

Vol. 32, No. 10**August 2017**

FEATURE STORY:

ISR Interview/ A Godly Sociology of Religion

ISR co-director Rodney Stark has recently written *Why God?: Explaining Religious Phenomena* (Templeton Press, \$24.95). In this interview with RW, Stark discusses, among other things, why sociological theory dealing with religion needs to take into account people's belief and images of God and the importance of history in understanding religious change.

RW: *You state in the book's introduction that Why God? is your third effort in writing a work on theory. Why did you feel it is important to do that now?*

Stark: I returned to theorizing about what religion is, what it does, and why it seems to be a universal feature of human societies because I know more now than I did in 1999 when I wrote *Acts of Faith* and because I finally felt able to extend my theorizing to include such things as miracles and revelations as well as religious conflict and civility.

RW: *You stress the role of belief in a supernatural God in creating religious vitality throughout the book. Can you explain its importance in your work?*

Stark: From the very start I have limited my definition of religion to systems of thought based on the existence of conscious supernatural beings—gods—despite the fact that most sociologists, especially back then, went along with Durkheim and accepted the notion of godless religions. That is, the prevailing view was that all systems of thought about the existence of life were religions, even those that denied the existence of gods. It seemed to me obvious that it was silly to be unable to distinguish the village priest from the village atheist. And I think even my earliest theorizing was far more powerful because I did limit my definition to godly systems of thought.

RW: *The role of emotion in religious ritual has been something else for which you have gained a new appreciation. Can you explain that?*

Stark: One loses a great deal if one fails to recognize the emotional aspects of, say, people's prayer lives or what many people feel during such things as communion. People don't just pray to get stuff; for many people prayer is a conversation with a friend.

RW: *The media and many scholars see the growth of the non-affiliated as the major trend in American religion. Yet your theory views the "nones," and even secular Europeans, as being candidates for re-joining religious groups, even new religious movements.*

Stark: Certainly Richard Dawkins qualifies as one of the most famous and "intellectual" of the "nones"—the title of his book *The God Delusion* would seem to say it all. And yet at the end of the book, he wrote, "Whether we ever get to know them or not, there are probably alien civilizations that are superhuman, to the point of being god-like in ways that exceed anything a theologian could possibly imagine." Indeed, it is self-styled atheists, not religious believers, who are the most likely to believe in UFOs, ghosts, astrology, Bigfoot, and the other occult notions. So much for anti-religious claims of credulity.

RW: *You theorize that religions belonging to the strict niche with a strong image of God tend to show more growth than lax religions, something that you find has been borne out with the steep declines in mainline Protestantism. How would you respond to critics who point to the recent drops in membership, baptisms, and missionaries among such a conservative group as the Southern Baptists?*

Stark: The Southern Baptists may currently show a slight decline for a variety of idiosyncratic reasons. But the fact remains that, overall, evangelical (or conservative) Christian groups are growing while the liberals decline.

RW: *Toward the end of the book, you note that much of research today looks at the effects of religion but is limited to an individual perspective. But such research ignores the social context. What is the advantage of taking the latter route?*

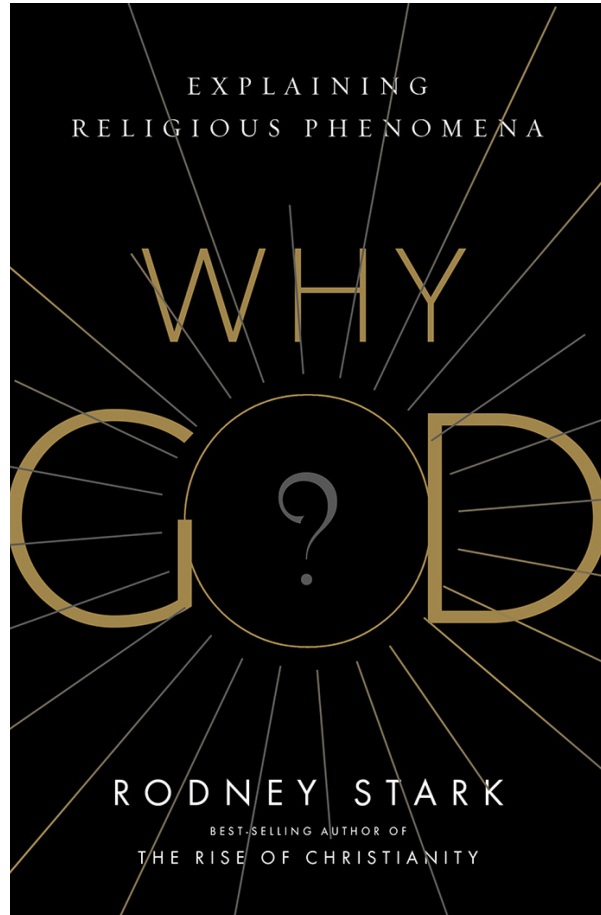
Stark: Because, under some circumstances the religious climate (or environment) determines whether and how individual religiousness matters. For example, individual religiousness only deters delinquency in communities where the majority participates in organized religion.

RW: *There is much talk today about religious versus secular conflict, especially along political lines. You write that norms of civility tend to develop between competing religious groups, but can that pattern apply to religious-secular conflict?*

Stark: The days of conflict and prejudice among Catholics, Protestants, and Jews are behind us in the United States and much of the West—although there is growing anger within and towards Islam. Meanwhile, the secular—or irreligious—community has become increasingly and overtly hostile towards all aspects of religious life. Given that the media strongly support and, perhaps, even promote these attacks on religion (don’t you dare wish anyone a merry Christmas), I see no hope of civility developing here anytime soon.

RW: *What stands out in reading the book is your frequent use of historical data and examples. Is that because you’ve built up such a storehouse of such material from your historical research, or is there another reason for that approach?*

Stark: I draw on historical examples because they often are more apt than any current ones—it is a mistake for social scientists to limit themselves to the “church of what’s happening now.” Indeed, so much of my research has been historical precisely because major issues and explanatory opportunities often exist primarily in the past—the rise of Christianity, for example, is a rather more profound phenomenon than the rise of the Southern Baptist Convention.



ARTICLES:

Evangelical church music bridging secular and sacred

Evangelicals are using new musical forms that go significantly beyond “traditional” contemporary Christian music (CCM) in both worship and outreach, but such experimentation may have unintended consequences for churches according to two reports. *Christianity Today* magazine (July–August) reports on the rise of electronic dance music (EDM) in evangelical churches that may be challenging the lyric-based CCM with a largely message-free musical form. This trend largely reflects the use of EDM in rave culture in the 1990s, which drew youth to its pulsing beat and special visual effects. Although some churches tapped into the rave culture early (usually those of the non-evangelical variety), the tipping point for using EDM was in 2013 with the release of Chris Tomlin’s “God’s Great Dance Floor” and “We Are Young and Free” from the popular Hillsong Christian music brand. Since then, churches have adapted EDM in varying degrees. Some

intersperse it with CCM, while others emphasize the dancing component, but most music directors agree that EDM, which in some forms leave out vocals altogether, is a challenge to the message-heavy component of church music.

But EDM has overcome the stigma in most churches, with one worship leader quoted as saying that the musical form “bridges something primal in us. That’s something God put there, and it can be used for good or bad.” Ethnomusicologist Josh Busman says that musical styles have theological implications. In the case of EDM, he adds that the genre brings a context for creating a sense of tension and release (“sin and redemption”) as well as a greater sense of community and collective experience. Meanwhile, there is also growing use of secular music and lyrics by evangelical churches according to the new book *Secular Music, Sacred Space* (Lexington Books, \$85.00). Mostly churches that author April Stace calls “post-denominational evangelical” (PDE) have embraced this trend of using secular music—including secular lyrics—for the reason of relating to and reaching increasingly unaffiliated younger generations, though sometimes the evangelistic thrust seems weak. Although Stace’s research is based in churches in the Washington, DC, area, the phenomenon of churches using popular secular music, and the debate it has generated in evangelical circles, has become nationwide.



The book traces this trend to the popularization of Christian music by the Jesus movement of the 1970s and revolves around the question of what makes church and Christian music Christian in the first place. Those churches and musicians that Stace calls “transformationalists” are the inheritors of the attempt to break down the wall between secular and sacred, and this attempt relates to the theology of the post-modern emerging movement. Using secular music—anything from Katy Perry to Lynyrd Skynyrd songs—within a church setting is seen as a way to bridge this

sacred/secular gap, even as many of its proponents do not see the practice as part of actual worship (the songs are used at the very beginning of services). While the book seeks to debunk the notion that this phenomenon is the wolf of secularization coming in sheep's clothing, the way that this music provides a "safe space" for expressing doubt in these churches may create alternatives in church life and theology.

Religious environmentalists step up activism in the face of government retreat

The critical attitude toward environmental controls and regulations and the withdrawal from the Paris accord on climate by the Trump administration appears to be driving up the environmental activism of American churches reports *The Economist* magazine (July 28). The Erasmus blog of the magazine reports that "green-minded congregations, and even those who have not hitherto been especially green," are being galvanized to think harder about what they can do for the planet. "The effect is especially noticeable on America's West Coast, a bastion both of environmentalism and unconventional forms of religion. Since the withdrawal announcement, at least 7,000 people and associations have joined a campaign called 'We're Still In,' which proclaims that federal policies and inaction will make no difference in their determination to help keep the earth from warming."



While religious groups are far from alone in pledging to create their own environmental changes apart from the government, one environmentalist leader says that churches have been in close tandem with, and often ahead of, secular authorities in asserting that curbing carbon can and must go ahead regardless. The state of Washington shows particular church momentum on the issue, as about 500 religious communities have signed up to Earth Ministry, a Seattle-based initiative combining lobbying efforts with offering practical measures on how a congregation can turn greener in its own behavior. In contrast, Willis Jenkins, a religion professor at the University of Virginia, argues that the persistence of an "eco-skeptical lobby may have emboldened the president to walk away from Paris," reports the article. But it is unclear what influence the evangelical groups more critical of environmental activism and regulation has on evangelical public opinion on this issue. One activist says that it is becoming easier to win over religious people, including evangelicals, to environmental concern. While they may be turned off by talk of "climate action," conservative Christians will more likely respond to the task of caring for God's creation.

Current Research

● **The election of Donald Trump may be a political after-effect of the steep decline of mainline Protestantism in American culture, writes Lyman Stone in the web magazine *Vox* (July 14).** Stone, a population economist, looks at average change at county-level Republican share of the vote per member of each denomination from 2012–2016. In other words, Stone estimates how the vote changed from Mitt Romney to Trump in the areas where each denomination’s members tend to live. He finds that areas with a high density of mainline church members in 2010 saw a shift in the direction of Trump versus Romney’s share in 2012. But areas with a high density of evangelical churches saw Trump underperform relative to Romney. A similar dynamic was in place for areas with a high density of Catholics. While the largest evangelical group, the Southern Baptists, does show some swing toward Trump, the shift away from Trump among other evangelicals “offsets that move.” “In other words, Southern Baptists may not be typical of American evangelicals,” Stone adds. He sees a more inconsistent and complex case than the usual narrative, with “evangelical- and Catholic-heavy areas supporting Trump less than they supported Romney, while mainline-heavy areas saw the opposite trend.” Stone argues that the decline of mainline Protestant churches and the corresponding loss of a common moral language “to steer these voters away from demagogues on the left or the right,” might leave them to “drift into more extreme political positions.”

(*Vox*, <https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/7/14/15959682/evangelical-mainline-voting-patterns-trump>)

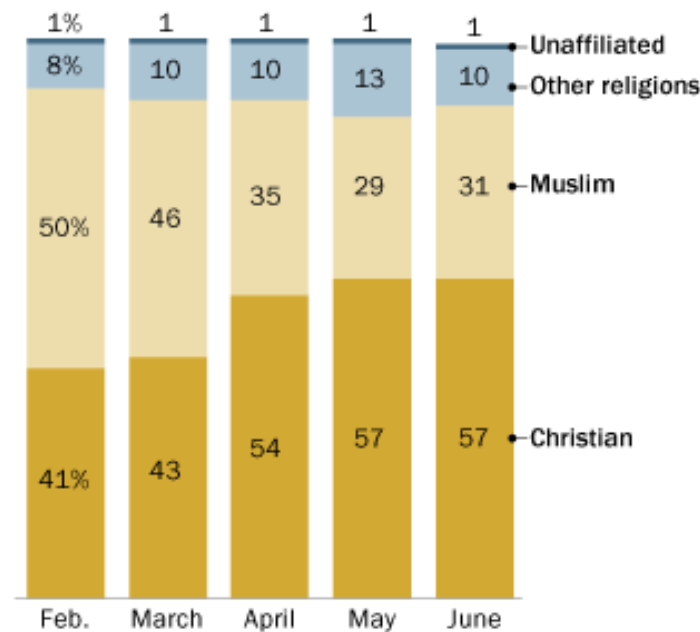


● **More Christian than Muslim refugees have entered the United States in the first months of the Trump administration, reversing a trend that had seen Muslims outnumber Christians in the final year of Barack Obama’s presidency, according to analysis of data from the Pew Research Center.** In the Pew *FactTank* blog (July 12), Phillip Connor and Jens Manuel Krogstad

analyze U.S. State Department refugee data and find that from Donald Trump's first full day in office through the end of June, 9,598 Christian refugees entered the U.S., compared with 7,250 Muslim refugees. Christians made up half of all refugee arrivals in this period, compared with 38 percent who are Muslim. About 11 percent of these arrivals belong to other religions, while only one percent claim no religious affiliation. The religious composition of refugees varies on a monthly basis as well. In February, Trump's first full month in office, Muslims accounted for 50 percent of the 4,580 refugees who entered the U.S., and Christians made up 41 percent of newcomers. By June, Christians (at 57 percent) made up a larger share of refugees than Muslims (at 31 percent). This reversal contrasts with 2016, when a record number of Muslim refugees entered the U.S. and Muslims made up a higher share of refugees admitted than Christians (46 percent and 44 percent, respectively). But the change under the Trump administration is closer to the long-term pattern: between 2002 and 2016, Christians outnumbered Muslim refugees, with 2005, 2006, and 2016 being the exceptions.

Christians have made up more than half of U.S. refugee arrivals since April

% of refugee arrivals by religious affiliation in 2017, by month



Note: "Other religions" include Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and other religions. Data do not include special immigrant visas and certain humanitarian parole entrants. Two refugees with unknown religious affiliation are not shown.

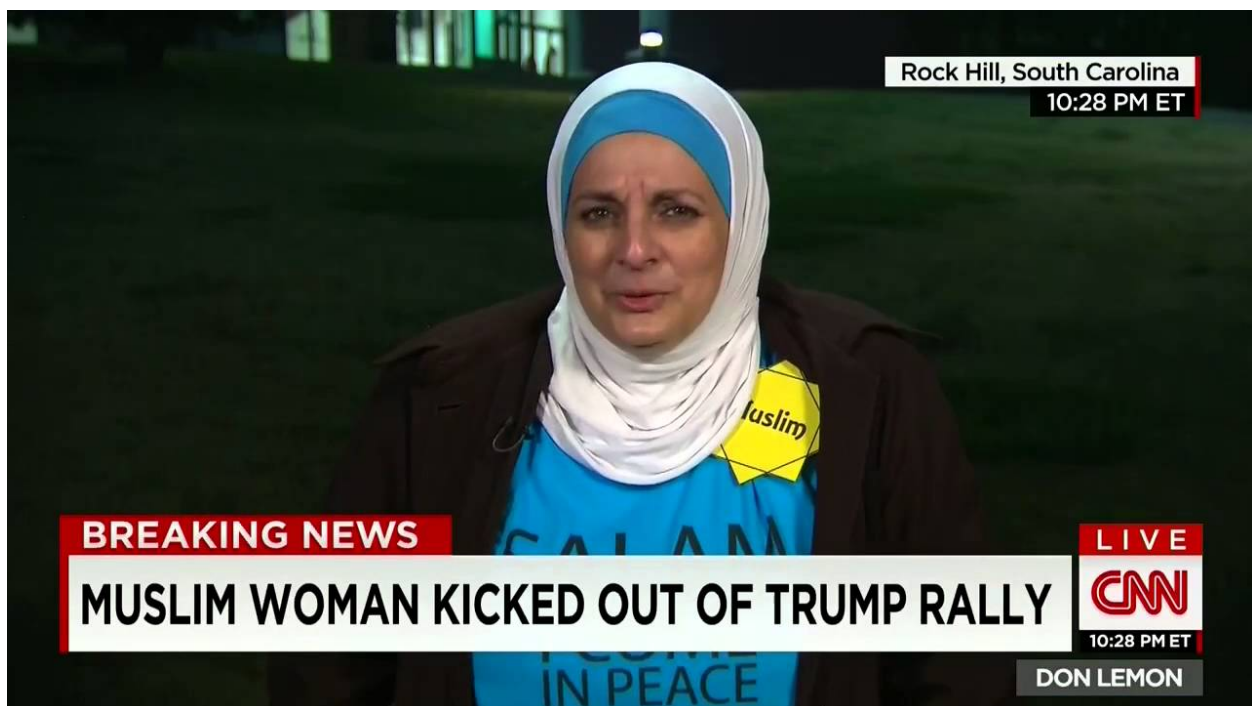
Source: U.S. State Department's Refugee Processing Center accessed July 7, 2017.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

(*Pew FactTank*, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/07/12/in-first-months-of-trump-presidency-christians-account-for-growing-share-of-u-s-refugee-arrivals/>)

● **While Muslims feel dissatisfaction with the current state of the U.S. and say they have experienced discrimination, they are still optimistic about the American way of life according to a new survey from Pew Research Center.** The survey compared Muslim attitudes from 2011 to 2017, finding considerable disquiet (68 percent) about the presidency of Donald Trump compared to that of Barack Obama, when the majority of Muslims believed the country was headed in the right direction and viewed the president as friendly toward them. Three-quarters of respondents say Trump is unfriendly toward Muslims in America, and 48 percent say they have experienced at least one incident of discrimination in the past 12 months. But the overwhelming majority say they are proud to be American, believe that hard work brings success, and are satisfied with their lives.

(The Pew report can be downloaded at <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>)



ARTICLES:

Brazil's Pentecostal and charismatic missions target Brazilian diaspora, Europe

There are probably 3,000 Brazilian Protestant missionaries abroad, mostly Pentecostal, and 90 percent of them are sent by Brazilian missionary agencies, reported Paul Freston (Wilfrid Laurier University) at the conference of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion in Lausanne, Switzerland (July 4–7), which **RW** attended. One in five Brazilians today is Pentecostal. Like South Korea and Nigeria, where sizeable Protestant minorities can be found, Brazilian denominations send missionaries abroad not only in order to care for Brazilian emigrants but also to convert non-Brazilians. Brazilian missions abroad started in the 1980s. Freston describes Europe as the ultimate test for such missions. Reversing an historical missionary flow holds a fascination in itself. Moreover, Brazilian Pentecostals perceive Europe as spiritually cold, having experienced a loss of spiritual vitality, and feel that they may play a role in changing the situation. There is also the idea of repaying a spiritual debt in the same way grandchildren would help sickly grandparents.

Finally, sending missionaries to Europe reinforces legitimacy in the highly competitive Brazilian religious market. Many missionaries feel that the problems of European Christianity are largely the result of European churches themselves. Freston identifies different modalities of approaching missionary work in Europe. Using diaspora churches as a launching pad meets with little success since Europeans are unlikely to see them as potential teachers. Some have the idea that diaspora churches can galvanize European Christians, and European churches have sent members or even teams to these new churches; there have been several examples in the U.K. There are also global Southern ministers working as partners with European denominations. But one also encounters unmediated, unsolicited, and self-funded missionary efforts by Brazilian denominations or missionary agencies. Obviously, success is far from guaranteed. But those preachers who fail to develop missionary work often fall back to the diaspora as a substitute for their ministry, Freston said.



Buddhism clashing with and appealing to British youth culture

While some ethical values of young adult Buddhists in the U.K. strongly correlate with broader youth culture—e.g. gender equality—other values do not cohere well, such as reluctance about high alcohol consumption, reported Sarah-Jane Page (Aston University) in her paper presented at the conference of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion in Lausanne (July 4–7), which **RW** attended. Regarding sexuality, mindfulness is extended to the intimate dimension of life, stated her co-author Andrew Kam-Tuck Yip (University of Nottingham). The full results of their research can be found in a new book, *Understanding Young Buddhists: Living Out Ethical Journeys* (Brill, \$115). In comparison with other religious groups, fewer Buddhists in the U.K. share the same religion as their parents. The research focused on a sample of 44 individuals between 18 and 25, with 31 of them describing themselves as exclusively Buddhists and the others incorporating Buddhism as part of their identity, e.g. Buddhist-Christian. Only a third had been raised in a religious tradition. Some were children of converts to Buddhism, but their parents had not strongly socialized them in Buddhism. While 60 percent of the respondents are involved in religious communities, they tend to adopt an individualized and deinstitutionalized approach to Buddhism.

Except for those who associate Buddhism with another religious tradition, a god figure is absent from the accounts of participants, despite the theistic context of religion in the U.K. and in the West, and they rarely invoke the divine. Their understandings of Buddhism emphasize three components: mindfulness, flexibility, and ethical principles and guidance for everyday life. The book being based on a broader project on religious



young adults and sexuality, an entire chapter is devoted to that topic. Most of the respondents considered Buddhism as positive towards sexuality. While they range from heterosexual to homosexual and bisexual, young Buddhists emphasize as a fundamental principle the avoidance of sexual misconduct or harm in relation to themselves and others. Less than 20 percent think that sex should ideally take place only within the context of marriage. A vast majority of the respondents do not support “the hegemonic status of heterosexuality,” the authors remark. Statements by the Dalai Lama warning against homosexual practices or other similar attitudes are seen as culturally-bound or specific to one Buddhist tradition. Many LGBT participants feel that Buddhism gives them the space they need.

Expectedly, anti-consumerism and environmentalism are seen as corresponding with Buddhist principles and ethics. Vegetarianism or veganism is valued, and even those participants who have not given up meat emphasize a mindful approach toward avoiding what can contribute to harm to

animals, such as fast food chains. As the authors observe, broader social narratives, and not only Buddhist principles, have an influence here too. There is a level of criticality towards aspects of contemporary culture, but “our participants were not revolutionaries,” the authors note. The emphasis on the decline of religion among young people in British society derives mostly from the observation of traditional religious institutions, and “it is the decline in Christianity, rather than religion per se, which is being mapped.” While “young people’s spirituality is underpinned by individualization,” religion continues to play a role for a number of young adults. The value system of Buddhism and its pluralistic ethos can thus prove attractive. Young Buddhist adults interviewed during the research appear to be pluralists and pragmatists whose aspirations and ideals are close to those of socially engaged Buddhism, even if they are not politically engaged in the public sphere.

Hindu nationalists defining Indian democracy down

India may well be on its way to becoming a Hindu state, even as its secular constitution remains officially in force, writes Christophe Jaffrelot in the *Journal of Democracy* (July). In an article marking the 70th anniversary of democracy in India, the political scientist notes that much of this change toward favoring Hinduism and cracking down on other religions, particularly Islam, picked up momentum in 2014 with the rise of the Hindu nationalist BJP party and the election of Narendra Modi as prime minister. While Modi has made frequent statements that support religious minorities, he also has stood by while Hindu nationalist groups have put pressure on Muslims and Christians, with one leading BJP figure condemning Mother Teresa just before she was declared a saint. The same leader, Yogi Adityanath, was named chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, India’s largest state, in March. Along with various campaigns to promote Hindu nationalism, the most long-lasting effort has revolved around defending the cow as sacred; even though selling beef is permitted in almost every state, militias and other nationalist groups have taken the law into their own hands, targeting “traffickers” (formerly legal sellers of beef), especially the many Muslim butchers.



Jaffrelot argues that India is becoming what he calls an “ethnic democracy,” which is marked by recognizing one ethnic or ethnoreligious group and its discourse as forming the core nation of the state. He adds that Hinduism “continues to enjoy a favorable international image as a religion that professes pacifism and pure spirituality. Indeed, this is one of the sources of India’s ‘soft power.’” Yet criticism is mounting. In its 2017 annual report, the U.S. Commission on International

Religious Freedom decried the existence in India of a “pervasive climate of impunity in which religious minorities feel increasingly insecure and have no recourse when religiously motivated crimes occur.” But it is likely that India will widely be viewed as a counterweight to China in the interests of Western realpolitik. Jaffrelot concludes, “Hindu nationalists, looking around at a mostly Hindu society, have always favored democracy in the majoritarian sense. What they do not favor is the nondemocratic side of democracy, the side which insists that individual and minority rights remain sacrosanct, with no majority allowed to trample them, ever.”

(*Journal of Democracy*, <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/>)

Muslim refugees disenchanting with Islamic community in Germany

The large wave of new Muslim immigrants in Germany are showing themselves to be less religiously conservative than the pre-existing Muslim community as well as more concerned with integrating into mainstream German society, reports *The Atlantic* magazine (July 26). The more than one million refugees that have settled in Germany are from Muslim-majority countries and have stoked fears that the newcomers will not adjust to Western secular society. Turkish-Germans who migrated to the country in the last sixty years run most of the established Islamic institutions, but recent Muslim arrivals have had limited contact with this community. They claim that the mosques are too conservative and are mainly Turkish-speaking, with members that are overbearing and teachings that are irrelevant to their concerns about dealing with trauma and integrating into



society. The article finds that the Muslim immigrants interviewed said the older Muslims in Germany focus too much on identity politics and self-victimization.

The sense of alienation from established Islam among the newcomers is not only directed at Turkish Muslim mosques but also at Arab ones that are considered too traditional, such as on women's issues like wearing the head covering, and thus unable to help them make the transition to German society. The largest Islamic organization, the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITB), which is directly linked to Turkey's religious affairs department, has been less engaged in refugee response than the larger Christian bodies, largely because of fewer connections and different church-state status than the churches. The government pays for almost all refugee work through taxes to Protestant and Catholic churches. DITB is attempting to start a registered Muslim welfare agency organization that would have similar status to Catholic and Protestant churches but has not yet been successful.

Serbian feast reflects rising religious nationalism

The celebration of the *slava* feast throughout Serbia blends secular, familial, and religious elements, but the observance is also increasingly tied to the Serbian Orthodox Church and nationalism, writes Sabina Hadzibulic in the journal *Temenos* (53:1), the journal of the Finnish Society for the Study of Religion. Besides Christmas and Easter, *slava* is the most important celebration in the life of every family, with historians tracing the celebration of a family's patron saint back to medieval times. Hadzibulic writes that traditionally the *slava* meal started in the church, with a bishop or priest consecrating the bread, and then proceeded to each home (considered a "small church" in Orthodox tradition) where family and guests made prayers and toasts. Although the celebrations were suspended during the communist era, they have regained their significance post-communism, even transcending the private family sphere and becoming more public, especially because of their large size.



The *slavas* have entered the school system and, more recently, state universities, with more specifically religious meanings, such as the role of St. Sava in the nation's history, raising objections from the Muslims of Western Serbia and others concerned about religious freedom. The Serbian Orthodox Patriarch and numerous church and government officials preside over one *slava* celebration in Belgrade as participants hold aloft icons and the cross of Jerusalem. At the ceremony's conclusion, the mayor of Belgrade lights the ceremonial candle and carries the icon of the Ascension of the Lord into the building of the Municipality Assembly, where the celebration of the breaking of the bread follows. Hadzibulic concludes that the "revival and new visibility of the slava tradition has emphasized its religious and ethnic dimensions. It has become a channel to advocate nationalist ideas and conservative political attitudes, allowing no room for alternative identities, loyalties, and ways of belonging."

(*Temenos*, <https://journal.fi/temenos>)

Muslim Brotherhood marginalized and divided on strategy

Critics still see the Muslim Brotherhood as a source of Islamic extremism, but the *New York Times* (July 16) reports that the movement is struggling for survival in its birthplace of Egypt and among exiles. Current members of the group, many of whom are in exile or in prison, say the group has become more democratic but also more marginal and divided, writes Patrick Kingsley: "They say it has little ability to exert control over even its own members, let alone the governments of the Middle East." In 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood seemed to be the coming force in regional politics; in Egypt, its own member Mohamed Morsi became president, while in Tunisia and Syria, the Brotherhood emerged as a powerful revolutionary force.



But much of the leadership has been rendered powerless after Morsi was ousted from the presidency and thousands were killed or imprisoned, with other members fleeing to Qatar and, more often, Turkey. Without communication with the leadership or material support, the members in exile are now openly disagreeing with leaders in what was once a hierarchical group. The brotherhood is divided between those favoring the hierarchy's gradualist approach and smaller factions favoring greater confrontation with the Egyptian state. Exiled members tend to support neither approach, claiming that the hierarchy is too pietistic and the confrontationists can lead to possible civil war, as in the cases of Syria and Algeria. The exiles' experience in Turkey may affect their political approach, coming to reflect the majoritarian style of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has cracked down on competing sects and opponents.

Church architecture shaping Christianity's presence in China

Christianity is exerting a growing presence in China not only through proliferating churches but also due to their architectural style and geography, writes Michel Chambon in the journal *Studies in World Christianity* (July/August). The anthropologist studied the locations and architectural styles of congregations in the city of Nanping and the province of Fujian, an area which reflects the urban-rural makeup of the rest of the country. The churches tend to be built in locations distinct from Buddhist temples and other religious groups in that they are inside residential areas (most temples are on town borders near burial places), on the top of hills (temples are often constructed on the slopes of hills in a concern to follow folk practices of fengshui, "Qi energies," and geomancy), and decorated with lights while temples' interior lights are not visible at night. Chambon adds, "Echoing the positioning at the top of hills, there is an overall emphasis on verticality for churches. A tall building, a high tower, a cross on top...." In fact, "Christian prayer hills" are numerous in China, many of them referring to material entities, such as a rock or snake.



Churches tend to be associated with modernity, especially as other religious buildings are becoming more traditional in style. While the tops of mountains are traditionally inauspicious or seen as negative, “Christians use this position, suggesting that their building, like their God, does not depend on occult powers.... Their God does not worry about the Qi of the mountain, the wind of the typhoons, or other worldly powers,” Chambon writes. These churches “speak to Christian and non-Christian...[and] advocate for another kind of religiosity, presence of a specific actor, the Christian God, and encourage a worldview where this God could be the center. They play an active role in the process of making the presence of the Christian God tangible.”

(*Studies in World Christianity*, <http://www.euppublishing.com/loi/SWC>)

Findings & Footnotes

■ *The International Yearbook of Religious Demography* (Brill, \$98) has quickly emerged as the equivalent to an annual journal on religion and demography. With its global reach and plethora of useful statistics, the 2017 yearbook, edited Brian Grim, Todd Johnson, Vegard Skirbekk, and Gina A. Zurlo, yields important insights on issues ranging from the familiar ground of changing religious populations to shifts in religious identity. The first chapter provides a comparison between the period of 1970–2000 and projected 30-year trends (2000–2030) and finds the “unexpected trend” that the world is becoming increasingly religious—from about 80 percent affiliated with a particular religion in 1970 to over 90 percent in 2030. Another chapter covers the influx of more than 3.1 million asylum seekers into Europe between 2010 and 2015. This migration has slightly increased the share of Muslims on the continent, by nearly half a percent, but with marked variations from one country to another, report Michaela Pontančoková (Joint Research Centre of the European Commission), Marcin Stonawski, and Anna Krysińska (both at Cracow University). Such statistical data matters, especially considering the fact that many Europeans tend to overestimate—often by a wide margin—the percentage of Muslim population in their respective countries, thus making them reluctant to host Muslim asylum seekers. While there are uncertainties, the authors estimate that

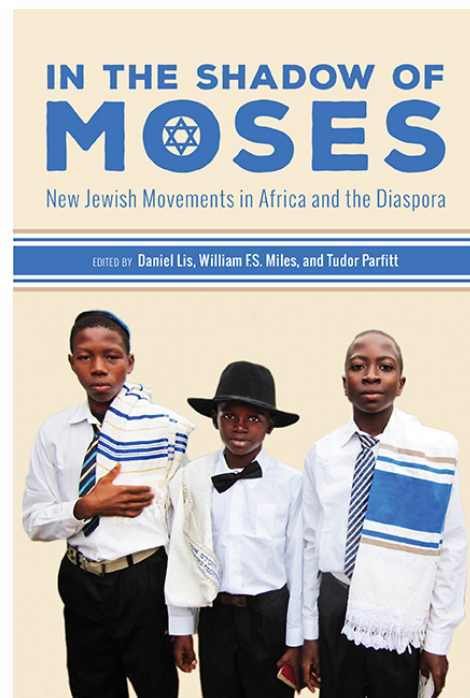


approximately 1 million Muslim migrants arrived in the region in the year 2015 alone, comprising about three-fourths of all asylum seekers in that year. The share of Muslims among asylum seekers has increased over the years in most countries, with the exception of Italy due to the increase of the share of sub-Saharan Africans there.

The Pew projections on the global future of religion that were published in 2015 could not take into account those migratory changes. Revised estimates proposed by the authors suggest significant changes in Sweden, where the asylum seekers may have brought the Muslim population to 8.1 percent instead of the projected 5.7 percent (+2.4 percent), in Austria (7.1 percent instead of 5.9 percent, +1.2 percent) and in Germany (7 percent instead of 6.4 percent, +0.6 percent). While Germany received the largest number of asylum seekers in 2015, it also has a much larger population overall, hence the lesser proportional impact. In those countries (especially in Sweden), asylum seekers have also significantly augmented the share of young people among Muslims, something that may imply other long-term demographic consequences. The authors add, "In many countries, the countries of origin for Muslim asylum seekers differ from those of the established Muslim communities there, contributing to an increased ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity of the Muslim population in Europe." Not all Muslim asylum seekers will get recognition, however. But repatriations are unlikely to be massive, which means that most of those who arrived will stay anyway. One needs also to take into consideration the levels of religiosity as well as potential changes in religious identity during the migration and integration process. In any event, the study shows that the religious demographic impact of migration waves, even on a relatively short period, deserves close attention.

■ *In the Shadow of Moses: New Jewish Movements in Africa and the Diaspora* (TSEHAI Publishers, \$29.95), edited by Daniel Lis, William F. S. Miles, and Tudor Parfitt, tells the fascinating story of the emerging Jewish communities in Africa, as well as how these newcomers to Judaism interact with traditional Jews and Israel. The first chapter by Miles relates these new Jewish groups both to growth of new religious movements as well as to globalization, seeing Judaism belatedly following a similar pattern to the ways that Christianity and Islam spread from their traditional bases in Europe and the Middle East to take up residence and flourish in the global South. In this process, Africans have been most receptive to Judaism that emphasizes faith over ethnicity and culture and are drawn to the economic prosperity associated with Jews and Israel, while they have few qualms about mixing Judaism with their native traditions and spirituality.

The other chapters deal with Jewish groups and movements in specific African countries and in diaspora communities, including a study on African Jews in France and tensions they feel with native born French Jews while also fighting back against the growth of anti-Semitism in the Muslim community. The most interesting contributions focus on the gradual process of various African groups adopting Judaism (with many coming from evangelical, often messianic Jewish groups) and then trying to gain recognition and legitimacy from mainstream Jews and Israel, such as Ethiopian Jews. The



role of the Internet has been influential among converts, especially in societies where there are few ties to the global Jewish community.

■ While the new book *Global Chinese Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity* (Brill, \$103) refrains from giving an estimate of the number of Pentecostals and charismatics in the country, just about every other characteristic of these movements is measured and parsed in this informative volume. Editors Fenggang Yang, Joy K. C. Tong, and Allan H. Anderson note in the Introduction that the problem of estimating these movements relates to their ill-defined nature, especially in China and among the Chinese diaspora. They add that Pentecostal practices, such as healings and speaking in tongues, may influence many churches that may not use the label. Other churches, influenced by Chinese folk traditions, appearing very similar to charismatics/Pentecostals further complicate the situation. The editors use the framework of “light” and “heavy” Pentecostal identities, with the latter often identified with specific Pentecostal denominations, the most well known being the True Jesus Church.

This lack of distinctions makes it difficult to study Chinese Pentecostals, and the restrictions these groups face due to the Chinese government’s concern that they are especially difficult to control compound the situation. The book is divided into historical and contemporary sections, with the latter offering noteworthy contributions on the way these churches are involved in social ministries, even as they are restricted, and the way that such megachurches as City Harvest in Singapore offer a successful church paradigm to the postmodern world. A chapter on Forerunner Christian Church and its pastor Grace Chaing in California provide an interesting case study of a growing women-led charismatic movement in the Chinese-American community where neither female clergy nor Pentecostalism are the norm.



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

Father James Mallon has gained prominence among Catholics for his synthesis of evangelical and Catholic practices while growing his parish in Canada, and now he is taking his teachings on the road with the formation of the **Divine Renovation Network**. Based on his widely popular book *Divine Renovation*, the network will work with churches in North America and overseas offering Mallon's recipe of evangelical church growth practices based on small groups, megachurches, and orthodox Catholic teachings. The small group evangelism and discipleship movement Alpha has particularly influenced Mallon, who has a background in the Catholic charismatic movement. His church in Halifax, Nova Scotia, has close to 1,600 attenders—the largest congregation east of Montreal—with about 40 percent active in discipleship groups. Over 40 percent of the people in his recent Alpha groups have been unchurched. In joining Catholic identity with evangelical practices, Mallon says that Catholics have the advantage over evangelicals of being able to turn “consumer demand into spiritual desire.” He is referring to the greater demand for services—weddings, funerals, baptisms—in Catholic churches that can be “upped” to more in-depth opportunities to teach the faith (for instance, requiring that parents attend an Alpha group before the child is baptized). (Source: *The Tablet*, June 24; *Christian Century*, July 19).

