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**A Note from Rodney Stark, Co-Director of the Institute for Studies of Religion,
Baylor University**

I have been a regular reader of *Religion Watch* since its earliest days. In fact, I found it so useful for helping me keep up with major religious events and trends, as well as research on religion, that many years ago I wrote a blurb to be used in soliciting subscribers. Even so, *Religion Watch* has barely broken even, and I have always admired Richard Cimino for his dedication. He founded *Religion Watch* on his own without any financial backing and has managed to keep it alive for over 30 years. For the past several years, the Religious Newswriters Association and the University of Missouri School of Journalism have sponsored *Religion Watch*, but a recent wave of budget-cutting at the university brought that partnership to an end and threatened to end *Religion Watch* as well.



When I learned of this sad situation, I consulted with my colleagues at Baylor's Institute for Studies of Religion, and we decided it was time to set things right. Beginning with this issue, Richard Cimino is the editor of the *Baylor ISR Religion Watch*. The commitment to unbiased coverage continues. So does the global perspective on religion. The major change is that now **all subscriptions are free**. If you have received this issue, you will continue to do so unless you "unsubscribe." There is a "new subscriber" function included in all issues for anyone who is not already receiving *Religion Watch*.

Crowdfunding—coming soon to a church near you

Crowdfunding has become an increasingly popular way to support new ventures in business and non-profits, and now new congregations and other religious organizations are investing in such campaigns as they seek to expand their ministries, according to the current issue of the *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* (No. 9). Such crowdfunding sites as Kickstarter and Indiegogo have generated billions of dollars as entrepreneurs and other backers use these Internet sites to solicit financial support for a wide variety of projects and causes. While religion-related projects make up a small portion of crowdfunding efforts, Indiegogo offers a “religion” category that has drawn church plants and other efforts seeking financial support. Author Adam Copeland writes that the typical religion-related crowdfunding project often seeks funding to “create a new space or emerging ministry on the edge of the traditional, established church.”

Copeland studied five campaigns of new congregations, with only two meeting their funding goals, though all raised over \$20,000 each. St. Lydia’s Dinner Church, a new Evangelical Lutheran Church of America congregation in Brooklyn based on shared meals, ranks as the most successful project, not only raising the most in funding (\$33,240) but also the most backers (263 people). Copeland finds that these religious projects make particular use of the video component of Indiegogo along with the digital text to create a “compelling narrative meant to tug on the heartstrings—and the wallet—of the viewer.” He concludes that more congregations will likely build upon the relative success of his case studies, “and crowdfunding will become more common. Whether in digital text or video, one thing is clear: the offering plate has gone digital.”



Other churches in Copeland’s study, including an Episcopal church plant and coffee shop in Birmingham, Ala., and a new church in Portland, Ore., that was expelled from the Evangelical Covenant Church because of its gay rights stance, seem to fall into the mainline and experimental Emerging church orbit that lacks the funding sources of many evangelical church planting networks. For this reason, social media and the “general ability to communicate publicly” is now an important tool of outreach. Research on church plants conducted by the editor of **RW** finds that new mainline congregations tend to draw people working in education and social work who spread their donations among various non-profit groups and causes. This pattern is in contrast to evangelical church plants that attract more business professionals who regularly concentrate their giving—and often tithing—within the congregation.

(*Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, <http://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/religions/article/view/26248>)

Christian study centers extend evangelical presence at elite universities

A growing number of Christian study centers based around prestigious American universities are taking “advantage of their campuses’ multicultural marketplace of ideas,” even as evangelical groups have faced exclusion from these centers of education, writes Molly Worthen in the *New York Times* (Jan. 17). Christian study centers, which occupy private buildings off campus and exist independently from university, “beyond the reach of nondiscrimination,” have mushroomed since 2000, with about 20 now embedded in the most prestigious universities around the country. At the same time, their sister evangelical campus organizations, such as InterVarsity, have lost access to campus space and student fees at several colleges due to their requirements on belief and practice (such as excluding homosexual behavior). Worthen writes that these centers “position themselves as forums where students can hash out the tensions between their faith and the assumptions of secular academia—the same assumptions that have assailed more traditional ministries. They are, in a sense, spiritual ‘safe spaces’...”

At the same time, the staff and students in these study centers see themselves not as “evangelists but as conveners of a conversation meant to grapple with the ideological divides that secular liberalism’s mantra of tolerance so often elides: How do people with clashing assumptions about what is real and good communicate and coexist?” The centers have created places for debate, such as Columbia University’s journal *Cross and Crown*, Dartmouth’s *Apologia*, a semiannual journal that aims to “think critically, question honestly, and link arms with anyone who searches for truth and authenticity.” But the centers also question the premises of secular identity politics and clash with campus activists who claim that Christians and other religious people are overstepping their bounds as they address such issues as gender.

hears her friend’s identity as “spiritual but not religious... You’ll hear them say, ‘I want a relationship with the Creator,’ but they don’t feel the need to manifest that relationship within the church space.” But the lack of a church foundation with its resources in place “may actually hobble some of the activist work,” Green concludes.



(*The Atlantic*, <http://www.theatlantic.com>)

Canada’s unchurched capital draws innovation in ministry

Vancouver, long Canada’s most unchurched city, is showing that megachurches and other religious innovations can flourish there, even if their American origins are downplayed. *The Christian Century* (Jan. 6) notes that Vancouver “is known in religious circles for being a very secular city in a secular province in an unchurched part of the continent. According to researchers at the Angus Reid Institute, only 17 percent of British Columbians attend church as often as once a month—lower than Canada’s overall rate of 23 percent.” Writer Jason Byassee adds that the low

rate of religious participation is associated with the city's (and British Columbia's) culture of leisure, the decline of the United Church of Canada, and the lack of any church establishment. But the flood of Asian immigrants into Vancouver—with 30,000 Chinese immigrants entering Canada every year since 2000—is convincing churches to reshape their ministries. The Tenth Church, affiliated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, attracts some 2,000 worshippers at its five sites to its services marked by low-key preaching and elements of Catholic piety and mysticism, with several of the satellites holding weekly communion. Although his denomination is strongly against gays in leadership, Pastor Ken Shigematsu says that gay and lesbian members have an important place in the community.

Byassee writes that “There are megachurches larger than Tenth in Vancouver. The Mennonite Brethren, having dropped their ethnic distinctives and emphasis on pacifism, have congregations numbering in the thousands downtown...and in the suburbs. The Baptists have the largest congregation in the area, Village Church in Surrey. Coastal Church downtown has rock concert-quality music. All the congregations have quite conservative theology. They're all led by Canadians.” Even though the church planters associated with these churches have some American ideas and money behind them, if a congregation seems too American, Canadians won't attend. “The secret, it seems, is a can-do American attitude without visible American trappings,” Byassee



adds. The innovation doesn't necessarily lead to megachurch-type growth. Grandview Calvary Baptist Church draws 300 worshippers but is a leader in creating intentional communities and affordable housing. Byassee concludes that “Christian institutions in Vancouver succeed by being engaged with the culture, not by condemning it. They teach the faith clearly and winsomely. Their walls are permeable. And they stay at their ministry for decades....”

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

CURRENT RESEARCH

● **Voters are less opposed to the idea of having a non-believer, even an atheist, as a presidential candidate, according to a survey by Pew Research.** The survey, released January 27, shows that the share of Americans who said they would be less likely to vote for an atheist is down from 61 percent in 2007 to 51 percent today. Previous Pew surveys found that 7 in 10 Americans said it was important that a president have strong religious beliefs. The new survey, conducted among 2,009 American adults, asked the somewhat different question of “How important is it to you to have a president who shares your religious beliefs?” That question turned up much smaller numbers, with 64 percent of Republicans and only 41 percent of Democrats saying it was very or somewhat important. The importance most Republicans attach to a candidate’s faith was more muted when it came to the candidacy of Donald Trump. Forty-one percent of Republicans see Trump as a potentially good, even great, president, even though they don’t think he’s particularly religious. Almost twice as many evangelicals agreed Trump would be a bad president compared to Ted Cruz and Ben Carson. For Democrats, almost half said Hillary Clinton is not a religious person, despite her public claim of being an active and lifelong Methodist.



● **The pay gap between men and women clergy is significantly wider than the national pay gap of 83 cents on the dollar, according to Tobin Grant in his *Corner of Church and State* blog (Jan. 12).** National data on the clergy pay gap was unavailable until this year, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the national median income for both male and female clergy (the Bureau had collected this data before but could not make reliable estimates of women because of their low number). The data shows that women clergy earns 76 cents for each dollar earned by male clergy. The gap for clergy is wider than it is for similar occupations, such as high school and college teachers (which are both close to the national average).



(*Corner of Church and State*, <http://tobingrant.religionnews.com/>)

● **On the disputed question of how many Muslims there are in the U.S., the Pew Research Center recently released estimates that there were about 3.3 million Muslims of all ages living in the country in 2015.**

This estimate means that Muslims made up about 1 percent of the total U.S. population (about 322 million people in 2015), but the Islamic population is likely to double by 2050. The new Pew estimate of Muslims is based on a demographic projection that models growth in the American Muslim population since a 2011 estimate and includes both adults and children. The projection was based on data on age, fertility, mortality, migration and religious switching drawn from multiple sources, including the 2011 survey of Muslim Americans. According to the current estimate, there are fewer Muslims of all ages in the U.S. than there are Jews by religion (5.7 million) but more than there are Hindus (2.1 million). Since 2007, there has been a steady growth in both the number of Muslims in the U.S. and the percentage of the U.S. population that is Muslim. Just over half of the projected growth of the American Muslim population from 2010 to 2015 is due to immigration.



● **Despite overwhelmingly positive coverage in the media, Pope Francis is drawing smaller crowds and “possibly alienating the base of traditional Catholics,” according to the newspaper *Politico* (Jan. 12).** New figures published by the Vatican show that in 2015, more than 3.2 million pilgrims visited and attended papal events, liturgies or prayer services at the Holy See. That number is a sharp decline from the 5.9 million visitors Pope Francis received in 2014, and it was less than half of the 6.6 million pilgrims who visited the Vatican during Francis’s pontificate in 2013. While the Vatican attributed the dropping numbers to fears over terrorism, pope-watchers say another factor may be at work.



The popularity of Francis among the media and other outsiders, especially over his moderate stance on such issues as homosexuality and communion for the divorced, has alienated and caused suspicion among more devout Catholics. Vatican specialist Sandro Magister dismissed the terror threat argument, saying that weekly attendance at the pope’s general audiences were higher last December (44,000) after the Paris attacks than the year before (32,000). In turn, a

Vatican spokesman cited a novelty effect, arguing that the latest numbers are in line with the attendance figures for conservative Pope Benedict—whose public attendance figures peaked at 3.2 million after his inaugural year in 2006.

GENERAL ARTICLES

How Islamic is the Islamic State?

The nature of the Islamic State (IS) gives rise to various and often conflicting approaches among scholars and other observers monitoring its development. In an article published in *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Nov.-Dec. 2015), Jeffrey Kaplan (University of Wisconsin Oshkosh) and Christopher P. Costa (Department of the Navy) approach it as an instance of a “new tribalism” and claim that it has actually become a sectarian group of its own, separate from the Islamic Ummah while attracting support from Muslims around the world. Like several other authors, Kaplan and Costa emphasize the millennial nature of IS and stress that feelings of living in times leading to the Day of Judgment are widely spread in a number of Muslim countries—in the context of “constant waves” of “messianic fervor or eschatological desperation” in the Islamic world. While millennial beliefs in all religions of the “People of the Book” are often benign, they can also turn into antinomianism, leading followers to commit actions that would otherwise be reprobated.

The authors note a disturbing trend in rhetoric in IS publications that selectively retrieve elements from the Islamic heritage. But similarly to what happened in other cases of confrontations with messianic groups, Western war planners tend to dismiss such rhetoric as “nonsensical.” But this millennial language is actually what makes IS dangerous: a perception of living in the Last Days, “freeing them from the normal constraints of Islamic law and simple human decency.” Rightly, the authors



note that this tendency is not unknown in the history of apocalyptic movements. Moreover, they identify IS as a case of a “new tribalism,” following a theoretical model originally developed by Kaplan in 2010. Distinct from “ascriptive” tribalism (i.e. a group into which one is born), IS belongs to the type of “aspirational” tribalism (i.e. tribes “coalesc[ing] as a tightly knit supportive milieu that is forged by deep currents of belief”). The authors claim that this pattern should not be overlooked by a focus only on radicalized religion.

Jihadism is not limited to IS, and several well-known French authors, such as Gilles Kepel and Olivier Roy, have for years developed widely read analyses of such phenomena. In an overview of recent French publications on the topic published in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Jan. 21), Marc Zitzmann shows that interpretations differ among those scholars. Roy and Farhad Khosrokhavar—an expert on radicalization as well as on jihadists in jails—attribute limited significance to religious beliefs as a source of radical views, while Kepel or Jean Birnbaum see it as crucial. Moreover, according to Kepel, jihadists follow the blueprint elaborated by Abu Musab al-Suri in his 1600 page book *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, made available online in the mid-2000s. So-called “lone wolves” may not be part of an organization, but they are part of the system, and the ultimate

purpose is to provoke a “civil war” in Europe. Either complementary or contradictory, those different approaches by various authors attempt to make sense of what is more than merely a security threat. Also at stake are the perceptions of immigrant communities in the West as well as the controversial issue of relations between jihadist appeal and specific currents of contemporary Islam.

(*Terrorism and Political Violence*, <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/ftpv20/current>)

Zoroastrian women moving toward priesthood

For the past few years, women have started to serve as assistant priests for the Zoroastrian community in Iran, reports Giulia Bertoluzzi in the Swiss monthly *Sept* (Dec.-Jan.). Following the emigration of many Zoroastrians—including priests—after the Islamic Revolution, there has been a severe shortage of priests for performing the rituals of this very old, Persian-born religion. This led to the development

of a category of assistant priests. From 2009-2010, the *mobed* (member of a family of hereditary priests) Soroushpur, current chairman of the Council of Zoroastrian Priests, suggested opening the priesthood to women as well. He had done



research on ancient Zoroastrian documents and claimed to have found clear evidence of women clergy in ancient times before Muslim invasions.

A majority of Zoroastrians welcomed the proposal, but more conservative *mobeds* opposed it, saying that women should not perform holy rituals when menstruating and could become full priests only after menopause. For this reason, women can function at this point as assistant priests, although several of them feel convinced that this policy will necessarily evolve. Zoroastrian women emphasize the key role they have played in keeping the religion alive. There are currently eight women among Iranian Zoroastrian clergy. Last year, in the historical center of Zoroastrian religion, Yazd, a woman opened one of the yearly festivals for the first time in centuries.

(*Sept*, P.O. Box 76, 1752 Villars-sur-Glâne 2, Switzerland; www.sept.info. A slightly different version of the article had previously been published in English in *Middle East Eye*, July 27, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/features/zoroastrian-priestesses-iran-2058029133>. A video showing a prayer and talk by *Mobedyar* Mahshad Khosraviani, the first Zoroastrian priestess to be ordained in North America in 2012, can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slm9WhAFix4>)

Jewish extremist youth violence fed by religion or disillusionment?

A spate of attacks on Palestinians and churches and mosques in Israel in the last year has put the spotlight on the growth of extremism among Jewish youths, reports a *Religion News Service*-based article in the *Washington Post* (Jan. 20). Both religious Zionists and secular Jews were shocked by reports of youths in the Zionist settlement communities of the West Bank accused of fire bombing and murdering members of a West Bank Palestinian family and vandalizing and attacking mosques and churches, including a Benedictine Catholic community in Jerusalem, last summer. All of the suspects, who were indicted last month, are called “hilltop youths” and had spent time at unauthorized Zionist settlements. Even Israel’s right-leaning politicians called the cases Jewish terror attacks. Leftists accuse the settlers of turning a blind eye to extremist rabbis who are fanning the flames of violence, but religious Zionists say the situation is more complex.

One moderate rabbi says these extremist youths “reject religious Zionist leadership, their teachers, their parents and their rabbis.” He compared them to gang members disillusioned with authority, particularly their elders, for not resisting the 2005 Gaza disengagement, the Israeli campaign to uproot 10,000 settlers from their homes. Kimmy Kaplan, an expert in Jewish extremism at Bar-



Ilan University, said young Palestinians and Israeli extremists are products of the same conflict and violent environment, especially if they are backed by imams or rabbis associated with militant groups. The youths’ former rabbis are reported to be cooperating with the authorities, urging their former students to obey the law, though with little success.

Converts and their spouses diversifying Reform Judaism in Israel

Immigrants, largely from the Philippines, are converting to the Reform branch of Judaism and are bringing along their inactive Jewish spouses in the process, adding to Jewish diversity in Israel, reports Judy Maltz in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* (Jan. 5). The new movement of converts are usually Filipino women who “converted to Judaism through the Reform movement, and their husbands or partners are native-born Israelis who grew up in Orthodox or traditional homes, but ultimately abandoned religious practice, only to return to it under the influence of their Jewish-by-choice wives.” For the Reform movement in Israel, it has been a double bonanza. “Our congregations are becoming



more diverse and interesting, not only because of these Jews of choice who have been joining, but also because of their spouses,” says Rabbi Gilad Kariv, executive director of the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism. “We now have coming through our gates a new group of native-born Israelis who might not have discovered us otherwise, and this is one of the reasons it is so important for us to embrace Jews of choice.” The Tel Aviv synagogue Beit Daniel is at the epicenter of this new phenomenon, but an increasing number couples with similar profiles can be found at Reform congregations around Israel. “And increasingly, they distinguish themselves as active and devoted members,” Maltz writes.

Behind the trend of Reform growth is the 2002 Supreme Court ruling that permitted anyone converted to Judaism by the non-Orthodox movements to be identified as Jewish in the Population Registry. But while Reform converts may be recognized by the Population Registry, the Orthodox-run Chief Rabbinate does not consider them Jewish, and thus the state does not recognize their marriages unless they also marry abroad. Orthodox conversions are for the most part not a live option for foreign workers in Israel as the Chief Rabbinate would suspect them of being motivated by a desire to obtain permanent status in the country rather than by a genuine interest in Judaism. Since individuals converted to Judaism through the Reform movement in Israel are not entitled to such rights and benefits, these particular converts are not subject to suspicions of going through the process for any material gain. But Maltz adds that this distinction doesn’t necessarily mean that Reform conversion was a default choice. As one convert says, “I preferred Reform Judaism because it’s modern, the women sit with the men, and you can dress normally.”

Remnant of Ethiopian Jews making the move to Israel

The decision taken in November 2015 by the Israeli government to allow 9,000 Ethiopians previously not recognized as Jews to immigrate to Israel marks a last step in successive approaches to the issue, as reported by Bernard Dichek in the *Jerusalem Report* (Jan. 25). Some of those who had been allowed to come at the time of the mass airlifts of 1984 (8,000 Ethiopian Jews) and 1991 (14,000 more) happened to be of mixed Jewish and non-Jewish lineage. In 2003, the Sharon government decided to allow only those matching strict criteria (i.e., having a Jewish mother) to come to Israel. The Netanyahu government reaffirmed those criteria in 2010. The impact on people who were expecting to immigrate to Israel was devastating; some had already sold their belongings and left their homes, families were separated, while people lived in huts next to the Israeli Embassy in Ethiopia, clinging to the hope of reaching Israel some day. Ethiopian activists in Israel were unable to convince the government to bring them to Israel. In 2014, it announced that immigration from Ethiopia was completed.



After the 2015 Israeli elections, Dichek adds, the beating of an Ethiopian-Israeli soldier by police highlighted discrimination suffered by the Ethiopian Jewish community in their new home. Asking for advice from Avraham Neguise, a newly-elected Ethiopian-born member of Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, Prime Minister Netanyahu received several recommendations to improve the lot of Israelis of Ethiopian origin, and the Knesset was also made aware of the resentment about those stranded in Ethiopia, whose plight was made clear to a fact-finding mission there. This mission led to a reversal of government policy: “The government decision, for the first time, enables Ethiopians who have Jewish lineage on their father’s side to come to Israel. Their non-Jewish spouses and common children will also be included.” All are expected to reach Israel within five years, with the first group expected in March.

(*The Jerusalem Report*, P.O. Box 1805, Jerusalem 91017, Israel; www.jerusalemreport.com)

Religious minorities facing discrimination in Myanmar

Known for its transition to democracy around the charismatic figure of Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as for its ancient Buddhist culture, Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) has also made headlines in recent years due to severe anti-Muslim violence [see Oct. 2015 RW]. But other religious minorities are also raising the issue of discrimination writes Melissa Crouch (University of New South Wales) in the current issue of *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* (Winter 2015). The country’s legal system actually recognizes personal law for Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Christians. Since 2013, there have been discussions in view of enacting a new law regulating inter-religious marriage between Buddhists and non-Buddhists; heated debates on the topic had already taken place as early as the late 1930s. These debates surface again and again, although there is little evidence of a rise in such marriages. Reactions against Muslims are largely also reactions against the perceived “invasion” of Bengalis and the related inability of the state to stop the inflow writes Tharaphi Than (Northern Illinois University).



While it is difficult to assess if net migration is really taking place, any incident can easily fan the flames in such a context of mistrust. Buddhist groups justify violence as being defensive in order to protect race and religion, while militant Buddhist groups categorize non-Buddhists (especially Muslims with Bengali origins) as “wrong believers” and see them as a security threat. Due to the sensitivity on the Muslim issue, the government has delayed the release of the 2014 census data, so the 1983 census remains the only available overview. At that time, there were 3.9 percent Muslims, mostly Sunnis, with those of Bengali origin whose citizenship has not yet been recognized making up half of this population. If the proportion has remained stable, Muslims would now make up some 2 million out of 51.5 million inhabitants. But some Muslim leaders

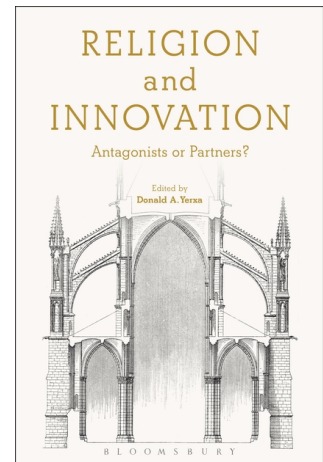
claim that the Muslim population is greatly underestimated and might be above 10 percent. Christians comprise around 4 percent of Myanmar's population (3 percent Protestant, with Baptists as the largest group, and 1 percent Catholic), but their importance in social and political life is larger than what those percentages suggest: out of 629 members of the two houses of national Parliament, there are 45 Christians reports Benedict Rogers (Christian Solidarity Worldwide). She adds that how they will contribute shaping future legislation will be a test of Christianity's influence on society. The latest issue of *Hinduism Today* magazine (January-March) also features Myanmar with a 17-page long, richly illustrated travel report by Rajiv Malik. The article claims 2.9 million Hindus in the country, with Tamils comprising the largest group, although some other sources quote lower figures. Those Hindus originate not only from India as there is also a significant Hindu population with roots in Nepal. In contrast with hundreds of thousands of Buddhist monks promoting Buddhism, "there is not a single Hindu sadhu or swami, either Myanmar-born or sent from India," Malik writes (though, of course, there are priests performing the rituals in temples and institutions for training them). According to the report, the strongest organizational Hindu presence nationwide is the Sanatan Dharma Swayamsevak Sangh (SDSS), an organization founded in 1950 and affiliated with Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in India. Local Hindu temples are said to be popular with Buddhists as well. This shared worship helps to prevent frictions between both groups, Malik suggests—although there have been cases of Buddhist preachers critical of Hinduism, and hundreds of thousands Indians were expelled in the 1960s.

(*The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, P.O. Box 12205, Arlington, VA 22219-2205, www.tandfonline.com/rfia; *Hinduism Today*, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304, www.hinduismtoday.com)

Findings & Footnotes

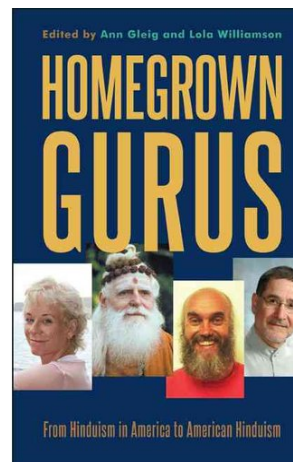
■The title of the new book *Religion and Innovation* (Bloomsbury, \$37.95), edited by Donald A. Yerxa, would no doubt be dismissed as a glaring oxymoron by new atheists and other strong secularists, who argue that religion serves the cause of progress only by accommodating it or, more typically, getting out of its way. But Yerxa and the book's 14 contributors attempt to make the case that throughout history a wide range of religious movements and organizations have contributed to significant changes in everything from politics to scientific and legal and artistic life. Some of the book's arguments are clearly theological in nature. One chapter argues that scientific progress itself will revive the need for religion, largely because it allows humans to control more and more of the world, making them more morally accountable and prone to guilt.

More empirical chapters include archeological case studies of Mesoamerican religions suggesting that they served conservative as well as innovative roles, such as in the formation of cities, new kinds of architecture, and new uses for psychoactive substances. RW readers may be more interested in the contributions on contemporary innovations, notably economist Rebecca Samuel Shah's study of the role of evangelical missions to the Dalit (or "untouchable") caste in India. Such practices as tithing create an innovative break from tradition that allows the poor more self-control over their finances, encouraging "future-oriented patterns of



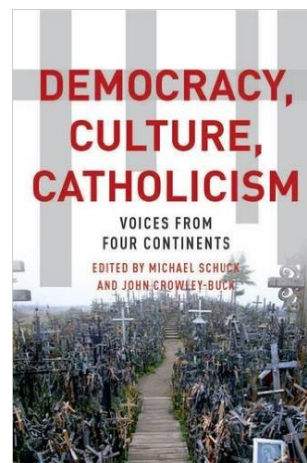
expenditure and savings.” A more speculative chapter looks at a city planning project for a future Chicago informed by classical humanist urbanism and Catholic metaphysics and social teachings.

■ ***Homegrown Gurus*** (SUNY Press, \$26.95), edited by Ann Gleig and Lola Williamson, documents the shift in American Hindu leadership from its immigrant Indian beginnings to a new generation of largely American-born gurus and their networks. The editors make the point that these gurus are part of a third wave of Hindu leaders in the U.S. The first wave took place more than a century ago when 19th century leaders from India such as Vivekananda came to the U.S. to introduce Hindu teachings, while the second wave was the result of the 1965 Asian immigration act. The homegrown leaders, represented by such figures as Ram Dass (Richard Alpert), Swami Rudrananda (born Rudolph Albert), and Sivaya Subramuniasami (born Robert Hansen), are mainly converts who span the “traditionalist”/“modernist” spectrum much more than the earlier waves of gurus, who tended to see their role as modernizing Hindu traditions to appeal to American seekers. The “homegrown” gurus are eclectic enough to be called “postmodern” by Gleig and Williamson, but they seem to defy labels, as they include Master Charles, who has developed a form of high tech meditation using sonic waves that are fed into the meditator’s ears through earphones, and Subramuniasami, who moved from “New Thought” and New Age teachings to embrace orthodox Hinduism and become the satguru (true guru) of 2.5 million Tamil Sri Lankans (and founded the magazine *Hinduism Today*).



The contributors show how it is not unusual for Indian Hindu gurus to embrace modernist practices and teachings and appeal to Euro-American followers, while converts are reaching Indians with more ritual-based forms of the religion. And then for something completely different, what Philip Charles Lucas calls “Neo-Advaita” de-emphasizes Hindu traditions almost completely and repackages them as therapeutic and syncretistic spiritualities, even drawing on Christian themes, the most notable figure being Eckhart Tolle. Some of the chapters also look at the guru sex scandals that broke out in the 1980s and 1990s, which led to some groups de-emphasizing strong guru-follower relationships and adopting more democratic models. The editors conclude that the American Hindu situation is similar to the fragmented state of Buddhism in the U.S., only more so—one marked by multiple interpretations of tradition, increasing pluralism, and mixture of various forms of modernism and traditionalism.

■ The result of a three-year interdisciplinary project, ***Democracy, Culture, Catholicism*** (Fordham University Press, \$35), edited by Michael J. Schuck and John Crowley Buck, focuses on the Catholic Church in Lithuania, Peru, the U.S., and Indonesia and how it relates to the development and maintenance of democracy in these countries, although there is some attention given to Catholic countries in general. Political scientist Samuel Huntington wrote of a “third wave” of democracy consisting mainly of Catholic countries making this transition, and the most interesting parts of this often disjointed book explore this dynamic in these four societies and beyond. Peter J. Schraeder presents a study confirming that a democratic transition has taken place in Catholic countries; using data from Freedom House, Schraeder finds that whereas only 15 Catholic countries could be classified as democratic in 1973 (the year designated as the beginning of the



third wave of democratization), by 2013 “an extraordinary 35 Catholic countries had emerged as democracies.”

Schraeder also asks “what happens after the Catholic Church in a predominantly Catholic country has successfully pressured an authoritarian state to democratize?” He cites data showing that the higher the level of democratization in predominantly Catholic countries, the lower the level of political restrictions on religion. The data also suggests that the higher the level of democratization in these countries, the greater the level of state involvement in religious legislation, though the book’s case studies complicate the picture. After significant democratic activism in these and other Catholic countries—including predominantly Muslim Indonesia and religiously pluralistic America—the church faces new challenges. The level of Catholic democratic activism has decreased in all of these countries due to conflict between conservative and liberal Catholics (in the U.S.); new political actors and parties less amenable to traditional social justice concerns (in Lithuania); new kinds of secular and populist competition with the church (Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia); and a more inward stance due to outside pressures (Indonesia).

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

The Process Church of the Final Judgment, an esoteric religious movement that became defunct during the 1970s, has been partially revived through various online expressions. The church held to a mixture of psychotherapeutic and occult teachings and practices that was in many ways similar to Scientology, although it had a polytheistic orientation. The group did not have a large membership, even though the writings of its founders Robert de Grimston and Mary Ann MacClean had broader influence, and gradually went defunct due to schisms in its leadership. Recently, however, the Process has had a new incarnation as, among other things, a large and successful animal welfare organization called Best Friends. Under MacClean, the group moved through various spiritual expressions to embrace the “salvation of animal lives rather than human souls,” according to sociologist William Sims Bainbridge.



The Process had a long involvement in music, inspiring the group Funkadelic under George Clinton, and today several bands featured on YouTube have embraced Process themes, most notably the New York occult band Sabbath Assembly. Finally, Process teachings have found their way onto the Internet, both attracting a new following and reinvigorating its original members. Solo magical rituals have replaced the former emphasis on group rituals. There is talk of reviving the group, but even if that doesn’t happen, “the wide distribution of music, scripture, symbols, and even simulated artifacts in the form of newly crafted jewelry and clothing offers the possibility of revival of a radical religion that was once thought to be extinct,” Bainbridge writes. He adds that the rebirth of elements of Process may be an example of how “we are witnessing not the decline of religion but its fragmentation, which can be considered a form of paganization.” (Source: **Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion**, Vol. 11, article 14, http://www.religjournal.com/articles/article_view.php?id=105)