

Vol. 33, No. 12**October 2018****FEATURE STORY:****Religious leadership takes on new roles in post-Arab Spring, Islamic State Middle East**

Religious leaders of all faiths in the Middle East underwent a dramatic shift after the Arab Spring and the rise of the Islamic State, taking on greater public roles that extended beyond their communities and dealt with matters of security and governance, while also losing clout among their followers. That is the conclusion of most of the articles in a special issue of the journal *Sociology of Islam* (6:2) devoted to religious authority in the contemporary Middle East. In the introduction to the articles, Mehran Kamrava of Georgetown University writes that after the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, sectarianism among most religious groups in the region became more predominant, especially in the case of conflict between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. He points out that, the greater the state's power and capacity and the less united the religious hierarchy have been, the more likely the state's attempt to incorporate religious institutions within itself. Yet because of the more hostile environments within which leaders find themselves, "religious leadership has only become more centralized, and its role and significance more critical to the overall health of the community, especially among minority religious groups such as the Zaydis, Yazidis, Baha'is, Maronites, Chaldeans, and others."

In another article, Albert de Jong writes that while the role of religious leaders as dispensers of elite knowledge and guardians of traditions had already been in decline with the growth of higher education among the laity, the waves of unrest that have recently swept over the Middle East have sped up this process. These disturbances, "in conjunction with large-scale displacement [of religious minorities], which has weakened the crucially important ties most of these communities maintained with their physical surroundings—with their rivers, tombs of holy people, and similar *loci* of religion—make the future of these communities highly uncertain." Another article on religious minorities suggests that the leadership of the Yezidis, a mystical group active in Iraq, has better withstood the forces of modernity than have native Christian groups, although the toll of attacks and displacement by the Islamic State makes their future precarious. A similarly dire forecast is made in regard to the future of the leadership of Syria's 'Alawis, an esoteric quasi-

Islamic sect that has been seen as a pillar of the Asad regime, although these leaders (shaykhs) have traditionally not been politically active. Leon Goldsmith of Sultan Qaboos University notes that the cooptation of the ‘Alawi religious leadership by the Asad regime has been an “instrument of regime maintenance since 1982.” This has divided the religious leadership between the traditional and the regime-appointed leaders. The standards of shaykhs have deteriorated as regime loyalists have been appointed to leadership positions, and they have lost respect and independent status in their communities. Goldsmith concludes that the “growing corruption and opportunism creeping into the ‘Alawi religious class at the expense of traditional shaykhs bodes poorly for the future of religious leadership as a positive agent for political transformation and stability in Syria.”

Mark Sedgwick of Aarhus University looks at the authority of Sufi shaykhs and orders in the Middle East and finds that the lack of establishment status in this mystical branch of Islam has actually put it in a position of new influence. He notes that there is a paradoxical inverse relationship between the influence of a Sufi shaykh and the size of his or her order: powerful shaykhs tend to run small orders, while larger orders may be so disorganized that leaders have weak influence (as seen in the 2011 uprising in Egypt when a Sufi shaykh promised to deliver hundreds of thousands of protestors but only a handful of followers showed up). Sufi shaykhs have in general lost much of their former social influence with the growth of stricter forms of Salafi Islam and the growth of state power, but that also means that the former is being seen as a popular alternative to the latter case of political Islam. The growing trend of “Traditional Islam” (using “tradition” in the esoteric sense of the term) is one sign that Sufi Islam will carry its own kind of social and political influence in the region, Sedgwick concludes.



The articles on Sunni and Shi'a religious leadership are generally more upbeat than those dealing with religious minorities. In Iraq, Ayatollah Sistani has become renowned in Shi'a Islam for modeling a form of religious leadership that has proven to be highly adaptable in the face of the challenges of globalization, as he wields authority not only among followers but on a political level. Meanwhile, Tamara Sonn of Georgetown University argues that Sunni religious leadership and authority among Arabs is not lacking or failing, even if it changes and diversifies. Such "political Islam" has shown it can survive clashing views among its leaders. "The most popular of those voices, as demonstrated by their survival despite repression and, in some cases, electoral successes, include both traditionally trained scholars and a new breed of authorities with less formal religious training. But they share terms of reference in their discourse, including insistence that Muslim communities, at the very least, have the right to be governed by laws of their own choosing."

(*Sociology of Islam*, <https://brill.com/view/journals/soi/soi-overview.xml>)

ARTICLES

"Bishops vs. everyone else" overshadows right-left Catholic split

The decades-long split between liberal and conservative Catholics may be giving way to a stronger division between Catholic laity and their bishops in the wake of reports that members of the hierarchy covered up for priests and fellow bishops engaging in sexual abuse, writes John Allen on the Catholic website *Crux* (September 30). He asks: "are we seeing a redefinition of the traditional left/right divides in the Church because the focus of popular complaint is no longer really teaching, one of the three traditional duties of a bishop, but rather governing?" He acknowledges that it is simplistic to suggest that left-right conflicts are dissipating; the election of Pope Francis has served to intensify controversy and polarization on questions of sexuality, marriage, capital punishment and Church teachings in general. It is also the case that conservatives and liberals tend to differ on how to approach matters of priestly sexual abuse, with the former arguing for a tougher line on homosexuality in the priesthood.

But Allen adds that there has been a shift in emphasis, as the "questions that matter today are why it should be exclusively up to a bishop where a priest serves, and whether he should remain in ministry; whether bishops can be truly trusted to exercise sound fiscal oversight; why bishops get to decide which church records are made public...; and, in general, whether the practice of styling bishops as the ultimate decision-makers has served the Church well." Another reason for the fading of liberal and conservative divisions is that the abuse crisis has affected both camps; offenders have been found to be both staunch upholders of Catholic doctrine and those arguing for a more relaxed approach to Church teachings. Allen notes that this is bad news for the bishops, since with the left-right divisions on politics they could at least count on one side supporting them; today,

with the shift to “bishops v. everybody else on governance, it’s hard to know who, exactly, their natural allies might be.” Even as bishops have increasingly delegated Church management to competent administrators, they see their right of governance “as a red-line issue, and they can be expected to defend it. As the saying goes, now they may just find out who their real friends are.”

(*Crux*, <https://cruxnow.com>)



Lay Scientologists take up apologetics, public relations

Although observers have predicted the near-demise of the Church of Scientology under the influence of Internet critics and activists who have targeted the leadership over scandals and abuses, the church has largely weathered these attacks, with its members increasingly involved in publicity efforts to spread the faith, writes Donald Westbrook in the journal *Studies in Religion* (47:3). The church in the mid-2000s was besieged by online activists such as Anonymous, whose multiple attacks on its leaders effectively disabled the usual church response of taking legal action against critics, not to mention the equally damaging impact on the church of former leaders and ex-members taking to the media to air their grievances. But Westbrook notes that while there may have been some members leaving as a result of these attacks, the church has continued to gain recruits and keep old ones, with members reporting more annoyance than antagonism from the protests. What has changed is that members are increasingly taking public relations, recruitment, and apologetics into their own hands, even as the church leadership retains a strategy of attacking

(if no longer legally) and discrediting critics. The author cites a grassroots effort of members starting blogs and other webpages defending the church that are not necessarily linked to church headquarters. One site promoting parenting from a Scientology perspective has moved into a public relations mode of including posts on disconnection and brainwashing.

One noteworthy case of a member independently conducting public relations for the church is EricRoux.com, the website of a minister of Scientology's Celebrity Center in Paris, who also serves as the church's chief spokesperson and interfaith activist in Europe. But Roux also runs his website and Twitter feed independently of the church, where he reposts blog entries and videos of interviews he conducted with the French media. This strategy may dovetail with a concerted attempt to reach out to non-affiliated Millennials (or "nones"), as seen in the church's advertising during the Super Bowl appealing to the "rebels, the artists, the freethinkers and innovators." The church apparently is targeting those for whom traditional religious institutions seem irrelevant and unappealing, but they are likely thinking more of the "spiritual but not religious" rather than atheistic, anti-religious segment of the nones. In fact, the nones are viewed as ideal potential members since they will not have the baggage of former affiliations that has served as an obstacle to members' accepting distinctive Scientology teachings as they move "up the Bridge [advance within the religion] to Total Freedom." Westbrook finds that the church's second and third generation members have not been shielded from the Internet campaigns and attacks against the church and say that such

antagonism has made them stronger in their beliefs as Scientologists. He concludes that such younger members may use the "culturally bilingual sense [whereby] children of Scientologists, including second generation Sea Organization [elite level] members, are familiar with popular culture as well as with the peculiarities of Scientology's theology and ecclesiology."



(*Studies in Religion*, <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/sir>)

Occult practitioners build their brands on the Internet, with some struggles

Occult practitioners are moving from part-time avocational interest to professional work as they ply their trade in the spiritual marketplace on the Internet, writes Karen Gregory in *American Behavioral Scientist* (online in September). Gregory looks specifically at how Tarot card reading has shifted from being a face-to-face practice one might do for spiritual fulfillment alongside holding a job to a new form of self-employment. While the Internet facilitates this professional turn in Tarot card reading, Gregory finds that many women readers are drawn to commercialize and digitalize their work to compensate for the lack of other employment. In interviews with Tarot card readers in New York, she finds that while face-to-face connections and referrals remain a vital component of these practitioners' lives and livelihoods, "social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter and blogging...play a strong role in facilitating self-employment. In addition to helping establish a digital presence and, in some cases, a digital brand, these platforms also work to network readers to one another," promoting the notion that "lucrative, self-employed Tarot work is possible."



Gregory found a good deal of competition among Tarot readers over presenting an ideal brand that would give them a good reputation among clients, but that they also tended to struggle to translate older business models to the web. She calls the readers "reluctant entrepreneurs," since their work online and off is beset by issues of access to and knowledge of the latest technology to keep them competitive. Such professional struggle has led Tarot card readers to rely on greater assistance, support and guidance from others, finding "validation from the community" as they engage in training workshops and other mentoring services. Often the turn to professionalism (what is known as "getting real" and finding one's "true" brand) "can look like digital conformity to normative aesthetics." The impetus to present one's life and spiritual practice as a "perfect accomplishment"

online is met with hostility and criticism as readers struggle with material concerns and professional failures.

(*American Behavioral Scientist*, <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/abs>)

Remnant Church emerges as bearer of Mormon restoration

With its headquarters close to the Independence Temple and the headquarters of the Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or RLDS), the Remnant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has emerged as the most organized of the groups born out of opposition to developments within the RLDS church and hopes to lead the cause “to revitalize and renew the early tenets of Mormonism,” writes historian Casey Paul Griffiths (Brigham Young University) in the *Journal of Mormon History* (July). Since the 1970s and 1980s, a number of RLDS faithful became suspicious of what they saw as a liberal and ecumenical turn of their church, sacrificing the distinctive teachings and beliefs of their religious tradition. The 1984 revelation allowing women to be ordained to the priesthood was seen as a clear break—“as a culminating symbol of all the changes initiated by the RLDS leadership over a decade.” The RLDS renamed itself and subsequently moved closer to mainline Protestantism. After years of meeting in small, loosely organized groups, the would-be founders of the Remnant Church faced their inability to reverse the course taken by the Community of Christ. Concluding that the RLDS leaders had lost authority, in 1999 twelve church leaders issued a proclamation that would eventually lead to the Remnant Church, seen not as a new church, but as a continuation of the movement started by Joseph Smith, Jr. A descendant of Smith, Frederick N. Larsen, was accepted as a prophet in 2002 and has led the Remnant Church since.

The presence of a prophet has allowed the Remnant Church to add several sections of revelations to the *Doctrine and Covenants*, one of the LDS sacred texts (partly different in the LDS and RLDS traditions). Its claim to the shared historical legacy of Mormonism has also been made clear by the acquisition of a building next to the Temple lot in Independence, where three LDS denominations have a physical presence, the largest one there being the Community of Christ. Griffiths describes the Remnant Church as “both a revitalization and retrenchment movement” holding conservative family values. Along with other early Mormon principles, such as the “law of consecration,” the



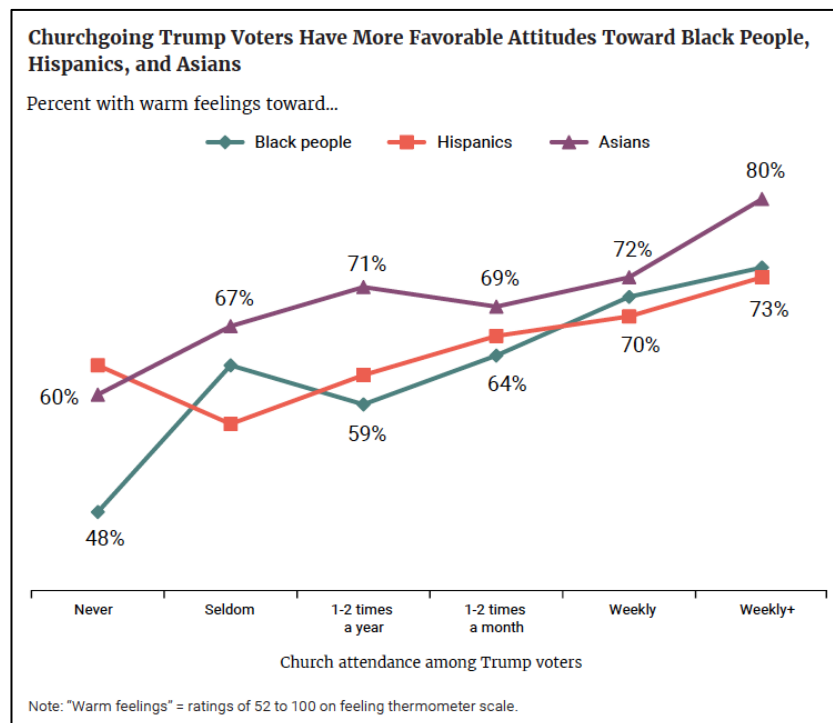
building of a temple in Jackson County (MO) is emphasized, although the understanding of what temple worship should be is still evolving. In 2015, the Remnant Church had nearly 3,000 members worldwide. Beside it, there are several other RLDS offshoots, such as the Conference of Restoration Elders and the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches, but efforts to bring them together have failed. According to Griffiths' assessment, with aging leaders (the current prophet was born in 1932), a main challenge for the Remnant Church will be to find new leadership.

(*Journal of Mormon History*, Mormon History Association, <https://mormonhistoryassociation.org>)

CURRENT RESEARCH

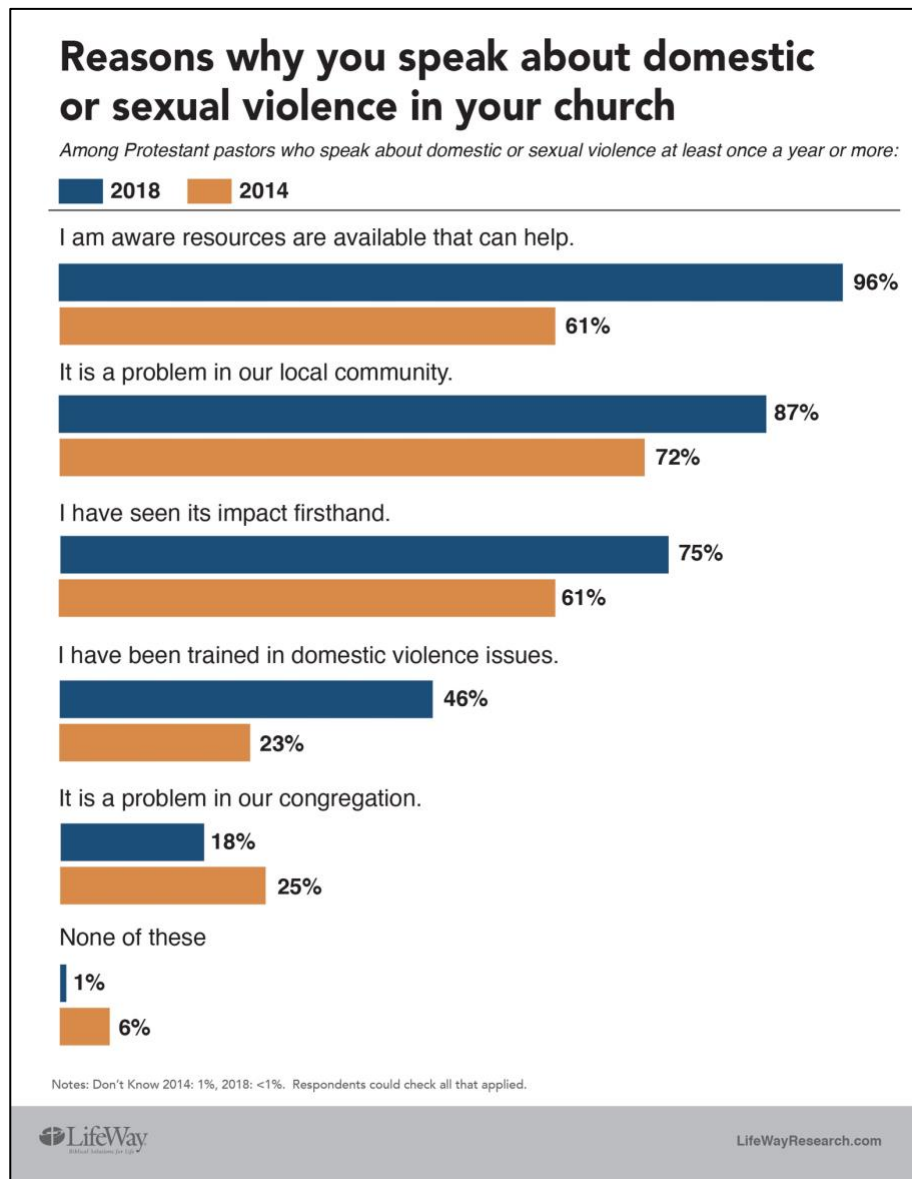
A new survey finds that divisions based on religion remain within the Republican Party almost two years after the election of Donald Trump. The survey, conducted by Emily Ekins for the Voter Study Group, finds that regular church attenders who voted for Trump over Clinton still tend to hold different views than his more secular supporters, and that the more devout segment of the GOP is still less enthusiastic about Trump, scoring lower on populism on economic issues and on “authoritarian” and “tribal” values on questions of race and identity. The voters' views were analyzed based on their frequency of church attendance (from “never” to “weekly” or more often). It was found that the more frequent the attendance, the less “white-identitarian” they appeared, the more they expressed favorable views of racial minorities, and the less they agreed with populist arguments on trade and immigration.

(This study can be downloaded at: <https://www.voterstudygroup.org/publications/2018-voter-survey/religious-trump-voters>)



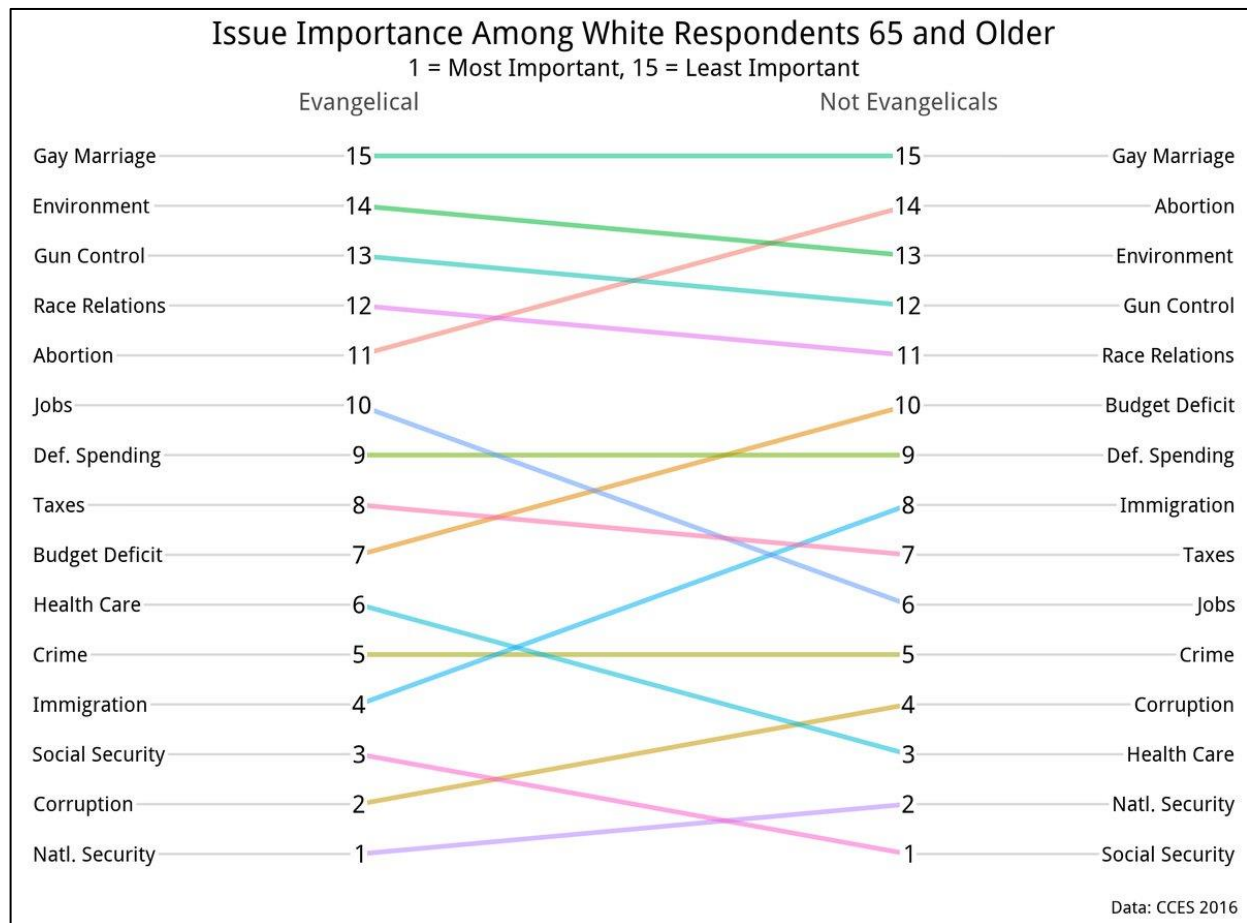
Protestant pastors are addressing issues of domestic and sexual abuse and harassment in fairly large numbers, according to a study by LifeWay Research. The research firm surveyed 1,000 pastors by phone during the summer of 2018, as the #MeToo and #ChurchToo (the Christian counterpart to #MeToo) movements dominated the news. The survey found 51 percent of Protestant pastors saying they speak to their congregations about the issues at least several times a year, compared with 34 percent in 2014. Almost two-thirds of the pastors surveyed both this year and four years ago said that domestic or sexual violence occurs in the lives of their congregants. There was an uptick from 2014 to 2018 in both the number of pastors reporting having experienced domestic and sexual violence themselves and the number reporting knowing a loved one who had experienced this violence. Eight in 10 said they know someone who has experienced domestic or sexual violence, an increase from 74 percent in 2014.

(This study can be downloaded at: <https://lifewayresearch.com/?s=sexual+harassment>)



A study by political scientist Ryan Burge shows that older evangelicals are less activated by traditional social issues, such as gay marriage, gun control, abortion, and taxes, than are younger evangelicals (including Millennials). In the blog *Religion in Public* (September 10), Ryan Burge analyzes the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study and finds fewer differences between younger and older generations of evangelicals than are usually claimed. What stood out, however, is how many of the culture war issues do not move retired evangelicals. The issues that they care about the most are national security, corruption, social security, immigration, and crime. For older white non-evangelicals of the same age group, immigration is the eighth most important issue, compared to older evangelicals rating it the fourth most important. Because older respondents of any religion put immigration fifth on their list of concerns, it is not necessarily the case that the issue stands as a special threat to older evangelicals.

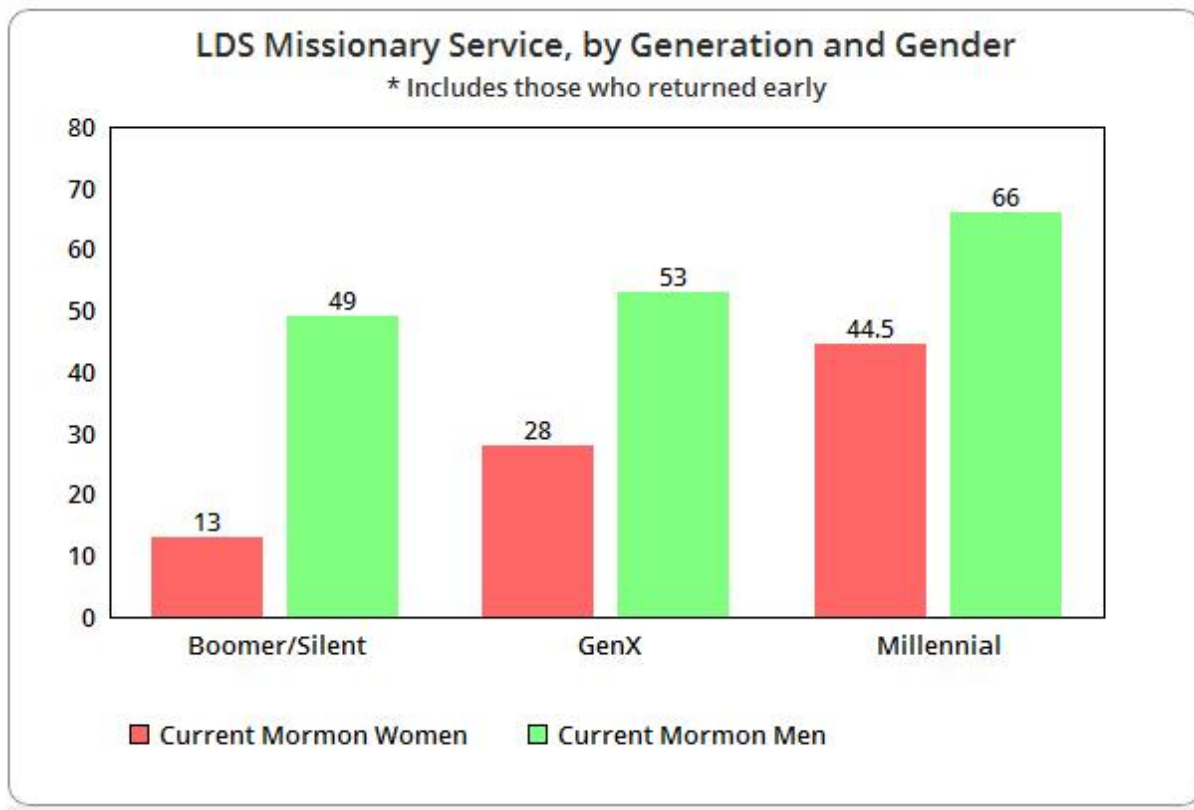
(*Religion in Public*, <https://religioninpublic.blog/2018/09/10/retired-evangelicals-care-a-lot-about-immigration-less-about-gay-marriage/>)



A study of Mormons who go on the yearlong spiritual missions required of young people by the LDS church finds both positive attitudes about the experience and a more recent pattern of early returns. The Next Mormon survey found that the majority of those going on church missions say they had a positive experience, even if they came home early. “But those early returns are increasing. In our study, we did not have a single Boomer/Silent respondent, male or female,

who had returned early from a mission. This was the ‘don’t come home early unless it’s in a coffin’ generation. By the time we get to the Millennials, it’s nearly one in five,” writes Jana Reiss in her blog for *Religion News Service* (September 26). And of Millennials who actually went on missions (rather than the generation as a whole), fully one-third came home before their assigned time. These early return missionaries did not experience a loving welcome when they came home earlier than expected. Nearly six in 10 respondents in a Utah Valley University study said their wards were unfriendly or indifferent, and nearly half said their local church leaders treated them poorly (though fewer than one-third experienced such a reception in their own families). The rate of early return is slightly higher among women than it is among men, a finding that stands out, since the rate of missionary service has grown especially among women, more than tripling from Boomer/Silent women (13 percent) to Millennial women (44.5 percent).

(This study can be downloaded at: <https://thenextmormons.org/>)



The growth of short-term missions has been influenced by the presence of immigrants in churches and is having a strong effect on building transnational ties, according to a study in the journal *Sociology of Religion* (Fall). Short-term mission (STM) travel is practiced by over one-quarter of all American churches annually, as members travel abroad to engage in ministry and social service projects with sister churches in countries in the global South. Researchers Gary Adler and Andrea Ruiz of Penn State University analyze data from the third wave of the National Congregations Study and find an “immigrant effect” in churches involved with STM, with about 30 percent of such travel taking the form of “civic remittance in which recent immigrants and their U.S. congregations aid foreign communities.”

Most congregations engaging in STM trips are evangelicals, while non-evangelical churches and traditions show a low level of such involvement. But the presence of immigrants in mainline Protestant churches also increased the likelihood of engaging in STM (even if it did not have an effect on non-Protestant traditions). Nearly one-third of STM travel came from congregations with recent immigrants, suggesting that the “transnational flow of immigration is connected to the flow of STM travel.” The authors conclude that, “while large relief and development organizations visibly dominate the portrait of religious transnational civic engagement, our research shows how a decentralized form of civic engagement is produced at the congregational level....”

(*Sociology of Religion*, <https://academic.oup.com/socrel>)



ARTICLES

Orthodox Church and culture sector clash over property restitution in Russia

Since the 2010 law allowing for the restoration of church property in Russia, competing interests continue to battle over just what its implementation means for the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). This can be seen in the recent request of the ROC to take ownership of the UNESCO-protected 12th-century Golden Gate in the city of Vladimir, a request opposed by officials and

locals who consider it an important part of local identity and not a religious monument, according to a report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (August 18). Currently owned by the Culture Ministry, the Golden Gate indeed includes a small church, but one that was not used during most of the long history of the building. Moreover, since the end of the Soviet period of enforced atheism, the museum complex has been willing to allow the church to conduct services on its grounds under its control. Usually, when the ROC applies for a monument that was used for religious purposes, it is able to get it back. But some museum curators are critical of the consequences, claiming that access to such monuments subsequently becomes more difficult, taking them off the tourist map.

Moreover, the curators say that the ROC does not take proper care of such monuments, citing the instance of the famous wooden Uspensky Church in Northern Russia that had been given to the ROC in 2017 and burnt down last August. Art history experts are concerned that some important frescoes might be damaged if the full cycle of services and a constant flow of pilgrims burning candles inside the buildings would return to such places. They also stress that a number of significant buildings returned to the ROC are in a poor state of maintenance (*Nachrichtendienst Östliche Kirchen*, September 6). According to those voices, such buildings should stay under the protection of the Culture Ministry. In St. Petersburg, the St. Isaac Cathedral was given back for use by the ROC while remaining state property and still serving as a museum—with the city in charge of maintenance costs. Across Russia, there are other important monuments currently claimed by the church. While museum curators are asking for adjustments to the 2010 restitution law in order to better guarantee the protection of cultural monuments, the legal service of the Moscow Patriarchate held a seminar in July at the Yaroslavl Theological Seminary regarding the application of the 2010 law (*Patriarchia.ru*, July 14).



Ukrainian Orthodox Church autonomy likely to strain Orthodox, ecumenical relations

The move of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (EP) toward granting autonomy (or autocephaly) to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church will likely have global repercussions for Orthodox churches and beyond, according to recent reports. On September 7, an EP announcement stated that, “within the framework of the preparations for the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine,” the Patriarch had appointed two exarchs (legates) in Kyiv, Archbishop Daniel of Pamphilon (USA) and Bishop Ilarion of Edmonton (Canada)—to the anger of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP). A week earlier, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow had paid a visit to Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople in an attempt to prevent such a move. The desire of sectors of Ukrainian Orthodoxy for independence from the Russian Orthodox Church is not new and has been strongly connected to national aspirations. During the Soviet period, Ukrainian Orthodox groups had organized abroad and some of them came under the authority of the EP. In 1990, they supported sympathizers in Ukraine who organized a Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church.

Moreover, after Ukrainian independence in 1991, part of the established Orthodox Church in the country decided to form its own autocephalous church, while the MP granted autonomous status to those large segments of Orthodox clergy and faithful who remained under its jurisdiction. Thus there are now three Orthodox bodies in Ukraine, but only the last one is recognized by worldwide Orthodoxy, although this would change with the granting of autocephaly by the EP. The MP warned that such a move would lead to a break of communion and possible schism (*Orthochristian.com*, September 9). The EP claims that, as the mother church of both Ukraine and Russia, it never relinquished its rights on Ukraine to the MP, while the MP claims that Ukraine has been part of its canonical territory for centuries and accuses Constantinople of ignoring historical reality. Moreover, it sees the EP as attempting to create for itself a role similar to that of the papacy.



As an immediate measure, any joint celebration between bishops of the MP and bishops of the EP was suspended. Repeated statements from EP representatives present the decision to grant autonomy as irreversible. The only uncertainty is the time that it will take. If communion is broken between the two patriarchates, it would be difficult for other Orthodox churches to keep a neutral stand. While immediate repercussions in the home countries of Orthodox churches would be limited, the impact on Orthodox communities established in other countries around the world would be a major setback. Inter-Orthodox organizations and assemblies of bishops from different jurisdictions would probably stop functioning. In addition, the ecumenical partners of Orthodox churches would face difficulties, even if they are careful to stress that Ukraine is an internal Orthodox issue. At the worldwide ecumenical level, if the new autocephalous Ukrainian Church recognized by Constantinople would apply for membership in the World Council of Churches (WCC), one does not know how the MP would react and if it would leave the WCC, in which it represents the largest Orthodox body (*Tribune de Genève*, October 1). In the background of these conflicts are political allegations that the EP is acting as a supporter of U.S. policies toward Ukraine and that the MP is an extended arm of Russian attempts to keep control over Ukraine.

Hindu nationalism presents kinder, gentler face

The Hindu nationalist organization that helped bring Prime Minister Narendra Modi to power is “attempting a makeover to soften its image ahead of next year’s national elections,” writes Joanna Slater in the *Washington Post* (September 21). The main Hindu nationalist group, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), recently held an unprecedented three-day event where its leader Mohan Bhagwat sought to counter criticism that he heads a chauvinistic and divisive organization. He claimed his group supported a vision of India that encompasses religious minorities as well as




RSS critics. Slater writes that the event is part of a “continuing campaign by the RSS to move from the fringes of public debate in India toward the mainstream. Among the audience in the cavernous conference hall were not only RSS members but diplomats, journalists and activists skeptical of the RSS.”

The unusual outreach event came at a time when the RSS is facing mounting criticism from India’s opposition parties. Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the Indian National Congress recently compared the RSS to Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, saying that it is trying “to change the nature of India” and “wants to capture its institutions.” Under the Modi government, there have been instances of killings and assaults — mostly of Muslims — by vigilante “cow protection” squads seeking to punish those who harm cattle. Slater adds that “[m]embers of groups affiliated with the RSS have also boasted of their ability to attack Muslims with impunity and claimed Muslims who marry Hindus are engaging in ‘love jihad.’” The outward goal is to “portray the RSS as a more benign organization,” said Walter Andersen of Johns Hopkins University. The RSS is slowly changing some of the fundamental elements of its rhetoric, according to Badri Narayan, a professor at the University of Allahabad. “We have to see how much they are going to implement these new ideas in action,” he added.

Druze religion sees youth disaffection

The Druze religion is facing a pattern of defection and inactivity among its young people, according to *The Economist* magazine (September 21). The approximately one million members of the Druze are spread across Israel, Lebanon, and Syria, but the esoteric religion does not proselytize and only accepts members whose parents are both Druze. The faith is marked by a two-tier structure. The “uqqal” receive religious training and can read and understand Druze sacred texts, with men in this category donning black robes and women wearing white veils. Most members are “juhhal” who are largely uneducated in the faith and respect and follow its dictates even if they do not interpret the scriptures themselves. Although only anecdotal, Druze leaders and activists report a downturn of involvement by the younger generations.

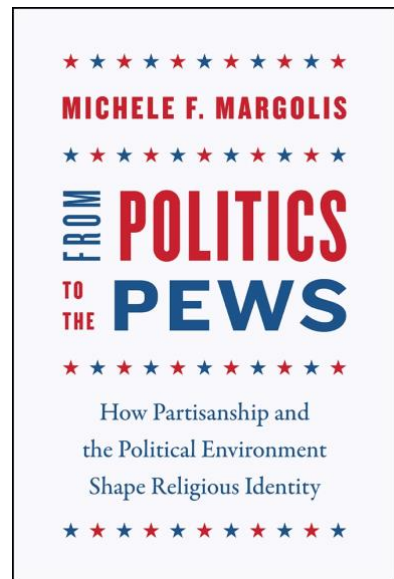


In the past, even if a young person “did not know the ‘mystery’ of the Druze religion, he would still follow the rules and limitations imposed by the sheikhs. However, with the penetration of knowledge, information, and education into our villages, young Druze are believing less.... They challenge all the prejudices that were imposed on us as kids,” says Amir Asad, a young Druze activist. But Mowafaq Tarif, the spiritual and political head of the Israeli Druze, says

that recent protests that members have made against a law in Israel that emphasizes the Jewish character of the state have boosted their standing in the eyes of youth and convinced some to return to the faith.

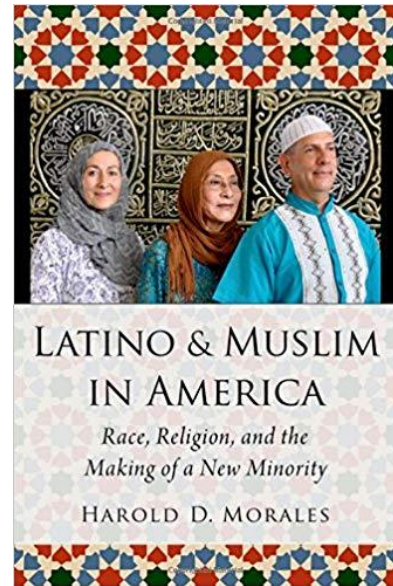
Findings & Footnotes

■ The idea that religious beliefs and worldviews shape political orientations is challenged in Michele Margolis' provocative new book *From Politics to the Pews* (University of Chicago Press, \$32.50). Margolis argues that it is in the formative periods of young people's development that they take on partisan political beliefs and identities, and that these shape people's religious views and actions, a theory that has broad implications as to why Americans seem so divided religiously and politically in recent years. Most political scientists studying the effects of religion on politics have focused on the way religious leaders and fellow believers in congregations give members explicit and implicit messages about what kinds of political positions and actions they should take. Using longitudinal data that studied political and religious involvement among baby boomers over a period of 30 years, more recent surveys of voting behavior (2007–2014), and small-scale survey experiments that measure more sudden political changes, Margolis seeks to show how during the life cycle people are shaped by their political environments that drive religious change.



As religious institutions became more closely associated with distinct political positions, these linkages either drove people further from or closer to religion. In other words, politically driven Democrats distanced themselves more from religion as religious institutions became friendlier to political conservatism—a finding that is not new and has been used to explain the growth of the non-affiliated in the U.S. But more novel is Margolis' finding that politically driven Republicans became more religious during this period. Of course, this implies that politically involved voters of all stripes are aware of the religion's place in party politics. She finds that both Democrats and Republicans with low political knowledge were not affected religiously and that what is called "religious sorting" (into affiliated and non-affiliated camps) occurs predominantly among those with moderate to high levels of political knowledge. While acknowledging that religious efforts to affect politics can be effective, they are best done to mobilize already politically convinced believers rather than to persuade the unconvinced or undecided. Margolis concludes that the process of many Democrats' and Republicans' "updating" aspects of their religious attachments in response to politics may mean that today's sharp cleavages along political lines will be difficult to "unsort." Even if the political parties moved closer on religious issues, political identities tend to be stable and formed early and only the younger generations would experience the narrowing of the "God gap."

■ *Latino and Muslim in America* (Oxford University Press, \$34.95), by Harold D. Morales, looks at the history and current situation of Hispanic converts to Islam, observing that they find themselves in the dilemma of being a minority within a minority in America's religious and racial landscape. The book acknowledges that there are no firm figures on the number of Latinos who have become Muslim, with estimates ranging from 52,000 to about 200,000, but Morales sees them playing a greater role in American Islam and in some ways following the trajectory of Hispanic Protestants as they depart from a Catholic identity. The identification with Islam among Hispanics is marked by a similar disenchantment with the Catholic Church and quest for a personal and intimate faith that rejects the close fit between religion and Latino culture and racial identity. Yet the stories of conversion—or “reversion” as new Muslims often call their turn to Islam—that play a prominent role among Latino Muslims and are similar to evangelical “testimonies,” are not necessarily culture-free; many of them see the Hispanic turn to Islam as following in the tracks of Islam's flowering in early Spain and in the social justice movements that have marked their history in the U.S.

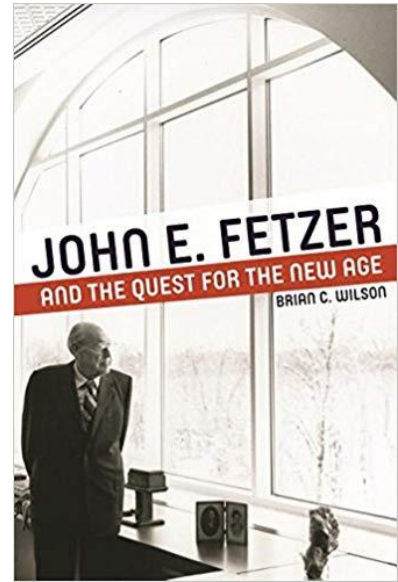


Morales sees the Latino embrace of Islam as coming in three waves. The first one took place in the 1980s, mainly among Puerto Ricans, under the influence of the organization Alianza Islamica, which sought to link social service to Islam and translated Islamic texts into Spanish. The second wave in the 1990s brought Latino Muslims more into the American Islamic mainstream, as they tried to work with non-Hispanic Muslim groups (and faced considerable rejection on that front) and put more emphasis on disseminating Islam over the Internet, with less attention to social service (although gender issues became more prominent). After 9/11, concerns were voiced about suspected extremism within the community, especially after some Latino Muslims took part in Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. Some of these concerns were expressed by Latino Muslims themselves, as seen in the tensions surrounding popular rapper Hamza Perez and his portrayals of inherent conflict between Islam and America. The public interest in the apparent anomaly of Hispanic Muslims, as shown in Morales' analysis of media accounts during the time of these conversions, has only grown in recent years. In the current third wave of Latino Islam, new organizations with a sharper activist edge and using sophisticated technology have sprung up, along with an attempt to unite Hispanic Muslims with the formation of the pan-Islamic group LALMA. Morales concludes that Hispanic Muslims are wrestling even further with their status of being considered a dangerous minority within a dangerous minority after the 2016 election, facing anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic attitudes.

■ That individual spiritual and religious routes can often reflect wider aspirations and trends is clearly illustrated in the case of John Earl Fetzer (1901–1991), a successful entrepreneur in Michigan, who was a radio and television executive, but also the owner of the Detroit Tigers baseball team for more than 20 years. Fetzer had deep spiritual interests, which inspired him to establish the Fetzer Institute in 1962. Written by American religious historian Brian C. Wilson (Western Michigan University), with the support of the Fetzer Memorial Trust, the new book *John E. Fetzer and the Quest for the New Age* (Wayne State University Press, \$34.99) focuses on the businessman's diligent and at times dizzying spiritual search. The book starts with Fetzer's childhood in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Later, however, his mother joined

the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in which Fetzer was actively involved for several years—it was at Emmanuel Missionary College that he built and ran the first radio station in southwestern Michigan. Having developed doubts about Adventism, he left the church around 1930, but would keep the idea that there are genuine prophetic individuals as well as the millennial idea that radical transformations would occur soon. Wilson also links his persistent interest in the connection between health and spirit to aspects of Seventh-day Adventist health beliefs.

Fetzer would no longer earnestly join any religious organization, although he affiliated formally with the Presbyterian Church for business reasons. But, besides business, he would devote significant efforts throughout his life to spiritual pursuits. This would start from 1934 with visits to Camp Chesterfield, the most important Spiritualist camp in the Midwest. Mediums, spiritual healing and divination would continue to fascinate him throughout his life. As Wilson observes, Spiritualism would provide “a gateway to other metaphysical ideas and movements”—definitely not a unique case. Wilson goes on describing Fetzer’s interest during the same period in Freemasonry, Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, and especially the Theosophical legacy with the “I AM” movement and the work of Alice Bailey. “Theosophical or Theosophically inspired literature would continue to be some of his favorite reading.” Since Wilson had access to Fetzer’s own library, he could assess the depth of his interest by Fetzer’s markings in books. From the 1950s, Fetzer’s interests also extended to unorthodox science, i.e., UFOs and the paranormal. Fetzer started to articulate his own worldview in texts he wrote in the 1960s and 1970s.



The influence of ancient wisdom traditions, but also of New Thought and positive thinking, is obvious, as well as his certainty that a new age “lies immediately ahead,” with mighty transformations for mankind and the turning away from dualism. His books were not widely distributed, but meant for family and friends. In the 1970s, the Fetzer Foundation supported parapsychological research, and in the same decade Fetzer started practicing Transcendental Meditation, met its founder Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and discovered *A Course in Miracles*. In the 1980s, an aging Fetzer became interested in channeling and John-Roger Hinkins’ Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness (MSIA), practicing its spiritual exercises to the end of his life. During that decade, the Fetzer Institute would also increasingly turn to funding research on holistic health care. Following John E. Fetzer’s “transition,” the Institute has diversified its work and put more emphasis on promoting a practical spirituality. Wilson describes Fetzer as “the consummate *bricoleur*, sampling many spiritual traditions, accepting some of their elements and rejecting others, all in the attempt to create a worldview that would work for him.” And Fetzer’s “intellectual trajectory hit nearly every mark on the road to the New Age,” even if he may also have renounced the label had he lived longer, Wilson concludes.

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

The **Nuns and Nones** project attempts to bring the non-affiliated and Catholic sisters into dialogue, activism and social reflection together. While “nones” are a growing and youthful segment of the American population and Catholic nuns are aging and declining in numbers, the project maintains that the two groups share a common social outlook and a concern to translate these values into action. The project is an outgrowth of How We Gather, a Harvard Divinity initiative that explores how Millennials are building communities of meaning outside of religious institutions. Nuns and Nones gatherings are valued by nones, who are involved in social activism but who look to the sisters with their decades of social action experience who are able to sustain themselves spiritually. There is little attempt to recruit for vocations to the diminishing ranks of nuns in these encounters; rather, the emphasis is on learning about the contributions each group can make to each other. The future plans of the group include focusing on immigration and climate change and also exploring the creation of a community where nuns and Millennials can live together. (Source: *America*, September 17).

