

Vol. 33, No. 10**August 2018****FEATURE STORY:****Putting Max Weber to the test on the Protestant ethic**

Community development ministries have expanded throughout the Christian (and non-Christian) world, but until recently there have been few attempts to find out how effective they are in lifting their clients out of poverty. *Christianity Today* magazine (July/August) reports that a body of research has developed in recent years that goes beyond drawing the usual correlations between community development, religious faith, and poverty relief that have existed since Max Weber's study on the Protestant ethic to look at the causative factors in this relationship. Economists Lincoln Lau and Bruce Wydick write that a recent randomized controlled experiment involving 320 villages and 6,276 low-income families in the Philippines "appears to confirm that the Protestant ethic causes economic change." Participants in the study were randomly selected for a curriculum teaching Christian values as well as health and wellness advice for four months. These families were then studied along with a control group for increases in their household income six months after finishing the curriculum program. Those who received the evangelical Protestant training showed a 9.2 percent increase in household income compared to the control group.

The evangelical group also showed changes in hygiene and "grit," which may have been due to the value lessons. But other results were not as clear. "The workers who received religious training may have consumed more goods and had fewer family members going to bed hungry, but the results were not statistically significant," Lau and Wydick write. One negative outcome of the study was that major arguments with relatives increased by 2.2 percent for those who received the values training. Despite the increase in household income, some participants also viewed themselves as poorer compared to the rest of the community than when they first started the program. Lau and Wydick also report on other recent studies on the causal relationship between Christian discipleship and economic development. A 2013 study of the faith-based program of Compassion International found that it increased secondary school completion by 40 percent and the probability of white-collar adult employment by 35 percent among formerly sponsored children.

The writers also cite a forthcoming study, in a book to be published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, of an evangelical church curriculum in Mexico promoting hopefulness and aspiration that was randomly distributed among 732 indigenous women receiving microfinance loans from 52 community banks. The majority of the borrowers were Catholic and about a quarter were Protestant. After a month of using the four-week curriculum, early results suggested “positive impacts on both measures of hopefulness and microenterprise finance performance.” Interestingly, it was Catholic women who showed the most beneficial results, suggesting that they may have been hearing the evangelical message for the first time, whereas the Protestants may have heard it all before. Lau and Wydick conclude by noting that the link between economic development and religious faith is finding a new receptivity—from the World Bank and the United Nations to Max Weber’s home country’s Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation.

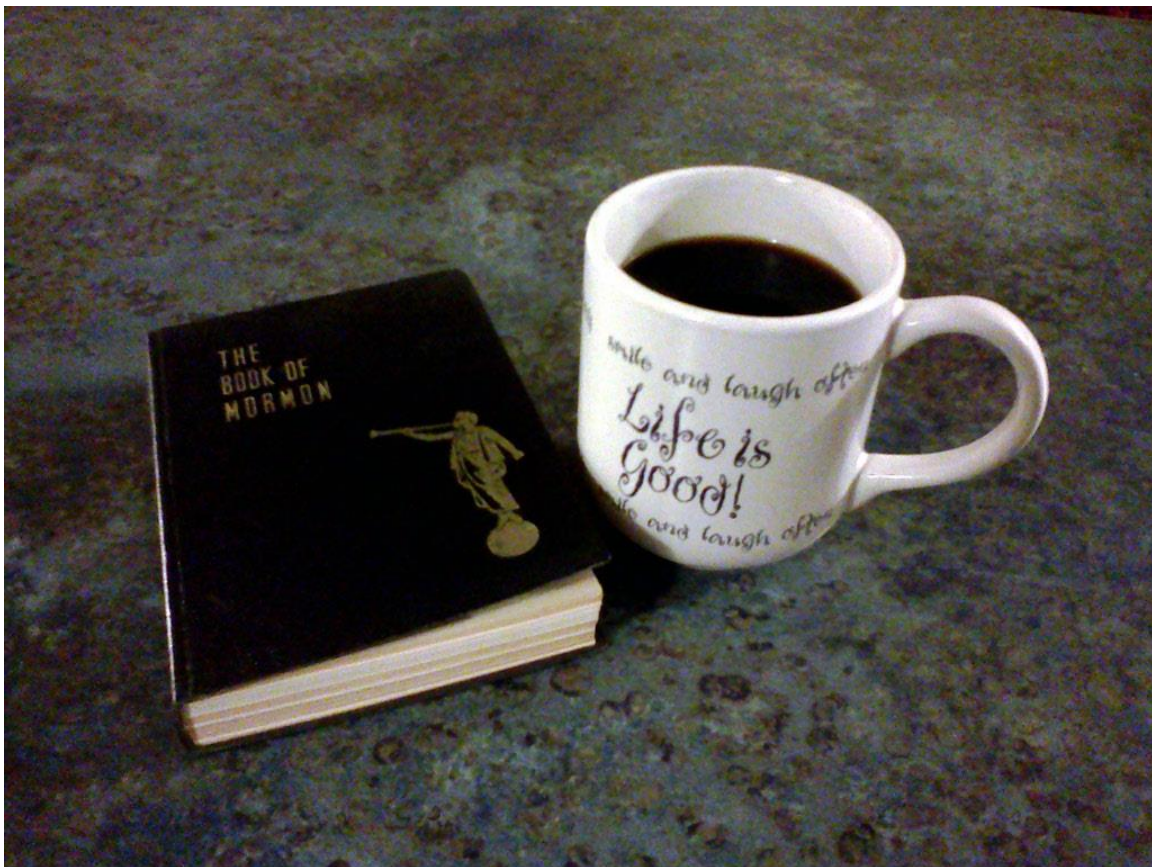
(*Christianity Today*, 465 Gunderson Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188)



ARTICLES

The caffeination (but not necessarily liberalization) of Mormons?

The “Word of Wisdom,” which dictates diet regulations in Mormonism, is not followed strictly by most Latter-Day Saints, with only about half of church members saying they do so, according to a study in the independent Mormon journal *Dialogue* (Spring). The prohibition of such beverages as caffeinated soda and coffee has become a well-known feature of the church even to outsiders. These results are from the Next Mormon Survey, which is an online survey of about 1,700 Mormons and former Mormons based on a “panel matching” technique that is said to be comparable to a representative sampling method. Researchers John Ferguson III, Benjamin R. Knoll, and Jana Riess find that Word of Wisdom adherence plays a smaller part than might be expected in defining Mormon identity. Compliance with the Word of Wisdom is required to obtain a “temple recommend,” which is a prerequisite for participating in temple ceremonies and holding many leadership positions in the church. But “there is no strong consensus among Mormons themselves that Word of Wisdom compliance is essential to ‘being a good Mormon,’” the authors write.



The prohibition of coffee, tea, alcohol, and tobacco has become a well-known feature of the church even to outsiders. Only 37.5 percent of respondents said refraining from drinking coffee or tea is

essential to being a good Mormon. However, 57.2 percent said did say that not drinking alcohol is essential to being a good Mormon. Coffee was found to be the most popular “prohibited substance,” with about one-third of respondents reporting that they drank the beverage in the last six months. The change is reflected in Mormon culture, with caffeinated sodas now being sold on the campus of Brigham Young University, even though these beverages were never officially prohibited by the church. As might be expected, regular attenders were most likely to follow the Word of Wisdom, but the authors speculate that younger active Mormons, who showed less strict adherence to the regulations than other active Mormons, are will be likely to further relax and reinterpret these teachings as they move to positions of church leadership.

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

Spiritual factor widespread but taboo in deviant sexual subcultures

A large segment of those participating in deviant sexual subcultures, such as those involving sadism and masochism, report spiritual experiences from such involvement, even if they are hesitant and self-conscious about using religious or mystical language, according to sociologist Julie Fennell. In the journal *Sociological Forum* (online July), Fennell writes that the spiritual and “pagan” elements in the “BDSM” (bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism) subculture have been largely



ignored by skeptical practitioners and others who are part of the “scene.” Fennell conducted 70 interviews with those she calls “kinksters” as well as analyzing a convenience sample of 1,100 such devotees and found that those most involved in the BDSM scene both showed high rates of atheism and agnosticism while also having a high spiritual interest, often involving pagan beliefs. Forty-seven percent of those showing high involvement in the subculture reported spiritual beliefs compared to only 21 percent of those displaying low involvement.

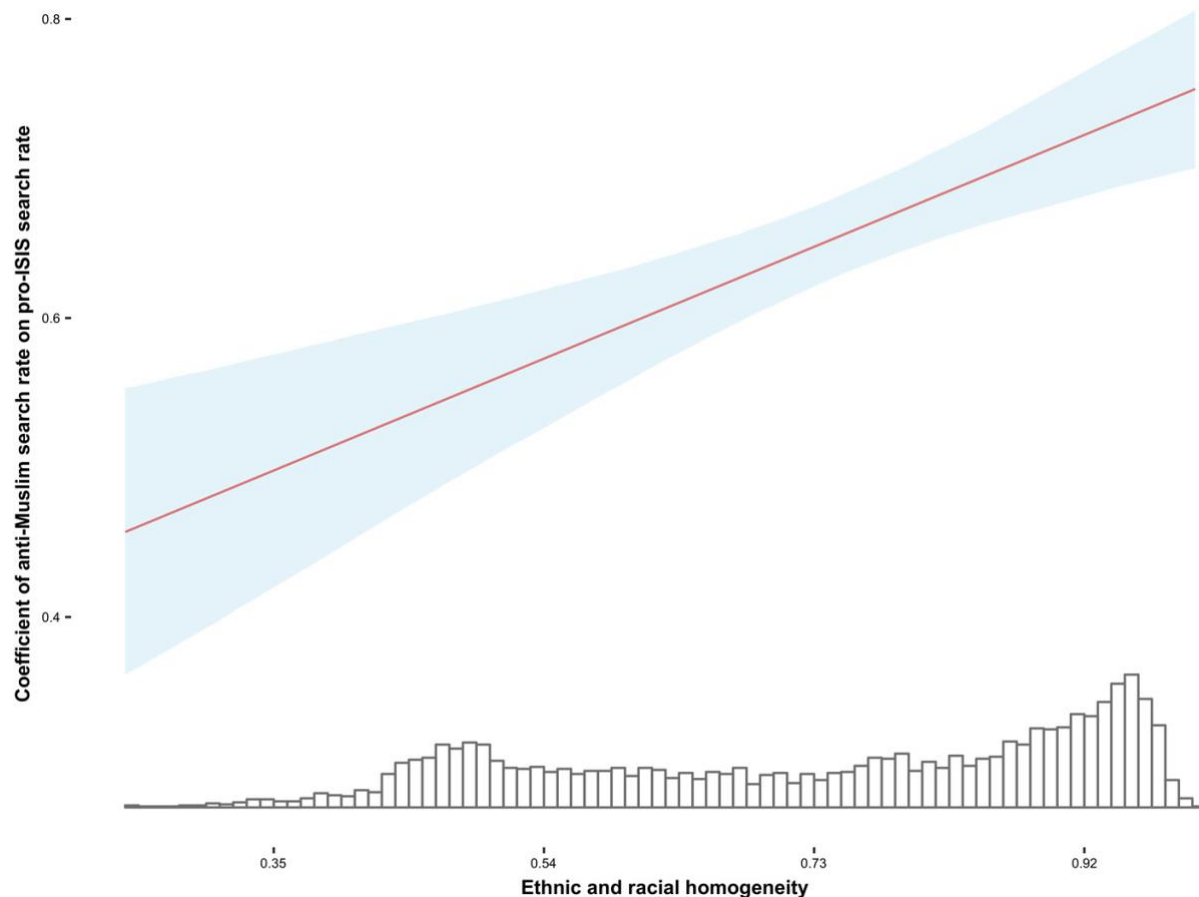
Respondents stated that they felt experiences of atonement and transcendence through such practices. Fennell notes that the “BDSM subcultures and the Pagan subcultures have become heavily entwined,” with the more active participants of the former groups exposed to pagan ideas and practices. While BDSM events were once a part of many pagan gatherings, they have gradually been discouraged because of internal fights about their appropriateness among pagans. More recently, pagan-based BDSM events, such as “sacred body modification tattooing and branding” and Tantric sexual practices, have become part of mainstream BDSM gatherings, though less so

at the smaller parties that kinksters hold. Fennell found that even those with spiritual beliefs expressed doubt and ambivalence about using spiritual or mystical language as it conflicted with their secular and supposedly rational worldviews.

(*Sociological Forum*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/15737861>)

CURRENT RESEARCH

● **Communities showing significant poverty and a lack of ethnic diversity may produce both more anti-Islamic sentiment and more extremist Muslim tendencies, according to a recent**



study in the journal *Science Advances* (June 6). Researchers Christopher A. Bail, Friedolin Merhout, and Peng Ding examine the relationship between anti-Muslim and pro-ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) Internet searches in 3,099 U.S. counties between 2014 and 2016, using instrumental variable models that control for various community-level factors associated with radicalization. They find that searches for anti-Muslim material are strongly associated with pro-ISIS searches—particularly in communities with high levels of poverty and ethnic homogeneity. Although the causal nature of this relationship is difficult to prove, these findings suggest that minority groups may be more susceptible to radicalization if they experience discrimination in settings where they are isolated and therefore highly visible—or in communities where they compete with majority groups for limited financial resources. The authors acknowledge

that many convicted radicals do not cite racial or ethnic prejudice as motivating factors for their behavior. Yet the study has significant implications for counterterrorism and immigration policy, questioning the use of counterterrorism policies that target Muslims more than other groups. Such policies “may make communities more vulnerable to radicalization if they are interpreted as discriminatory or unfair.”

(*Science Advances*, <http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/4/6/eaao5948>)

● **A new study of Pentecostalism in Zambia suggests that this faith energizes interest in politics more than does involvement in other churches.** The study, conducted by Elizabeth Sperber and Erin Hern and published in the journal *Politics and Religion* (online in June), is based on a stratified random sample of 1,500 Zambians. The researchers find evidence that Pentecostals are more likely to report political interests— “a finding that cuts against earlier studies that portrayed Pentecostals as apolitical or focused on other-worldly concerns.” Such political interests include higher rates of voting than other Christians and talking about political matters. But the Pentecostals were also less likely to contact political officials than their peers. The higher rate of dissatisfaction with the government among Pentecostals may be one reason for that reluctance. Sperber and Hern caution that their sample is concentrated in three provinces in Zambia and may



not represent the whole country.

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

ARTICLES

Why are young Finns still attending summer revivals?

While the Catholic World Youth Days with millions of participants have become a feature of contemporary Catholicism, religious youth events on a smaller scale also take place in other churches, for instance in Finland. Togetherness and shared rituals, more than a cohesion of beliefs, are central for young people attending a summer revivalist gathering there, writes Paula Nissilä in *Social Compass* (June). There is a mixture of leisure and fun along with quite unchanged traditions, from which young participants are left free to choose. Like other European countries, Finland is experiencing a decrease in religious participation and membership, but the summer gatherings of the traditional Finnish revivalist movements under the guidance of the mainstream Lutheran Church remain full of vitality. Their continuing importance distinguishes Finland from other Northern European countries. Ten percent of the Finnish population identifies with a revivalist group, and an equal percentage admits being influenced by revivalism. Thus, it is not surprising that 3 percent of the population takes part in the summer gatherings.



Nissilä interviewed young participants who worked as volunteers at a gathering of the (moderate) Awakening Movement and also followed up with post-event interviews. The festival has taken place every year since 1893 and has included a youth program since the end of the 1960s. This has allowed for a youth subculture within the event, along with the creation of a “spontaneous community.” The majority of the participants mentioned their friends as a main reason for

attending. In contrast with those social aspects, only a minority mentioned the religious content of the event. Singing was also mentioned as something important. The break from the daily routine to something more adventurous and the community feeling were clearly enjoyed. While the numerous revival services formed a key component of the gathering, Nissilä remarks that “many of the informants showed a lack of interest”—not that they did not like them and did not sing if attending, but in that they were not the priority, although the occasional appearance of young people hanging around still showed to other generations that the traditions were being passed on. On the other hand, during the youth program the young participants would gather together to sing the hymns, with many of them obviously knowing them by heart. As Nissilä remarks, it remains to be seen what the long-term implications of such continued participation in revivalist summer gatherings will be.

(*Social Compass: International Review of Sociology of Religion*, <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/scpa>)

“Experts” play significant role in labeling religious groups as “extremist” in Russia

The use of academic experts showing little knowledge of or sensitivity for religious peculiarities is a key factor in the classification of a number of religious groups as “extremist organizations” in Russia (such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses in 2017), writes Dmitry Dubrovsky (Center for Independent Social Research, St. Petersburg) in *Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West* (July–August). This approach is rooted in the legacy of the Soviet period, when academic experts were used to confirm that religious dissidents presented a threat to the existing social order. Due to peculiarities of the Russian legal system, expert opinions play a disproportionate role in legal matters, according to Dubrovsky. When it comes to religious groups, not only experts in religious studies have been asked to provide assessments, but also increasingly linguists and psychologists, who mostly show little understanding of the specific nature of religious texts or behavior. Moreover, when it comes to Muslim groups, established imams are sometimes requested to evaluate non-traditional Muslim groups, which makes clear how new religious groups are assessed in comparison to what is understood as normative religion.

Among experts in religious studies themselves, Dubrovsky distinguishes three groups. The first ones—admittedly a “dying species”—are those still following the Soviet model of scientific atheism. The second are those who actually see religions through theological lenses and translate into an academic vocabulary the assumptions of their own religious traditions—and who play an active role in the drafting of expert reports on religious extremism. Finally, there are researchers approaching the issues from an anthropological and sociological angle, and who are inclined to support human rights and religious freedom. Dubrovsky also sees the difficult relations between the last two groups as part of a tension between theology and those religious studies attempting to emancipate themselves as a secular academic field rather than a branch of theology. Two state institutions are especially influential in this field. One is the agency in charge of registration (at national and federal levels), and the other comprises the departments for anti-extremist legislation, which include special departments for fighting against religious extremism. The impression conveyed by Dubrovsky’s analysis is one of heavily textual analyses of religious groups’

documents, frequently without contextualization or knowledge of the life and practices of the groups, leading to severe assessments about extremism or exclusivism. Finally, as Dubrovsky remarks, expertise in religious studies becomes replaced by expertise on extremism.

(*Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West*, Institut G2W, Birmensdorferstrasse 52, P.O. Box 9329, 8036 Zurich, Switzerland - <https://www.g2w.eu/>)



Russia embracing and Europe stigmatizing home schooling

Home schooling is on the rise in Russia, finding support from the Russian Orthodox Church and the government, at the same time that the practice is being restricted in much of Europe, writes Allan Carlson in the conservative ecumenical magazine *Touchstone* (July/August). Carlson reports that the Global Home Education Conference, attracting homeschoolers from 35 nations, was held as a two-city event in Moscow and St. Petersburg. He notes that while Germany, Sweden, and Norway have recently criminalized home schooling, even in some cases jailing offending parents and seizing their children, “Russia has legalized the practice as a recognition of ‘natural’ parental rights.” Prominent members of the Duma attended the conference as they praised home education as the best way to raise “spiritually strong” children grounded in Russia’s Christian heritage. Archpriest Dmitri Smirnov, chairman of the Patriarchal Commission on Family Matters of the Russian Orthodox Church and a popular television host, addressed the gathering, lauding home schooling as recovering a God-given right and as a way for parents to teach their children and build the “image of Christ” within them. (*Touchstone*, www.touchstonemag.com)



Russian evangelicals sharing Putin's Middle East interests

Along with their Orthodox counterparts, Russian evangelicals have shown growing support for Vladimir Putin, especially over what they see as the leader's attempts to protect Middle Eastern Christians from religious persecution, writes Jayson Casper in *Christianity Today* magazine (July/August). When Russia intervened in the Syrian conflict, the action was applauded by Russian Christians—both Protestant and Eastern Orthodox—who have established strong ties to the region's churches. Russians tend to view Syria as an “icon”—a place of veneration. Casper reports that Russian Christians didn't understand American non-intervention in Syria. There is also some “cross-pollination” taking place in this relationship. “Thousands of Middle East Christians went to study in Russia during the Soviet era... They returned with esteem for the nation that enabled their education and played key roles in Middle East business and political development,” he adds.

In the view of many Christians, Russia is playing a balancing role vis-à-vis America's focus on Israel, although many Christians are wary of the way politicians use religion on either side. In a report on Russian developments in the online journal *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* (July), William Yoder notes that evangelical Zionism has been making a comeback in Ukraine and Russia, especially among Pentecostals. The Zionist influence can be seen in how the Euro-Asian Federation of Unions of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, once Moscow-based, has shifted toward a base in Minsk or Jerusalem. The group held its 2018 gathering in Jerusalem and

its new general-secretary is an ethnic Jewish Russian who moved from Moscow to Jerusalem in 2015.

(*Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/>)



Tibetan monks losing vocation under the sway of technology

The growth of technology within a sect of diasporic Tibetan Buddhists is one factor in growing defections among younger monks, according to Malwina Krajewska of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Poland. Krajewska, who was presenting a paper at the Toronto meeting of the International Sociological Association in mid-July, which **RW** attended, studied several Tibetan monasteries in India and Nepal over a five-year period, particularly from the Karma Kagyu branch of Tibetan Buddhism (which is separate from the lineage of those following the Dalai Lama). She found that since these monasteries have accepted lay practitioners, the younger monks have followed a less strict lifestyle. Krajewska observed younger monks streaming videos and taking “selfies,” drinking Coca Cola during pujas, even allowing her to practice sitting meditation along with them.

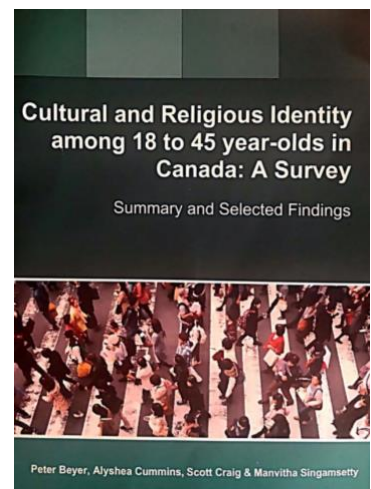
The monks are also putting their ceremonies and rituals online even as they pursue more secular interests, such as following football. The old lamas see this relaxation of the rules as a threat to monastic life. The monks’ new taste of freedom, especially through Internet use and travel, has led to many of them dropping out of the monasteries, Krajewska says. In the monasteries that she studied she found that there has been a narrowing of the number of vows that monks take upon

entering monastic life. By taking fewer vows, the monks can meet and talk with women and find other new opportunities. Much of this change has come under the leadership of the head lama, Gyalwang Karmapa, who has challenged tradition by his openness to technology and, more personally, by marrying several years ago. But Karmapa himself acknowledged that monasteries may close in the future, with the tradition existing in the hearts of only a few monks.



Findings & Footnotes

■ **RW** has cited various results from the *Cultural and Religious Identity among 18–45 Year-olds in Canada Survey*, and now the study (part of a larger project on religious diversity based at the University of Ottawa) has issued its final report. The survey was structured to allow respondents to identify themselves between the shifting poles of “religious” and “spiritual,” using open-ended questions, and it then categorized them as “religious,” “spiritual but not religious,” or “non-religious.” Additionally, it divided the religious into the “standard” type of religious who practiced only one faith and the “moderately” religious, including those who might practice more than one faith and engage in spiritual seeking outside of their own tradition. Interestingly, the survey found the non-affiliated or “nones” in all of the categories, although obviously progressively more in the moderate, spiritual but not religious, and non-religious categories. Over half of the non-religious respondents (about one-fifth of all respondents) identified as atheists (although one-quarter of the non-religious believed in the soul). Generally, the survey found a decline in



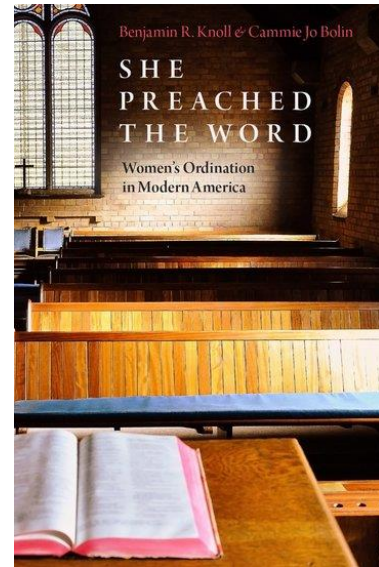
standard religious, an increase in non-Christian religions, and more space given for “indigenous” spirituality. For more information on this report, email: hshipley@uottawa.ca

■ The July issue of *Charisma* magazine suggests how political sympathy has created new alliances between charismatic and conservative evangelical churches in the Trump era. The cover story about Liberty University is a fairly even-handed portrayal of this mega-evangelical university started by Jerry Falwell and then revitalized by his son Jerry Jr. The article by Taylor Berglund portrays the school as being misunderstood and often attacked by secular media, which relentlessly focus on Falwell’s close relationship with President Trump. Liberty students may be conservative in politics, but they are less politically activist and enthused about Trump than they are alleged to be, allowing for at least Republican diversity on campus and the inviting of speakers who are far out of the conservative mold (Bernie Sanders and Jimmy Carter). A separate interview with Falwell by *Charisma* editor and Trump booster Stephen Strang does show how the Trump alliance has healed past theological rifts. Falwell says that his father was never as anti-charismatic as other fundamentalist Baptists and that today Liberty welcomes charismatics and Pentecostals, as there is a “real common thread with social and political issues between charismatics and Baptists.” Falwell goes on to say that his strong support for Trump has become less contested on campus, explaining that most of it came when there were 16 or 17 candidates during the Republican primaries, and was based among Ted Cruz supporters. For more information on this issue, write: *Charisma*, 600 Rhinehart Rd., Lake Mary, FL 32746.

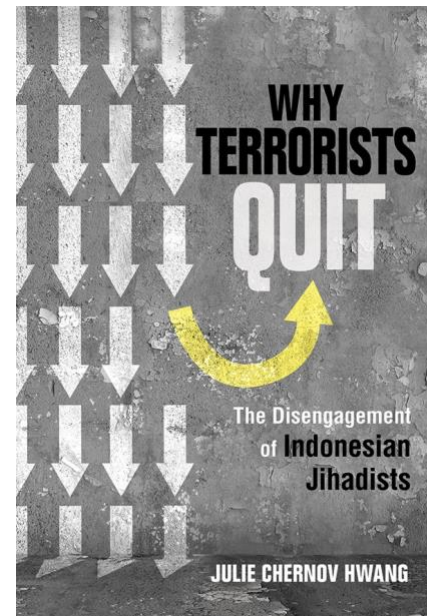


■ Women’s ordination is the main topic of the new book *She Preached The Word* (Oxford University Press, \$29.95), but authors Benjamin R. Knoll and Cammie Jo Bolin also explore women’s roles in churches and how congregants respond to such changes. Much of the book is based on a nationwide telephone and Internet survey of American worshippers, as well as interviews with clergy and congregants. One puzzle the authors look at is the fact that while support of women’s ordination is high—72.3 percent among churchgoers—there is still a strong gender gap in the ranks of clergy in the U.S. and the movement to ordain women has stalled in recent years. When it comes to personal preferences for clergy in their own congregation, clergymen still draw more support than clergywomen. “That less than 10 percent of those who attend religious services in the United States specifically prefer a female leader...may help to explain” the enduring gender gap. Aside from congregational policies and practices, political affiliations and policies may help shift support for women’s ordination in their congregations. Liberals and Democrats are more likely to break with their churches’ policies if they are against women clergy. Women’s ordination can also serve as a “signaling device” that can draw liberals and conservatives to like-minded congregations.

Yet the authors do not find that women-led churches are synonymous with declining mainline churches; in fact, levels of attendance and other religious behaviors are slightly higher in congregations that ordain women and moderately higher for younger women in congregations with a female pastor and priest. Continuing in that vein, the book looks at the effect of having (or not having) female pastors on congregational life and both male and female worshippers. The authors look at whether women who worship in congregations with female pastors or priests (or imams, rabbis, bishops, etc.) show higher levels of spirituality and religious investment than women who have male religious leaders. They find that gender leadership in congregations does make a difference, but it matters less to women whether the pastor or priest is male or female than whether the congregation *allows* women to serve as the principal leader at all. Women who attend congregations with male-only leadership policies are somewhat less likely than women who attend congregations that ordain women to feel a sense of personal commitment and trust in their religious community. Knoll and Bolin argue that policies that give women the *potential* of gender equality are empowering for women, even if the current leader at that moment happens to be a man. In contrast, men are equally as invested and trusting in religious communities that do not ordain women as they are in ones that do.

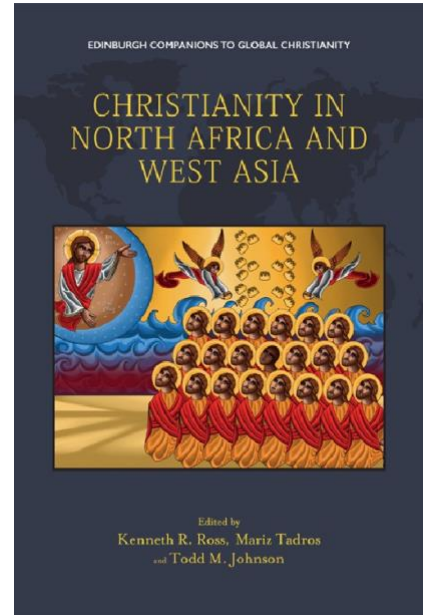


■ The new book, *Why Terrorists Quit* (Cornell University Press, \$39.95), by Julie Chernov Hwang, is especially relevant now that foreign fighters for the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations are returning to their home countries or migrating to new societies. Hwang, a political scientist, conducted over 100 interviews with former leaders and followers of Islamic jihadist groups in Indonesia, tracing how they made their exit from extremist organizations. The author finds that disengagement from jihadist groups tends to take place very gradually and that the accompanying process of reintegration is often just as lengthy. It wasn't just cost-benefit thinking (that violence and extremism did not pay off) that alone accounted for members leaving these groups; rather, the disillusionment usually took place within a social network of other dissenters and disgruntled members. Such social support—usually in the form of new friendships and family—and an “alternate set of loyalties” were necessary in breaking the strong spiritual bonds and “addictive” quality of life in a jihadist group. Because the Indonesian jihadist landscape is so factionalized, always offering a more violent group to join or a way to reengage with these movements, alternative networks are especially important. Hwang argues that her findings apply to other locations besides Indonesia, but the appeal of her book is in her keenly observed case studies of former jihadists who have transitioned to ordinary life.

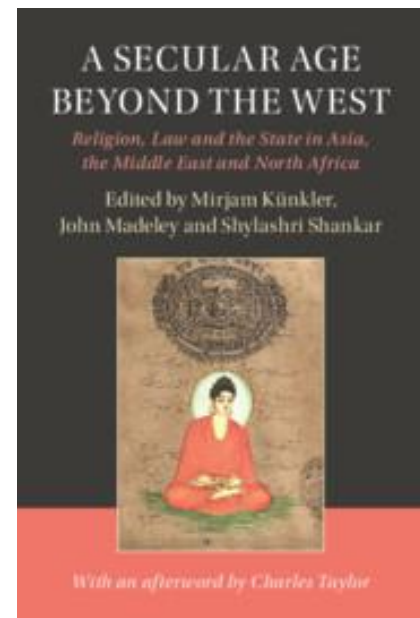


■ *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia* (Edinburgh University Press and Oxford University Press, \$230), edited by Kenneth R. Ross, Mariz Tadros, and Todd Johnson, is the most recent book in a series looking at the global demographics of Christianity (see June 2017 **RW** for the review of the first book of the series on sub-Saharan Africa). The two regions of North Africa and West Asia share a past of churches that were once sizeable and influential minorities (though the term “minority” is still controversial because of the Christian involvement in colonialism). That is no longer the case now (except in Cyprus, Georgia, and Armenia), with signs of Christian extinction showing in Middle Eastern and North African countries, particularly Libya and Iraq. Gina Zurlo reports that Christianity in the region declined from 14 percent at the turn of the 20th century to 7 percent in 1970, to 4.4 percent by 2015.

The largest bright spot is the growth of new Christian communities and multi-ethnic and multi-denominational churches in Gulf countries, such as Dubai, due to the rapid migration of migrant workers and professionals to the area. The expansion of Pentecostalism and house churches—even in Islamic societies such as Morocco, the revival of monasticism (such as in Egypt), and the proliferation of Christian broadcasting stations and social media also reveal how innovation often co-exists with modes of survival and resistance against religious restriction and persecution in these areas. The rest of the book follows a country-by-country format, with concise chapters tracing the Christian presence and its prospects in each society.



■ It has been 10 years since social philosopher Charles Taylor published his massive and acclaimed tome *A Secular Age*, which traced the emergence of secularity in Western Christian societies. To both mark the occasion and extend and critique Taylor’s argument, scholars, mainly from Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, have issued the new book *A Secular Age Beyond The West* (Cambridge University Press, \$120). The book, edited by Mirjam Künkler, John Madeley, and Shylashri Shankar, notes that Taylor himself called for his examination of secular currents in the West to be extended to non-Western societies, and the contributors to this anthology oblige with interesting case studies and analyses of these developments in China, Japan, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Israel, Turkey, Russia, Egypt, and Morocco. The editor’s note that when Taylor discussed secularity, he tended to refer to different expressions of the trend. What he called “Secularity I” was the way different spheres of life (government, law, science, and education) separated themselves from religious authority over centuries, while “Secularity II” can be understood as what Taylor sees as the decline of religious belief and practice. The other category of “Secularity III,” referring to the way that religion has been transformed from a social and communal reality to one where personal choice and self-fulfillment become the overriding values, is more unique to the West.



The contributors struggle to relate these three kinds of secularity to different societies and cultures; as the editors ask, “Can we talk of secularity in environments where religious identity is something not voluntarily acquired but imposed by state policies or social pressures?” In the chapters on Morocco, Russia, Israel, Pakistan, and Iran, authoritarian rule and a strong link between “church and state” have limited pluralism within religions as well in the wider societies. The different trajectories of the establishment and freedom of religion in these countries—influenced by their specific religions and their histories of colonialism—make any easy comparisons with the West difficult. While most of the countries show some signs of Secularity I—the emancipation of law, state, and economy from religious institutions—most of the authors opt for the idea of “multiple secularities” when it comes to the other forms of secularity. In Taylor’s response to the contributors, he acknowledges that Secularity III (which he allows may not even be considered “secularity”) is the most complex trend when applying his analysis at a global level, although he sees signs of it in unexpected places, such as Russia. He adds that he didn’t account for the growth of religious nationalism and mobilization in his 2008 book, but that such currents as the expansion of political Islam and reactions against it, such as Hungary’s restriction of Muslim refugees, challenge his portrait of accelerating secularity.

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

1. **Kopimism**, a new religious movement that grew out of the piracy and anti-copyright movement, has been considered a parody religion, but more recently it has taken on the trappings of an actual religion, or at least a quasi-religion. The movement was started in 2010 by Isak Gerson in Sweden, which was the hub of anti-copyright and piracy activism, as an outgrowth of the Pirate Party, and has taken root in other countries (no estimate is given for membership). The establishment of the Missionary Church of Kopimism—it gained the formal recognition of the Swedish state in 2012—was more of a vehicle to spread the piracy message of encouraging free downloads and the sharing and exchange of information, but the church has gradually increased its religious-spiritual thrust.

While not exactly holding to a supernatural message, the movement does teach that information and data are a sacred and eternal force that moves the world in the “right direction.” The movement has practices and rituals involving copying (sharing files) both online and offline, its own marriage ceremonies, and a moral code known as the four Ks—“Kreativity, Kopying, Kollaboration, and Kwality.” Unlike parody religions, such as the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, Kopimism doesn’t seek to undermine any existing religion, and even encourages borrowing from other religions. Some speculate that the future of the movement may move further along the religious spectrum, with an “emergence of a collective ‘cybernetic spirituality’...wrapped up in transhumanist ideals.” (Source: *Culture and Religion*, 19:3).



2. **GodSquad** is considered to be the first “gamers” church, seeing its mission as bringing God to the gamer community. The Assemblies of God mission church was started in 2016 and has since gained thousands of viewers. The founder, Rev. Matt Souza, sees gamers as a population that skews atheistic and tends to dislike religion. As of July 2018, the church boasts 1,800 committed members and Souza’s streams draw roughly 4,000 total viewers each week, according to Twitch analytics. Souza estimates that about 10 new congregants join every seven days. The pastor streams for hours every day in addition to giving a weekly sermon, letting viewers watch while he plays games and also fields questions about Jesus and Christianity. He also promotes ethics among his congregants, such as how to be Good Samaritan gamers: “Don’t get too ‘salty’ when you die in a game. In multiplayer games, always thank your teammates for their efforts. Don’t curse. Don’t play *Grand Theft Auto*—too much sex and needless murder.” The church also moderates chat rooms where gamers can discuss personal problems and have someone pray with them.

(Source: *Washington Post*, July 27)

