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March 26, 2010: The New Neo-Hasidism

Bruce Ledewitz

Duquesne University, ledewitz@duq.edu

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Title: The New Neo-Hasidism

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3/26/2010—the new book, *A Heart Afire: Stories and Teachings of the Early Hasidic Masters* by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Netanel Miles-Ypez, reviewed here at Religion Dispatches, looks like tremendous fun. Schachter is an infectious character and represents the best of universalist Jewish spirituality, open to Zen, Science Fiction, Sufism, and everything else. His picture alone is worth the price of the book. I'm definitely going to read it. Having been raised within the Lubavitch movement myself, and having fallen in love with Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim*, I can testify to the power of this movement for the believer. Yet it must be admitted that neo-Hasidism, for all its greatness, has not sparked serious Jewish and religious renewal beyond a certain core. Why is this? That is impossible to answer, but I do have one suggestion. The Hasidic God is much too traditional to be any use today. Hasidic reverence for the world has to be teased out from the anthropomorphic deity. That task calls to us, not to the followers of the Rebbe. They have done their part. Now we must do ours.