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FEATURE STORY:

Eastern Orthodox churches facing their own culture wars?

Eastern Orthodoxy is often said to be resistant to the cultural and theological battles that have marked other denominations, but the familiar scenario of conflict between “traditionalists” and “progressives” on matters of sexuality, gender, and politics is increasingly evident in this tradition. In the conservative ecumenical magazine *Touchstone* (May/June), Orthodox writer and priest Alexander F. C. Webster identifies an “Orthodox left” that is mounting a “Trojan horse” strategy seeking to effect change in these conservative churches. He charges that an Orthodox “elite” are dismissing more traditional believers as “fundamentalists”—a term that has been making the rounds in Orthodox theological conferences and journals and particularly propagated by prominent Fordham University theologian Aristotle Papanikolaou [see July 2016 **RW**]. Other theologians, such as Fordham’s George Demaopoulos and St. Vladimir’s Seminary’s Peter Bouteneff, as well as Archbishop Chrysostomous of Cyprus, have targeted such “fundamentalists” as being responsible for the lack of unity evident at last year Pan-Orthodox Council in Crete (several Orthodox bodies did not participate in the council for various reasons).

Webster cites Bouteneff’s report on the council in the mainline Protestant *Christian Century* magazine, where the latter concludes that Orthodoxy is “lagging in its responsiveness to modern demographic realities and to modernity in general,” as an example of this attitude. Webster’s article itself—and its publication in a well-known conservative magazine—suggests that both sides in these conflicts are positioning themselves in the two-party system of American religion marked by “liberals” and “conservatives.” While some Orthodox theologians have long been open to arguments about restoring women to the diaconate and even ordaining women to the priesthood, Webster sees support for such causes as stemming from Orthodox clergy and theologians’ increasing sympathy with gender and sexual liberation ideologies, leading up to “a soft-sell of the ancient proscriptions against abortions to the latest trend, ‘transgenderism.’” On LGBTQ issues, Webster sees a growing mood of tolerance and downplaying of church teaching on homosexuality among these elite theologians. But they are not far ahead of Orthodox laity; surveys have shown

that American Orthodox laypeople are close to mainline Protestants and Catholics in their support of same-sex marriage (54 percent).

Webster writes the deaconesses have been “obsolete” in Orthodoxy, but there have been several attempts to renew this office in recent decades, according to *Commonweal* magazine (June 3). The most recent effort took place this year when the Synod of Alexandria decided to revive the female diaconate in Africa and then proceeded to consecrate five women as deaconesses this past February. These moves by the synod caught American Orthodox by surprise; they did not know the female diaconate was even under consideration in Africa, even as they have created organizations advocating for deaconesses in the last two decades. The Synod of Alexandria has not yet published an official description of these deaconesses’ duties, but it has been informally reported that these women will assist in missionary work, catechism, and baptism, as well as leading services in mission parishes that have no regular priest. This development comes at a time when deacons in general have received a more prominent place in Orthodox churches after a period when they mainly had an administrative role. Today, Orthodox seminaries have established diaconal training programs, and the diaconate is generally seen as a boon to parish life and a ministry unto itself, such as assisting with liturgies and catechesis. The elevated role envisioned for deaconesses is likely to concern church conservatives, who fear it may be seen as a stepping stone for women’s ordination into the priesthood. But without an international mechanism for churches to communicate with each other, and due to the self-governing nature of Orthodox jurisdictions, there is unlikely to be uniform movement on the deaconess question.

(*Touchstone*, <http://touchstonemag.com/>; *Commonweal*, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/>)



ARTICLES:

Succession leads to Hasidic Jewish success

Hasidic Judaism is in its “golden, even platinum age” thanks to the effective succession of leaders and the dynasties they have built in America, said sociologist Samuel Heilman in a talk he gave at the City University of New York Graduate Center in early May, which **RW** attended. Heilman was speaking about his new book *Who Will Lead Us? The Story of Five Hasidic Dynasties in America* (University of California



Press, \$29.95). He noted that the different Hasidic groups show different patterns of leadership succession when a “rebbe” dies—some, such as the Satmar branch, have two or more leaders who compete for leadership, while the Lubavitch Hasidim have functioned with no successor since its last rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, was pronounced messiah upon his death by his followers. Heilman added that sons and sons-in-law increasingly succeed fathers today, a pattern that was not the case before the growth of Hasidic pluralism. The teaching known as “holy seed” that passes on the leadership to sons of rebbes has also influenced this trend; sons of rebbes would once work in other professions, but such options are now more limited, leading to family rivalry.

But Heilman stressed that the outlook for the Hasidim is bright, even with the struggles for succession, when only two decades ago few would have predicted survival for these traditionalist communities, much less success. “The U.S. has been better for Hasidim than anywhere else, even Israel. This is the golden age of Hasidism—they have more wealth, people, authority, power, and security than they ever did in Europe.... The move from the melting pot to the salad bowl, or multiculturalism, has been very good for the Hasidim.” These communities are free of restrictions, while the welfare state offers them considerable support. These rebbes’ influence and authority come from the substantial institutions (mosdos) they have built in the way of charities, schools, and real estate and other financial interests. In turn, members give their leaders increasing power and prestige. Heilman concludes that each rebbe increasingly competes with the other rebbes in a limited market where their “brands” seem increasingly similar in terms of lifestyle and attitudes toward the outside world. Yet these rebbes and their followers believe that Hasidim “should chart the direction of Jewish history.... Increasingly rebbes feel they are not only local leaders of their Hasidim but also international voices heard beyond their courts.”

Rev. Moon's disputed legacy and the divergent paths of Unificationism

Besides personal rivalries and disputes over the control of assets, divisions within the Unificationist movement after the death of its founder, Sun Myung Moon (1920–2012), are marked by the adoption of both different theologies and different views on the nature of the movement. This divergence was clearly expressed at a conference that took place on May 29–30 at the Faculty for Comparative Study of Religion and Humanism (FVG) in Antwerp (Belgium), which **RW** attended. Devoted to the life and legacy of Sun Myung Moon and the Unification movements, this gathering was an unusual kind of academic conference since most of the papers—besides a few by non-Unificationist scholars—were presented by representatives of the three main groups derived from the Unification movement, who met for the first time together in an academic settings to explain and debate their differences.

While the most members continue to follow the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) led by Rev. Moon's widow, Hak Ja Han (known as True Mother in the lingo of the movement), with more than 50,000 members, the two main schisms are also under the control of relatives of the founder. At different points in the history of the movement, two of his sons had indeed been put in the position of presumptive heir to the leadership. Hyun Jin (Preston) Moon had already parted ways with his father in the late 2000s but keeps control of some assets and leads the 2,000-member-strong Family Peace Association (FPA), along with its more secular subsidiary the Global Peace Foundation (GPF). As already reported in **RW** (October 2015), the founder's youngest son Hyung Jin (Sean) Moon is the leader of the Sanctuary Church (World Peace and Unification Sanctuary), which claims 10,000 members. All groups continue practicing rituals established by Rev. Moon. But while the FPA understands itself as part of a post-religious era, with an emphasis on peace and cultural activities (even avoiding the use of the word "Unificationism"), the Sanctuary Church follows a clear church model.

The most significant divides, however, are not organizational. A key fault line regards the role claimed by Mrs. Moon and her moves away from a patriarchal model. Both competing groups denounce statements by the widow, which claim that she is the Only Begotten Daughter and was born without the original sin, in contrast with her husband, and that she understood the Divine Principle without having to be taught by her husband. In the eyes of her critics, she is thus putting herself above Rev. Moon and introducing "a new theology," as stated by Richard Panzer (Unification Sanctuary). Moreover,



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the change from praying to Heavenly Father, now substituted with Heavenly Parent, linking the human True Parents with the duality of Heavenly Parents, is seen as bringing deep changes to Unificationist doctrines. In contrast, theologians from the FFWPU-controlled Unification Theological Seminary, such as Andrew Wilson, feel that Mrs. Moon is doing history a great service by challenging the age of patriarchy and opening the age of women.

There is also disagreement about what the sacred scriptures should be. Based on pronouncements by Rev. Moon that they are to be used for all eternity, both the FPA and Sanctuary Church cling to the Eight Textbooks. While Mrs. Moon uses them too—but also revises them, to the irritation of the two other groups—she has selected three books as the scriptures for the new era and has also given canonical value to some of her own discourses. The Antwerp conference made clear that each group is building on specific aspects of Moon’s legacy. By asserting her own authority and bringing doctrinal changes, Mrs. Moon is continuing in her own style the creative pattern of her late husband. At the same time, she seems to be paving the way for the institutionalization of the movement with the creation of a Supreme Council. With rivalry between Unificationist groups becoming increasingly theologized, the prospects for reunification of the divided branches seem dim.

(The proceedings of the conference will be published by the FVG - <http://www.antwerpfvg.org/> Massimo Introvigne published an overview of the Unification Movement schismatic groups in April on the WRSP website: <https://wrlldrels.org/2017/04/23/unification-movement-schisms-2/>)

Evangelical women bloggers bring gender, authority questions to surface

The democratic and free-wheeling world of the Christian blogosphere has elevated the role of evangelical women while posing a crisis of authority in churches and denominations, writes Tish Harrison Warren in *Christianity Today* magazine (April 27). The rise of the blogosphere has led to a new kind of Christian celebrity and authority—“the speaker and the author who comes to us (often virtually) as a seemingly autonomous voice, disembedded from any larger institution or



ecclesial structure.” One recent example of this crisis involves the popular blogger Jen Hatmaker, who generated controversy when she announced that her views about homosexuality had changed, leading the book distributor Lifeway to stop selling her books.

The incident has brought up the question of authority and the need for some type credentials for bloggers, especially as women Christian bloggers have filled a vacuum in some churches and denominations that don’t give women public teaching and preaching roles. Their readers look to these women bloggers for spiritual formation and inspiration, while they are operating outside of denominational and institutional structures. Warren concludes that denominations that restrict women in leadership nevertheless need to realize that their women members are receiving teaching from women bloggers and need to find a way to authorize or commission these bloggers to recognize their authority and keep it accountable to larger structures.

(*Christianity Today*, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/>)

American Sikhism’s post-9/11 activism raises women’s status

The creation and growth of American Sikh organizations and activism following 9/11 has given women greater leadership roles and status within Sikhism in the U.S., writes Sangeeta Luthra in the journal *Sikh Formations* (online April 20). The targeting and misidentifying of Sikhs (usually men with turbans) as Islamic extremists since 9/11 and the attack on a Sikh gurdwarah in 2014 in Michigan led to a new wave of institution building and activism that sought to safeguard religious freedom and civil rights and educate the public about the Sikh religion. These new institutions are built on the American Sikhs’ technological savvy—many work in IT fields, proficiency in English, and experience dealing with the media in the U.S. Although not likely to match the funds raised for gurdwarahs (Sikh temples), “the impact of these institutions is still very significant in shaping Sikh’s ethics, community and identity,” Luthra writes.



Another important trend is that over time the largest of these organizations have gone from “primarily online interactions to adding on programs that encourage face-to-face interactions within and across communities.” These interactions are less formally segregated along gender lines than the traditional worship and practices within gurdwaras. Couples or families tend to sit and do

siva together at these activities. Based on interviews with Sikh community leaders and analysis of Sikh web sites, Luthra finds that women have attained more leadership roles in these post-9/11 organizations. The women interviewed report feeling empowered by such involvement. The status of Sikh women improved overall after 9/11 after leaders “began referencing the Sikh belief in the equality of women as an authentically Sikh ideal and American ideal... This messaging contrasts to earlier periods of Sikh American activism, during which Sikh women’s equality was not seen as a pressing priority for activists. I believe that Sikh American civic engagement is creating new spaces for Sikh women’s equality and empowerment,” Luthra concludes.

(*Sikh Formations*, <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rsfo20/current>)

CURRENT RESEARCH

● **Are the number of atheists drastically undercounted in the U.S.?** That is the claim of social psychologists Will Gervais and Maxine Najle, who conducted an experiment on the role of stigma in identifying as an atheist and found that the national percentage could be as high as 26 percent. The magazine *Vox* (May 17) reports that the researchers formed the hypothesis that many atheists do not reveal their identity to survey interviewers because of social pressure and stigma against non-religion. Gervais and Najle sought to eliminate any element of embarrassment for subjects to admit their atheist identity through using a representative, online survey of 1,000 respondents that allowed them to reply to a group of statements on a range of subjects by writing down the number



of statements that was true for them. Thus they did not have to admit to being a vegetarian or a dog owner or, for one group of respondents, believing in God. The researchers write, “According to our samples, about 1 in 3 atheists in our country don’t feel comfortable disclosing their lack of belief.”

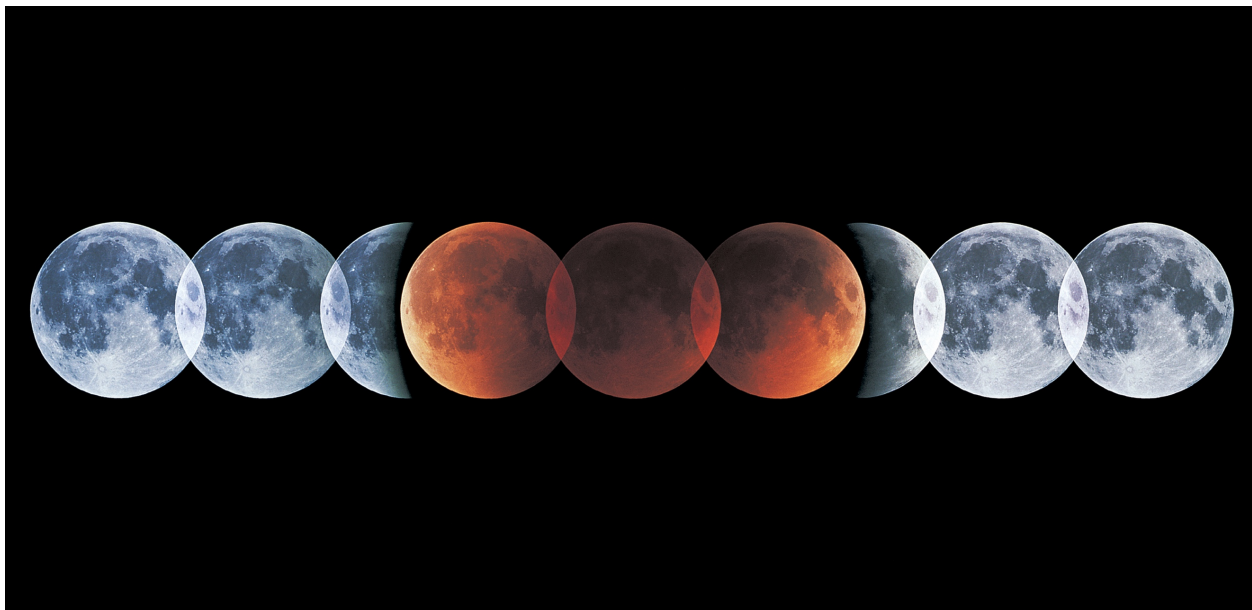
Of course, this high figure dwarfs the usual rates of atheist identification—usually at around 3–4 percent but going up to 10 percent for all non-believers. Critics charge that the study exaggerated the effect of stigma on atheist self-identification. Greg Smith of the Pew Research Center said that low levels of atheist identification are also found in surveys where respondents write in their answers, thus minimizing social pressure and stigma. Rodney Stark, sociologist and co-director of ISR at Baylor University, told **RW** that there are “no nationally ‘representative’ online samples.

There is a huge bias in online anything, and even more in volunteer ‘samples.’ And there certainly is no stigma in admitting one is an atheist in Scandinavia, but the percentage of atheists is not much higher there than in the U.S.,” Stark said.

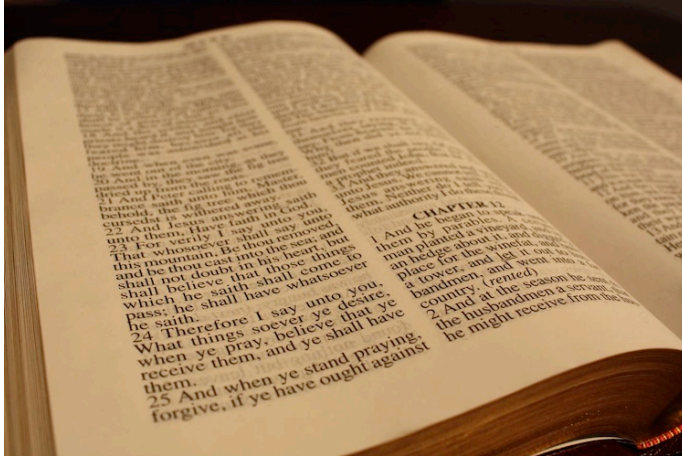
(Vox, <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/4/13/15258496/american-atheists-how-many>)

● **While non-affiliated Americans have grown sharply in recent years, receiving national attention, a more hidden group known as the “liminals,” who are not consistently either religious or non-religious, may be driving up the figures for the “nones,” according to a study by New York University sociologist Michael Hout.** In the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (online May), Hout notes that this liminal group of survey respondents is only revealed when data provide multiple answers from the same person, as with panel data. The sociologist analyzed General Social Survey panel data from 2006–2014 and found that “[hidden] in cross-sectional evidence of greater estrangement from organized religion are many people, roughly one in five adults, who are committed neither to being religious nor to being nonreligious.” There are two “liminals” for every committed nonreligious person. Rather than “in-betweenness” being a halfway house to non-religion, Hout concludes that “two key observations point in the other direction, toward a religious identity. Liminals are more likely to name a religion than not. A minority of persons raised with no religion displayed a consistent nonreligious identity as adults; a third of them were liminal, and a quarter of them were consistently religious.”

(*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*,
<http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-JSSR.html>)



● **Fewer than one in four Americans (24 percent) now believe the Bible is “the actual word of God, and is to be taken literally,” similar to the 26 percent who view it as “a book of fables, legends, history and moral precepts recorded by man,”** according to a Gallup Poll. For the first time in Gallup’s four-decade trend, biblical literalism has not surpassed biblical skepticism. Meanwhile, about half of Americans—a proportion largely unchanged over the years—fall in the



middle, saying the Bible is the inspired word of God but that not all of it should be taken literally. Writing in the *Religion in Public* blog (May 19), Ryan Burge notes that the General Social Survey has shown a more consistent percentage of those holding a literal interpretation of the Bible since the 1990s. It is the percentage of Americans believing in an “inspired Bible” that has shown more decline—decreasing from 48 percent in 2000 to 44 percent in

the 2016 wave of the GSS.

(*Religion in Public*, <https://religioninpublic.blog/2017/05/19/changing-views-of-the-bible-point-to-polarization/>)

● **Catholic consecrated communities in the U.S. have grown in number during the past 10 years, with groups that stress community and more traditional practices showing the most growth, according to a recent study.** The study, conducted by Patricia Wittberg and Mary Gautier, is the third since 1999 and found 159 emerging communities, with a gender makeup of 52 percent women. From 2006, there was a 31 percent increase in these communities (a net gain of 38 communities), with a total reported membership in 2016 of 4,200 full members and another 1,000 in formation. According to the CARA Report (Spring), the strongest predictors of which communities grew 50 percent between 2006 and 2016 were an emphasis on traditional practices and beliefs, including loyalty to the magisterium, wearing



traditional habits, adoration of the Eucharist and other contemplative practices, and the importance of evangelization. Websites of over one-fifth of these communities mentioned ministry to the poor and to youth. Wittberg and Gautier point out that this growth is significantly lower than the growth of new religious communities in the 19th century, when most of the American religious orders were founded. Predominantly Catholic regions that once turned out such vocations, such as New England and the Middle Atlantic states, no longer do so, the researchers add.

(*The CARA Report*, Georgetown University, 2300 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20007)

● **A new study by the Benedict XVI Center for Religion and Society finds that those who identify as having “No religion” (or “nones”) represent 48.6 percent of the British adult population.** As far as regions go, inner London reports the fewest nones in Britain at 31 percent, compared to highs of 58 percent in the southeast and 56 percent in Scotland. The study, conducted by Stephen Bullivant, found that 67 percent of Britons identified as some kind of Christian in 1983, while in 2015, the figure was at 43 percent. Nones in the UK are predominantly white and male, but there are now 10.9 million nonreligious women. Among 18- to 34-year-olds, men and women are equally likely to be nones. Among 25- to 54-year-olds, the nonreligious have the lowest proportion of university graduates among the (non-)religious groupings. Three-fifths of nones say that they were brought up with a religious identity, and less than one-in-10 of those brought up non-religiously now identify with a religion.



The study finds that after consistent decline, in the past few years the proportion of nones appears to have stabilized. *The Observer* (May 13) quotes Bullivant as saying, “Younger people tend to be more non-religious, so you’d expect it to keep going—but it hasn’t. The steady growth of non-Christian religions is a contributing factor, but I wonder if everyone who is going to give up their Anglican affiliation has done so by now? We’ve seen a vast shedding of nominal Christianity, and perhaps it’s now down to its hardcore.” The study found that there are roughly 0.8 million nones who both pray monthly or more and rate their own level of religiosity highly. A

further 2.8 million either pray monthly or more or rate their own religiosity highly (but not both).

(The study can be downloaded at: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/no-religion-population.aspx>)

● **One of the most extensive studies of jihadist extremism in Italy finds that discrimination, economic disparity, outrage toward Western foreign policy, and oppression of Muslims did not figure highly in their support of violence.** The study, conducted by Michele Groppi and published in the journal *Perspectives on Terrorism* (11:1), is based on a quantitative study and focus groups of 440 respondents in 15 Italian cities. A significant minority (26 percent) supported violence framed in religious terms, though the majority did not. Thirty-three percent of respondents agreed with the statement that whoever offends Islam or its sacred tenets should be punished, while 12 percent strongly or slightly supported al-Qaida, and 15 percent supported the Islamic State. In testing each model linking support for violence with the literature, Groppi found that the strongest predictors were taking offense against offenders of Islam and the endorsement of an Islamic, theocratic form of government. Social difficulties and uncertainty about belonging to Italian culture were found to be only marginally significant for such support.

(*Perspectives on Terrorism*, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot>)



● **Marriage outside of Israel's Chief Rabbinate, which holds the monopoly over Jewish marriages in the country, has gained favor with the majority of Jewish Israelis for the first time, according to a recent survey.** The Chief Rabbinate officiates at Orthodox marriages, the only kind permitted for Jews, although the policy has faced opposition and alternatives. The survey, conducted by Hiddush, an Israeli organization seeking to advance religious pluralism, found that 55 percent of respondents said they would be interested in alternatives of Jewish egalitarian marriages outside of the Chief Rabbinate for themselves or their children. This figure included 81 percent of secular Israelis, though only 13 percent for Religious-Zionists and 0 percent of ultra-Orthodox supported such a measure. Those who currently wish to marry outside of the Orthodox faith have to travel overseas for a civil ceremony. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis live in parallel but unofficial common-law relationships that have won recognition in the courts and confer some marital rights such as inheritance and joint custody of children, reports the *Times of Israel* (May 11).



ARTICLES:

Christian Zionism in global South sheds its end-times focus

Christian Zionism is shifting from its American base with its apocalyptic background to charismatic Christian churches in the global South that stress prosperity teachings, writes Daniel Hummel in *First Things* magazine (June/July). Christian Zionism started under the auspices of evangelicals in the U.S., who taught that Israel would be the stage of end times events prophesied in the Bible. In the last decade, “Israel has found potential allies in the global South who vastly outnumber American Christian Zionists”—a trend that could have major geopolitical implications. Many of these new Christians are from countries that have had negative relations with Israel, such as Nigeria, Brazil, and China, but the massive growth of charismatic and Pentecostal churches and their related lobbying activities through such organizations as the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ) in these nations may be leading to new attitudes regarding Zionism.

The role of prosperity theology may seem less clear than American end-times teachings in relation to support for Israel, but the prosperity gospel stresses not only personal wealth and health but also national healing and blessing. These churches hold that a nation’s attitudes toward Israel will lead to either blessings and prosperity or to a curse, citing such Old Testament verses as Genesis 12:3 that state God’s promise to prosper such countries. Prosperity evangelists, such as South African Kenneth Meshoe, point to the example of Zambia, which went from poverty to greater development, allegedly because of its changed policies and attitudes toward Israel. This teaching is prominent in mainstream Pentecostal churches as well as among preachers on such networks as



God TV and Christian Broadcasting Network and theologians such as David Pawson and Malcolm Hedding, who are connected with ICEJ (which has 70 branches around the world). Hummel concludes, “This is no end-times escapism or even right-wing political ideology. Rather, in the twenty-first century, Israel represents hope for the largest generation of new Christians around the world.”

(*First Things*, <https://www.firstthings.com/>)

Both pluralism and militants gain ground in Iran’s seminaries

Young clerics in Iran’s seminaries and affiliated universities in the sacred city of Qom show a new pluralism and appreciation of non-Islamic disciplines, suggesting the emergence of a more “open and malleable religious life,” through there are also new signs of militancy in these schools, according to two studies. In the journal *Sociology of Islam* (5: 2017), Abbas Mehregan writes that in the last two decades, Iran’s leading seminaries and centers of religious life have undergone significant modernization, with areas of study going far beyond Islamic jurisprudence to include social sciences, philosophy, comparative religion, gender studies, and law. “Technological developments have brought students of seminaries and clerics into contact with the foreign world,” leading to the formation of somewhere between 150 and 400 new research centers, providing the opportunity for clerics to get familiar with research methods in the modern human sciences and to investigate Islamic topics from a new perspective. Today, “Islamic theology and sharia are promoted in chat rooms and religious questions are answered online...virtual seminaries have been established, and many seminary students, including 2,000 female students have started to create blogs,” Mehregan writes.

A survey Mehregan conducted among younger clerics at the main Shiite seminary in Qom finds a plurality of views. He finds that two-thirds of respondents acknowledge the “scientific authenticity of academia alongside religious seminaries [an idea that Ayatollah Khomeini condemned at the onset of the Islamic revolution in 1980].” The survey found that 52.5 percent rejected the application of violence to guide people to “real” Islam, although there was a significant minority (33.5 percent) who do not tolerate religious diversity and strongly agree or agree with the use of violence. In ranking interpretations of Islam among these clerics, what stands out is that after a political and ritualistic interpretation, modern interpretation received more preference than a traditional and “fundamental” view of the faith. Mehregan concludes that it is “incredible for many Muslims to hear from learned clerics in the capital of Shiism that applying sharia is not the main goal of religion and that Islam is not the exclusive path of salvation.... This implies the creation and gradual expansion of a softer interpretation of Shia Islam in Iran.... In other words, Shia believers have a free choice in the multivocal market of religious ideas. In practice, they have the possibility to refer to an alternative mujtahid or school if they encounter a problem with some religious decrees or beliefs....”

At the same time, Iran’s seminaries are undergoing a process of “securitization,” according to a study in the journal *Contemporary Islam* (online April 17). An influential organization in Iran known as the Clerical Basij, which was formed to regulate and suppress dissenting and opponent clergy, has expanded its reach in the country’s seminaries, writes Saeid Golkar. Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has created an insider’s network of seminary students and clergy, which ensures that seminaries and the clergy connected with them do not publicly criticize the Islamic regime. This growing contingent of “clergy security” has the “upper hand” compared to other political and clerical elites, Golkar concludes.

(*Sociology of Islam*, <http://www.brill.com/publications/journals/sociology-islam>; *Contemporary Islam*, *Contemporary Islam*, <https://link.springer.com/journal/11562>)



Findings & Footnotes

■ The journal *Current Anthropology* (April) features a symposium on fluid religious identities, with participants arguing that the religious “itinerant” is the rule rather than the exception today. Authors Yonathan N. Gez, Yvan Droz, Edio Soares, and Jeanne Ray even coin a term for the phenomenon of dynamic religious identity—“butinage” (which refers to the practice of foraging for flower pollen and nectar)—and draw on a range of recent anthropological and sociological research to make the case that using religion as a stable identity marker and even the idea of conversion doesn’t capture today’s religious reality. Research that finds adherents shifting between conflicting religious practices and beliefs is challenging the notion that when one converts to a faith, it is a one-way and final process, even with respect to exclusive faiths, such as Pentecostalism.

The authors agree that theology may hinder such mobility but maintain that religious “butineurs” can build bridges between similar traditions (such as Catholics and evangelicals) more often than disparate ones. They conclude that the practical outcomes of this pattern may mean that such individuals may facilitate the borrowing of religious practices between institutions or that the role of lay believers and their threat of leaving religious groups can help negotiate power vis-à-vis religious institutions. Respondents to the article discuss how the idea of butinage may apply to interchange between secular



and religious groups, and that the idea of a free flow between religions downplays the constraints caused by competition and conflict between religious groups. For more information on this issue, visit: <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/ca/current>

■ The Irish Jesuit journal *Studies* devotes its spring issue to the future of Catholicism in Ireland. The contributors include clergy, theologians, and sociologists who attempt to account for the rapid disaffiliation and disenchantment of Irish Catholicism within the past two decades. While the writers differ on the causes of this institutional decline, reciting a litany of losses that are likely to be felt in education, politics, and social welfare, they agree that a different model of the church is needed. Sociologist Gladys Ganiel draws on her work arguing that “extra-institutional” religion—ranging from Presbyterian peace-making efforts to Catholic charismatic prayer ministries—hold the seeds for wider social transformation. Others discuss restructuring efforts in the church and how the Pope Francis model can renew Irish Catholicism. D. Vincent Twomey provides a critical conclusion, updating his 2002 book, *The End of Irish Catholicism*. He writes that even apart from the sexual abuse crisis, Irish Catholicism lacked an intellectual-theological center, a lack that has only intensified in recent years with the closing of seminaries and theological institutes. The failure of religious education programs has left young people “exposed to an RE program on world religions devised by the state, which is a recipe for indifference to all religions.” The pastoral planning proposals put forward to renew the church have been



long on pragmatism and populism but short on capturing the theological imagination of the younger generations, as well as in providing liturgical renewal, he adds. For more information on this issue, visit: <http://www.studiesirishreview.ie/>

■ While cases of martyrdom, prophetic denunciations, prisoners of conscience, or armed resistance by a small group make great stories for movies or international media reports, and while thousands of Christians indeed die for their faith every year, most persecuted Christians actually respond by “creative pragmatism” to ensure survival in the hope that better days will come write guest editors Daniel Philpott and Timothy Samuel Shah in their introduction to an issue of the *Review of Faith & International Affairs* (Spring) devoted to Christian responses to persecution. Less investigated than persecution itself, Christian responses are being studied by scholars participating in the project *Under Caesar’s Sword*, the world’s first global investigation of the topic. It was launched in fall 2014 with a grant from Templeton Religion Trust. Groups under consideration may not always accept the label “persecution”. Robert Hefner (Boston University) reports that in the course of interviews conducted in 2015 and 2016, Christian leaders objected to its use in describing issues encountered by Christians in Indonesia—where acts of anti-Christian discrimination and violence have increased since the transition to democracy in 1998–1999—since it “risked obscuring the fact that a great majority of Muslim Indonesians remain their partners in the project of Indonesian nationalism and multi-religious citizenship.”

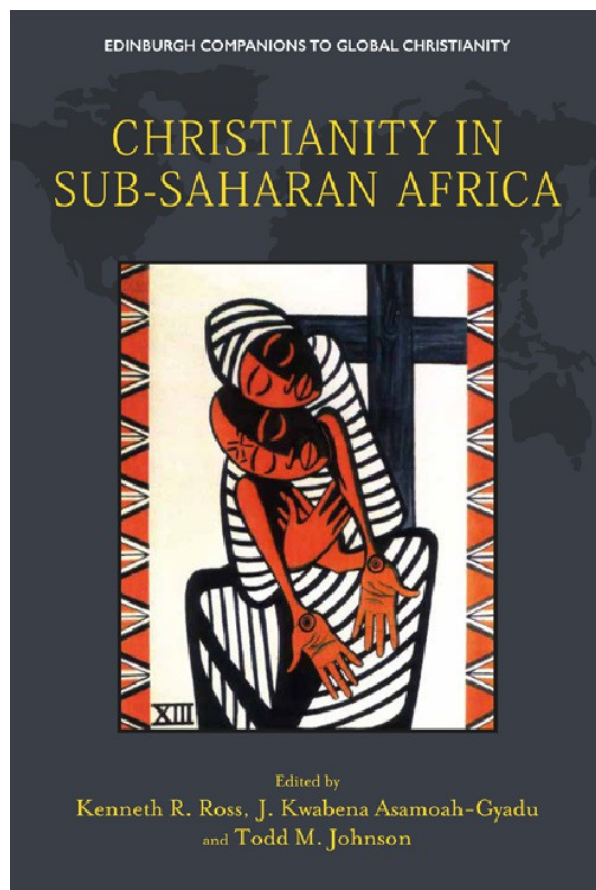
From a comparative analysis, the contributors look at various strategies in responding to persecution, including survival strategies, association strategies, and confrontation strategies. Survival strategies, in which Christians attempt to preserve their communities as well as basic institutions and practices, are the most common—and require a lot of courage, for instance, in environments of Islamist repression. Association strategies are where Christians attempt to build relationships and cooperation with those outside their communities (in their country or abroad) in order better to resist repression. This approach, however, requires a semi-open environment, and is difficult to develop in a highly repressive environment. Communities may engage in all three strategies. This strategy has been the case with some unregistered house churches in China. According to Fenggang Yang (Purdue University), who has conducted fieldwork in various areas of China during more than a decade, with the rising number of Christians in China and their growing strength, one may expect increasing instances of resistance in the coming years, despite a recent turn to intensified persecution.



Case studies show that not everybody in a community always agrees on a privileged strategy. For instance, in Egypt, writes Mariz Tadros (University of Sussex) in her article on Christians in the aftermath of Arab revolts, despite an entente between Coptic Pope Tawadrous and Egyptian President Al Sisi, Copts have continued to engage in resistance against the infringements of their rights and open criticism of the regime, putting into question the government's narrative about its management of the issues. The way a church's leadership copes with issues is not always representative of all segments of the community. A community faced with persecution may choose ways of cooperation and accommodation (insofar they are feasible), but it may also resist openly or embrace avoidance (i.e. withdraw into clandestine existence), as happened with some Christian groups in China.

(*Review of Faith & International Affairs*, P.O. Box 12205, Arlington, VA 2219-2205; Material related to the project *Under Caesar's Sword* (including a 26-minute documentary movie) can be found on its website: <http://ucs.nd.edu/>)

■ *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Edinburgh University Press, \$230) is the first of ten volumes to be published to serve as a companion to the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, a 2010 sourcebook on Christian demography. Editors Kenneth R. Ross, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, and Todd M. Johnson bring together indigenous authors to look at a wide range of subjects covering all the countries in this region. Another distinctive feature of this book (and subsequent ones that will cover each continent) is its use of many different kinds of data, including census, surveys, and denominational sources and estimates (which are more contested but may be the only sources of data available in many cases). The first two chapters cover the whole region, with the Introduction looking at the growth rates of the various countries and religions, showing uneven rates of expansion (with the fastest Christian growth in Benin and sharpest decline in Somalia). These two chapters also suggest that Christianity has become almost completely indigenous, even as new connections are forged with the West through migration and mass communications. The concluding chapter attempts to forecast the future of Christianity in the region. Even if such predictions are on shaky grounds, author Mercy Amba Oduyoye makes intriguing observations: denominations are and will likely remain alive and well, even if there is a movement toward Christian unity, even among African independent churches; there will likely be growing conflict with Islam, especially in its more militant forms; and the danger of heads of state embracing particular churches and appearing to legitimize them even as churches diversify in the region.



On/File: A Continuing Record of Groups, Movements, People, and Events Impacting Religion

Crossroads, recently named the fastest growing church in America, has also made a name for itself for its entrepreneurial ministry that is closely integrated with the startup culture of Silicon Valley. The church, based in Cincinnati, was a startup of executives from Procter & Gamble beginning a Bible study in 1990. The church founders used the marketing and brand management techniques unique to Procter & Gamble, gathering demographic data of the city and its residents' church-going habits. Eventually targeting the 25 to 35 age demographic, the church has grown to 30,000 congregants in nine locations in the greater Cincinnati area. Among the church's staff of 274, a 75-person "experience team" is responsible for branding and marketing the church, even including a "labs division" that is led by a corporate brand ethnographer. The church's eight satellite branches operate as franchises, and Crossroads even engages in mergers and acquisitions, having lately acquired a church in Lexington, KY, with 2,500 members and four locations. The clearest influence of Silicon Valley on Crossroads can be seen in its entrepreneurship and investment division. The church runs contests and funding drives to "increase God's presence in the marketplace," creating an "accelerator" that turns out entrepreneurs who are given five-month residencies and startup funds of \$25,000. Fifteen of the 19 startups have survived, raising a combined \$6 million and creating 66 jobs in the U.S. and overseas. (**Source:** *Bloomberg Business Week*, April 5)

