

Vol. 33, No. 3**January 2018**

FEATURE STORY:

Rewinding and forwarding on 2017 religion

Reviewing religion in 2017 by looking at the few key words and phrases that served as flashpoints in the media—populism, immigration, racial divides, and evangelicals and President Donald Trump—ignores the fact that many of these developments had taken shape well before last year. Religion in 2017 revealed other trends that were just unfolding and may become more visible in the upcoming year and beyond. As in past annual reviews, we cite the issue of **RW** (and other sources) where these subjects were covered in greater depth during the past year.

- 1) The Islamic State’s failure to create an Islamic caliphate in the Middle East seemed certain by the end of 2017, but the extremist Islamic group will likely maintain itself virtually. The use of the Internet to recruit new jihadists and spread propaganda may also serve to give the movement a second wind in attempting to create its own state, or at least create a new offshoot that may do so (just as Al Qaeda gave birth to the IS).
- 2) The relation of evangelicals to the Trump presidency rated as the most popular religious news story last year. Many dimensions of this story were visible during the 2016 primary race, such as the large evangelical support for the candidate despite the ethical questions surrounding him. But Trump’s election by a majority of evangelicals and their continuing support of his policies—and the related campaign and moral issues surrounding Alabama’s Roy Moore—has intensified questions of evangelical “ownership” of an unpopular presidency and the fallout among non-evangelicals and younger evangelicals who are critical of his administration. The Trump administration’s overtures to the religious right, such as the nomination of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court and the endorsement of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, suggests a long-term alliance that will likely shape the results of this year’s mid-term elections.
- 3) The growing coalition between American conservative Christians (not just evangelicals) and their counterparts in Eastern Europe and Russia also became recognizable in 2017. Although such an alliance is buttressed by admiration for Vladimir Putin and his friendliness toward “traditional values” and for the Trump administration, the connections with conservative groups and parties in Hungary and Poland should not be overlooked in the year ahead (see this

issue's article on the movement against Christian persecution in the Middle East for more on the Hungarian connection). (November RW)

- 4) The rebirth of the religious left was another theme that reverberated throughout 2017. The Trump presidency has ignited liberal and radical protests and alternatives that encompassed religious activists and organizations on such issues as immigration, poverty, and gender equality. But it is difficult to assess the strength of these initiatives since they are targeted toward a declining base in mainline and liberal Catholic churches. Even if the progressive message resonates with a growing number of younger voters and activists, congregations and other organizations have to make the case to the non-affiliated that the faith component is an important part in such activism. In the case of the sanctuary movement, religious congregations have a unique function in ministry to illegal immigrants because of their legal exemptions, but even here it remains to be seen if this movement will expand beyond a small network of congregations.
- 5) The murder of 25 worshippers in a Baptist church in Texas last year was potentially a sign of the new vulnerability of congregations to the violence that has been felt throughout much of American society. It is uncertain whether this means that houses of worship that were once considered off-limits to certain kinds of violence are no longer immune from such acts. But studies have suggested that the rate of violence is increasing, whether as a result of hate crimes or theft and other criminal motivations. The Texas incident has led to growing interest in providing greater security for worshippers. (December RW)
- 6) In the context of increasing Saudi-Iranian geopolitical competition and the wars in Syria and Yemen, as well as the new, more assertive leadership in Saudi Arabia, the Sunni-Shia rivalry might intensify in 2018. The international ambitions of Iran after the 1979 revolution and the growth of more or less militant forms of Salafism over the past decades have contributed to such a situation. This may be exacerbated by President Trump's trip to Saudi Arabia in May, when he seemed to give the Saudis carte blanche for going full speed against Iranian interests.
- 7) Lastly, although not a new trend, we should note that the Catholic Charismatic Movement turned 50 last year. From its modest start at a prayer retreat at Duquesne University in 1967, it has grown into an influential component of modern Catholicism and remains vibrant in some areas of the world. In the turbulent times the Catholic Church went through immediately after the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI gave an official welcome to the movement when describing it on Pentecost 1975 as a "great chance" for the church. Its contribution both to reinvigorating segments of Catholicism and to creating bridges with other Christians on the basis of shared spiritual experiences should also be kept in mind. Tellingly, the festival celebrating the anniversary in Rome on Pentecost 2017 "included several non-Catholic leaders, most notably Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Anglicans, non-denominational Christians and even Messianic Jews, who were not just guests but were showcased in a few of the events and were on stage for the conclusion..." ("On 50th anniversary of Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Francis focuses on 'reconciled diversity,'" *The Catholic World Report*, June 5, 2017,

<http://www.catholicworldreport.com/2017/06/05/on-50th-anniversary-of-catholic-charismatic-renewal-francis-focuses-on-reconciled-diversity/>).



ARTICLES:

New concerns, players in movement against persecuted Christians in Middle East

While the Islamic State's attempt to impose a caliphate in Iraq and Syria may have ended, it seems the movement to fight for the religious freedom of Middle Eastern Christians is still gaining momentum. An early-December conference in New York on Middle East Christians, organized by the Anglosphere Society and attended by **RW**, shows a new level of both organization and consciousness-raising among Eastern and Western church leaders, revealing some unexpected new actors in the post-IS situation. All this comes at a time of ISIS's withdrawal from much of Iraq and Syria but also of the Iraq government's imposition of restrictions on churches, such as on their right to own property and access to sacred sites that form an important part of the collective memory of Christians and other religious minorities (see June 2016 RW). A coalition of church leaders and churches known as the Ninevah Reconstruction Committee in Iraq (NRC) has sought to unite Christians as well as gain a place at the table during the negotiations to reconstruct the war-torn nation. It is through the NRC that Western forms of assistance to Christian refugees and the displaced are being funneled. The conference had a strong Catholic representation, and the work of the Knights of Columbus was highlighted. The Catholic fraternal organization has led in volunteers, advocacy and aid, giving a total of \$17 million to Iraqi churches.

The participants stressed the importance of assisting Iraqi organizations through such an umbrella group as the NRC that would avoid the competition and divide-and-conquer attitude that has been

the case in the past. Ronald Lauder of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) pressed for greater interfaith and ecumenical cooperation in addressing religious persecution, calling for a counterpart to the WJC to create a Christian united front on the issue. Cardinal Timothy Dolan of the New York Archdiocese said that while it has taken a while for churches to respond to the alarm about persecution in the Middle East, today the issue has made it to the “kitchen table,” becoming a popular topic in churches. “I doubt there is a Catholic parish in the U.S. that doesn’t include persecuted churches in their prayers,” he said. Assistance has also dramatically increased, channeled not only through the Knights of Columbus but also the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher and Aid to Christians in Need. Several of the speakers praised the Trump administration for seeking to bypass the UN as the source of aid to Iraqi refugees since the funds go to Muslim-dominated camps and bypass many Christians. Dolan also criticized the American Islamic community for not taking fellow Muslims to task for their actions against Christians.

The presence of officials from Hungary’s government at the conference revealed how the country has become something of a standard-bearer for the cause of persecuted Christians. Hungary is better known for its border restrictions that prevented refugees from the Middle East from entering the country last year, but the country has also been one of the few to target aid directly to Christian refugees through churches and religious organizations. Tristan Azbej, chairman of the Hungarian Commission on Religious Freedom, was open about the government’s anti-immigration policy and its position that refugees’ “problems should not be brought to Europe.” He said that instead the government tries to help refugees in their own homelands. The government has been the main source of support for Christian villages in Iraq in danger of genocide and extinction. In an interview with RW, Azbej said that the Hungarian government does not limit its assistance only to Christian groups. Other than assistance to church rebuilding projects, Hungarian refugee policies stipulate that reconstruction programs should be open to other religious minorities, including Muslims, Azbej said.



Churches of Christ decline affects ‘brand loyalty’ to church colleges

Along with the decline of membership and congregations in the Churches of Christ, there is diminishing “brand loyalty” to the denomination’s colleges and universities. The *Christian Chronicle* (December 26) reports that universities associated with the Churches of Christ have seen a 51 percent decline in students who identify with the fellowship. At the start of the 21st century, two out of every three freshman at the dozen-plus universities—which include Pepperdine University and Abilene Christian University—identified with the Churches of Christ; today that figure stands at two out of every five freshman, according to an annual survey conducted by Trace Hebert of Lipscomb University. In the past, church leaders, church members, and alumni from Church of Christ institutions would recommend these schools to young people and stress the importance of maintaining church affiliation in their educational plans. Hebert adds that another trend is the decline in parents’ commitment to send their college-age children to universities affiliated with the Churches of Christ.

Since 2000, approximately 1,200 Churches of Christ congregations have closed, a 10 percent decline, and there has been a 12 percent decline of adherents (to 1,445,856). While the overall membership of the denomination is shrinking, the number of church members who attend Churches of Christ universities “seems to be shrinking at a faster rate,” according to Jana Rucker of Harding University in Arkansas. College officials say they see church members wary of incurring student loan debts and more fiscally conservative than the typical family, making attending a denominational college too costly. But by drawing non-members and increasing graduate enrollments, these universities have been able to hold their own. Yet Hebert voices concern about “what happens to the church long-term when you don’t have the same number of students and alumni coming out of these universities, serving and planting churches and helping grow the population...[A]s I look back, I see the beneficial, symbiotic relationship between these institutions and the growth of the church in decades past.”

(*The Christian Chronicle*, <https://christianchronicle.org/>)



CURRENT RESEARCH

● **The downturn in religious affiliation in the U.S. has been interpreted as a sign of secularization and how America may be becoming more like European countries, but a recent article argues that it may be more the case that one segment of Americans is becoming more intensely religious than the rest of the population.** Sociologists Landon Schnabel and Sean Bock analyze the General Social Survey, looking specifically at which segments of the population have shown change or decline in religious belonging, belief and practice. Writing in the journal *Sociological Science* (November), the researchers find that it is the moderate religious population that has declined most drastically while those most intense in their devotion have remained stable. On such measures as church attendance, frequency of prayer, belief in a literal Bible, and religious identity, those Americans who are most intense have even shown signs of increase. For instance, in 1989, 31 percent of those saying they prayed once a day reported praying several times daily, while that number increased to 40 percent in 2016.

Meanwhile, moderate religious practice and belief, such as monthly attendance, has seen the sharpest drop. Schnabel and Bock criticize those scholars claiming that America is no longer religiously exceptional by noting that the stable segment of intense religionists in the U.S. remains an exception in the West. What is called American-style secularization is really a case of moderates dropping out, feeling that religion has become “too intense, too strict, and too politicized in the face of social change.” The researchers conclude that the “persistent intensity of American religion in conjunction with the decline of moderate religion may produce a widening cultural gulf between rising secularists and persistently intense religionists.”

(*Sociological Science*, <https://www.sociologicalscience.com/>)



● **Internet use may be associated with religious non-affiliation and the relativistic acceptance of the equal validity of all religions but does not displace religious attendance or other kinds of involvement in time-related religious activities, according to a study by Paul McClure of Baylor University in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (online in December).** Using data from the Baylor Religion Survey (Wave III), McClure found that an increase in the amount of time spent on the Internet is linked with decreased odds that an individual will be religiously affiliated. But while the researcher found that television viewing does have an association with involvement in fewer religious activities, the same cannot be said for Internet use. He argues that a reason why the Internet may affect beliefs, such as religious inclusivism, and affiliation is that the medium creates a “new space through which individuals must navigate competing truth claims and ideas about what is ultimately important...the Internet encourages tinkering with an assortment of spiritual options, and rejecting the exclusive truth claims of any one particular religious tradition becomes more likely.” But the finding that Internet use did not cut into time-related religious activities may mean that Internet use fills gaps “between previously scheduled events” but does not displace them.

(Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,

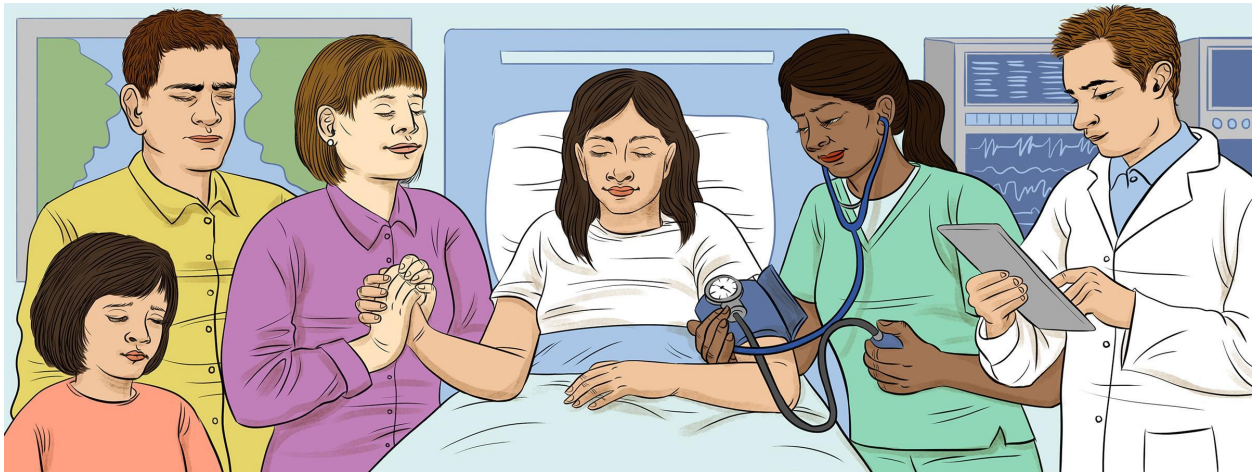
[http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1468-5906](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1468-5906))



● **Although congregations are increasingly interested in healing and health and are becoming more involved in such ministries, various ethnic groups approach this issue differently, according to an article by researchers Daniel Bolger, Cleve Tinsley IV, and Elaine Howard Ecklund.** Writing in the *Review of Religious Research* (Online in November), the researchers interviewed 47 clergy and laity at 18 different Korean, Latino, and African-American

congregations and found that while they appreciated the prevalence of health initiatives in their churches, they viewed the interface between religion and medicine differently. The African-American and Latino pastors and laity tended to see faith as providing the potential for healing. Emphasis on divine intervention was especially prominent among African-American respondents. The black respondents were the only group to articulate distrust toward the medical establishment. The Korean Americans, the one ethnic group of the three most represented in the medical professions, “tended to frame the main benefit of faith as the support of the faith community rather than the efficacy of prayer in promoting health outcomes.” Although Korean Americans cited the potential for divine healing, they saw the comfort and actual medical care given by other Christians and professionals in the community as the most direct advantage of faith.

(*Review of Religious Research*, <https://link.springer.com/journal/13644>)



● **Active secularists occupy the far left and activist wing of the Democratic Party that is most likely to be proactive in moving the party leftward, according to a recent study.** Writing in the journal *Politics and Religion* (online November), Mark Brockway surveyed members of the American Humanist Association and found that these so-called “committed seculars” see themselves as more to the left of the Democratic Party than do the non-affiliated. Brockway found that these humanists are also more likely to get involved in campaigns to steer the Democratic Party further leftward. Comparing the committed seculars to religious progressives, Brockway found that there may be some affinity



between these groups. “The merging of religious and secular Democrats is especially likely given that an important cultural issue, same-sex marriage, has been settled by the Supreme Court, and will likely lose salience as an issue for religious Democrats. This may allow the Democratic Party to aggressively tap secular members to be donors and volunteers for Party candidates and campaigns,” Brockway concludes.

(Politics and Religion, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-religion>)

● **Fewer than half of those who identify as evangelicals (45 percent) strongly agree with core evangelical beliefs, according to a survey by LifeWay Research (released Dec. 5).** A significant number of evangelical believers reject the term “evangelical,” with only two-thirds (69 percent) self-identifying as such. Some research studies define “evangelical” by self-identification, with respondents picking from a list of religious traditions. Others categorize people as evangelical by the churches with which they identify. LifeWay used a set of four questions about the Bible, Jesus, salvation and evangelism developed in partnership with the National Association of Evangelicals. Those who strongly agree with all four are considered to be evangelicals by belief. Fifteen percent of Americans are evangelicals by this criterion. In contrast, 24 percent of Americans self-identify as evangelicals. Researchers found differences between the two groups, the main one being that evangelicals by belief are more diverse than self-identified evangelicals. Evangelicals by belief go to church more often. Seventy-three percent say they attend services once a week or more. That drops to 61 percent for self-identified evangelicals.

(LifeWay Research, <http://lifewayresearch.com/>)



ARTICLES:

Evensong—drawing seekers at home and abroad

Despite reports of growing secularism in Europe, such a liturgical service as evensong is finding steady popularity—in both its birthplace of England and in the Netherlands. Evensong is an evening prayer service that is delivered mostly through song, offering a reflective and contemplative service that combines elements of a choir concert. The blog *Church Leaders* (September 25) reported that many cathedrals and churches like Westminster Abbey recorded a 30 percent or more increase in evensong attendance between 2008 and 2012. The website ChoralEvensong.org was even launched in order to facilitate the growing desire to learn about evensong and find church services. Guy Hayward, editor of the Choral Evensong website, says that “A lot of people don’t want to directly engage with the church, they don’t want to go in through the front door, as it were. They are looking for a side entrance and choral evensong provides that. They are attracted by artistic expression and then by osmosis they find it spiritually appealing.” More unexpected is the growing interest and participation in evensong in the Netherlands, a country known for its secularized and Protestant culture. The current issue of *Tenemos* (Vol. 53, No. 2), the journal of the Finnish Society for the Study of Religion, reports that evensong is being adapted to the Reformed Protestant churches even as Dutch Protestantism is being changed by such ritualized practices.

Authors Hanna Rijken, Martin J.M. Hoondert, and Marcel Barnard studied the dress of 30 Dutch evensong choirs and found that the majority of them use English liturgical robes, in most cases the scarlet cassocks and cotta (white robes) from choirs at Cambridge University and Westminster Cathedral. In cases where the clergy take part or are present, they tend to dress informally. The researchers noted that the choir is seen as non-ecclesiastical and therefore



can wear these liturgical robes (which are sometimes markers of gender). But, even though these services and forms of dress might take on a non-liturgical Reformed appearance in some cases, Rijken, Hoondert, and Barnard observed that the majority of choirs had undergone a “ceremonialization or cathedralization of choristers’ dress, especially in contrast with what is usual at Protestant Sunday morning worship.” They concluded that there has been “a transformation of the way religion is expressed or ritualized in the context of Reformed Protestant churches in the Netherlands. The popularity of evensong suggests a longing for other forms of worship, with a focus on ceremony, ritualized behavior, and Anglican-like vesture for the choristers.”

(*Church Leaders*, <https://churchleaders.com/news/international/310736-evensong-church-of-england-resurrects-tradition-attract-millennials.html>; *Tenemos*, <https://journal.fi/temenos>)

At anniversary, Ismaili Muslims maintaining positive image in the West

Both their tolerant approach towards people of other faiths and their humanitarian and development initiatives contribute to a positive image of Ismaili Imami Muslims (also called Nizaris) in the West, while their spiritual understanding of Quranic rules, veneration for their current imam and openness to the Western way of life earn them criticism from more conservative Sunni and Shia Muslims, writes Liane Wobbe in the German monthly *Materialdienst der EZW* (December). In 2017 and 2018, the believers of the main branch of Ismaili Shia Islam celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of their current leader, Karim Aga Khan IV (b. 1936), who has been the 49th Imam of the community for 60 years. The path of Ismailism diverged from that of other Shia Muslims in the 8th century over succession issues, and a schism within Ismailism in the late 11th century marked the starting point of Nizari Ismailism. Since the 19th century, Ismaili leaders have shown a reformist orientation and have promoted education and health development among their followers. Karim Aga Khan is at the same time the spiritual leader of his community (and sole qualified interpreter of the Quran according the Ismaili understanding), a major philanthropist, and an investor (*Jeune Afrique*, Aug. 24, 2017).



The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) has become one of the largest private development agencies in the world, with 80,000 employees, and spending more than \$900 million per year. Part of this funding comes from donations from the Ismaili community, but also from institutional donors. The AKDN includes a for-profit agency, the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED), with a focus on investments in developing countries. Access to Ismaili religious ceremonies in their places of worship (called Jamatkhana) is reserved for members, but programs have been developed in several countries to offer guided tours and opportunities for dialogue with non-Ismailis. Conversions have become rare, mostly through marriage. In contrast with other Muslims, Ismailis pray three times a day. While statistics about Ismaili Muslims vary from one source to another, an estimate of 15 million is often given, with 1.5 million in India, 500,000 in Pakistan, 200,000 in Tajikistan, and 200,000 in Syria. There is a significant Ismaili presence in the USA and Canada, too. In Europe, the Ismaili population is smaller, with the largest presence in the UK (15,000).

(Materialdienst der EZW, Auguststrasse 80, 10117 Berlin, Germany – www.ezw-berlin.de; official website of the Ismaili Muslim community: <https://the.ismaili/>)

Sufism under attack in Libya

Since the political changes that took place in 2011, dozens of Sufi sites (mosques, shrines, tombs, and libraries) have been destroyed in Libya, while a number of Sufi religious leaders have been kidnapped and killed, with little protection from authorities, according to a statement by *Human Rights Watch* (Dec. 7, 2017). Two historic Sufi mosques in the capital, Tripoli, have been heavily damaged during the last quarter of 2017. The development is striking if one considers that Sufism used to be very popular in Libya, with a great historical significance in the Senussi brotherhood, although it had been first weakened by Italian colonialism, and then severely controlled under Colonel Gaddafi's regime.

Islamist violence against Sufis in Libya started very soon after Gaddafi's removal, with the desecration of graves of Sufi saints and accusations of idolatry (as reported by *Reuters*, Feb. 1, 2012). As elsewhere in Muslim areas around the world, opposition to Sufism is seen as directly linked to the rise of Salafi ideas and influence, according to Libyan political analyst and researcher Tarek Megerisi, quoted in an article by Justin Salhani in *Al-Monitor* (Dec. 28). "Given that Salafi militias are continuing to grow in power across the country, and the constituency of Salafists in Libya is also steadily climbing, the persecution of Libya's [Sufis] seems likely to worsen in the near-term future," says Megerisi. Formerly, most Muslims would have seen Sufis as fellow believers, while Salafists consider them as departing from "true Islam."

(*Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/07/libya-new-wave-attacks-against-sufi-sites>; *Al-Monitor*, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/12/libya-extremism-attack-sufi-religious-minorities.html>; *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-sufis/freed-from-gaddafi-libyan-sufis-face-violent-islamists-idUSTRE8101LA20120201>)



Findings & Footnotes

- With Religion Watch having become available for free, one of our goals has been to make available online those years of our newsletter that had only been published in print (i.e. pre-1998 issues). Thanks to the patient work of associate editor Jean-Francois Mayer in designing and updating the



files, and to Frances Malone, who patiently scanned several years of archives (and also to Larry Iannaccone for donating his back issues of RW), it is our pleasure to announce that the years 1990 to 1997 are now available as scanned PDF documents on our archive site. They can be accessed from <https://www.rwarchives.com/archives/pdf-1985-1997/>. There are still a few missing issues that we hope to be able to add to the list soon. In the upcoming months, we also hope to be able to add the issues for the years 1985 to 1989 as well. Most of the content of the issues can be explored by using the site’s search tool.

- The 2017 Religion Monitor, published by the Bertelsmann Foundation, reveals considerable integration in language and culture among Muslims in Europe, along with the majority viewing interreligious relationships as the norm. The report looked at five European countries and found that approximately three-fourths of Muslims born in Germany have grown up with German as their first language. The trend of language skills improving with each generation is true for France, the UK, Austria, and Switzerland. More unexpected was the finding that a large majority of Muslims have frequent contact with their non-Muslim neighbors, especially in Switzerland. The report also covers such topics as Muslims’ access to the labor market, the degree of religiosity among Muslims (still in the high range), and the rejection of Muslims by their neighbors (with France the lowest and the UK the highest). It is available at: [https://www.bertelsmannstiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/Study_LW_Religion-Monitor-](https://www.bertelsmannstiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/Study_LW_Religion-Monitor-2017_Muslims-in-Europe_Results-and-Country-Profiles.pdf)



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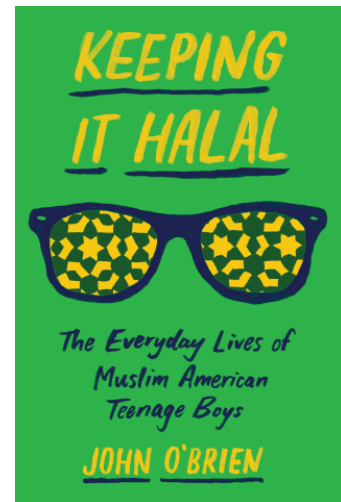
- The new book *Catholics and U.S. Politics After the 2016 Elections* (Palgrave Macmillan, \$129), edited by Marie Gayte, Blandine Chelini-Pont, and Mark J. Rozell, sheds much needed light on the Catholic vote in recent years and how it has dramatically diversified. The editors and contributors make it clear that much of the change in makeup from overwhelmingly Democrat to pluralistic, tracking the national average, has as many demographic as religious factors behind it (class shifts and movement to the sunbelt), although it has long been shown that more devout Catholics have switched to the Republican Party. The greater part of the book seeks to explain the 2016 presidential elections where the Catholic vote was 52 percent

for Donald Trump versus 45 percent for Hillary Clinton, with 60 percent of white Catholics voting for Trump. While Catholics have tracked close to the national average, the 2016 vote was an anomaly.

Rozell writes that the campaign to draw in Catholic voters for Trump was relatively successful while Clinton had limited appeal and even Democratically-inclined Latino Catholics did not turn against Trump in significant numbers. Other contributors flesh out this trajectory, noting that the effect of U.S. Catholic bishops and the Holy See on Catholic voting was weak, while the decade-long Catholic-evangelical alliance on such issues as abortion may have had more influence, as well as working-class concerns persisting in the industrial northern cities. Other chapters look at the various yet ultimately weak efforts of the Catholic left to find sympathetic voters, and the possible split in Catholic conservative ranks over the Trump presidency.



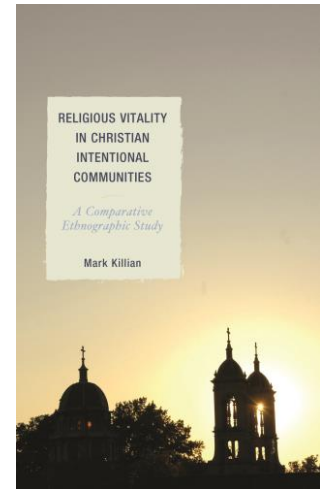
- *Keeping It Halal* (Princeton University Press, \$29.95), by John O'Brien, is an engaging ethnographic study of Muslim teens and how they walk a razor's edge between assimilation to youth culture and keeping their Islamic identity. O'Brien immersed himself in the social and religious worlds of a group of young men at a large urban mosque for three and a half years. The NYU sociologist seeks to discount the idea that Muslim youth engaging in hip hop culture are on a path of downward assimilation that will move them to a lower socio-economic rung than their middle-class families. Rather, these teens are selective in how they adapt youth culture, using a repertoire of strategies to be a "cool Muslim." On one hand, they steer clear of overly religious Muslims (who they dub "extreme"), including Muslim rappers who are too upfront about their faith. On the other, they often censor themselves and their friends about content and behavior that might not be deemed "halal" or acceptable to the Islamic community (such as listening but not dancing to rap in the mosque).



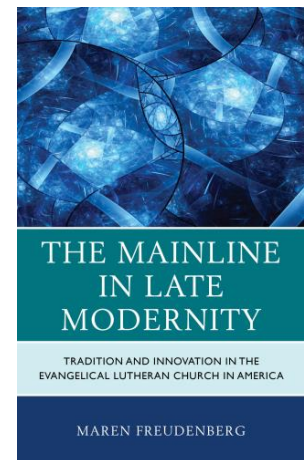
O'Brien notes that other behaviors (even something as trivial as not showing up for Friday prayers on time) are adopted by these young men to show that they value individual freedom and a certain amount of rebellion like other youth even while they maintain their faith. Dating is a particular area where this tension between following teen norms and religious observance seems to break down; ambiguity and understatement are the preferred means of dealing with this fraught period. They might use Islamic terminology, linking spirituality and romantic love, but tend not to apply Islamic law directly to their relationships (though they largely refrained from premarital sex). This low-key approach is also seen in the way these Muslim youths tend to downplay their Islamic identities in public (even though their mosque called for a more extroverted approach to their religion in their daily lives), though this is partly to fit in with other young people and partly due to concerns about harassment from revealing their faith in society. In the conclusion, O'Brien revisits these young men and finds that they have been able to manage this tension between (now) emerging American adulthood and Islamic identity. He ends by calling

for mosques to provide more spaces for young Muslims to work out these tensions in forming their identities.

- Mark Killian's recent book, *Religious Vitality in Christian Intentional Communities* (Lexington Books, \$95), looks at how communal Christian groups' success is related as much to their relations with each other and their neighborhoods as to their internal dynamics and structures. The question of whether religious communities will survive in the religious marketplace has taken on new meaning with the growth of such movements as the "new urban monasticism," which has established intentional communities as a form of ministry in inner cities. Killian finds that of the Christian intentional communities established between 2005 and 2009, only 31 percent had survived by 2015. The author examines two intentional communities (where only some of the members live strictly communally) in the Midwest, using ethnography to explain how such specialist kinds of religious organizations have maintained their vitality and growth. Killian argues that there is not one key factor that drives these groups' effectiveness. One community has profited more from providing strict teachings and beliefs while the other relies on the evolving religious ecology—the interactions between the community and other neighborhood groups and structures and how they meet each other's needs. But these factors can be interrelated; for instance, religious communities can strictly enforce members' taking up residency in their neighborhood (rather than commuting), thereby extracting resources from the local community to survive and grow.



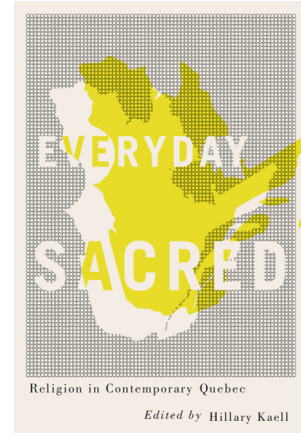
- *The Mainline in Late Modernity* (Lexington Books, \$95), by Maren Freudenberg, presents the intriguing if debatable thesis that this segment of American Protestantism is rising to past challenges and renewing itself in the face of growing individualism and pluralization. Freudenberg, a German sociologist, presents an extended case study of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, viewing the denomination as a bellwether of mainline Protestantism as it tries to scale down its hierarchical structure and generate more participation and leadership among the laity. She contends that the ELCA's attempt to adapt conservative Protestant church-growth techniques was more or less a failure and that now the denomination is putting to use its progressive Lutheran capital in a church renewal that still values the piety of the people in the pews. This could mean anything from greater community involvement to lay-led Bible studies and other contextual ministries that serve as an alternative to traditional parishes.



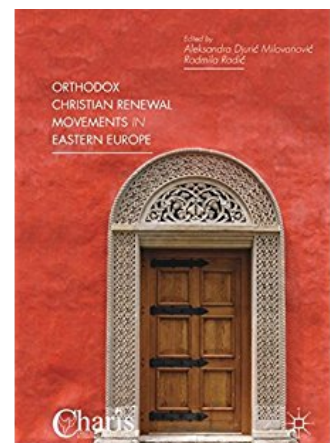
The "church culture shift" that she observes taking place is especially evident in upper Midwestern Lutheranism, which—as Freudenberg acknowledges—could cast doubt on her contention that this is a denomination-wide development (there are several church cultures in the ELCA). But she also studies the discourse and actions of the denominational leadership and finds that they are attempting to delegate authority toward the congregational and regional levels. At the same time, she argues that church leaders are seeking to retain Lutheranism's liturgical and confessional nature (most clearly seen in the leadership

of ELCA’s Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton), which may conflict with decentralized and lay-led currents. Such maintenance of the “core” identity allows (at least in Lutheranism) for “messiness” and experimentation on the congregational level, or tension between “structure and anti-structure.” Critics may note that she does not pay much attention to how the influence of seminaries and clergy formation and the ever-present ideological “culture wars” are shaping the denomination. Still, Freudenberg’s work represents an important effort to interpret changes that are evident throughout the mainline and what they may mean for the future of this branch of Protestantism.

- The plotline of religion in Quebec often revolves around the once-dominant role of the Catholic Church up until the 1960s and then the rapid freefall in Catholic identity and practice since then. The new book *Everyday Sacred* (McGill-Queens University Press, \$32.95), edited by Hillary Kaeel, challenges that narrative with more contemporary approaches in the study of Quebec religion, particularly those of “lived religion,” hybrid and unofficial forms of spirituality, and the role of public religion in a pluralistic society. In some cases, traditional religious forms are being maintained, as seen in the chapter on rural roadside crosses, whose caretakers see such structures as a means of resistance to the elites they view as secularizing the province, even in the countryside. Another chapter studies pilgrimages to Marian shrines and how (like in secular Europe) participants take an individualized rather than a more traditional approach to the faith. Along with chapters on immigrant religion, two contributions add to the recent literature on Quebec as a launching pad for new religious movements in the Francophone and wider world. Such new currents as transhumanism have found a fertile field in the province because they appeal to the “technophilia” of Quebecois who have a great deal of respect for the authority of science and technology.



- In a prologue to *Orthodox Christian Renewal Movements in Eastern Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, \$109), Meic Pearse notes how the way the Orthodox Church perceives itself as “timeless and unchanging” represents both a strength and a weakness in changing environments. Renewal movements have thus raised debates and played a role in the contemporary life of Orthodox Churches, as documented in this book edited by Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović and Radmila Radić. Largely historical, the book offers insights on a number of renewal movements, little-known by most religion scholars in the West, appearing from the 19th century (and even the late 18th century in Russia) in Orthodox environments and—despite the specificities of their particular contexts, especially the “nationalization of Orthodoxy” at that time—not entirely unlike those born during the same period in Western Christianity. The introduction by Milovanović and Radić makes these shared features clear: intensity of personal religious experience, holiness, discipline, communion, Scriptural authority, use of vernacular languages in liturgical practice, hymn chanting, prayer, all belong to the list.



There were in fact influences from Reformation movements and similar movements formed by people who borrowed from evangelical groups while continuing to consider themselves as Orthodox. The challenge of missionary activities by movements of Protestant origins was felt as a call to renewal by some priests and faithful, even if it took time, as one can see in Bojan Aleksov's study on the reactions of the Serbian Orthodox Church to the spread of the Nazarenes (an Evangelical movement not to be confused with the American denomination). As shown in a chapter by the editors, the God Worshipper movement in Serbia largely started as a spontaneous, grassroot phenomenon, first seen with suspicion by many church officials. Several chapters explore different aspects of this movement and its impact on the Serbian Orthodox Church, covering the entire second part of the volume and making those chapters into an ensemble that forms the core of the book. The God Worshippers attended church services regularly, but also met on Sunday afternoons or evenings and on saints' days since, "although they resolutely claimed that they belonged to the Church and that they respected the Church hierarchy, only outside the churches could they freely reveal and fulfill their religious needs," as Dragan Ašković writes in a piece on the prayer chanting of the God Worshipper movement.

Like similar movements in other denominations, the challenge for the established church was to draw benefit from the stronger piety they inspired while avoiding the fall into doctrinal errors or practices seen as un-Orthodox. In fact, founders of some movements ended up leaving the church and continuing with independent movements. Despite the hiatus of the Communist period, some movements have managed to survive those hostile decades and to remain sources of renewal for their national churches. Corneliu Constantineanu finds that such is the case with the Romanian Lord's Army, whose birth was closely linked to a new appreciation of the direct access to clear translations of the Scriptures available for all believers, and which "today affects more than a million people in all parts of Romania." Similarly, the Brotherhood of Theologians Zoe (founded in 1907) has become "one of the most, if not the most, influential religious organizations in twentieth-century Greece." It was devoted from the start to "the expansion of Orthodoxy within Greece" while remaining outside denominational control. Still, it has been accused by a famous former member, theologian Hristos Yannaras, of having been influenced by Protestant sources and of having deviated from a genuinely Orthodox spirit. Zoe was influential, but remains today a shadow of its own self. Amaryllis Logotheti describes its ideology as having been one of "conservative modernization." All these movements, each in their own way, have brought new impulses to Orthodox Church life in their respective countries, impulses that in some cases have lasted to this day.