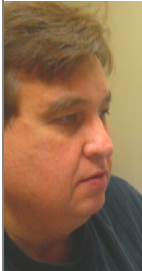


First Thoughts



“...Happy 1st Anniversary”

It's official; Crosswinds Foundation for Faith and Culture is one year old. That's right, **on April 17th we celebrated our first anniversary.** Thanks to all of you who have supported us financially, prayed for us, and offered encouragement during this past year.

Without question this has been one of the most rewarding years of my ministry. Yet, I am mindful that while I may have been the one to share the gospel with someone we met this year, or take the phone call or email from someone who needed help with a question, or providing the research for a pastor or church staff, or writing the articles; none of this could have been accomplished without your standing with us. So, **in case I haven't told you enough, thank you!**

We are especially excited that we are starting our second year with a new outreach to Romania and parts of Europe with the addition of Nelu Filip and Ieremia Rusu to the Crosswinds team. You can read more about them on the “Ministry” page of the Crosswinds website. In future issues they will be updating us on some of the cultural crosswinds that are blowing across Europe.

As I write this, staff member Don Malin is home from his tour of duty in Afghanistan for a two week furlough. He is having a tremendous ministry with the men and women he serves alongside as he serves as their Chaplain. I hope you saw the pictures of their worship time in our Special Report from Afghanistan. If not, you can read it in the archives section of our website.

We continue to update our website with fresh content so be sure and check it often. If you didn't read our Easter email, you will want to go to the website and read Scott Shoop's article **Evidence for the Resurrection.** This is just the first of many papers Scott will be providing for us.

This issue of CrossingCurrents focuses on the shifting trends in American spirituality. We begin with an article of the threat of the interjection of eastern meditation into the life of our youth. Then the "In the News section" includes two rather lengthy, but important and revealing, articles from *Time* and *Newsweek*, with slightly different looks at America being a post-Christian nation. I invite your careful consideration of the conclusions that are reached in these articles as they have important implications for the future of the Church. You can decide for yourself whether the Church is being affected by these winds of cultural change when you read our Culture Tracks section. I would love to hear your thoughts on this.

In closing, would you consider a special gift in celebration of our first year? I realize these are tough times economically and you might not be able to make such an investment at this time; if so, perhaps you would commit to pray for us as we continue to reach out to others. We'll be most grateful for anything you are able to do.

YOUR DONATIONS HELP

To make a financial investment in our ministry make your check payable to: Crosswinds Foundation and mail to: P.O. Box 12143
Birmingham, AL 35202

For information on giving by credit card (Visa, MC, Discover, AMEX) contact us at 205-327-8317; or info@crosswindsfoundation.org

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Missing Articles From Past Issues

Just let us know and we will be glad to send copies of those you would like to have. Some of the topics we have covered:

- Becoming a Post-Racial America (2 Parts)
- Oprah and Spirituality
- President Bush, Faith, and Culture
- Atheists and Christmas
- Coming Soon to a Bus Near You

Our new booklet, *Spiritual Buffet* is now available. Please see page four for additional information and to order.

No Internet access? Contact us and we will mail copies of research reports we offer.





The Beatles Take Transcendental Meditation to School by Bob Waldrep

In case you missed it, this month the Beatles finally reunited - at least the remaining two, Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr, did. Granted, these two also came together in 2002 to perform at a concert held in memory of fellow Beatle, George Harrison, who had passed away in November, 2001.

So, what occasion could be of such importance as to bring these two together, again? This time, it was a benefit for the David Lynch Foundation's "Global Initiative to Teach One Million At-Risk Youth to Meditate".

Along with Paul and Ringo, others endorsing and performing at this event included: hip hop pioneer, Russell Simmons; '60s pop singer, Donovan; music artist, Sheryl Crow; and founding Beach Boy member, Mike Love. Why would this diverse group of pop cultural icons, combine efforts to raise funds in the hopes that a million children could be trained in meditation techniques?

The short answer: the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The meditation they are endorsing is the Eastern variety, Transcendental Meditation (TM), developed by the Maharishi of whom, many of these celebrities are devotees. Some, such as Paul, Ringo, Donovan, and Love, actually trained at the feet of the Maharishi. They are true believers, using the influence of their celebrity to try and make TM more mainstream in the culture; particularly, among young people, as evidenced by their participation in this benefit.

McCartney said as much during a press conference¹ promoting the event, stating, "[TM] was a great gift the Maharishi gave us...it's a life-long gift, it's something that you can call on at anytime and I think it's a great thing. I think it is a particularly great thing what David and the Foundation is doing - putting it in schools and allowing kids to experience something that I don't think they otherwise would have had the chance to experience. I think it's a great thing now it is actually coming into the mainstream."

Noting the interest in TM, at this same press conference, Lynch Foundation President, John Hagelin said, "Forty years ago there was a huge upsurge of interest in Transcendental Meditation when the Beat-

les and Donovan and Paul Horn and Mike Love and others, helped bring the message of meditation to the West. Today there is another powerful resurgence due this time to an abundance of scientific research on the benefits of meditation for health and brain development, especially among children. This resurgence is taking places in corporations, in Board rooms, and in schools, again, fueled by this research."

During his remarks, McCartney also referred to this so-called "scientific" research regarding TM, stating, "I think people will be able to look at it and say, okay, here's a study that was done in Detroit, or the West Bank, or in Brazil, and look at it and see what the effects are. We think it's a great thing."

The appeal to science, as proof of the claims made by TM practitioners, has been used almost from its inception in the mid 1950s. Parallel to this is the claim it is not a religious practice, or related to religion.

Despite the belief, shared by Paul and Ringo, that research supports it being a "great thing", many question these claims of scientific evidence. However, whether rooted in science, or not, is Hagelin correct in his assertion of a resurgence of the practice of TM? In addressing that, perhaps a brief history of TM should be considered; especially, as to whether or not it is connected to religion.

According to the TM website, "Transcendental Meditation provides a way for the conscious mind to fathom the whole range of its existence - active and silent, point and infinity. It is not a set of beliefs, a philosophy, a lifestyle, or a religion. It's an experience, a mental technique one practices every day for fifteen or twenty minutes." tm.org/maharishi

"[TM] was a great gift the Maharishi gave us"
Former Beatle, Paul McCartney

Though it claims not to be a religion, it is without question rooted in the religion of the Maharishi. The TM website contains a research section and one of the "scientific" evidences it presents to validate TM is an American Medical Association article² dated June 12, 2006. Interestingly, the following quote from that article appears on the

TM website: "The TM technique is a meditation modality restored from the ancient Vedic tradition in India and taught worldwide since 1957.



The "Vedic tradition" is the forerunner of the Eastern religion of Hinduism. It would certainly appear that the meditation techniques that the Maharishi developed in the 1950s are closely derived from the religious training he received under his guru, Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, who was the spiritual head of the monastery at Joshimath, following the Advaita Vedanta³ school of Hindu philosophy, which is basically, the belief that the universe is one thing/one reality - Brahman - and everything else is just an illusion - Maya.

This is not TM's first attempt to integrate itself into the educational system. In the early 1970s the Maharishi developed a new strategy for TM, known as, World Plan. The goal was to integrate TM into every area of society thus solving all of the world's problems. One area of focus would be education.

In order to get past any objections to their trying to introduce religion into public education, TM was presented in a new sanitized from religion, secular version. The only problem was it was still the same old version of TM even if it was being put in a new package. Once introduced into New Jersey schools, it didn't take long before a suit was filed testing the claims that TM was not associated with religion.

In the case of *Malnak v. Yogi*, the Court ruled that TM was, in fact, a religious practice. This ruling was later upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals, 3rd District, which agreed it violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment, effectively barring TM from the classroom. However, advocates for TM still insist it is not connected to religion and continue to try and get it accepted in the classroom by an invitation from school administrators.



Culture Tracks

Statistical data reflecting the cultural footprints of Americans.



In the News

Excerpts from articles reflecting trends in American spirituality (LINKS PROVIDE FULL TEXT)



Belief Trends Among Professing Christians

- 39% believe Jesus sinned while on earth (54% disagreed with this)
- 59% believe Satan is not a living being but a symbol of evil (35% disagreed with this)
- 58% believe the Holy Spirit is not a living entity but a symbol (34% disagreed with this)
- 64% believe a person can be influenced by demons/evil spirits (28% do not believe this)
- 5% have a positive opinion of Wicca (Witchcraft); however 40% said they did not know enough to respond
- 39% believe Mormons are Christians (29% disagree and 30% say they are not sure)
- 22% believe the Bible is not accurate in all it teaches (73% believe it is)

Source: Barna Research

Read the Full Report at: www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/260-most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exis

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THE END OF CHRISTIAN AMERICA Newsweek, Apr 13, 2009

It was a small detail, a point of comparison buried in the fifth paragraph on the 17th page of a 24-page summary of the 2009 American Religious Identification Survey. But as R. Albert Mohler Jr.-president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, one of the largest on earth-read over the document after its release in March, he was struck by a single sentence...[the report found] the number of Americans who claim no religious affiliation has nearly doubled since 1990, rising from 8 to 15 percent. Then came the point he could not get out of his mind: while the unaffiliated have historically been concentrated in the Pacific Northwest, the report said, "this pattern has now changed, and the Northeast emerged in 2008 as the new stronghold of the religiously unidentified."

..."That really hit me hard," he told me last week. "The Northwest was never as religious, never as congregationalized, as the Northeast, which was the foundation, the home base, of American religion. To lose New England struck me as momentous." Mohler posted a despairing online column on the eve of Holy Week lamenting the decline..."A remarkable culture-shift has taken place around us...The most basic contours of American culture have been radically altered. The so-called Judeo-Christian consensus of the last millennium has given way to a post-modern, post-Christian, post-Western cultural crisis. [threatening] the very heart of our culture."

There it was, an old term with new urgency: post-Christian. This is not to say that the Christian God is dead, but that he is less of a force in American politics and culture than at any other time in recent memory.

...Let's be clear: while the percentage of Christians may be shrinking, rumors of the death of Christianity are greatly exaggerated. Being less Christian does not necessarily mean that America is post-Christian. A third of Americans say they are born again; this figure, along with the decline of politically moderate-to liberal main-line Protestants, led the ARIS authors to note that "these trends...suggest a movement towards more conservative beliefs and particularly to a more 'evangelical' outlook among Christians."

To be post-Christian has meant different things at different times...The broader-and, for our purposes, most relevant-definition is [it] characterizes a period of time that follows the decline of the importance of Christianity in a region or society.

Beatles Take... continued from page 2

As the Lynch Foundation website states, "[it] provides funds for students to learn to meditate through TM teaching centers, hospital-sponsored wellness programs, boys and girls clubs, before- and after-school programs and in schools when invited by the administration." (davidlynchfoundation.org) In addition, it claims to have provided scholarships for over 60,000 students, teachers, and parents to learn Transcendental Meditation.

According to Newsweek Lynch's foundation had, at that time provided, "...some \$5 million for TM research and voluntary in-school programs for more than 2,000 students, teachers and parents at 21 U.S. schools and universities...[and has] more than 4,000 students and dozens of U.S. schools, mostly charter and public, on its waitlist for grants of \$625 per student, parent or teacher." (May 28, 2008 issue)

The money raised at the Lynch Founda-

tion's concert is intended to see these parents, teachers, and students receive this training. If the numbers are accurate, it would certainly appear that the Foundation president's assertion of a resurgence in the practice of TM is correct. There is little wonder considering the current fascination many have with practices, such as mediation and yoga, associated with eastern religions.

The fundraiser by the Lynch Foundation has raised hope among many local TM groups that schools in their area will be more open to the "benefits" and "acceptance" of TM. This renewed emphasis on promoting TM among youth, along with the current media attention being given Lynch and other TM celebrity practitioners, means parents and educators need to be particularly alert to what is happening in their local schools.

Please let us know if you have knowledge of TM being offered, or of attempts being

made to get it an "invitation" in a public school system, or other organization.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ View the news conference at: www.davidlynchfoundation.org/videos.html#
- ² Read the AMA report http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/166/11/1218.pdf
- ³ Read more about Advaita Vedanta http://crosswindsfoundation.org/articles/AdvaitaVedanta.pdf

For More information about TM and the Lynch Foundation (This is not an endorsement of these sites, nor all of their content.):

Apologetics Index: http://www.apologeticsindex.org/207-transcendental-mediation-research

Newsweek: http://www.newsweek.com/id/139206

Skeptics Dictionary: http://skeptdic.com/tm.html

Falling Down the Rabbit Hole: (Former TM Practitioner) http://www.suggestibility.org/

TM Free Blog http://tmfree.blogspot.com



...In 1992 the critic Harold Bloom published a book titled "The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation." In it he cites William James's definition of religion in "The Varieties of Religious Experience": "Religion ... shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they consider the divine."

Which is precisely what most troubles Mohler. "The post-Christian narrative is radically different; it offers spirituality, however defined, without binding authority," he told me. "It is based on an understanding of history that presumes a less tolerant past and a more tolerant future, with the present as an important transitional step." The present, in this sense, is less about the death of God and more about the birth of many gods. The rising numbers of religiously unaffiliated Americans are people more apt to call themselves "spiritual" rather than "religious."

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/192583?GT1=43002>

CHURCH-SHOPPING Time Apr. 28, 2009

Forty-three years ago, this magazine published a stark cover with the words "IS GOD DEAD?" The accompanying article predicted that secularization, science and urbanization would eliminate the need for religious belief and institutions before long. In modern society, only the weak and uneducated would persist in their faith. Yet rumors of religion's demise turned out to be premature...as a new report from the Pew Forum shows, it is a mistake to conclude that more Americans are rejecting religion. Leaving church, it turns out, doesn't mean losing faith.

What the Pew researchers didn't anticipate is that fully 44% of Americans have changed faiths at least once..."It was a phenomenon,"

says Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum...So the researchers followed up with more than 2,800 of the original respondents...[to]...ask why they had decided to leave and/or join a different faith.

"The U.S. has an unmatched religious dynamism," explains Lugo. "It's an open religious marketplace as well as a very competitive one. This is the supermarket cereal aisle." ... all faiths can freely exist in the U.S. but must compete for adherents in order to survive.

With all of those choices, choosing a church (or mosque or synagogue or temple) isn't just a matter of theology for many Americans. They might decide where to worship because they adhere to a broad tradition - like Protestantism - or because they are drawn to a particular denomination, sub-denomination, or even an individual congregation. Or they might choose based on location or children's activities or the quality of preaching or music or pot-luck offerings. The concept of church-shopping itself is uniquely American. "What is your religious preference?" is such an American question," Lugo says...in most places, religion is an assigned identity. It's part of your family, [or] heritage."

For the most part, unaffiliateds report deep dissatisfaction with organized religion, believing that it focuses too much on rules and that religious leaders are too concerned with acquiring power and wealth. "In the 2008 survey...it was clear that 40% of these unaffiliated people are fairly religious," says Lugo. "They are not indifferent or hostile to religion." Indeed, only 32% of unaffiliateds agreed with the statement that religion is superstition and even fewer (23%) said that belief was important in their decision to leave a religious tradition...When asked for the main reason they joined their current religion, 33% of former unaffiliateds cited the benefits of being

spiritually and socially connected to a community and 20% said that it was a choice driven by personal spirituality and a sense that something was missing from their lives.

These findings...do confirm that a stubborn, insistent strain of religiosity continues to infuse Americans - even those who claim they've left organized religion behind.

www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1894361,00.html

MAN NOT ALONE IN UNIVERSE CNN, April 20, 2009

Earth Day may fall later this week, but as far as former NASA astronaut Edgar Mitchell and other UFO enthusiasts are concerned, the real story is happening elsewhere. Mitchell, who was part of the 1971 Apollo 14 moon mission, asserted Monday that extra-terrestrial life exists, and...is being concealed by the U.S. and other governments. He delivered his remarks during an appearance at the National Press Club following the conclusion of the fifth annual X-Conference, a meeting of UFO activists and researchers...Mankind has long wondered if we're "alone in the universe. [But] only in our period do we really have evidence. No, we're not alone," Mitchell said.

"Our destiny, in my opinion, and we might as well get started with it, is [to] become a part of the planetary community....We should be ready to reach out beyond our planet and beyond our solar system to find out what is really going on out there."

Mitchell grew up in Roswell, New Mexico, which some UFO believers maintain was the site of a UFO crash in 1947. He said residents of his hometown "had been hushed and told not to talk about their experience by military authorities." [Being] warned of "dire consequences" if they did so...being a local boy... they considered me reliable enough to whisper in my ear their particular story."

cnn.com/2009/TECH/04/20/ufo.conference/index.html



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ENGAGING THE CULTURE

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For additional information on a topic in this newsletter, or another area of interest, contact us for a free information packet.

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This is a compilation of articles written by Bob Waldrep and Ron Carter for the *Alabama Baptist Newspaper*.

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