

Vol. 33, No. 4**February 2018****FEATURE STORY:****Eastern spirituality in the West—secularizing or globalizing?**

How much of Eastern spirituality and practice in the West is really dressed up secular therapy and consumerism? In his new book, *Secular Beats Spiritual: The Westernization of the Easternization of the West* (Oxford University Press, \$32.50), sociologist Steve Bruce casts doubt on the notion that the “turn to the East” represents anything like a spiritual revolution that is replacing traditional religion. The subtitle refers to Colin Campbell’s 2007 book, *The Easternization of the West*, which argued that Western culture was undergoing a transformation to Eastern spiritual values. Bruce, a longtime defender of the secularization thesis, looks at many of the influences Campbell sees as Eastern spiritual themes and stirrings and dismisses them as largely secular or at most “quasi-spiritual.” Bruce takes the reader on a colorful tour of New Age and Eastern spiritual gatherings and groups, especially in the UK, making the book more ethnographic than his other works. He looks at such New Age communities as Findhorn and Glastonbury and finds small if devoted followings (mainly of older people), a tolerance for diversity and absence of a set of unifying beliefs, syncretism, and a therapeutic mindset (discovering one’s true self). In subsequent chapters on yoga, neo-Hinduism (such as Hare Krishna), and Buddhism, Bruce finds a similar pattern: the groups and ideas that thrive in mainstream society (such as human potential concepts and physical and emotional well-being) are the most distant from traditional religious expressions and practices. This is especially the case with the practice of “mindfulness,” as this insight form of Buddhist meditation has evolved into a stress on calmness, increasingly leaving behind any religious trappings.

Not unexpectedly, Bruce finds that his theory of secularization is confirmed by what he sees as the secular drift of these groups. In the final chapters, he returns to his usual number crunching, acknowledging the difficulty of counting the loosely affiliated and individualistic Eastern seekers. From surveys, subscription lists and other studies, he estimates New Age adherents as ranging between seven and one percent of the UK population, mainly middle-class, middle-age and elderly and not likely to reproduce their numbers. “Put very simply, ‘alternative spirituality,’ as it is sometimes called, is not an alternative to religious indifference. It is an alternative to conventional

religion [since so many of such seekers had religious upbringings] and, as the proportion of people with any childhood religious socialization declines, so too does the pool from which spirituality recruits,” he argues. Campbell’s book was not so much about the growth of New Age and Eastern religious groups, but rather the diffusion of Eastern spiritual influence in Western culture. Bruce, who sees the same secularizing currents in the UK as soon to arrive in the U.S., denies that Eastern spirituality, given its individualism, has had much public influence. He concludes that the “Western appropriation of Eastern religious themes has been accompanied by a considerable reshaping of those themes. What we have actually seen is the Westernization of the Easternization of the West.”



Most of the contributors to the new anthology *Eastspirit* (Brill, \$146) would agree with Bruce that Eastern spirituality changes, sometimes drastically, in the transition from Asian societies to the West. But they would also argue that these changes are not always in the secular direction—and that sometimes they boomerang back and influence Eastern religion and societies. Editors Jørn Borup and Marianne Qvortrup Fibiger write that the interaction and circulation of religions between Asian and Western societies is complex, with “spirituality” often being added to the mix only after Eastern religions have gone west, as is the case with meditation and Zen. Several contributors look at the way Eastern traditions have been spiritualized in the West and then exported back to Asia, as with Deepak Chopra becoming a well-known guru in India and qigong returning to China in its new “spiritual form, not least through Hong Kong and mainland China’s film industry.” Whether or not they will have many takers among the growing non-affiliated (or

“none”) population in the West, it is also true that second-generation members of ethnic groups adopt more spiritualized versions of their native traditions. In her chapter on the transnational worship of the Indian guru known as “Hugging Amma” among diaspora Hindus in Mauritius and spiritual seekers in Denmark, Fibiger finds that these worshippers are more religiously conservative than their counterparts in India as they search for authenticity.

ARTICLES:

Congregations’ role as sanctuary coming under strain under Trump administration?

The longtime tradition of government respecting the autonomy of churches in offering sanctuary to illegal immigrants and other violators of the law is gradually being dissolved under the presidency of Donald Trump, reports the libertarian magazine *Reason* (February). The internal policies of government immigrant agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have long treated congregations in a similar manner to other sensitive locations, such as hospitals, courts and schools, as being immune to police intrusion. Even though cities may declare themselves “sanctuary cities,” they nevertheless face immigrant deportations that are legal. But in “the sanctuary church movement’s seven-decade-long existence, authorities have never gone into a church to arrest undocumented aliens, even though churches are technically considered public spaces, which officers don’t require a warrant to enter,” Shikha Dalmia writes. But that distinction has been less evident to the Trump administration, as it has “eviscerated the longstanding norms preserving a sphere of independence for these institutions. If the administration continues on its draconian course, it will vastly expand the government’s reach and radically shrink the space where American humanitarianism can find full expression: civil society.”



Congregations have historically received special exemption from police intrusion because of their mission to minister to people without discrimination, as well as law enforcement’s reliance on these entities to provide much needed social services. But Dalmia adds that, besides cracking down on illegal immigrants in courts and other public places, the “Trump administration has been pushing the limits in [traditional] ‘safe zones’” including hospitals. This is a dramatic departure from the Obama administration’s actions (although that administration was actively deporting illegal immigrants as well). Since Trump assumed office, the number of congregations opting to

provide sanctuary has doubled from 400 to 800. But most of these churches have sought to collaborate with ICE, refraining from sheltering those with serious criminal records, for instance. But Trump has “maintained a strategic ambiguity about whether or not he plans to honor the policy of not raiding houses of worship.” ICE did raid a humanitarian camp in Arizona and agents detained six men after they left a church-run homeless shelter in Virginia. The Trump administration’s advocacy of religious freedom could be jeopardized if it moves against the churches. And such a move could drive the sanctuary movement underground; already some of “California’s faith leaders are building a secret network of houses where undocumented...families could go into hiding in the event of a full-blown crackdown,” Dalmia concludes.

(*Reason*, <http://www.reason.com>)

Calvinist charismatics flourishing by joining head and heart religion

Reformed churches, known for their intellectual and doctrine-based approach to the faith, are also adopting charismatic practices, reports *Christianity Today* magazine (January/February). The mixing of Calvinism and charismatic practices is particularly evident in the new church planting networks, such as Advance, Newfrontiers, and Acts 29 (to some extent), which are active in the U.S., Britain, and other parts of the world. These churches show the free-flowing worship of charismatic Christianity as well as the expository preaching and liturgy of the Reformed tradition. For instance, Frontline Church, an Acts 29 congregation that has expanded to four locations in the Oklahoma City area, “combines structured liturgy (creeds, the Lord’s Table) with ‘planned spontaneity,’ including small groups of prayer during communion, where congregants pray for each other’s healing and offer prophetic words to one another (e.g., ‘I believe the Lord wants to say to you...’),” writes Brett McCracken.



The Reformed tradition has tended to be “cessationist”—teaching that spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophesy, and healing ceased after the apostolic period of church history. Reformed apologists, such as John MacArthur, targeted charismatics as espousing false doctrine and emphasizing feelings over sound teaching. But in the early 2000s, Korean-American church planter Dihan Lee started a congregation with a Reformed-charismatic synthesis. Lee does not label his preaching Reformed, though he “preaches God’s sovereignty, covenants, and election, but also the prophetic, the gifts, and spiritual warfare.” Reformed charismatics see their teachings

as particularly appealing in the global South, where Pentecostalism has spread rapidly. Oscar Merlo, former executive director of the Alberto Mottesi Evangelistic Association, one of the world's largest Latino evangelical associations, says that the Reformed emphasis on the cross is an important corrective to the charismatic stress on prosperity and victory. The “Word and Spirit” emphasis of these churches is also finding a hearing in the secular urban centers of the U.S., where the teachings and practices of spiritual unity can break down racial and political polarization, McCracken reports.

(*Christianity Today*, 463 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188)

#MeToo movement resonates with evangelical women

The #MeToo movement, involving women speaking out against sexual harassment, is finding expression in religious institutions, particularly evangelical churches where there is sometimes a conflict between granting offending clergy forgiveness and holding them accountable for their actions. *National Public Radio* (January 24) reports on how the issue of evangelical churches dealing with pastoral sexual abuse and whether evangelical women may be losing trust in their church leaders have become hot topics in evangelical circles, especially among the growing ranks of evangelical women bloggers (see June 2017 RW). “I think everyone who has offended others has to recognize that while God may forgive us, and our friends and our church may forgive us, there may be a trust gap that is going to be hard to overcome,” says Darryl Crouch, pastor of Greenhill Church in Mount Juliet, Tenn. The report focuses on the case of Pastor Andy Savage of Greenhill, who allegedly harassed a member but was defended by fellow clergy.



Some evangelical women say the strongly male culture of the pastorate because of their views of male and female leadership roles makes the issue of clergy sexual abuse more sensitive. There is the concern that church authorities will be reluctant to move decisively against pastors accused of improper behavior. Kelly Rosati of Focus on the Family said that it is important to separate the evangelical belief about distinctive gender roles in the church from the exploitation of power

differentials between a pastor and his flock. “What you saw in that [Andy Savage] incident was a conflating of those two issues,” she says, “and a failure to understand that what one person might describe as a sexual incident is really about those other things, power and abuse and violation.” The reaction among evangelical women to the #MeToo movement, Rosati says, suggests it may be a watershed moment for them that will end up “shaking out the ground a little bit in the evangelical community.”

(*National Public Radio*, <https://www.npr.org>)

C3 expands in Canada by winning over hipsters

“A church for hipsters”—that has been the tone of several media reports on C3 Church for the past few years, the latest one being an article about the Toronto branch in *The Globe and Mail* (January 18). C3 stands for Christian City Church, a neo-Pentecostal church launched in 1980 that now counts 450 churches around the world. Like the famous Hillsong Church, to which it is frequently compared, it started in Australia, illustrating that country’s potential as a launchpad for new, global religious movements. In Canada, it currently has 11 congregations with about 3,000 participants. Its message is clearly geared to young city-dwellers, Christopher Katsarov notes, and it seems to work in Toronto as in many other places where C3 and similar movements are active. Social interactions between members are strongly encouraged, with “connect groups” of peers meeting during the week for various activities—not necessarily Bible study.

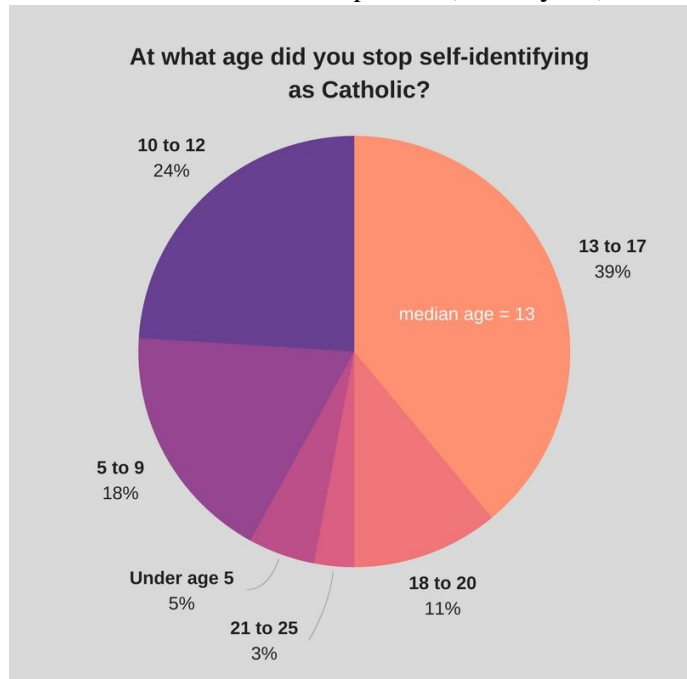


Katsarov reports that, in its efforts to reach the young and spiritually curious, C3 Church carefully “avoids the language of judgment and sanction,” which is attractive for people who would not feel comfortable in churches having a more traditional approach. Regarding the hot issue of same-sex relationships, the C3 pastor answering the Canadian journalist’s questions refrained from any judgment: “I see my role not to tell people what’s right or wrong or what to do, but to point them to having a relationship with Jesus.” While certainly not being an endorsement of homosexuality, this stance has already earned C3 some criticism from other evangelicals, especially after a blog post by a C3 pastor from Melbourne on that topic in 2009. But it is unlikely to deter more hipsters

from joining the movement, and might rather indicate wider adjustments to come in other contemporary churches as well.

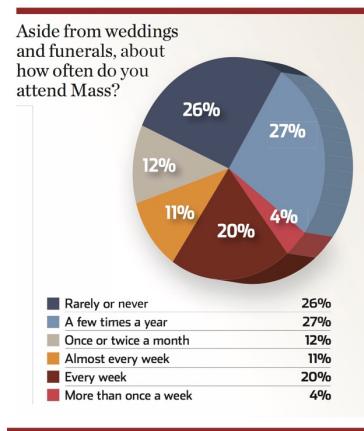
CURRENT RESEARCH

● A new study, *Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics*, looks at a sample of former Catholics, aged 15 to 25, to shed light on the movement of young people exiting the church in recent years. The *National Catholic Reporter* (January 22) notes findings from the survey, which was conducted by St. Mary’s Press in collaboration with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, including the following: approximately 12.8 percent of young adults in the U.S. between ages 18 and 25 are former Catholics, with 6.8 percent of U.S. teenagers between 15 and 17 falling into that category. Seventy-four percent said they stopped identifying as Catholic between ages 10 and 20, with a median age of 13. About one-third (35 percent) are “done” with religious affiliation but still believe in something bigger, perhaps even God, while another 14 percent view religious affiliation and faith as “nonsensical.” Nearly half (46 percent) are looking for another faith expression or practice that better aligns with their sense of spirituality.



(*National Catholic Reporter*, <https://www.ncronline.org/>)

● American Catholic women represent a potential new wave of Democratic voters and espouse a number of liberal positions while retaining a Catholic identity, according to one of the most extensive surveys of Catholic women conducted by the research group CARA. *America* magazine (January 22) reports that the survey of 1,508 women self-identifying as Catholic finds 59 percent leaning Democratic in political sympathy (although political intentions do not always translate into votes). About one-quarter of women in the U.S. attend Mass once a week or more often; 23 percent attend less than weekly but

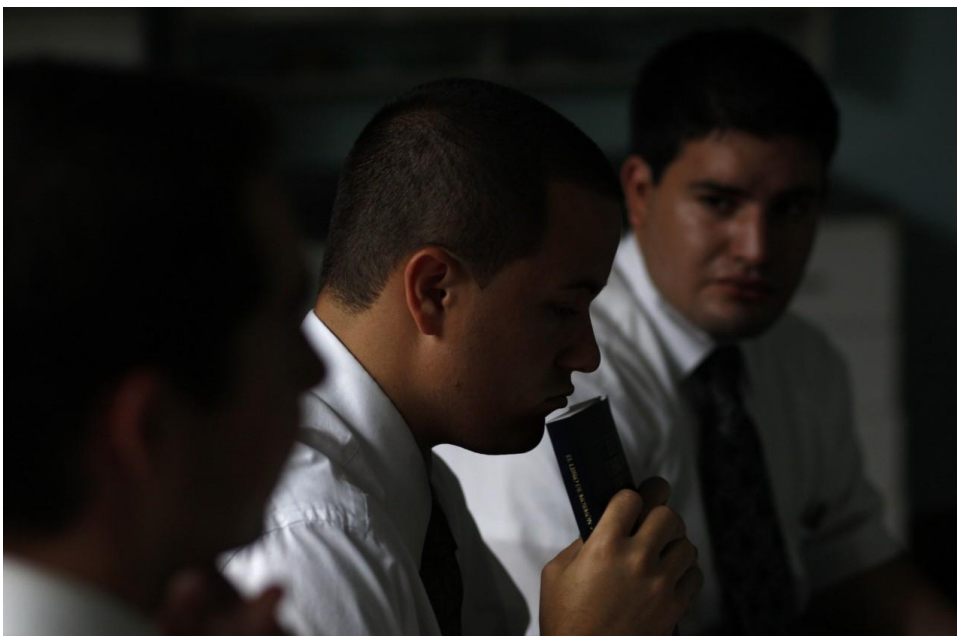


at least once a month. Twenty-seven percent attend a few times a year and 26 percent attend rarely or never.

● **A new survey on the growth of doubt among Mormons suggests that younger and more politically liberal members are more likely to have doubts and leave the church than older and more conservative members.** There has been a good deal of press coverage on apostasy and doubt among Mormons in recent years, especially with the growth of ex-Mormon support groups and other sources critical of the LDS church on the Internet. The current issue of the independent Mormon journal *Dialogue* (Fall) reports on findings from the Next Mormons Survey, an Internet poll of 1,156 self-identified Mormons and 540 former Mormons, which is said to be representative through the use of a panel matching technique that corrects for sample biases.

The survey finds that younger people are more likely to leave when they start doubting church teachings, whereas older ones are more likely to remain with the church. Liberals are also more likely to leave when they become doubters, while conservatives are more likely to remain. Doubters make up about one in five Mormons and one in ten active Mormons. Church attendance and involvement in social networks with other Mormons serve to minimize doubt. The top three reasons for leaving the church were: no longer being able to “reconcile my personal values and priorities with those of the Church,” no longer believing there was “one true church,” and feeling “judged or misjudged.” Authors Benjamin Knoll and Jana Reiss conclude that “broadening the tent” in the range of views allowed in the church might allow more room for doubters to remain there and identify as Mormons.

(*Dialogue*, <https://www.dialoguejournal.com/>)



ARTICLES:

European women’s circles embracing spirituality and “sisterhood”

Since the early 2000s, the emergence of women’s circles, small, intimate monthly gatherings exploring women’s issues, in Europe has also seen the growth of eclectic spirituality among participants, writes Chia Longman in the journal *Religions* (January 1). These circles “appear to be a growing phenomenon across the globe in recent years, as they have become more visible and accessible to a broader audience due to the Internet and the launch of various transnational ‘circle movements’ since the 2000s that promote circling.” These circles tend not to promote any one version of feminism and spirituality, which is often seen by the participants Longman interviewed as a personal issue. But such alternative practices as meditation, rituals, chanting, the presence of altars, oracle cards, blessings, and references to the divine or the sacred feminine were frequently found among these women.

These circles are not only seen as protected spaces and a source for self-empowerment but they also stress the concept of “sisterhood,” which lends them a sense of “collective agency and community,” Longman adds. She calls these groups “post-secular” in that they try to break down the divides between secular, religious, and spiritual. The circles’ appeal shows a “growing curiosity from the side of secular feminism for the neglected, yet critical, and even political potential of spirituality...a new kind of spirituality/wellbeing practiced by (predominantly, but not exclusively) white middle-class women in the West....”



(*Religions*, <http://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/9/1/9>)

Segments of French Catholicism pursue resistance while tide of decline continues

Facing a sociological decline as well as a shift of values, a number of practicing Roman Catholics in France have become more combative on the public stage, according to a new book by historian and political scientist Jérôme Fourquet, a leading expert at IFOP, a French survey firm. He finds

that six percent of the French population currently attends Mass every Sunday, while 35 percent did so in the early 1960s. *A la Droite de Dieu* (“On the Right Side of God,” Editions du Cerf) identifies two trends that have contributed to the mobilization of a section of French Catholics—the legal successes achieved by the LGBT lobby and the feeling that French identity is being threatened by the growth of Islam at the very time Christianity is declining. Jihadist attacks, including the killing of a priest in a church in 2016, have contributed to such fears. This is also boosting initiatives by some groups for evangelizing Muslims, despite negative reactions from sectors of French Catholicism eager to promote interreligious dialogue. Practicing Catholics seem on average to be more concerned than the French population in general about migrants, who are often associated with Islam.

Nearly half of practicing Catholics in France are open to welcoming new immigrants (the percentage goes up to almost 70 percent if the question is asked only about Christians from the Middle East), but more than half tend to resist calls by Pope Francis for welcoming migrants in Europe. There is an intra-Catholic debate about such issues in France, with some Catholics critical of what they



see as a turn toward identity by more conservative French Catholics, whom they suspect of becoming more eager to defend an idea of Christendom than Christianity itself. The analysis of some electoral results shows that Catholic activists have not been able to translate mass movements against homosexual marriage and adoption into electoral pressure, either within existing parties or through new political groups. Mimicking what leftist activists had done after the 1960s, they have now started engaging in long-term efforts to penetrate not only politics but also cultural fields.

Once a contested demand has been enshrined into law, there is a legalist tendency to accept it despite the initial clash. While opposition to homosexual marriage had been massive from 2012, support for it had been gaining ground and it has become law. Similarly, the cause of legalizing medically assisted procreation for lesbian couples and single mothers has been gathering growing support in the French population (going from a 47 percent approval rate in 2013 to 64 percent in 2017). Even 48 percent of French Catholics tend to support such a legal move. Moreover, remarks Fourquet, there are currently clear signs of moves at the highest level of the Roman Catholic Church for adjusting pastoral approaches to new social realities. But conservative French Catholics are unlikely to welcome such initiatives. Fourquet concludes that the hardening of a significant

part of French Catholicism might represent the classical sociological phenomenon of a stronger emphasis on one's identity by a group becoming aware that it has turned into a minority in a rapidly changing environment.

Poland shows more individualistic approaches to religion

Although there have not been changes as radical as what some observers had expected to see in Polish religiosity and its connections to the dominant Roman Catholic Church, sociological research as well as surveys report stronger secularization and a changing attitude toward the church in Poland since 2008. Still, writes Fr. Janusz Mariański (Catholic University of Lublin) in *Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West* (January), most people in Poland continue to have no issue with the public presence and influence of the church. A survey conducted in 2015 shows that 88 percent of Poles do not object to crucifixes in official buildings, and more than 81 percent do not consider religious teaching provided at state schools as an issue. On the other hand, 33 percent do not like the church making pronouncements on morals and sexuality, 55 percent are disturbed by the church if it takes a stand on laws voted by the parliament, and more than 83 percent are irritated if a priest tells people whom to vote for.



A clear trend is the rise of people who feel free to believe in their own way. Nearly half the population adopts such an approach, while 42.7 percent claim to follow the rules of the church. The striking change is that there were still 66 percent claiming to do so in 2005, thus making the decline in ten years marked. While church religiosity remains the dominant model in Poland, helped along by socialization through church and family, competition between Christian and secular models will become increasingly obvious, according to Fr. Mariański's assessment. It is unclear what this will mean for the presence of the Catholic Church in public life. Current trends suggest the possibility that changes will not so much mean a move toward atheism or religious indifference, but rather a more individualistic kind of religiosity. A process of secularization is the most likely scenario, although one should keep in mind that it might not follow exactly the same

patterns as in the West, and that social modernization might go along with forms of religiosity. Polish Catholicism remains a mass phenomenon, Mariański adds, but internal differences might grow. At this point, there is no reason to anticipate a downfall scenario, considering how many people currently do not see a contradiction in being at the same time a good citizen of Poland, a good European, and a modern Catholic.

(*Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West*, Institut G2W, Birmensdorferstrasse 52, P.O. Box 9329, 8036 Zurich, Switzerland)

Flourishing Lubavitch Hasidim positions itself as voice of Russian Jewry

Chabad, the outreach arm of Lubavitch Hasidic Judaism, shows significant growth in Russia and has successfully created the image of itself as the leader of Russian Jewry in line with Russian nationalism, writes Galina Zelenina of Moscow State University in the journal *Contemporary Jewry* (online January). Chabad entered the stage when traditional Russian Jewish communities had weakened in the post-communist period and competition from Jewish groups abroad, such as Reform Judaism, was heating up. It had the advantage of claiming an established Jewish lineage in Russia, since the Hasidim had a history in pre-Revolutionary Russia (though far from an unbroken line of succession of leadership). Chabad emerged victorious as far as numbers and influence, becoming widespread throughout Russia and Eastern Europe. It sees itself as more advanced (the “coolest”) and more multicultural than any other Jewish group, one that speaks for all of Russia—even inflating the number of Russian Jews to over a million where most studies have found only from 300,000 to 600,000. Chabad is now the leading voice of the Federation of Jewish Communities (FJC), which itself is in close alliance with Russian authorities and the Kremlin.

Zelenina writes that the “leaders of Russian Hasidism have been adopting the same tactics, systematically expressing gratitude and giving blessing to the protective and supportive local Russian authorities, who differ greatly from the atheistic Soviet regime. It is important to note that the present-day Kremlin is not only tolerant of Jews, but also aware of the religious-conservative shift. It



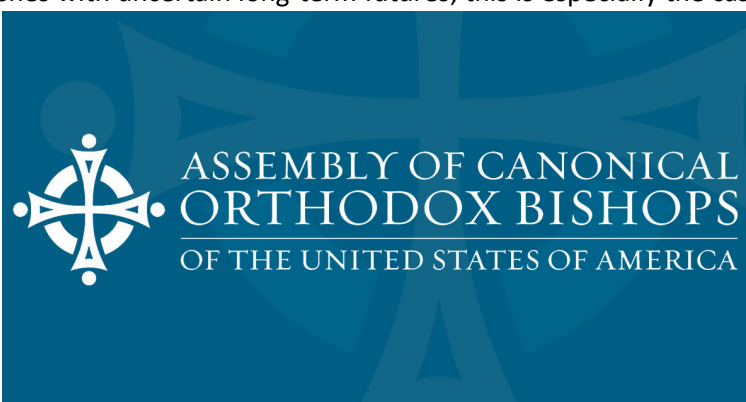
assigns priority to ‘traditional values’ and actively supports the revival of religious spirituality.” Zelenina compares Chabad and the FJC to Russian Orthodoxy and its close ties to the state; both seek to draw in nominal members and influential leaders (and create grand projects for the public, such as the new Jewish Museum) to build a cohesive community that equates itself with being Russian, though requiring little or no participation (except for its inner circle of followers). She concludes that “Chabad is pursuing goals both mundane (the movement gains power by positioning itself as the representative of all Russian Jewry) and redemptive (by counting unaffiliated Jews as Jews—even as observant Jews after they fulfill just one commandment, which is expected to hasten the coming of the Messiah).

(*Contemporary Jewry*, <https://link.springer.com/journal/12397>)

Findings & Footnotes

■ While **RW** (November 2017) had already reported on some of the results of the *Orthodox Christian Parish Life in America* study by Alexei Krindatch, the full report has now been published under the auspices of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America and brings additional, significant observations about trends in U.S. Orthodoxy. The results are based on a survey of 580 parishes, i.e., 30 percent of all (canonical) Orthodox parishes in the U.S. While 40 percent of Orthodox parishes were founded prior to WWII, 15 percent were born after the year 2000. The total number of adherents at least loosely associated with a parish comes to nearly 800,000. Regularly participating parish members come to around 325,000. The Orthodox Church of America (OCA) has the highest percentage of truly involved members (69 percent). About one quarter of active Orthodox parishioners are senior citizens (age 65 and above), while young adults (18–34) only make up 12 percent, illustrating a wider trend for this age group of staying away from organized religion.

A majority of parishes do not seem strongly missionary-minded: “In only 18 percent of American Orthodox parishes, the parishioners pay serious attention to bringing new members into their parishes.” While slightly less than one quarter of the parishes perceive themselves as “vibrant and flourishing,” 30 percent describe themselves as “struggling” parishes with uncertain long-term futures; this is especially the case for parishes in the Serbian and Carpatho-Russian Churches. Based on responses from clergy, Krindatch identifies several areas of concern, including apathy among church members and instability in church membership (turnover and people on the move, as well as divisions within parishes). Additional issues are the strong ethnic focus of some parishes,

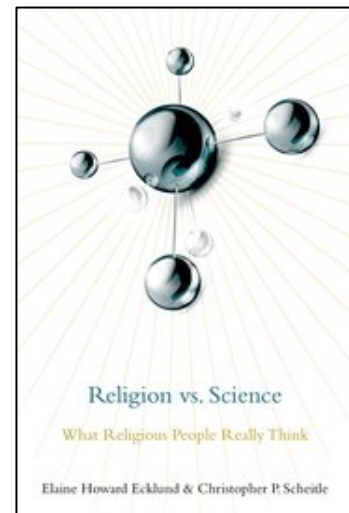


reinforced by the arrival of new immigrants, the coexistence of different Orthodox jurisdictions instead of church unity, and adverse economic and social environments (e.g., poor and declining local communities).

Regarding the future organization of Orthodoxy in America, “more [and younger] American Orthodox priests (71 percent) than American Orthodox bishops (58 percent) envision the future of Orthodoxy in America in the form of an administratively united Church.” Only a quarter of American Orthodox parishes engage in ecumenical worship services. On average, younger priests (age 40 and below) seem less inclined to participate in such services than older ones. Krindatch finds that 95 percent of parishes maintain their own website and 74 percent are on Facebook. More than half of priests admit to being very frequent users of electronic technology and social media. The full report (163 pages) is available at: <http://www.assemblyofbishops.org/assets/files/studies/2018-01-OrthodoxChurchesIn21CenturyAmericaFinal.pdf>

■ *Religion vs. Science: What Religious People Really Think* (Oxford University Press, \$29.95), by Elaine

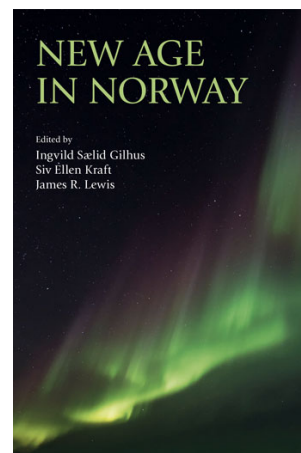
Howard Ecklund and Christopher P. Scheitle, is something of a sequel to Ecklund’s earlier book, *Science vs. Religion*. While the first book looked at how scientists viewed religion and spirituality, the new work starts from the other direction—looking at how believers (from Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) approach science. Both studies seek to dispel the stereotypes of atheist scientists on one hand, anti-science believers on the other. The new book addresses the hot spots that are said to concern religious people—evolution, climate change, technology, and science education in general—and examines the reality and complexity of their attitudes through extensive interviews with laypeople (and religious scientists) and survey research. The book finds that religious people in general appreciate science and technology, but that their—especially evangelicals’—overriding concern is about the secularizing effects of science and scientists themselves as well as technological developments (“humans playing God”). On evolution, there is not wide opposition to the theory, nor do most support “young Earth” creationism, but there is concern that teaching on evolution makes no room for supernatural factors.



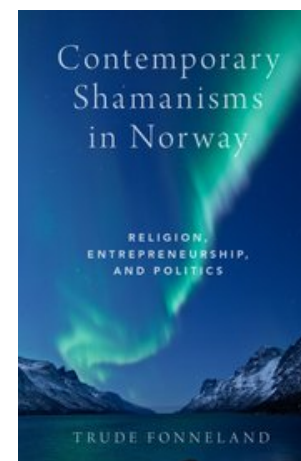
As Ecklund showed in her last book, the view that many scientists are fervent atheists (on the model of Richard Dawkins) is not accurate, but the authors found that this stereotype has stuck among many respondents (again, especially among evangelicals). This negative view of scientists discourages those believers working in these fields, particularly students and potential science students, and they tend to keep a low profile in their congregations (while also feeling they do not fit in with other scientists). In fact, Ecklund and Scheitle do not find a direct link between holding a religious faith and the choice to enter a career in a science field, though the non-affiliated, Jews, and adherents of non-Western religions are represented more in rank-and-file jobs. When it comes to climate change, the authors find a similar pattern of general concern about the environment among most respondents (including evangelical respondents), but that their actions are “confined and muted” in addressing these issues. More conservative respondents again saw environmental activism as challenging God’s authority and

sovereignty, but there was only a minority who denied global warming or that humans have any involvement in it. Ecklund and Scheitle conclude that the need for dialogue between religious believers and scientists is more urgent than ever, with religious scientists in particular acting as “ambassadors” in their faith communities.

■ *New Age in Norway* (Equinox, \$40), edited by Ingvild Gilhus, Siv Ellen Kraft, and James R. Lewis, provides an in-depth examination of alternative spiritualities and how they appeal to a mainstream, secularized audience and society. Like other Scandinavian societies, the “secularized” label has to be qualified in Norway because the Lutheran church still plays a role in providing services for life-cycle events (baptisms, weddings, funerals) as well as gathering spaces in times of crises and disasters, even as church attendance is very low. This “belonging without believing” culture has shaped the reception and development of alternative spiritual movements in Norway, according to the book’s editors. It is the way the contributors depict the Lutheran church’s tolerance for very different groups and movements, including those friendly and those very critical of alternative spirituality, that makes the book interesting reading. This could be seen in the Lamplighter movement, which combined spiritualism and charismatic Christianity, though it disbanded under conservative Christian criticism, and also in the ecumenical spirituality movement reviving the practice of pilgrimage. But there is also competition between the Church of Norway and alternative organizations. For instance, the Holistic Society has created rites of passage to rival the church’s, yet it remains very small (only 1,000 members), which is puzzling since holistic groups and practices are popular in the country.



More successful have been networks, such as Alternativt Nettverk, catering to the eclectic needs of Norwegians as they have become “multi-religious actors” (engaging in “religious commuting”). Lisolette Frisk concludes the book with a comparison of the New Age scenes in Sweden and Norway, noting that alternative spiritual currents are as strong in both countries as anywhere else in the West. Both countries show a strong interest in communication with spirits compared to other countries, as well as an interest in practices lying between the religious and secular arenas, such as yoga, mindfulness and human potential therapies. The contributors also examine the way popular alternative groups in Norway have blended New Age with the indigenous shamanism of the northern Sami people, though the new book *Contemporary Shamanisms in Norway* (Oxford University Press, \$99) sets this phenomenon



in a more global context. Authored by Trude Fonneland, the book notes that the shamanism of Scandinavia has gained greater currency than the more popularized American Indian forms of shamanism because of its “authenticity.” But this form of shamanism is also making the rounds in the global spiritual marketplace. Both globalization and standardization are evident in the way the Sami themselves (defying criticisms that Sami shamanism has been appropriated by New Age groups) have incorporated other national shamanic traditions while recently starting a national shaman association for the first time to

represent those spiritual practitioners. Fonneland’s extensive interviews with several Sami shamans show some serving as “spiritual entrepreneurs,” as they actively cooperate with Norway’s tourist industry to promote pilgrimages to Sami holy sites. Through wide media exposure, these shamans—in league with tourism promoters—are pressing for development of the north, portraying it as a center of modern and “rational” spirituality rather than a primitive region marked by superstition.

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

1) **The American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute (AMCLI)** is one of the country’s most influential networks of American Muslim civic leaders. Founded in 2006, AMCLI is based at the University of Southern California’s Center for Religion and Civic Culture. The Carnegie Foundation helped inaugurate the program with an initial \$50,000 grant, followed by a \$200,000 grant from the Ford Foundation. Since its first cohort graduated in 2009, more than 250 Muslim activists have attended its training programs. Part professional development, part support group, AMCLI has trained national and regional cohorts in intensive sessions led by interfaith organizers, academics, and activists. Among AMCLI alumni are Linda Sarsour, an organizer of the Women’s March on Washington, D.C., and attorney Rabia Chaudry.

AMCLI alumni represent the broad diversity found in the American Muslim population at large: men and women, Sunni, Shia and Ismaili, gay and straight, urban and rural. Many of them are non-profit leaders and founders working in philanthropy, politics, public policy, immigration rights, social justice advocacy—



people primarily working outside of mosques to promote social change. The network is also playing a role in developing new leadership programs. Kashif Shaikh's Pillars Fund is supporting a new Auburn Seminary initiative to provide two-day intensive media and story-telling training to a cross-section of 120 Muslim leaders. The training workshops will be led by Wajahat Ali, an attorney and writer who has become a popular spokesman on topics relating to American Islam. **(Source: *Religion & Politics*, January 17)**

2) The recent founding of **Secular Rescue** can be considered the secular counterpart to the Western Christian effort to rescue fellow believers facing religious persecution. The initiative, launched in 2016, is run by the Center For Inquiry (CFI), a U.S.-based non-profit organization that aims to promote secular values, with the support of such prominent atheists as Richard Dawkins. "It's really an underground railroad of sorts for non-believers in countries where simply expressing doubt about religious belief is a criminal offense or where it may lead to grave physical harm," says Robyn Blumner, the president and CEO of CFI. The organization doesn't only target religious countries but also secular societies where atheists still face prejudice or violence from vigilante groups. One of the worst offenders in terms of government complicity against secularists and religious dissenters is Bangladesh, which has seen the murder since 2015 of at least 10 writers who had questioned religious dogma, with little response by the government. **(Source: *The Atlantic*, January 18)**

