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For more than two decades, Religion Watch has covered religions around the world, particularly looking at the unofficial dimensions of religious belief and behavior.



Religion Watch is produced by Religion News and the Center on Religion and the Professions, in cooperation with the Religioscope Institute. © 2014 RW

Technoscience driving generational divide in American Buddhism

There is a generational shift taking place in much of American Buddhism, with members of Generation X and Y differing from their baby boomer Buddhists, particularly on the importance of technology and their eclectic approach to the religion. In the online *Journal of Global Buddhism* (Vol. 15, 2014), Ann Gleig writes that the formation and growth of the Buddhist Geeks network in 2007 was the clearest indicator of generational change in Buddhism. Buddhist Geeks is an online Buddhist media company, consisting of a popular weekly audio podcast, a digital magazine component,

and since 2011, annual conferences. From analysis of the podcasts and web site, attendance at the conferences and conversations with leaders, Gleig finds that these younger Buddhists stress the spiritual benefits of technology; they are at the forefront of Buddhist communities' utilization of technology "as a spiritually transformative tool rather than [dismissing] it as a hindrance to practice" or seeing it as a necessary evil of modern life. This relates to their democratizing approach; as technology allows direct access to

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" . . . younger Buddhists stress the spiritual benefits of technology . . . "
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'Brand Islam' commands industry and scholars' attention

Islamic marketing and the creation of a "Muslim brand" is becoming a new marketing sub-discipline, as well as generating growing global interest in the worlds of industry and academia, writes Jonathan A.J. Wilson in *The Guardian* (Feb. 17), a British newspaper. Concerns particular to Muslims, such as wearing head-coverings, might have been dealt with under the banner of multicultural or ethnic marketing, but now "Islamic marketing seems ready to become another must-have in a growing portfolio of marketing degree and professional courses

es on your CV." As economies with large Muslim population (with large proportions under the age of 25) are growing in importance in the global market, catering to an Islamic identity is becoming popular with both marketers and governments. In 2010, business leader Miles Young described Muslims as the "third one billion" in terms of market opportunity, and bigger news than the Indian and Chinese billions. Wilson reports that at the end of 2013, at the ninth World Islamic

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Sunday school attendance has dipped from historical highs, as it now must compete for a more technology- and entertainment-saturated generation. SOURCE: *Public domain image via the National Archives.*

Generic ‘pop’ curricula and decreasing commitment add to Sunday School woes

The growth of generic and technology-based educational curricula and the loss of regular participation and volunteers are serving to further challenge the already declining institution of Sunday schools in the U.S., writes Sharon Ely Pearson in the *Christian Century* magazine (Feb. 19). She finds that the “faithful families” that used to attend Sunday school classes on a weekly basis now attend only once or twice a month, making it difficult to capture their attention. Sunday schools today must compete with technological and media entertainments that are reflected in curricula marketed with “pop music CDs, cheesy videos, Internet companion sites and cheap trinkets.” From biannual informal surveys of Sunday schools that Pearson distributes, she finds reports of a lack of commitment to this ministry as seen in the shortage of volunteer teachers and a declining number of paid directors of Christian education. This is resulting in a growing number of churches having no Sunday school programming for children. A part of this decline is the tendency of some congregations to integrate children’s needs and interest

into worship services, while aging churches have few or no young families present.

These declines and the loss of denominational loyalty in many congregations have led them to easy-to-use, low-cost, user-friendly and eye-catching packaging. One resource specialist says that “Many are deconstructing traditional, orthodox Christianity. They want curricula that are postmodern, inclusive, less credal and dogma-oriented.” There is increased use of the Montessori approach to children’s formation, which allows young students to make their own choices in the learning process. Pearson sees the one bright spot being Godly Play, a Montessori-based curricula that encourages a child to “play with God,” inviting them to “make a journey of discovery for their personal theological meaning rather than memorizing concepts that others have discovered.” Pearson finds that Godly Play is being used by 43 percent of Episcopal respondents and 39 percent of all respondents.

(*Christian Century*, 104 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite #1100, Chicago, IL 60603.) ■

Technoscience and American Buddhism *(cont. from p. 1)*

Buddhist teachings without the mediation of a teacher or community, they downplay traditional hierarchical Buddhist structures.

Unlike previous generations, these younger Buddhists don't automatically adhere to any one Buddhist school of thought and practice. They utilize whatever "teachings and practices are helpful to end suffering," and also try to bring Buddhist ideas into everyday life, including business. There is an attempt to incorporate evolutionary thinking into Buddhist teachings, whether through the findings of neuroscience or the "spiritual evolution" philosophy of Ken Wilbur. Gleig agrees with proponents that the above views represent a "postmodern Buddhism," even though baby boomer Buddhists also sought to fit their religion in with science and democratic practice.

But the efforts to reconcile neuroscience and

"technoscience" with Buddhism comes in for sharp criticism in the Buddhist magazine *Tricycle* (Spring). In an interview, Curtis White, author of *The Science Delusion*, argues that government and corporations are using Buddhist concepts of "mindfulness" to "optimize impact ..." In this view of things, mindfulness can be extracted from a context of Buddhist meanings, values and purposes. Meditation and mindfulness are not part of a whole way of life but only a spiritual technology, a mental app..." It should be noted, however, that the postmodern Buddhists Gleig profiles, are also critical of what they call the "Mc-Mindfulness" industry that divorces Buddhist practice from its way of life.

(*Journal of Global Buddhism*, <http://www.global-buddhism.org/15/gleig14.pdf>; *Tricycle*, <http://www.tricycle.com/magazine>). ■

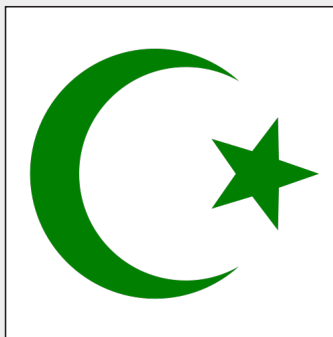
'Brand Islam' and its growing audience *(cont. from p. 1)*

Economic Forum (WIEF), held for the first time outside of the Muslim world in London, and at the first Global Islamic Economy Summit (GIES), "speakers stressed that Muslim majority and minority markets, while rooted in Islamic principles, transcend faith." Thus there is considerable attention paid to the Muslim consumers on halal food and lifestyle products (estimated at \$2.3 trillion). Islamic financial assets are growing at 15-20 percent a year.

He adds that an "Islamic identity has risen as something that homogenizes diverse audiences and governs key behavioral traits. Furthermore, as with other niche segments, there is evidence to show that there are patterns of higher consumption and greater loyalty, when aligned with Islam... Brand Islam is joining sectors together,

including fashion, cosmetics, entertainment, tourism, education, pharma, professional services and others under one narrative." He cites author John Grant as drawing parallels between the Muslim world (which he calls the Interland) and the rise of Japanese brands, like Sony, which showed a desire to change negative world perceptions towards Japan after the postwar occupation in 1945. "We are seeing Muslims searching for a way to reach out and harness spirituality in a post 9/11 era." One contribution of Islamic marketing is the idea that professionalism cannot be judged by products and services alone. Islam exacts that individuals, in both their professional and private lives, stand beside their offerings and

audiences – you practice what you preach. This is not unique to Islam or Muslims, but they are at the forefront of this wider agenda." ■



The star and crescent icon was popularized as a symbol of Islam around the 1950s. The color green has also enjoyed a long history in Islamic culture.



The Edward Harden Mansion in New York is the site of the first American Montessori school, founded in 1911. // SOURCE: Photo by Daniel Case via Wikimedia Commons.

Jews across denominational spectrum taking up the Montessori method for day schools

Claiming that the traditional Jewish day school model they grew up with is “outmoded and too clannish for 21st century Judaism, a new generation of parents and educators are flocking to Montessori preschools and elementary schools that combine secular studies with Torah and Hebrew lessons,” reports the *New York Times* (Feb. 21). The Montessori method of personalized learning is attractive to a cross-section of Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and Chabad (Lubavitch Hasidic) Jews gravitating to more secular and inclusive forms of learning. Most striking is the latter’s move from traditionalist methods of schooling to the school of thought founded by an Italian Catholic over a century ago. In Brooklyn, four Montessori schools have opened in the last decade,

with each tailored to a different group — one is for Hasidic girls, another for Hasidic boys, another one is primarily Chabad-Lubavitchers, while the fourth includes both secular and Hasidic students. Jewish Montessori schools started about 15 years ago, and are now popular across the U.S. In Boca Raton, Fla., there are centrist Orthodox, Chabad Orthodox, Reform and Conservative Montessori preschools; Orthodox day schools have started Montessori programs in Houston and Cincinnati; and several New Jersey towns with large Jewish populations now have Montessori schools.

The American Montessori Society finds that there are more than 40 Jewish schools among their 4,000 schools in the United States and about 30 in Israel. Some observers say that the Montessori philoso-

phy of allowing children to learn at their own pace and develop personal responsibility blends well with the Jewish tenet of educating each child according to his or her own way. The Chabad movement also supports these schools because its spiritual leader, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, endorsed them before his death in 1994. The interest in the Montessori method is also in line with a broader trend toward innovation and opening up to the secular world, even in orthodoxy. A particularly radical concept among Hasidic students is that these schools give secular subjects equal billing with religious ones. Because many new Jewish Montessoris, which tend to be less expensive than other Jewish day schools, are the only such institutions in town, they also tend to draw a greater mix of students. ■

WHAT THE

CURRENT RESEARCH

REVEALS ABOUT TODAY'S RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

01 **Involving young adults in leadership, innovative worship and an accepting attitude toward different lifestyles and theologies mark congregations that have effectively incorporated those in their 20s and 30s into their ranks, according to a new study.** The Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership/Faith Communities Today (FACT) study, bringing together researchers and religious leaders from 40 U.S. denominations and other religious groups, is based on surveys and case studies of congregations in which more than 1 in 6 (21 percent or more) are between 18 and 34 years old. Having younger people in both pastoral and worship leadership is important in the congregations studied, as is innovative, often informal and experimental worship services. The use of technology in worship, teaching and communication between members also characterized these congregations.

Half of the case-study congregations have developed events popular with young adults that cross the

line between worship and secular social events (especially those that tend to mix drinking and theological reflection, such as Theology on Tap gatherings that meet at bars and restaurants for Catholics). Seven of the 10 case study congregations placed a high premium on “non-judgmentalism” on issues such as homosexuality and conflicting theological views. While all of the case study congregations are linked up to denominations, only half stressed this link.

(For more information on this study, visit: <http://goo.gl/zBfvag>).

02 **As the Vatican is convening its Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family next fall, a new survey of Catholics around the world shows divided views in the church on these issues.** The survey, released by the U.S. Spanish language TV station Univision, suggests a divided church on six issues: gay marriage, women's ordination, abortion, divorce, contraception and the celibacy of priests. Conducted among 12,000 Catholics from countries in the Americas,

Europe, Africa and Asia, the survey found that gay marriage is now the most divisive. While 66 percent are opposed, only 54 percent and 38 percent of Americans and Europeans (respectively) agree with the church on this issue. But of those who support gay marriage, more than half agreed the church should not perform gay weddings. Europe, Latin America and the U.S. tend to be on one (the more liberal) side of these issues while Africa and the Philippines are on the other. The results of the Univision survey closely match the reporting that various bishops are sending to the Vatican in response to a questionnaire it sent out in preparation for the upcoming synod, according to the *National Catholic Reporter* (Feb. 28). The only issue where respondents showed strong unity is in positive view of Pope Francis.

03 **The overreporting of religious involvement in surveys, such as church attendance, has been evident among Christians**

► Cont. on page 6

Current research *(cont. from p. 5)*

in the U.S. but a new study finds that Muslims in Islamic nations likewise engage in inflating their level of religious practices, particularly prayer. The study, by Philip S. Brenner of the University of Massachusetts and published in the journal *Social Forces* (March), looks at survey responses on Muslim prayer in Pakistan, the Palestinian territories and Turkey, comparing them to time diaries, where respondents would record their actual times of prayer. Brenner finds that the comparison of survey responses regarding practices of prayer with the time diaries show that 15-40 percent of prayers are overreported.

Variation in overreporting emerged in Turkey and Palestine by gender, with women not men overreporting. Brenner writes that this may be because women tend to claim a stronger Muslim identity and that religious identity in general tends to motivate overreporting. Brenner concludes that while these Muslim rates are somewhat lower than the overreporting found among Americans in surveys of church attendance, “they are still high enough to add a caveat to survey estimates of religious practice in these countries.”

(*Social Forces*, <http://goo.gl/QcMw9L>)

04 **Secularization may be occurring in Israel, but the loss of religious influence that has occurred in recent years is affecting the various Jewish ethnic groups in different ways, according to political scientists Guy Ben-Porot and Yariv Feniger.** Writing in the journal *Ethnicities* (Vol. 14, No. 1), they note that on one hand, the

Orthodox have retained a monopoly on Jewish life in Israel, and there has been a resurgence of religion in different forms along with a limited commitment to the liberal values of tolerance. On the other hand, there is also an increasing secularization of the public sphere seen, for instance, in the rapidly growing commercial activity on the Sabbath. These conflicting patterns can be explained by the way in which the three major Jewish ethnic groups — the Ashkenazim (or European Jews), the largely Middle Eastern Mizrachim, and the Russian immigrants— are being secularized. The researchers conducted a survey among 495 subjects focusing on questions about belief and practices, the reach of religious authority, attitudes toward the Arab minority, and their religious practices. In one part of the survey that included both religious and non-religious Jews, the researchers find that 32.8 percent describe themselves as less religious than their parents, and only 7.8 percent said they were more religious than their parents. Almost half describe themselves as secular.

But the above three ethnic groups occupy different places on the secular religious-divide in Israel. The Ashkenazim experienced secularization earliest—beginning in the 19th century—and display a “liberal” variant of this process, showing a loss of belief and practices, support for liberal reforms in society as well as greater freedom and equality for Arabs. The secularization of the Mizrachim happened later but without the abandonment of religion, and is mostly expressed as the relaxation of some obser-

vances, such as shopping on the Sabbath, while maintaining respect for religious authority and a rejection of political liberalism. The Russian immigrants are described as “ethical liberal,” experiencing secularization as having a strong non-religious identity and support for liberal reforms against the Orthodox monopoly while rejecting equality measures for Arab citizens. The authors conclude that ethnicity is the factor best explaining the various and partial paths to secularization and the continuing importance of religion, particularly as an identity marker among Israel’s Jews.

(*Ethnicities*, <http://goo.gl/8tSZ5W>)

05 **A new analysis of two decades of Russian beliefs and practices shows that while there has been a large increase in affiliation and a modest increase in religious commitment, such a return to religion did not correspond with a return to church participation.** The Pew Research Center analyzed three waves of data from the International Social Survey Programme (1991, 1998, and 2008) and found a large increase of Russians identifying with the Orthodox church—from 31 percent to 72 percent—as well as a growth of affiliation with other religions. The share of Russians saying they are at least “somewhat religious” rose from 11 percent in 1991 to 54 percent in 2008. But across all three waves of survey, no more than about 1 in 10 Russians said they attend religious services once a month.

(To download this report, visit: www.pewforum.org/2014/02/10/russians-return-to-religion-but-not-to-church/.) ■

Business and Orthodox life intersecting in Russia

Although there is no such relationship between Orthodox Church and economics as the one observed by Max Weber regarding Protestantism and the work ethic a century ago, one can observe many connections between Orthodox religion and entrepreneurial activities in today's Russia, writes Tobias Köllner (Otto-von-Guericke University, Magdeburg, Germany) in *Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West* (February). This may contradict both Western perceptions of Orthodox Churches and the poor image of Russian corrupt businessmen. However, field research conducted in Russia over several years convinced Köllner that local entrepreneurs are not only concerned with maximizing profits. While they are eager to earn money, a growing number of small- and medium-sized businesses give a good deal of significance to religion and moral discourses in their work. He finds that the moral framework of the Soviet times has been replaced with the one provided by the Church.

Entrepreneurs also have religious concerns, even if there may be a dimension of ambivalence, with partly utilitarian considerations. During interviews, the German researcher observed how many of them share widespread beliefs on dark powers or are afraid of divine punishment for misdeeds. Thus they ask priests to come and bless

their houses, or hope that priestly blessings will help their business to prosper. In return, businessmen are also willing to support the Orthodox Church financially, especially when it comes to building or maintaining churches, since results are visible. Such donations are also a way to keep at bay the greed of State institutions by showing that a rich businessman is already taking his share of financial responsibility for the good of society.

Köllner has also observed how pilgrimages of entire firms have become popular in Russia since the late 1990s. While one may suspect such travels are made only for entertainment, the reality is more nuanced and rather shows a combination between religious and leisure activities. Quite often, religious motives are prevalent during travel to the pilgrimage place, while tourist motives dominate during the return trip. For entrepreneurs who organize such pilgrimages for their staff, various elements are playing a role. They are a way to continue the excursions on the pattern of the socialist brigades as practiced during the Soviet period. But entrepreneurs also assign a moral and educational role to such

pilgrimages, seen as a way to bring their employees closer to the Orthodox Church. They present that as part of their individual duty for contributing to social improvement. Ambivalence between one's own interests and religious as well as social motivations interweave such activities.

A primary source of religious inspiration for businessmen with religious leanings is the priest whom they consider as their confessor and/or spiritual father. This matters more to them than community life.

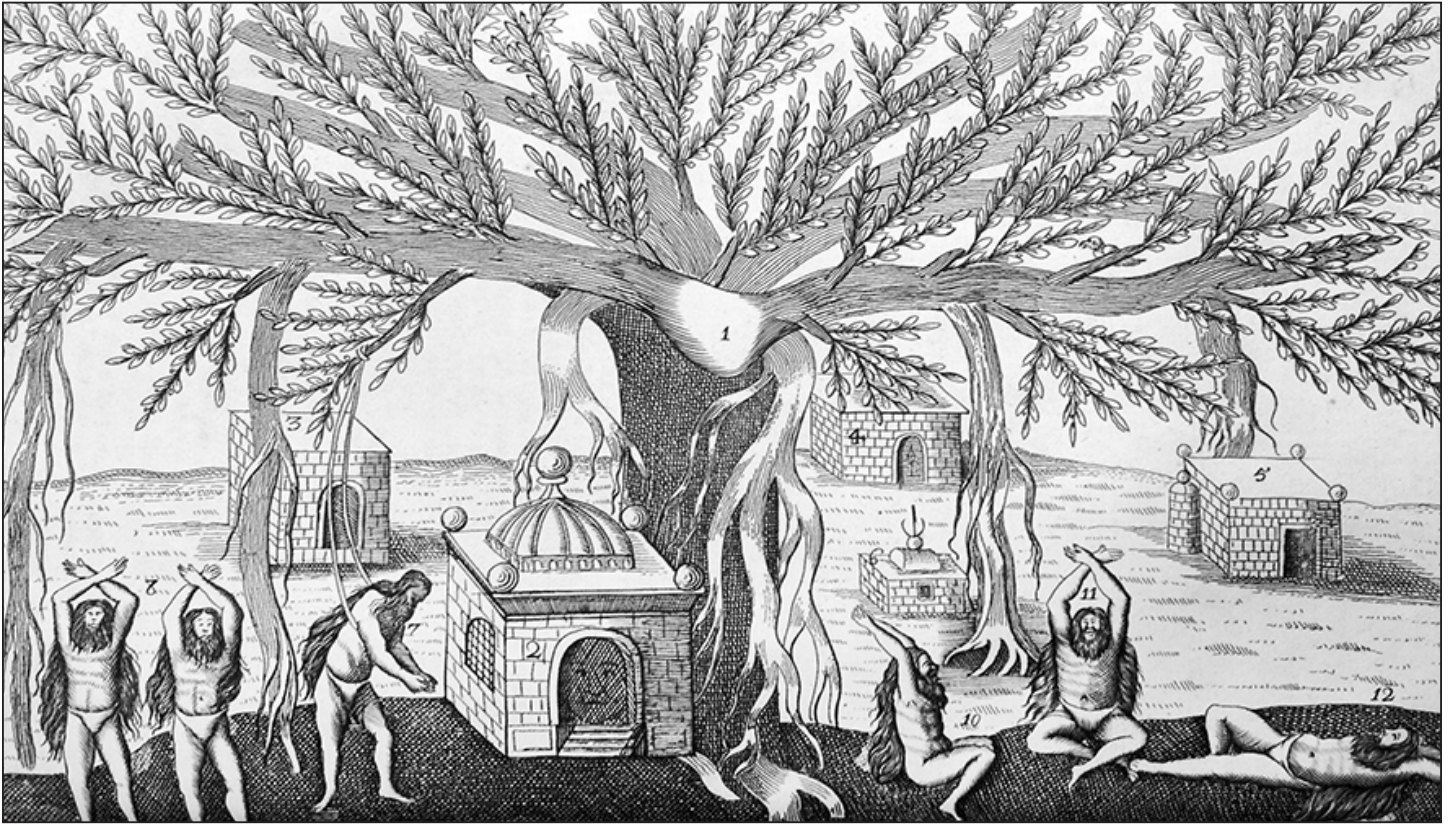
The spiritual teacher is chosen based on personal preferences. The link to him is strong and tends to be a lasting one. Much more than the formal teachings of the Church, the advice received in personal interaction with one's spiritual father will matter.

This allows for a

flexible adjustment to each person's specific circumstances.

(*Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West*, P.O. Box 9329, 8036 Zürich, Switzerland, www.g2w.eu. Köllner is also the author of a book in English: *Practicing Without Belonging? Entrepreneurship, Morality, and Religion in Contemporary Russia*, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012.) ■

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"... the moral framework of the Soviet times has been replaced with the one provided by the Church."
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An early illustration depicts Indians performing Yoga Asana in 1688. In 2009, Ali Bardakoğlu, former head of the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs, criticized yoga as a commercial venture that could lead to extremism. SOURCE: Jean-Baptiste Tavernier via Wikimedia Commons.

Yoga's popularity generates new debate among Turkish Muslims

Muslim institutions have become critical of the spread of yoga in Turkey but they have not yet made a formal pronouncement banning the practice, although an official statement is expected in the near future. At a workshop on the attitudes of Turkish State actors and Islamic authorities towards new religiosities that took place at the German Orient-Institut in Istanbul Feb. 20-22, which **Religion Watch** attended. Aysuda Kölemen (Kemerburgaz University) paid attention to Muslim polemics against

yoga in the country. This reaction has followed the rapid popularization of yoga in the 2000s, including advertisements by celebrities on television. During that decade, Turkish media gave yoga much positive coverage due to its alleged health benefits. It was advertised more as a kind of sports activity than a philosophy.

However, negative decisions by Islamic authorities in other countries started to give rise to concerns. In 2004, there was a fatwa (religious ruling) against yoga in

Egypt. Some isolated criticism followed, but elite religious scholars in Turkey commented that there was no issue as long as yoga was practiced as a form of exercise, without delving into philosophical aspects.

In 2008, there was a Malaysian fatwa against yoga to which more attention was paid, according to Kölemen. In the journal of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), a powerful Turkish

► **Cont. on page 9**

Yoga in Turkey draws controversy (cont. from p. 8)

State institution, a series of articles critical of new religiosities was published in May 2009, placing yoga in a negative context. There is not yet a written fatwa regarding yoga on the Diyanet website, but a formal position is currently being drafted and budget has been allocated for that purpose since last fall. Proponents of yoga emphasize that it is not a religion, but a way of life, and no rival for Islam. They state that one can practice yoga and be a good Muslim. They even make efforts to publicly distance themselves from “fake yoga centers” being used for converting people to Hinduism. But this has

not convinced critics, who wonder why people would need yoga, since they have Islamic prayer available as a spiritual practice.

The articles published in the Diyanet journal in 2009 approach yoga as an alternative to the Islamic path. They stress that a lifestyle or philosophy cannot be separated from faith. The success of yoga is perceived as a sign that secularized Turks are losing their Islamic tradition and consequently turn to New Age beliefs for filling a spiritual void. Thus yoga is not an innocent practice, but will finally turn people away from Islam. Kölemen identified some isolated

Islamic scholars who are supportive of yoga, especially a professor at the Ankara School of Divinity, who does not only consider yoga as compatible with Islam, but thinks that it can lead people to salvation.

According to this thinking, as a method for reaching God, it does not matter if it is rooted in another tradition. Such views are not typical ones, and the expected ruling of the Presidency of Religious Affairs on yoga may pose a challenge to yoga teachers in Turkey, unless it accepts to differentiate between yoga as physical exercise and yoga as a spiritual path. ■

New vocations among young adults more than an anomaly in Church of England

The latest statistics from the Church of England show that under-30s make up 23 per cent of those entering ministry – a 20 year high, reports *The Independent* newspaper (Feb. 20). The numbers of new vocations are not high — 113 out of the 501 that began training in 2013 were 20-somethings and late teens — there are proportionally more younger trainee vicars. The church is attributing the growth of seminarians and new clergy to the rise of online and offline promotion as well as a shift

in thinking away from the view that ordinands should not be fresh out of school or university. Each of the 43 dioceses has its own chaplains focusing on young vocations, and a pilot Ministry Experience Scheme that allows potential ordinands to experience life as a vicar for a year, reports Sally Newall.

There is also the Call Waiting website, launched in 2008, targeting 13- to 30-year-olds considering ordained ministry, and Step Forward, an annual day conference for those aged 18-30, in Durham.

From the interviews in the article, it seems that the Fresh Expressions movement, which pioneers in planting alternative churches and services, has generated religious vocations. At St. Mellitus College in west London, which prides itself on embracing the digital age, the number of ordinands under the age of 35 has risen from nine in 2011 to 29 in 2013. “All of my lecturers are on Twitter,” says Liz Clutterbuck, 32, who is in her third year at St. Mellitus. “There's a lot of good theological debate going on.” ■

CORRECTION: The graphics for the article on seminary-college mergers in the Vol. 29 No. 4 issue (page 4) incorrectly portrays a merger between Lenior-Rhyne College (Hickory NC) and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky. As the text makes clear, the merger was between Lenoir-Rhyne and Lutheran Southern Theological Seminary in Columbia, SC.

Researchers, health professionals eye HIV/AIDS-religion interaction in sub-Saharan Africa

Attention to the nexus between religion and HIV/AIDS policy in sub-Saharan Africa has started to emerge as a new field of inquiry since the late 1990s, at the same time healthcare professionals have started to see religious organizations as potential partners in the fight against the epidemic after years of suspicion, writes Philippe Denis (University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa) in the *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* (October/December 2013). The desire to better understand the role of faith-based organizations has provided opportunities for research sponsored both by religious and health and development organizations. While theologians in South Africa had already been reflecting on AIDS since the early 1990s, the boom in literature started after 2000. In quantitative terms, South Africa stands at the top of that production, due to the intensity of the crisis as well as to the quality of research infrastructure and strength of Christianity there. Very few publications deal with Islam, and a small number with traditional religion, with most focusing on Christianity.

Denis identifies four leading areas of research. The first one is religious affiliation as a predictor of HIV infection and the effectiveness of church-based prevention. Assessments are contrasted between those who claim that religion has little impact on sexual behavior of most Africans and those who suggest it has an impact, though not in those groups with an emphasis on faith healing, where HIV prevalence is reported to be highest. The second area of research is on religion and public health. Christian involvement in health matters has been present since colonial times in Africa, but HIV/AIDS has boost-

ed it, with international institutions selecting Christian healthcare institutions as funding conduits. They are present on the ground and are assumed to be reliable. A challenge may be coming, however, with international organizations intending to use more the national public health systems in African countries, which might force religious institutions to create new partnerships with them. The third area of research has been treatment, care and the operation of therapeutic communities. It appears that Christians are at the forefront of efforts to mitigate the effects of the epidemic more than Muslims, possibly because Christians tend to be better educated and better organized. The religious sector is particularly active in aspects such as support groups or orphan care, however, this remains underresearched.

A fourth area of research has been a “theology of HIV/AIDS.” It has become clear that “the thinking of religious leaders is, or has become, less monolithic than is commonly thought,” at least among Christians, since much less is known about Muslims. This can probably be explained by the considerable amount of theological work on HIV/AIDS. Denis notes that such reflection started early, but it has become increasingly institutionalized, with the World Council of Churches establishing the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa in 2002. Denis concludes that there is a growing recognition that HIV/AIDS is not only a biomedical phenomenon, but that it affects other fields, including religion.

(*Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 10 rue Monsieur le Prince, 75006 Paris, France, <http://assr.revues.org>.) ■

EXPLORE THIS ISSUE'S



FINDINGS & FOOTNOTES

01 The Atlas of Pentecostalism is a new online database that seeks to map the rapid growth of global Pentecostalism as a diverse and networked religion. The database uses new and old methods,

including global crowdsourcing, big data, cinematography, interviews and academic collaborations to provide an independent perspective on Pentecostalism as it changes. The database expands with time and can also be ordered as an eBook or print-on-demand book, which freezes the dynamic data at that moment. The print on demand book can be ordered as a full color paperback. The book contains the latest contributions and live data maps and is updated daily, with each

► **Cont. on page 11**

Findings & Footnotes (cont. from p. 10)

copy being unique. For more information about the atlas, visit: <http://goo.gl/6qhOzX>.

02 Timothy Miller brings together a group of practitioners, leaders and scholars to analyze the present trends and futures of religious communities in the book *Spiritual and Visionary Communities* (Ashgate, \$34.95). In the Introduction, Miller writes that although religious intentional communities are undoubtedly changing, especially due to their loss of isolation caused by the Internet, it is difficult to provide a reliable count of these often independent groups and thus account for the overall growth or decline of religious communalism. While Miller acknowledges that these communities, at least in the U.S., are relatively short-lived (partly because of their independence, they often refused to learn from the mistakes of those that have failed), he refrains from viewing this as a general trend, because there are so many exceptions. He is even hesitant to say whether religious communities survive longer than secular ones, because he finds both on his list of long-standing ones. Nevertheless, the chapters themselves show that many long-standing religious and spiritual communal groups remain vital while new communities are taking root.

The tone of the book is often autobiographical as much as sociological, and the emphasis in the book is on those communities espousing new or unconventional religious beliefs and practices. These include groups such as The Farm, a California-based commune from the early 1970s with a mix of Western and Eastern spiritual concepts, the futuristic environmentalist commune in Portugal called Tamera, the esoteric Damanhur community in Italy, the quasi-evangelical groups known as the Twelve Tribes in Vermont, the movement formerly known as the Children of God and now called The Family International, and the Buddhist New Kadampa Tradition community in England.

03 *The Education of David Martin* (SPCK, visit <http://goo.gl/wRSGMa> for order information) is a memoir of the formative years (as the title implies, schooling) and career of this leading British sociologist of religion, but along the way it provides interesting accounts of developments in global Christianity. Martin was one of the first sociologists to question the secularization thesis in the 1960s and then in the 1980s pioneered research into the growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America and eventually much of the non-Western world. The author recounts his early years growing up in

an evangelical home and his late and uneasy arrival into the world of academic sociology and the London School of Economics during the turbulent 1960s and 70s.

Martin's deep reading of history and theology has set him apart from many sociologists, but it is this out-of-step quality of the scholar and the book (especially its second half) that provides the reader with the context for many contemporary trends—from the dismissal (describing himself in the 1960s as a “academic deviant living by a non-existent subject”) and then rediscovery of religion in sociology to his battle to preserve the Book of Common Prayer from liturgical revisionism, and his “near-accidental” turn to studying the charismatic and Pentecostal upsurge in Latin America. His way of relating the personal and sociological is also provocative; he writes movingly of finding surprising affinities between the self-made quality of his Methodist lay preacher father and the Pentecostal converts he encountered in much of Latin America.

04 *Losing Our Religion* (Wipf & Stock, \$31) by Kevin Ward, tells the familiar story of disaffiliation from religious institutions and the search for alternatives — both secular and religious — but does so in a comparative framework, studying the cases of the U.S., Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Ward, who is based in New Zealand, finds that the U.S. is something of an exception to these patterns of disaffiliation and decreasing attendance, but even here the trend is downward on both measures. Yet he notes that in all of these nations, conservative congregations and denominations have either grown or show stability especially during the past four volatile decades. With other critics of the secularization theory, Ward argues that all these countries have not become completely irreligious and that spiritual interest has remained strong.

The most interesting parts of the books are the case studies of congregations — mostly from New Zealand — where Ward finds that a mixture of orthodoxy, relevance, outreach, and community seem to mark those that are thriving. Many of the trends he discusses, such as the growth of megachurches and emerging congregations, and younger generations disaffiliating, suggests a common religious landscape with similar challenges in these countries. Ward blends sociological with theological analysis toward the end and concludes with an examination how sports, especially soccer, and national holidays in New Zealand such as Anzac Day are serving as substitute and civil religions. ■

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

Alpha Lambda Mu at the University of San Diego is the first Muslim fraternity in the U.S. The fraternity was founded by Muslim students to offer fellow believers a way to express both their American and Islamic identities. While the fraternity is similar to its secular counterparts in that it offers members a menu of social activities and volunteer work, it does so in a Muslim context that avoids the heavy alcohol use and hazing rituals, not to mention non-halal food such as pork. With 24 members, the fraternity is planning to have its own house next fall and there are already several other chapters in the planning at Penn State, San Diego State and the University of Florida. Scholars say that the Muslim interest in a fraternal identity on campuses is not unexpected from a generation that sees itself straddling American and Muslim cultures, and is taking on a more public face after a period of introspection following 9/11. The chapter has close ties to the Muslim Student Association (MSA) on campus, although it stresses that the fraternity is not political — a charge often made about the MSA. (Source: *New York Times Education Life*, Feb. 9.) ■

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. For this reason, the newsletter has been praised by professors, researchers, church leaders, journalists and interested lay people as a unique resource for keeping track of contemporary religion. It is through monitoring new books and approximately 1,000 U.S. and foreign periodicals (including newspapers, newsletters, magazines, online content and scholarly journals), and by first-hand reporting, that Religion Watch has tracked hundreds of trends on the whole spectrum of contemporary religion. Published every month, the 12-page newsletter is unique in its focus on long-range developments that lead to, and result from, world current events.



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