

Anti-immigrant sentiments finding a place among the Christian right?

Opposition to illegal immigration is gaining a new place on the agenda of the Christian right, reports *The Public Eye* (Summer), a newsletter of the Political Research Associates, a left-oriented group monitoring conservative groups. Judging by 2007 Values Voters Summit, which is sponsored by such key Christian right groups as the Family Research Council, proposals about border security and penalties regarding illegal immigrants received as much attention as abortion. But the focus on illegal immigrants at the 2007 Values Voters Summit represented a significant change from previous gatherings and statements of Christian right leaders, as they counseled moderation on the issue or remained silent.

The earlier stance was largely based on the fear that an anti-immigrant agenda would alienate the growing ranks of Hispanic evangelicals.

But by January 2007, “the position of some prominent Christian right leaders hardened considerably, with the launch of the ‘Families First in Immigration’ campaign, which took a family values-friendly approach while also adopting a strong anti-immigrant stance,” report Tarso Luis Ramos and Pam Chamberlain. But the shift to a more aggressive posture on illegal immigration is largely a matter of “shepherds following their flocks,” as the base of the Christian right is more friendly to anti-immigrant sentiments. Recent

research, such as a 2006 survey by the Pew Research Center, has suggested that conservative white evangelical Protestants view immigrants as a threat to “traditional American customs and values.” Ramos and Chamberlain add that an anti-immigrant rhetoric was also often heard on Christian radio stations. Anti-immigration groups have been happy to draw in a segment of evangelicals to their cause. But because some prominent anti-immigrant organizations carry undertones of support for eugenics, nativism, and anti-Catholicism, the alliance between secular anti-immigrant groups and the Christian right may be an uneasy one. (*The Public Eye*, 1310 Broadway, Suite 201, Somerville, MA 02144-1837)

New college programs help generate religious vocations among young

There is a small, yet clear increase of younger students choosing the ministry as a vocation, a trend that is largely generated by church-related colleges encouraging students in this direction. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 4) reports that in the last few years, seminaries have begun to see an increase of students in their 20s. Since the 1980s, there has been a well-documented “talent drain” of younger students away from seminaries to more prestig-

ious fields, particularly in mainline Protestant churches where the clergy position has lost its social status. Only a third of seminary students are younger than 30 today. The recent increase is seen as mainly a result of church-related colleges making a more concerted effort to encourage interested students to pursue the ministry. A spate of new programs have made their way into colleges, some involving courses connecting vocation and faith, thanks to special

grants from the Lilly Foundation and the Fund for Theological Education.

Aside from such courses, colleges have “beefed up internship programs, and offered students extra-curricular support groups where those interested in becoming pastors could share their plans and concerns with each other,” writes Beckie Supiano. Most of those colleges taking advantage of these grants and programs have seen an

increase of their students going straight into seminaries. For instance, Hastings College, in Nebraska, had only one undergraduate majoring in religion among its 1,100 student body in 2001. By 2007, that number had climbed to 42. In the same time period, the

college saw 12 of its students go on to seminaries. Seminary education specialists cite both a new interest among young people in the helping vocations—with many having participated in volunteerism in college—as well as the new college programs that channel

such interests into vocational choices for the increase in young people moving into the ministry. (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 1255 23rd St. NW, Washington, DC 20037)

New racial and ethnic make-up causes shift in Adventism

The changing ethnic composition of Seventh Day Adventism will likely decide the future of the church in the US, write Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart in *Spectrum* (Spring), an independent Adventist magazine. Adventism's change from a predominantly white to a multicultural membership (with significant numbers of Caribbean and American blacks) has been taking place for some time, but the authors see shifts in everything from theology to politics resulting from this development. White Adventist patterns are similar to their European counterparts as they remain static or decline, while immigrant and minority membership are increasing significantly. The white community in the US is aging and has had the lowest rate of retention and recruitment of any ethnic

group. Thus, the importance of West Coast Adventism is now diminishing relative to that of the southeast, “not traditionally an area of strong Adventist penetration, but now the first stop for migrants from the Caribbean and Central America.”

For other ethnic communities, the pattern is likely to be one of forming a “patchwork of diasporas in which there are stronger links within dispersed ethnic groups than there are between neighboring Adventist communities of differing ethnicity,” write Bull and Lockhart. In terms of theology, black and Hispanic Adventists have shown little interest in white Adventist attempts to liberalize belief and practice. In other words, it is not so much as a contextual faith stressing inclusivity,

but as one that has a strong and unifying body of doctrine that makes Adventism hospitable, “allowing a series of minority ethnic groups to find shelter within it.” Yet within the political sphere there are clear indicators that a Democratic preference is rapidly overtaking the traditional Republican one; between 2000 and 2006, 43 percent of Adventists identified as Democrat and 31 percent as Republican. Bull and Lockhart add that Adventist politics is still at the “protest stage,” but that Adventists may soon embrace a similar activist stance to their counterparts in the Third World who have served in political office. (*Spectrum*, P.O. Box 619047, Roseville, CA 95661-9047)

LDS disassociates itself from FLDS in media reports

Following the controversy over the FLDS (Fundamentalist Latter-day Saints), the LDS Church—commonly called “Mormon”—is facing what has been described as a “PR nightmare” (*NPR*, June 30). The April raid on

the FLDS compound in Texas was widely reported in the US and international media. In many reports, the FLDS group was described as a “breakaway Mormon group” or “renegade Mormon group.” Since many people do not

understand the difference between the LDS and FLDS (or other “fundamentalist Mormons”), or simply associate the FLDS with the Mormon faith, this is seen by

the LDS Church as creating confusion. According to a poll conducted by the Church, more than a third of those surveyed believed that the FLDS group was part of the LDS Church.

In June, the LDS Church started a public relations campaign to emphasize its distinction from the FLDS. According to Howard Berkes's *NPR* report, the Salt Lake City-headquartered church has attempted to counteract others claiming a Mormon identity, including by the posting of videos on YouTube describing Mormons as mainstream people. It also sug-

gests that it is misleading for other groups to adopt the name of an established church, writes Ben Winslow in the Church-linked *Deseret News* (July 11). Polygamous groups reply that they share the same background as the larger LDS Church, also use the Book of Mormon and other LDS scriptures, and want to be known as "fundamentalist Mormons," having been "referred to by that name since the 1930s, often by the Church itself." Mary Batchelor, co-founder of Principles Voice (a "fundamentalist Mormon" coalition), says that "[w]e do not feel we have rejected Mormonism in

any way" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 10). In a statement published on July 10, the LDS *Newsroom* stated that the LDS Church respects the right of polygamous groups to define themselves as they wish, "as long as they don't distort the well-established identity of a long-standing church." It called on the media for "a sense of proportion and perspective" when dealing with the issue. (*NPR*, <http://www.npr.org>; *Deseret News*, <http://www.deseretnews.com>; *LDS Newsroom*, <http://newsroom.lds.org>; *Salt Lake Tribune*, <http://www.sltrib.com>)

Food shortage causing rethinking of what "kosher" means

A raid on a meat plant in Iowa bearing the Orthodox Union's kosher symbol caused a supply problem in US kosher markets, but also caused some to raise new issues about the meaning of the term "kosher." On May 12, US immigration authorities raided Agriprocessors' plant in Postville, IA and arrested 390 illegal immigrant workers (out of 800 employees in Postville). By early June, this meant there was less kosher meat available and prices for it rose, since Agriprocessors supplies 60 percent of US kosher meat and 40 percent of kosher chicken, reports Sue Fishkoff (*Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, June 6).

Moreover, a number of rabbis have started to question the moral-

ity of producing kosher meat while abusing underpaid migrant workers. It is true that there is no rule that food produced by abused or underpaid illegal workers becomes forbidden to eat, writes Rabbi Shlomo Levin (spiritual leader of Milwaukee's Modern Orthodox Lake Park Synagogue), but the issue is "to know if it is kosher to buy" (*J.*, June 13). He suggests that an addition to the current kosher supervision system would be welcome for kosher consumers in order to help them with their purchasing decisions. The Conservative movement released a policy statement defining the qualifying process for its future certification; it will indicate "that a kosher product was made in compliance with a set of social

justice criteria". This also marks an attempt by Conservative rabbis to influence the kosher food market, traditionally dominated by the Orthodox, writes Ben Harris (*Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, July 31).

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(*Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (JTA), <http://www.jta.org>; *J.* [a northern Californian Jewish newsweekly], <http://www.jewishsf.com>)

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CURRENT RESEARCH

► **Americans tend not to be dogmatic on doctrine, especially when it relates to judging the value of others religions, according to a new survey from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.** The recent survey is the second part of a comprehensive study of American religion that Pew Forum has conducted. The first study, which was released last winter, made waves for finding that a large number of Americans had switched to other churches from the ones in which they were raised. The main finding of the new study is that Americans are seldom dogmatic and often quite innovative in adapting their own belief systems to fit their own needs and purposes. While the religious individualism of Americans has been noted in many other studies, the new survey suggests that such an attitude has led to uncertainty and a non-dogmatic view of their beliefs and of the value of other religions.

Eighty-five percent of mainline Protestants and 79 percent of Catholics agree that “many religions can lead to eternal life,” and 82 percent of mainline Protestants and 77 percent of Catholics agree that “there is more than one way to interpret the teachings of my religion.” The figures for evangelical Protestants, however, show a somewhat different pattern.

Fifty-seven percent agreed with the first statement and 53 percent with the second one. In his e-newsletter *Sightings* (June 30), church historian Martin Marty adds that the new survey also reveals a growing convergence of mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics in the US: “At most four percentage points separate Catholic numbers from Mainline Protestants on all but four issues” of the 16 asked of respondents, Marty writes. The only wide separation is on legal abortion, with only 32 percent of the mainline Protestants thinking it should almost always be illegal and 45 percent of Catholics thinking the same. Minorities in both groups think that “homosexuality is a way of life that should be discouraged by society,” but only 34 percent of mainline Protestants and 30 of Catholics agree with this statement.

The survey report can be downloaded at <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>

► **Concerns over homosexuality may be far less divisive on the congregational level than deliberations that take place on the denominational level regarding this issue, according to a recent study published in the *Sociology of Religion* (June).** The study, conducted by Wendy Cadge, Laura Olson, and Christopher Wildeman, of 30 mainline Protestant churches in the northeastern US, looked at how denominations relate to their congregations on this divisive issue. Of the three denominations studied, the Evangelical Lutheran

Church in America (ELCA) provided the most extensive resources for clergy and laity to discuss this issue, while the United Methodist Church provided some assistance and resources, and the Presbyterian Church (USA) hardly any.

The researchers found that such denominational resources and materials influence how much attention congregations pay to the issue, but still only a small fraction of congregations (less than five percent) are responding to the homosexuality issue in a formal way. The study found a relative lack of division on the issue in its sample (which the authors acknowledge may not be representative of all mainline congregations). In only one of the congregations studied was there enough conflict to cause members to leave. In fact, it is the division and controversies at the denominational level that often spark conversation and study about homosexuality in congregations, rather than vice versa. “Individuals with the leadership of their pastors and commitments to their congregations generally seem to be figuring out how to disagree and live together. The only question is whether the mainline denominations nationally will figure out how to do the same.” (*Sociology of Religion*, 618 SW 2nd Ave., Galva, IL 61434)

► **Evangelical colleges appear to be among the only ones resisting the “hook-up culture” that dominates American campuses**

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today, according to researcher Donna Freitas. Her new book, *Sex & the Soul* (Oxford University Press) details the widespread casual sex occurring on US campuses based on surveys of students at seven colleges. A recent part of hookup culture is the use of theme parties, where students role-play soft-porn stereotypes. The *National Catholic Reporter* (May 30) notes that Freitas found that “with the exception of evangelicals, American college students see almost no connection between their religious beliefs and their sexual behavior.” She claims that Catholic colleges have become adept at turning a blind eye to the hook-up culture partly in fear of losing applicants and their tuition-paying parents. Freitas did find widespread dissatisfaction about the hook-up culture and a desire for spiritual guidance on sexual matters. Overall, she found that 45 percent of students at Catholic colleges and 36 percent at secular schools say their peers are too casual about sex. (*National Catholic Reporter*, 115 E. Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111)

▶ **Both blacks and the poor are overrepresented among adherents to the prosperity gospel, but, contrary to expectations, they are not all evangelicals, according to preliminary research by Bradley Koch of Indiana University.** The prosperity gospel, which promises the believer health and wealth, has been the central component of what is called the faith movement in both white and black Pentecostalism. Through a telephone survey and

in-depth interviews, Koch found that while born-again Christians do make up the vast majority of adherents to the prosperity gospel, “a significant (and likely growing) number are of the Mainline Protestant and Catholic traditions.” Koch is currently working on explanations for the expansion of these teachings, as well as the reason why blacks and the poor are overrepresented among its adherents, according to the *Newsletter of the Sociology of Religion Section of the American Sociological Association* (June).

▶ **A new study has found that baby boomers give less to religious causes than their parents’ generation did when they were the same age as the boomers.** And members of Generation X give even less than the baby boomers. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 13) cites new research by the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy finding that those aged 35–49 gave an average of \$789 to religious causes in 2000, while people in that age group in 1973 gave \$991. The difference in giving among the generations seems to be related to declining church attendance of those in the younger age groups today, according to one of the researchers.

▶ **The Poles are most likely to have a basic knowledge of the Bible, followed by the Americans, according to an Italian survey.** The Americans were the most likely to have a copy of the Bible in their houses, with more than 90 percent of them having a

copy of the scriptures. The survey of eight European countries and the US on biblical knowledge was conducted by an Italian marketing firm in preparation for an upcoming international synod of Catholic bishops. When asked a series of questions about the Bible’s contents and authorship, 17 percent of the Americans surveyed were able to answer all correctly, compared to 15 percent in all the other countries studied. The Poles took the lead for biblical knowledge, with 20 percent earning perfect scores. The lowest rank belonged to Russians, with only seven percent who were able to answer all the questions correctly, according to an article in *Baptists Today* (June). (*Baptists Today*, 6318, Macon, GA 31208)

▶ **Scientists and engineers in India tend to hold strong spiritual beliefs while considering themselves secular and accepting of most biotechnological innovations, according to a recent survey.** The survey, the first of its kind, was conducted by the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture at Trinity College in Connecticut among 1,130 scientists (34 percent of them engineers) from 130 universities and research institutions. Over 70 percent of the respondents said that they believe in God or a “higher power,” while 25 percent were atheist or agnostic. Sixty-two percent believe that God (38 percent) or “holy people” (24 percent) perform miracles, and about half believe in the efficacy of prayer. Seventy-five percent agreed with teachings on life after death,

Karma, or reincarnation, and the majority approved of degree courses in Vedic astrology. Yet most believe in evolution, and 77 percent also believe that scientific organizations should confront religious practices if they contradict accepted scientific theories. A large majority had few problems in working with biotechnology innovations such as cloning, genetic engineering, and stem cell research (only eight percent would refuse to conduct such work).

The study is available from:
<http://www.trincoll.edu/secularismintitute>.

► **Asia, in particular India, is the most “vocation-rich” region of the world in producing Catholic priests, according to a**

statistical analysis in the *Catholic World Report* (July). While it has been well known that Asia and Africa have shown the highest enrollment of Catholic seminarians in the world, the magazine calculated the ratio of seminarians to Catholics in each of the world’s nations and territories based on 2005 data from the *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae*, a Vatican-based overview of church statistics published in 2007. The ratio of seminarians presents a more accurate picture of how vocation rich a nation is rather than the total number of seminarians in each nation. Worldwide there is one seminarian for 9,743 Catholics. In Asia, the most vocation-rich continent, there is one seminarian for every

3,877 Catholics. Fifteen of the world’s three dozen most vocation-rich nations are located in Asia. Over 45 percent of Asian seminarians are Indian. Although India ranks only 16th in the world in Catholic population, it has more seminarians than any nation in the world. The strongly devotional Catholic nature of family life and schools and the high social status of the priesthood in the southern Indian region of Kerala are among the reasons given for India’s top rank. Africa and Oceania also rank high as vocation-rich continents, the magazine concludes. (*Catholic World Report*, P.O. Box 1339, Ft. Collins, CO 80522)

Catholic activism in France aims for more widespread celebrations of Tridentine Mass

Encouraged by Benedict XVI’s *motu proprio* (July 2007) allowing for a wider use of the celebration of the pre-Vatican II mass, French Catholic traditionalists in union with Rome have created a strong lobbying effort to obtain from their bishops more celebrations of what is now officially called “the extraordinary form of the Roman rite.” Groups such as Paix Liturgique (Liturgical Peace) promote the campaigning as an essential step toward reconciliation between traditions factions with the mainstream of French Catholicism. Helped by the Internet, which allows them to easily coor-

dinate, pro-Tridentine activists are stepping up the pressure on the bishops before the Pope’s visit to France next September, not without causing some irritation.

According to the Catholic daily *La Croix* (July 6), there have been relatively few requests for celebrations of the “extraordinary form,” and in most parishes only five or six people request it. Accordingly, the some 40 new celebrations that have been established in addition to some 130 previously existing ones are considered as “sufficient” for a group estimated at between 30,000 and 45,000 people across the country. Paix Liturgique—which claims to send its frequent electronic messages to 285,000 addresses—paints a quite different picture:

according to its July 10 electronic newsletter, requests have been made in some 900 French parishes, and the number of those supporting the “extraordinary form” is significant. Paix Liturgique’s assessment is that 15 percent of practicing French would like to attend mass in this form.

Archbishop Le Gall (Toulouse) acknowledges that many of those asking for pre-Vatican II masses are young people, reports Stéphanie Le Bars (*Le Monde*, July 6). Moreover, while very few active priests are sympathetic to traditionalists (some 1.5 percent of French clergy only), support among seminarians is significant:

► **Continued on page eight**

17 percent of them are reported to have traditionalist leanings. Obviously, people in charge of the issue in Rome are aware of such trends. In an interview with the Italian magazine *Jesus* (May), Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos, chairman of the Ecclesia Dei Pontifical Commission (entrusted with the task of facilitating the full communion of people who followed Archbishop Lefebvre, but also of supervising the application of the *motu proprio*), said that the largest numbers of people requesting masses in the extraordinary form are the faithful who have newly discovered it and are mostly young people.

Meanwhile, the followers of the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (Society St. Pius X, i.e. traditionalists not in union with Rome) report that the dialogue with the Vatican continues, in contrast to some media reports. However, the Society's leading figures suggest that reaching a full reconciliation might still take a long time, reports Yves Chiron in his newsletter *Aletheia* (June 25). Some observers also mention that too much haste might make it difficult for the society to overcome its own internal differences before reaching an agreement (*Aletheia*, April 28). (*Paix Liturgique*, <http://www.paixliturgique.com>; *La Croix*, <http://www.la-croix.com>; *Le Monde*, <http://www.lemonde.fr>; *Aletheia*, <http://www.aletheia.free.fr>; *Jesus*, <http://www.sanpaolo.org/jesus/>)

Hindu temples take up new community role in Germany

Although the trend is not yet as developed as it has become in the US or UK, Hindu temples in Germany tend increasingly to play a role beyond providing rituals, especially in educating Hindu children born in the West and conveying to them Hindu traditions, writes German scholar Carina Back (Hanover University) in her book, *Hindu-Tempel in Deutschland* (in German, Tectum-Verlag, €24.90). While Indians in Germany have rarely attempted to open temples, Tamils who fled the conflict in Sri Lanka have been eager to establish their own places of worship, as have members of the (smaller) Hindu community from Afghanistan. Focusing on Tamil Hindu temples, Back remarks that, despite financial and other constraints, to a large extent they follow traditional Hindu teachings regarding the arrangement of temples. Opening places of worship has gone along with the creation of institutional structures necessary for organizing and maintaining the temples. Hindu traditions are kept as much as possible, but it is usually not possible to hold the full daily schedule of religious services.

Out of two dozen Tamil temples in Germany (the first one established in 1988), only one is purpose built (in Hamm, opened in 2002), while another one is under construction in Berlin; all the others have been installed in converted factories or

warehouses, in flats or in basements. Consequently, many of them are still seen as temporary places, to be enlarged or replaced by new temples in the future. The author expects that future temples will align more closely with the traditional south Indian models; for the time being, financial considerations or zoning regulations have been preeminent in decisions such as the orientation of the temples and the choice of locations.

Lebanese Christians reassert themselves in the political arena

After 15 years of declining political influence, Christians are making a comeback in Lebanon, according to a recently released report of the *International Crisis Group* (July 15). There has been a reassertion of Christian political leadership in the country, such as Amine Gemayel, Michael Aoun, and Samir Geagea, since Syria's withdrawal in 2005. These leaders have managed to restructure, more or less successfully, their respective political groups. Regarding political alliances, Aoun has become the head of the opposition coalition and has succeeded in imposing an electoral reform that will give more autonomy to many Christian MPs, who formerly needed to enter into alliance games with Muslim political forces.

Former army commander Michael Suleiman was elected president, which has allowed Christians to recover that institution. He is seen

as a leader providing balance to the current situation. Despite tensions between Aoun and himself, there is a need to negotiate cooperation between the president and the popular leader. While the Christian political scene is now split into two camps (Samir Geagea's Lebanese Forces and Amine Gemayel's Phalanges on one side; General Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement on the other), in a situation of growing polarization between Sunnis (dominated by the Future Movement) and Shiites (represented by Hizbollah), the Christian electorate will play a decisive role in the 2009 parliamentary elections. Due to Aoun's strength (with his controversial alliance with Hizbollah since February 2006), it seems likely that opposition forces will come to dominate the Lebanese political scene. Christians will find themselves empowered in the political field, in exchange for recognition of Hizbollah's armed forces, writes International Crisis Group analyst Patrick Haenni.

The full report is available online in French only, while the executive summary is also given in English, at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5573&l=1>.

Another document on Christian–Muslim dialogue: breakthrough or business as usual?

A statement on belief and reason recently signed by a group of Catholic and Shiite scholars evokes some skepticism, even in circles close to the Vatican, re-

ports Rudolf Zewell in the German Catholic newspaper *Rheinischer Merkur* (May 8). Following the sixth meeting in Rome (April 28–30) between representatives of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Iranian scholars from the Tehran-based Centre for Interreligious Dialogue, a statement was signed, according to which faith and reason do not contradict each other and should not be used for promoting violence; moreover, both Christians and Muslims should accept their differences, while being tolerant toward each other. Several scholars—such as Karl-Josef Kuschel (professor at the University of Tübingen, Germany) and Salim Abdullah (Islam-Archiv in Soest, Germany)—regret that such a document was signed only with Shiites, i.e. a minority among Muslims (of which 90 percent are Sunnis). Moreover, several points in the documents are susceptible to various interpretations. Kuschel suggests that the document should mainly be seen as part of an effort by Shiite scholars to counter the image of Islam as a religion prone to violence and by the Vatican to show its openness toward dialogue and peace promotion, after some observers felt that the current Pope was reluctant to engage in dialogue with Islam. The issue of the relation between faith and reason in Islam had indeed been a key issue since the controversial September 2006 speech by Pope Benedict XVI in Regensburg.

It should also be noted here that there have been in recent times a

growing number of initiatives both from the Muslim and Christian sides to launch dialogue initiatives. One of the most significant instances has been the statement *A Common Word between Us and You*, signed in 2007 by 138 Muslim scholars and addressed to Christian leaders—originally also as a development of reaction after the Regensburg speech. Several Christian church authorities have acknowledged or answered the document, most recently the Archbishop of Canterbury, who on July 14 gave a detailed reply.

Regarding Shiites, the specificity of their brand of Islam (clergy and hierarchical structure) and other considerations (including political ones) seem to make them especially eager to enter into dialogue with hierarchical Christian Churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church. Regular Islam–Orthodoxy dialogue sessions have taken place between Iranian scholars and the Moscow Patriarchate since 1997, the sixth one in July in Moscow. Issues raised go beyond theological discussion; for instance, the participants at the July session stressed that “each nation should have a right to carry out its original historical mission” and “to adequately present and protect its interests” (*Interfax*, July 18).

(*Rheinischer Merkur*, <http://www.rheinischer-merkur.de>; *Interfax Religion*, <http://www.interfax-religion.com>; *A Common Word*, <http://www.acommonword.com>)

FINDINGS/FOOTNOTES

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

■ The **International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS)** is exploring the possibility of setting up an international research program on the globalization of Asian new religious movements (NRMs), announces its director, Max Sparreboom. The institute devotes its Spring 2008 newsletter to NRMs. In an introductory article, Wendy Smith (Monash University, Australia) notes that several researchers on Japanese NRMs have drawn parallels between those movements and Japanese multinational corporations. But globalization brings challenges to NRMs: should rituals be translated; would foreign branches be staffed with people from the home country of the movement; how should they recruit and retain members in different cultural environments? Those are some of the questions raised in articles on “six representative Asian NRMs” in this newsletter, including the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, Seicho-No-Ie, PL Kyodan, Soka Gakkai, Church of World Messianity (Sekai Kyusei Kyo), and Sukyo Mahikari. For more information, write: IIAS, P.O. Box 9515, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands, or visit: <http://www.iias.nl>.

■ **Relioscope Institute** has recently issued its first report on contemporary religion. The French-language report, authored by Malik Tahar Chaouch and entitled *L'Actualité de la théologie de la libération en Amérique latine: déclin et héritages*, examines the decline of Liberation Theology in Latin America,

as well as the ways in which it has evolved and influenced sociopolitical movements in the region. Liberation theology's twilight is usually related to the fact that it did not develop a political project matching its theological and religious approaches, as well as due to the end of the Cold War era. Moreover, the author stresses the point that the concept of the “revolutionary subject” itself (the people or the poor) went into crisis, just as did the notion of the “historical subject” coined by Marxism.

A second factor in the decline of Liberation Theology is the hostility faced by most of its proponents from the Catholic hierarchy. Nonetheless, Chaouch highlights the ways in which different Catholic networks (including both lay people and priests) have successfully engaged the Latin American sociopolitical fabric, oscillating between the center and the periphery of the Catholic Church. Given the existence of such widespread networks, the usual account that victimizes the Liberation Theology actors to justify its decline does not hold up. On the contrary, internal repression has helped to spread many of the ideas of the Liberation Theology project. Moving from ecclesial settings to secular, civil ones, many of its key actors have built strong networks, both theological and civil, which have displaced some of the Church institutional arrangements.

Chaouch convincingly argues for a reading of Liberation Theology's recent developments, according to which, instead of fading away and receding to give way to Catholic conservatism and Protestant “fundamentalisms,” it has gone from aspiring to a revolutionary rupture to a defense of plurality and the acknowledgment of a multiplicity of historical subjects. Therefore, according to Chaouch, the Liberation

Theology project has followed the trends of many social movements and transformed itself into what some have called a “self-regulated revolution.” Two things distinguish the new ventures from the all-encompassing Liberation Theology of the past: the secularization of its reflections (and the integration of social sciences within the theological discourse), on the one hand, and the increasing recognition of a plurality of collective actors, on the other.

Thus, rather than only one Liberation Theology project, nowadays we can find several theologies emerging, which are linked to new social movements: indigenous peoples, women, and ecological movements have their own theological approaches that put forward new understandings of the old libertarian paradigm. One such case is indigenous theology. The author puts forward the case of Mexico, showing the way in which diocesan structures (mainly San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas), religious orders (Jesuits and Dominicans), and the Episcopal Mexican Conference operated to give rise to distinct modes of organization and theological reflection among the indigenous Catholic flock. The report is a product of Chaouch's doctoral dissertation at the Institut des Hautes Etudes de l'Amérique Latine de la Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris. The author is currently associate researcher at the Center de Sociologie des Religions et d'Ethique Sociale de l'Université March Bloch, and director of Political Science and Public Administration at Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Hidalgo (Mexico). More information about the report can found on the Relioscope Institute's website, at: <http://www.relioscope.org>, or at: <http://www.religion.info>. - *By Marisol Lopez-Menendez, a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the New School for Social Research*

■ The debate over secularization is far from over, according to the contributors of the recent book *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies* (Routledge, \$120), edited by Detlef Pollack and Daniel V. A. Olson. Whether you agree with it or not, the book does show how the arguments about secularization have grown more complex and many sided in recent years. The helpful introduction by Pollack, a German sociologist, outlines the various schools of thought involved. In fact, the secularization camp itself is divided, with the various theorists citing conflicting causes and scenarios in this process (whether it be modernization or pluralism). Pollack challenges the claim that the major theorists posit that secularization is inevitable. The strongest critics of secularization are those holding to the economic market model, which sees pluralism and modernity as beneficial to religious growth. Another model critical of the secularization thesis is the individuation theory, which argues that modernity may change religion (making it less institutionalized, for instance), but not eradicate it.

The contributors make their points in the subsequent chapters and along the way provide some interesting arguments and research findings. A chapter on secularization and the state by Anthony Gill (University of Washington) seeks to show how political actors (through government regulations), as well as social forces, can change religious behavior and encourage secularization. Another chapter by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (Leipzig University) shows how science was used differently with varying outcomes, depending on its atheist, agnostic, or, more recently, religious contexts in East Germany, and how today's youth may approach religion in scientific terms. The concluding chapter goes beyond the current debate and im-

passes to combine both market and secularization models to explain religious behavior.

■ For over a decade there has been a growing interest in Reformed or Calvinist Christianity among evangelical young adults. This development has coexisted with post-baby boomer experimentation and involvement with "emergent" churches, which can be considered a polar opposite to that of Calvinism—non-doctrinal, experiential, and more teaching rather than preaching oriented. The new book, *Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists* (Crossway Books, \$14.99), by Colin Hansen, suggests that there are sharp differences and some similarities between the two evangelical camps. While RW has covered this development, Hansen's sympathetic portrayal provides important background information as well as an update on how Calvinism is turning up in unusual places in the American evangelical world. Most striking is the way that Reformed theology and charismatic worship and practices are being wed in the Sovereign Grace movement of churches, typified by Covenant Life Church in Maryland, led by the author-pastor Joshua Harris. Hansen also examines "ground zero" of the young Calvinist revival at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, finding both growing interest in and polarization over Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The emphasis on God's transcendence, as well as a strong revivalist thrust (seen in the adulation of Great Awakening preacher and theologian Jonathan Edwards and contemporary Baptist pastor and writer John Pieper), marks the new Calvinist turn much more than activism or political involvement. There are obvious social ramifications to this fervent Calvinism, as seen in the

insistence on male headship, but there is little mention of such culture war issues as abortion or even home schooling, which were touchstones of an earlier wave of young Calvinist enthusiasm in the 1990s (as, for example, portrayed in RW editor's 1997 book *Against The Stream*). Hansen's chapter on Seattle's burgeoning Mars Hill Church (and the larger Acts 29 network of which it is part) as an outgrowth and conservative adaptation of the post-modern emergent church movement is particularly worth reading.

■ **Getting Saved in America** (Princeton University Press, \$35), by Carolyn Chen, is the first book comparing the experiences of both Christianity and Buddhism among one immigrant group. The book provides everyday life stories from Taiwanese religious individuals in southern California. This book is a sensitive portrayal of personal narratives, and yet it successfully deals with important sociological questions on religion. This thoroughly ethnographic study shows how immigrants become religious after they have immigrated, and how they become Americans by becoming religious, which is the central argument of the book. Transnational research shows how immigrants use religious institutions, practices, and narratives to reconstruct "new communities" and "selves" in the US.

Chen argues that the example of the Taiwanese immigrant religious experience shows how Americans, not only immigrants, use their religions to solve issues of identity and belonging in daily life. Another distinct argument in the book is that previous scholarly writing regards immigrant religion in the host countries as a reinforcement/preservation of homeland traditions rather than a source of new habits, even if it is a convert religion. The contribution of Chen's work highlights how religions challenge and transform certain

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ethnic traditions among Taiwanese immigrants. -By Weishan Huang, a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the New School for Social Research

■ **Falun Gong and the Future of China** (Oxford University Press, \$29.95), by David Ownby, wrestles with an important question that is under debate in Chinese society: will religions continue to be relevant in the study of social changes in modern China? Following his last book, **A History of Falun Gong: Popular Religion and the Chinese State since the Ming Dynasty**, Ownby argues that Falun Gong and *qigong* are twentieth-century elaborations of a set of historical popular religious traditions, such as "White Lotus Sectarianism." Ownby believes that both Falun Gong and popular religions will indeed continue to have an impact in modern Chinese society.

One important contribution of Ownby's book is that his survey of Falun Gong prac-

tioners in Canada reveals the social and economic background of nearly 500 practitioners in North America. Significant numbers of Falun Gong practitioners are found to be doing considerably better than the average North American. Most of them are relatively young, well educated, and materially well off. Ownby's book informatively includes the history of *qigong* practice in China, the history of Falun Gong in China before 1999, the profile of Falun Gong's founder, Li Hongzhi, a sketch of overseas Falun Gong practitioners, and an analysis of conflicts between Falun Gong and the Chinese state. Different from previous studies focusing on existing literatures, Ownby's research includes a good deal of interview data, which provides ethnographic texture that enhances his analysis. Since Falun Gong is the most important and longest lasting resistance movement in China since the Tiananmen incident, this is an important study. -By Weishan Huang

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 focuses on long-range developments that lead to, and result from, world current events. 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.

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