

Hollinger's words, "striking intellectual and professional consequences." Thus, specialists in American religious history who adopt a master narrative of Christian decline in a national tradition "shoot themselves in the professional foot" and isolate themselves from an American historiography to which they could contribute more substantially if they acknowledged the continuing legacy, and indeed the vitality, of Christianity.

Hollinger expresses four "modest hopes" about the approach such scholars will take to the issue of secularization. The first is that they will grapple with the question of why secular outlooks made so little headway in the United States in the 20th century by comparison with what occurred elsewhere in the Western industrialized world. His second hope is that historians will sharpen the discussion of secularization by using instead, in some specific contexts, the term "de-Christianization," which is a more accurate way of representing what has occurred. After all, the secularization to which church historians refer is most often "the decline in authority of one specific cultural

program—that of Christianity."

Hollinger's third hope is that studies of de-Christianization will confront directly the implications of the process for those who are not Christian to begin with, especially American Jews. Jews were victims, for example, of American higher education's Christian hegemony, and they benefited by de-Christianization. That presents "an interpretive challenge," notes Hollinger, for those church historians who focus primarily on the downside of de-Christianization.

Finally, Hollinger hopes that "we can attend more directly to the cognitive superiority of science than some of the scholars who have the most to say about de-Christianization have proved willing to do." Science, in his view, is not on "an equal epistemic footing with other ways of looking at the world, all of which are then encouraged to respect each other under the ordinance of a genial pluralism." Time will tell whether the response to Hollinger's "modest hopes," especially among the professional historians to whom they are addressed, will be genial at all.

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

### *Regulating 'Frankenfoods'*

"More than a Food Fight" by Julia A. Moore, and "European Responses to Biotechnology: Research, Regulation, and Dialogue" by Patrice Laget and Mark Cantley, in *Issues in Science and Technology* (Summer 2001), The Univ. of Texas at Dallas, P.O. Box 830688, Mail Station J030, Richardson, Tex. 75083-0688.

Many Americans aren't wild about genetically modified foods, but it's in Europe that "Frankenfoods" are encountering the greatest resistance from consumers and, increasingly, governments. German foreign minister (and Green Party leader) Joschka Fischer said recently that "Europeans do not want genetically modified food—period. It does not matter what research shows; they just do not want it."

The European Union imposed a de facto moratorium on the approval of new genetically modified products in 1999, and while regulations have been proposed that would allow the lifting of the ban, five of the EU's 15 member countries oppose them. Moreover, the regulations include a still undefined "precautionary principle" that could set the bar very high—and that could be exploited as a protectionist tool. For the United States, the stakes are large:

About one-third of its \$46 billion in food exports, and a growing proportion of all American crops (more than 50 percent of soybeans, for example) are grown from genetically modified seed.

Moore, a public policy scholar at the Wilson Center, contends that much of Europe's resistance can be traced to a decline of public confidence in science growing out of "events that have no direct link to genetic engineering." The British government, for example, spent many years assuring Britons that bovine spongiform encephalopathy, better known as mad cow disease, posed no risk to humans. But in 1996, the government did an abrupt about-face. Seventy people have died from a form of the disease; as many as half a million more could die during the next 30 years. Infected cattle have since been discovered in other

European countries. And that's not all. Scandals erupted in France over inadequate effort to protect blood supplies from the AIDS virus and in Belgium over tainted animal feed.

Restoring confidence in science will require a new approach by government, science, and industry, says Moore. Americans, she thinks, will have to embrace the controversial precautionary principle. She also favors much heavier government spending for independent scientific research on food safety and environmental matters. Costs are high. It could take two to three million dollars just to trace the potential impact of one kind of genetically modified corn on one species of butterfly. Greater "transparency" is also needed. Moore notes with approval that Britain's new independent Food Standards Agency is to make all its technical risk assessments and recommendations available to the public.

Scientists generally, she says, must step out of their laboratories and speak to the public more often.

Laget and Cantley, both EU science advisers, take a somewhat different view. Europe is far from being antiscience, they say; its investments in biotechnology research are as great as America's. But Europeans take a different view of food regulation. While American regulation "focuses primarily on the end product," European regulation begins at the farm. The two scientists add that it's no surprise that European consumers aren't eager to buy America's genetically engineered foods, which have "been modified in ways beneficial to the agrichemical companies, the seed suppliers, or the farmers, but not to the consumer." Still, they express confidence in an eventual transatlantic convergence of policies on genetically modified foods.

EXCERPT

## *The Technology of Memory*

*It is a paradox that innovation itself in culture almost invariably seems to begin with the recovery of memory. The Renaissance at the dawn of the modern era was a rebirth of classical antiquity; 19th-century romanticism went back to the Middle Ages; and 20th-century artistic modernism began when Stravinsky took music and dance back to the pagan rites of spring and when Kandinsky and Malevich took painting back to the simple lines and colors of early Eastern Christian iconography. Northrop Frye said that our only real crystal ball is a rearview mirror, and in our global era it needs to be as wide-angled as possible. Culture is the DNA that shapes development, and human language is the basic vehicle through which memory is communicated and people are bonded together with a sense of identity. The founder of Hasidic Judaism said that "exile is caused by forgetfulness, and the beginning of redemption is memory."*

*Yet memory and its vehicle of language are both fading even as the hubris of human intellect probes ever more deeply into both cosmic and microcosmic space. There were about 6,000 languages spoken on this planet at the beginning of the 20th century; there are probably only 600 still widely spoken at the beginning of the 21st century. Together with biodiversity, cultural and linguistic diversity are fading fast. The records are being wiped out, not just of oral but also of written traditions that remain neglected, unread, and in many cases physically disintegrating. Almost the entire manuscript materials of two countries possessing the largest supply of two-dimensional written records in the world, India and Russia, are deeply endangered species with no serious programs or prospects for preservation. The multiple languages, scripts, and ways of recording written words across the vast Indonesian archipelago are being obliterated. Throughout the world virtually all books and paper-based records that have been produced since the introduction of high-acid paper 150 years ago are disintegrating at an accelerating rate and will not last another century—as are films, photographs, television tapes, and recorded sound.*

—James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress, in *The Sewanee Review* (Spring 2001)