places considered as "power spots," write Hotaka Tsukada and Toshihiro Omi in the annual *Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture* (No. 35, 2011). The "power spot boom" is seen as a renewal of sacred sites. Surveys reveal that television programs have played a key role in spreading the notion of power spots, especially after statements by some famous entertainment figures who associate such sacred sites with luck and success. The phrase "power spot" had appeared as early as 1986 for designating "a sacred site where universal spiritual powers gather." There was a gradual increase in the usage of the term during the 2000s, until its use exploded in the media in 2010.

Magazines—especially those geared to female audiences—started to publish guides to power spots, with all types of information of interest to tourists in the manner of tourist guides. Some power spots are ancient shrines, while others are natural spots (mountains, waterfalls). While a few spots can be found abroad (Sedona, Hawaii), "domestic spots are driving the boom." This has boosted tourism to some sites. However, this presents problems for conservation work at some natural sites. Polls conducted in 2010 indicated that between one-third and one-half of Japanese think that power spots do indeed exist. But it remains to be seen if this interest will be sustained and if "power spots" will become an accepted phenomenon, or if it will give way to new spiritual interests, the authors conclude.

(Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 18 Yamazato-cho, Showa-ku, Nagoya 466-8673, Japan)

FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

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

■ ***Nova Religio***, the journal of "alternative and emergent religions," devotes most of its August issue to Jews and new religious movements (NRMs), looking both at expressly Jewish movements, such as the Kabbalah Center and Messianic Judaism, and the often-disproportionate involvement of Jews in other religious groups and spiritual movements, such as Buddhism. In the introduction to the issue, Yakkov Ariel notes that Jewish converts to NRMs have often followed a pattern of seeking to retain an element of Jewish identity even as they adopt new spiritualities and practices. This is most clearly seen in the large Jewish involvement, even leadership, in American Buddhist groups, with even the name "Ju-Bus" given to such adherents. She notes that this is not just a contemporary or an American phenomenon—there was strong Jewish involvement in Christian Science and the early Hare Krishna movements, and there is growing Israeli involvement in all kinds of Jewish and non-Jewish NRMs. American Jews have also been prominent in the anti-cult movement, which was obviously related to many Jewish young people joining these groups.

The issue carries interesting articles on Jews in NRMs and how, in one way or another, they deal with issues of syncretism and globalization, particularly the tension between universalist and ethnic tendencies. Within Buddhism there is a pattern

of Jews retaining their ethnic and, in some sense, religious identities, with many cases of reversals (starting on the Buddhist spiritual path, but then adopting a more intentional form of Judaism) or mixing and borrowing of traditions, which was done on a large scale in the Jewish renewal movement. An article on Messianic Judaism portrays a movement split between those stressing its evangelical (and evangelistic) roots and those stressing a Judaic identity that would downplay the necessity of converting other Jews to belief in Christ as messiah. The interesting feature about the Messianic Jewish movement is that the pattern of Jewish seekers coming into non-Jewish movements is reversed: it is the Gentile Christians who are becoming numerous in this group.

For more on this issue, contact: *Nova Religio*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 94704.

■ The appearance of the ***Atlas of the American Orthodox Christian Churches*** (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, $19.95) will fill a large gap in public knowledge about Orthodox churches. The book, edited by Alexei Krindatch, brings together survey research, official statistics, history, and descriptions of both Eastern Orthodox churches and Oriental Orthodox people and institutions (such as the Coptic and Syrian Orthodox churches). Much of the quantitative information is based on the 2010 US National Census of Orthodox Christian Churches, which provides statistics on both the national and county levels, detailing the numbers of parishes and monasteries, as well as the numbers of members and adherents. Krindatch notes that the census is unique in that the figures come directly from parishes rather than larger bodies, whose counts have been known to be inaccurate and dated. Krindatch arrives at a figure of 0.34 percent for the average of Orthodox adherents in the U.S. population—considerably lower than official church estimates. The descriptions of 21 Orthodox bodies provide interesting accounts of their histories and current prospects, as well as color maps of membership figures. Most of the churches show a pattern of difficulty in retaining younger generations, but, at the same time, parish revitalization coming from an influx of recent immigrants and a wave of converts from non-Orthodox backgrounds.

■ In his new book ***American Religion: Contemporary Trends*** (Princeton University Press, $22.95), Mark Chaves agrees with most observers that continuity rather than rapid change marks religious life in the U.S. Yet the Duke University sociologist argues that new trends are unfolding that will create a more polarized nation in terms of faith and moral issues. Continuity since the early 1970s—the starting point of Chaves' analysis of the General Social Survey and National Congregation Survey—remains on questions of those saying they know God exists, claiming the born-again experience, engaging in regular prayer and Bible study, and watching religious television. He acknowledges that looking at a longer period of time on such a question as belief in God does show a degree of change; in the 1950s, 99 percent believed in God, whereas the percentage in 2008 was 93 percent.

It is the content of belief that has most markedly changed, such as belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, as well as a loosening of connections between denominations and congregations (probably the fastest-growing trend), more religious diversity (and appreciation of it), the growing number of unaffiliated among younger generations, a diffuse spirituality and a "softening of religious involvement" (although noting that much of this change took place before 1990). The brief book (139 pages) is not heavy on explanation, theory or prediction, but Chaves tends to take an institutional and demographic approach; he discounts a growth of traditional religious beliefs, arguing that it is more the case that the religious population is more concentrated in politically and socially conservative churches (increasingly in large congregations, which lends them more social influence and at least the impression of strength) and that these groups have more children than do liberal churches. Chaves sees increased polarization between religiously active and largely conservative Americans and those who are unaffiliated or even less active.

■ ***Religion and Reaction*** (Rowman and Littlefield, $55), by Susan B. Hansen, looks at the growth and strategies of the secularist movement in relation to the growth of conservative religious politics—a topic that has received scant attention. Hansen, a political scientist, sees what she calls the "seculars"—which can mean anyone from atheists to the religiously unaffiliated—on the ascendancy in American society, estimating that they represent between 12 and 16 percent of the population. Early on in the book, Hansen takes sides in the culture wars and declares herself as a "feminist, a political and religious liberal, and a supporter of gay rights and reproductive freedom," but her analysis does not show heavy bias. Using rational choice (cost-benefit) theory and the concept of a "morality policy cycle" (i.e. that threats to perceived fundamental values cause intense conflict until a new consensus is reached), Hansen argues that the religious right has had considerable success in mobilizing support.

But she notes that the organizatio-

nal and cultural bases of the secularists operate on a number of fronts: The "hard-core" secularists, made up of atheist and secular humanist groups, are engaging in political activism, followed by the advocacy work of the more moderate church–state separation and civil liberties groups and their legal advocacy (with receptive liberal courts); the media and entertainment industry, upholding secular values that both challenge conservative views and oppose censorship; a growing number of scientists targeting policies informed by religion (from creationism to sex education); and the increasingly secular Democratic Party (particularly among younger voters). Hansen acknowledges that secularists tend to be divided among themselves and highly individualistic (especially evident among atheists), making mobilization on issues difficult. Even in liberal states, secularists and other liberal activist groups found it difficult to challenge traditional religious groups' superior skills of fund-raising and organizing the rank-and-file. The competitive edge among secular in Internet organizing or scientific advocacy can easily be adapted by religious groups (and has been).

■ ***Rethinking Secularism*** (Oxford University Press, $24.95), edited by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan van Antwerpen, brings together much of the rethinking about the secular–religious divide that has been fomenting in academia over the past decade into one volume. Secularism means different things to different contributors, but in general the chapters are concerned with the political meaning of the phenomenon and how the resurgence of religion in public life challenges traditional secular thinking, particularly as it is found in the field of international relations. The common themes running through the book are partly intentional, as the contributors took part in the same conference and they often serve as interlocutors of Charles Taylor and his well-known 2009 book The Secular Age. In fact, in the first chapter Taylor provides a succinct summary of his argument about how the way modern people speak of both religion and the secular and how they are related would be difficult for pre-moderns to understand.

Jose Casanova follows Taylor with his argument that just as there is growing religious pluralism, there are "multiple secularisms" in different societies that are shaped by questions of the separation of "church and state" and state regulation of religion. He concludes his comparative chapter with the argument that separation between church (or mosque or temple) and state is less important for the maintenance of democracy than religious freedom. The "multiple secularisms" argument is fleshed out in political scientist Alfred Stepan's lengthy chapter on how democratic and non-democratic regimes reveal different models of religious–secular relations. Stepan draws on his and his colleagues' recent research on India and some (often non-Arab) Muslim societies that show high levels of democratic governance and activity while they adhere to what he calls a "respect all, positive cooperation and principled distance" model of religion–state relations. Such countries as Senegal, Indonesia and India accommodate even minority religions with public holidays and other forms of state support, while in some cases making secular demands on them.

Most noteworthy are Stepan and colleagues' recent survey findings from India (also shown in separate research from Indonesia and Senegal) reporting that it is among those individuals who show the most "intensity of religious practice" (especially in Hinduism and Islam) who also demonstrate the most support for democracy and non-authoritarianism in politics. Other chapters of interest include an analysis of how Muslim and Christian humanitarian groups have changed (sometimes in secular directions) under the influence of globalization and the war on terror; an examination of how the study of fundamentalism has grown in sophistication since the "Fundamentalism Project" of two decades ago; and Richard Madsen's attempt to apply Taylor's work to Asian religions, in the process providing an overview of patterns of religious syncretism, revival and conflict in this region.

■ Much of the talk of "postsecularism" is vague, but the new book ***Postsecular Cities*** (Continuum, $39.95) suggests that the term makes the most sense in relation to urban dynamics and changes. The book, edited by Justin Beaumont and Christopher Baker, argues that the limits of the secularization thesis are shown in the emergence of faith-based social services and the crisis of welfare states; the reassertion of religion in the public sphere by immigrants, especially Muslims; and the rise of transnational religions, such as Pentecostal megachurches. The book has a heavy European accent, but carries several contributions that are valuable in understanding religious trends in cities. Among them is an interesting chapter on how many churches' approach to urban life has shifted from seeing their roles as engaging in mission work to "save the city" to that of aligning themselves closely with the commercial and professional character of the city.

Author Robbie B. H. Gohe looks at megachurches that blend with their commercial environment, noting that this is not only an American development and profiling such cases

as Hillsong in Australia and New Creation in Singapore. These congregations actively partner with the business community and, in the case of New Creation church, tourist attractions, such as Santosa Island. Another chapter on postsecularity and urban planners (at least pertaining to the Vancouver, Canada case study) accounts for how these professionals use spirituality (often generic and multicultural varieties) in their designs. Other chapters include a study of the increasing importance of faith-based groups in the UK; a study of how zoning law controversies in London have shifted from non-conformist, Catholic and Jewish congregations to Muslim and black Pentecostal congregations; and an overview of Amsterdam's management of faith-based groups and its tendency to exclude groups that conflict with the city's policies (again, mainly Muslims and evangelicals).

■ Sociologist Bryan Turner covers an impressive range of topics in his new book ***Religion and Modern Society*** (Cambridge University Press, $32.99)—from the spirituality of tattooing; to the religious implications of increased longevity; to the dynamics of Buddhist, Muslim and Christian life in Singapore. The book also manages to discuss and summarize an exhaustive range of literature dealing with religion in society (its reference section covers 34 pages). But the seemingly disparate chapters in the book begin to show an underlying unity as Turner repeatedly turns to the relation of consumerism to secularization. Unlike other secularization theorists, Turner doesn't see this process as diminishing religion's private or even public pervasiveness in many societies. But the way in which religion in contemporary societies is transformed into spirituality and then turned into a consumer item is, in his view, a form of secularization. The loss of religion's traditional communal dimension means that religion merges with the "global economic system in terms of the circulation of religious commodities (amulets, prayer books, pilgrimages and so forth), by the creation and promotion of religious lifestyles (often associated with body management, veiling, diet and dining), by the adoption of modern communication technologies ... by the creation of religious cultures that among other things blend secular music with religious themes ...".

Because religions thus become powerful markers of identity that cut across national boundaries and secular forms of citizenship, governments increasingly see the need to "manage religion." Turner notes that such management often relates to concerns about radicalism and national security. He provides a case study of Singapore—where Turner has many years of personal experience—and its heavy regulation of religion and compares it to other societies that have maintained religious freedom, but now are forced to form religious policies to manage the tensions resulting from competing faith traditions. Turner may exaggerate the importance of consumerism in understanding religion and secularization around the world, but the book does a good job of showing how the religious market is increasingly a global one.

■ The new book ***The Missing Martyrs*** (Oxford University Press, $24.95), by University of North Carolina sociologist Charles Kurzman, is unique among the steady stream of books on terrorism and Islam in devoting most of its pages to arguing how Islamic extremists have been largely ineffective and unpopular in their attacks both against the West and fellow Muslim societies. He builds his case by conducting and examining survey research, interviewing Muslims (those both sympathetic to and against extremism), and studying extremist internal documents and websites. Kurzman notes that there may well have been tens of thousands of prospective Islamic militants in the last quarter of a century, but most of them received little significant training and have dropped out of the movement. Even if they are still active, more than 99 percent of the world's billion Muslims have ignored the militants' constant calls to action. Kurzman finds that in the five years after 9/11, only 40 Muslim-Americans planned or carried out acts of domestic terrorism.

The main reason for the dearth of terrorists is that they are facing division and competition on several fronts. The global jihadists, such as Al Qaeda, compete for followings with nationalist-based Islamic movements, such as the Taliban of Afghanistan or Hamas of Palestine. While the former envisions a worldwide Islamic revolution, the latter groups tend to be more interested in Islamicizing their own societies and fighting foreign intervention. Although there are periods when nationalist-based terrorists work together with global Islamist terrorists, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq during the wars with the U.S., these alliances are usually temporary due to ideological and theological differences.

Global Islamic terrorist movements also compete with more liberal Islamic movements and societies. While liberal Islamic movements and institutions often represent a small elite in many societies, Kurzman cites their influence in the growing democratic sentiments of majorities in Muslim countries. At the same time, many Muslims still support the implementation of Sharia, or Islamic law, in their societies. It is this combination of social conservatism and

democratic tendencies that offers the best counterweight to the appeal of terrorists, he adds. Kurzman concludes that while terrorism may be exaggerated by governments and security experts, it is not the case that political leaders and specialists can easily defuse animosity and violent incidents. An emphasis on listening to Islamic countries' concerns and building stronger relationships with civilians on the ground during armed conflicts may go some way toward fostering more positive attitudes toward the U.S., he writes.

■ In ***The End of Innocence?*** (University of Hawaii Press, $28), French researchers Andree Feillard and Remy Madinier painstakingly document the rapidly changing face of Islam in Indonesia, confounding stereotypes that posit Indonesian Muslims as either the peaceful and tolerant "exception" to global militancy or as the sleeping giant of radicalism (Indonesia being the largest Muslim country in the world). The authors make it clear that Indonesian Islam has frequently shifted between democratic and more militant Islamist expressions of the religion—sometimes showing both tendencies at the same time. The authors root their analysis in Indonesian history starting in 1967—the year that the reformist Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council was founded. But even before then Muslims were divided over the role of Islamic law in a society striving to create a harmonious and interfaith democracy (defined by the secular ideology known as Pancasila).

To put it very briefly, it has actually been the ongoing attempts to manage (even "manipulate") Islam by authoritarian governments that have led to various "mutations" of moderate and reformist Islam into more radical forms (often under foreign influence), according to Feillard and Madinier. The book's tracing of reactions and counter-reactions between the government and various Islamic groups over four decades makes for difficult reading for those unfamiliar with the Indonesian situation (not helped by an awkward translation). But the concluding chapters provide an up-to-date and concise account of how the Islamic scene shows a large middle-class conservative Muslim movement that can be, in one wing, intolerant of religious minorities, but in another wing, supportive of democracy and pragmatic in politics; with radical expressions that the former movement seems to be limiting in the past few years; and a smaller liberal minority that has been a particularity of Indonesia in the Muslim world, but may have a difficult time making the case for tolerance in a nation marked by the "tightening of interfaith boundaries and the decline of syncretistic forms of religions ...".

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

1) The formation of two new Christian pressure groups during the U.S. government deadlock over raising the debt ceiling in early August showed both new and old fault lines in religious political engagement. The concern about possible cuts in social services rallied together a group of Christian leaders who called themselves the **Circle of Protection**. Headed by Jim Wallis, editor of the left-leaning Christian magazine Sojourners, the group met with President Barack Obama and then issued a full-page advertisement calling for the exemption of government poverty programs from proposed spending cuts. The statement was signed by a fairly wide range of church leaders, including the heads of the National Association of Evangelicals and the National Council of Churches; representatives of Catholic, Orthodox, mainline Protestant and some evangelical denominations, such as the Vineyard Fellowship and the Salvation Army; and megachurches.

The day after the ad appeared, a group of conservative Christians issued their own statement to the president and founded **Christians for a Sustainable Economy (CASE)**. Signed by conservative Christian leaders such as Charles Colson and Eric Metaxas, the statement argued that while all Christians should care for the poor, government poverty programs are often counterproductive and "undermine [the poor's] family structures and trap them in poverty, dependency and despair for generations." The split between Christians on the role of government is nothing new in American religion, but the debt and spending issue has revealed new fissions and coalitions on the church and society front. Those signing the Circle of Protection declaration represented a greater diversity of theological and social positions than usually found in liberal church social statements. Many of the signers of the CASE statement were identified more with religious and secular think-tanks than with church bodies. **(Source: *Washington Post*, August 4)**

2) The newly formed **Mormon Defense League** (MDL) is not the first organization that seeks to respond to critics and other controversies invol-

ving the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS). But the organization, which is sponsored by the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research, an independent group defending church teachings, is closer to the "anti-defamation league"-type model employed by Jewish and Islamic communities than previous efforts, although legal advocacy and defense are not part of its agenda. The MDL especially hopes to be a resource for journalists in clearing up misconceptions about the LDS. In addition to having articles on its website, MDL.org, that address common misperceptions about the faith, the league encourages journalists to call its volunteer staff when they have questions. **(Source: *The Deseret News*, August 4)**

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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