

Vol. 34, No. 3**January 2019****2018 religion marked by pressures for reform and schism**

*The issues and trends in religion most visible in 2018 did not originate in that year but actually had germinated for decades. Still, 2018 carried enough bad news to convince religious leaders of difficult times ahead for religious institutions—from the continuing disaffection of young people to divisions over social and political issues in the contentious Trump era. As with previous years, the following review draws on past issues of **RW** and other sources to look at trends that unfolded in 2018 and their possible shape in the years ahead.*

1) The issue of sexual abuse in its various forms has continued to represent an uncomfortable challenge to most institutions, with the #MeToo movement—launched through social media in October 2017—adding more fuel to the fire with a variety of non-religious targets that subsequently extended to religious organizations, from prominent megachurches to new religious movements. The Roman Catholic Church has been at the forefront of the crisis, especially with charges of sexual abuse suffered by minors and a steady flow of new revelations about the complicity of bishops covering up abuse cases. A “Letter to the People of God” released by Pope Francis in August linked sexual abuse to wider ecclesiastical issues, stating that “To say ‘no’ to abuse is to say an emphatic ‘no’ to all forms of clericalism,” while the Pope himself was criticized by Cardinal Vigano for allegedly having protected Cardinal McCarrick. A summit of the bishops for discussing the problem of clerical sexual abuse will take place at the Vatican in February. Other religious groups have also continued to experience turmoil, for instance several Buddhist groups dealing with allegations of sexual misconduct mostly toward adults. In September 2018 a report was released detailing serious “physical, sexual and emotional abuse” by Tibetan lama Sogyal Rinpoche, who had withdrawn from the leadership of his network of Rigpa centers the previous year. “There are huge cover ups in the Catholic church, but what has happened within Tibetan Buddhism is totally along the same lines,” according to author and journalist Mary Finnigan, quoted in *The Telegraph* (September 9).

2) Since the death of evangelist Billy Graham last year, there has been speculation about his successors in the field of mass evangelism. Many observers have concluded that any such

successor—more likely successors—will come out of a different mold than Graham, given the fragmentation of evangelicalism and the rise of social media. One approach is team-based evangelism, with the charismatic Send movement being a noted example. The Send movement is built around an event of the same name to be held in February in Orlando, where lay missionaries will be commissioned to evangelize their own neighborhoods, cities, and schools. The movement is the brainchild of Lou Engle, who has for nearly two decades led mass events known as TheCall that organize youth to pray for revival. Engle is working with such major mission organizations as Youth With A Mission and prominent charismatic megachurches including Bethel Church to run this evangelist-training movement, according to *Charisma* magazine (January).

3) Last year saw the Orthodox Church coming very close to a serious schism. While tensions between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Patriarchate of Moscow have for years been difficult at times, as evidenced by the non-participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Pan-Orthodox Synod gathered in Crete in 2016, few would have predicted that the situation would escalate so dramatically around the issue of Ukrainian autocephaly. To the applause of the Ukrainian government, Constantinople lifted sanctions against the leaders of two independent Orthodox bodies advocating autocephaly for a national Ukrainian Church, stated that Ukraine was a territory under its canonical authority, and announced that autocephaly would be granted after a unification council of bishops supporting Ukrainian ecclesiastical independence convened. That gathering finally took place in December, and the granting of autocephaly is expected in January. The Russian Orthodox Church broke ties with Constantinople unilaterally and forbade its faithful from taking Communion in churches under Constantinople. Russian Orthodox leaders claim that Constantinople is playing a U.S.-sponsored game of weakening Russia. Supporters of Constantinople answer that a core issue is the Russian Church's failure to understand the specific role of Constantinople ("the Ecumenical Patriarchate") as a primate and worldwide center of unity for the Orthodox Church. (See the November issue of **RW**)



4) In September a provisional agreement was signed between China and the Holy See. While negotiations had been going on for a long time between the Chinese Communist authorities and representatives of the Catholic Church, such an agreement was far from certain in the climate of hardening Chinese policies toward religions of recent years. While both sides certainly think that they are acting in their best interests over the long term, assessments about the agreement and its timing are mixed in Catholic circles. Some feel that the part of the Church that remained faithful to Rome is being sacrificed, while the excommunications of those bishops belonging to the so-called “Patriotic Church” (loyal to the government) who had been ordained without permission from Rome have been lifted. At the Pope’s request, two bishops of the underground Catholic Church have already agreed to step aside in favor of formerly excommunicated bishops. According to the agreement, while the Pope will continue to have the final say, new bishops for Chinese dioceses will be proposed to the Vatican by the Chinese government. In the meantime, some new arrests of Catholic clergy not approved by the Chinese government have been reported.

Pastor-centered, independent fundamental Baptists feel abuse scandal

Fundamentalist Baptists are facing their own sex abuse crisis, propelled by their churches’ pastor-centered model of leadership, according to an in-depth report in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (December 9). The eight-month investigation by the newspaper found that “For decades, women and children have faced rampant sexual abuse while worshipping at independent fundamental Baptist churches around the country. The network of churches and schools has often covered up the crimes and helped relocate the offenders...” The paper uncovered at least 412 accusations of sexual misconduct in 187 independent fundamental Baptist churches and their affiliated institutions, spanning 40 states and Canada. One infamous case is that of Dave Hyles, son of Jack Hyles, founder of the flagship First Baptist Church of Hammond, Ind., who has faced numerous allegations of molestation and rape but never been criminally charged. The report found that 168 church leaders were accused or convicted of sexual abuse against children, with at least 45 of the alleged abusers remaining in ministry after allegations had surfaced. While there is no official count of independent fundamental Baptist churches, an online directory compiled by a pastor in Maine lists more than 6,000 of these congregations in the U.S., as well as churches in countries such as Nicaragua and Germany.



Although they operate independently, these Baptist churches are often linked through church-affiliated colleges (often founded by prominent pastors), such as Hyles-Anderson College, Golden State Baptist College, and Bob Jones University. Reporter Sarah Smith writes that pastors use their connections in this informal network to help abusers find new churches. She found that many of the churches identified in the investigation were clustered in the Southeast and Midwest, with the most being in North Carolina (17) and Ohio (12). A common thread in the allegations against these pastors is that they operated with little oversight and with an authoritarian style that allowed little questioning of their leadership. Many of the churches, which were among the fastest growing congregations in the 1970s and '80s, are separatist in nature, having left the Southern Baptist Convention not only for its supposed liberalism but also because of denominational oversight as they openly challenged Baptist traditions such as pastoral accountability to deacons. Smith adds that sexual abuse survivors from these churches have started Out of the Shadows, an online support group.

(*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*,

<https://www.star-telegram.com/living/religion/article222576310.html?fbclid=IwAR0oGaM4TqS6TK-gO2Cohf85b11RsqpXsisB0adDlrReoC5DP8feGsqbshk#topicLink=fundamental-baptist-abuse>)

Millennial Sikhs show vitality on elite level, lagging influence in congregational life

American Sikhs of the millennial generation are pioneering new human rights and political groups and are highly literate when it comes to Sikh teachings and rituals, but their influence has yet to be felt on the local congregational level. That is the conclusion of a series of articles on Sikh millennials in a special issue of the journal *Sikh Formations* (December). Millennial Sikhs are the first generation brought up without the memory of Sikh conflict in India and the subsequent waves of immigration to the West. Instead, they are more influenced by the impact of 9/11 and their backgrounds of American upbringing by immigrant parents who attempted to inoculate them from losing their faith and traditions through establishing schools associated with their *gudwaras* (or congregations). Charles Townsend writes that such training has made the millennial generation well-versed in the sacred musical and performative practice known as *Gurbani kirtan*, making them capable of performing all the rituals that a *granthi* (leader of the *gudwara*) does. Yet the younger generation, especially its elite members, have instead channeled their energies into online and home-based religious practice, political activism, and a concern with fighting discrimination. One young Sikh leader, Simaran Jeet Singh, has gained a following by stressing how a “divine force” brings people together under an umbrella of spirituality, equality, and service —drawing on the formative influence that *Star Wars* has had on this generation by even using the phrase “May the force be with you” in talks.

In another article, Pashaura Singh writes that the most successful millennial Sikh anti-discrimination effort has been a campaign to allow Sikhs in the military to practice their faith, including wearing the turban and other religious symbols. The small swords that Sikhs carry have been reinterpreted from being signs of militancy to fighting for social justice. Sikh millennial elites have lined up on both sides of the political aisle. Some took pride when Sikh prayers were recited

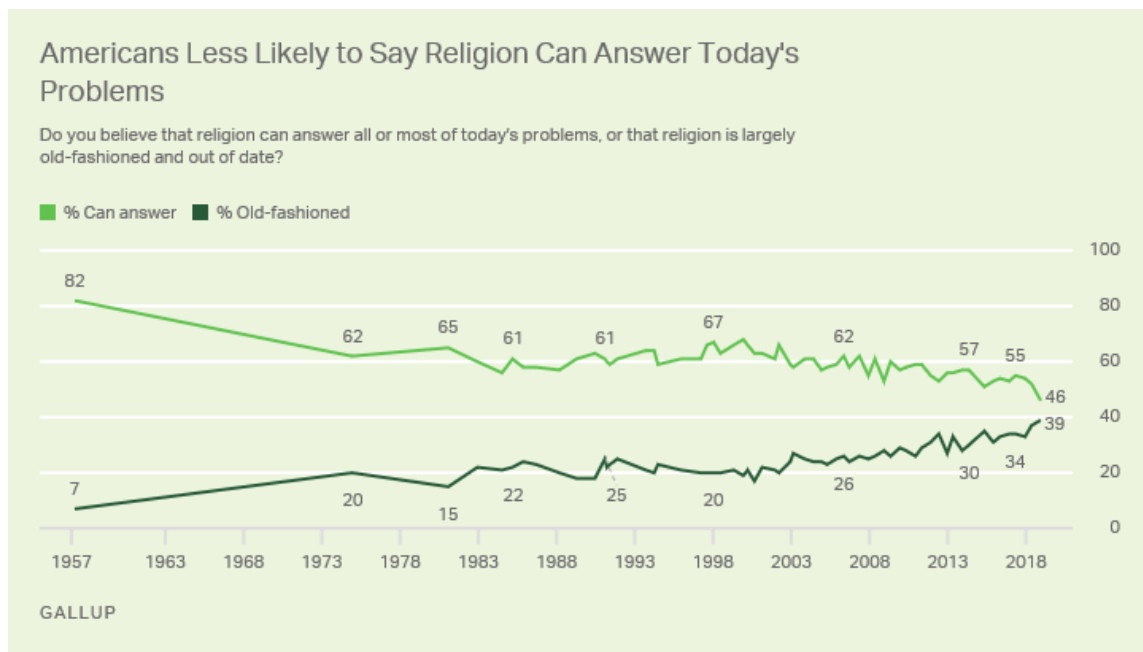
at the Republican National Convention in 2016 and when Nikki Haley, who is of Sikh background but publicly identifies as Christian, was nominated as U.S. Ambassador to the UN. Singh writes that these Sikh millennial elites have “followed the method of ‘pick and choose’ from the received Sikh tradition and presented universal Sikh values in such a way that will make sense to a large majority of people from Judeo-Christian backgrounds in North America.” But these elites, and many Sikh millennials in general, have not sought to gain entry to leadership in gurdwaras—not yet catching up to other religious traditions where the second generation has made its mark on congregational life. Leaders consist of Indian nationals and older immigrants where Punjab is still the standard language, and the sharp growth of gurdwaras in recent years (to about 400) has been marked by factionalism and politics—all factors that turn off millennials, who tend to stress cooperation. Other trends that Singh cites among millennials include a growth of women in Sikh organizations and a growth of Sikh martial arts.

(*Sikh Formations*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rsfo20/current>)



CURRENT RESEARCH

● **A record low number of Americans say that religion can serve as an answer to “all or most of today’s problems,” according to a new Gallup poll published in *The Hill* newspaper (December 24).** The survey found just 46 percent of respondents to say that religion could solve all or most of the world’s problems. It marked the first time in more than six decades that less than half of Americans responded that way. Meanwhile, 39 percent said that religion is “old-fashioned and out of date.” Americans’ perspectives on the issue are predictably divided based on how frequently they attend church, according to the poll. The poll found that 81 percent of people who attend church weekly say religion can answer today’s problems, while 58 percent of people who attend infrequently call church old-fashioned.



● **Youth who live in counties with a higher population share of Catholics are less likely to use marijuana, according to a study in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (online in December).** The study, conducted by Fanhao Nie of Valdosta State University and Xiaozhao Yang of Murray State University and based on analyses of the National Study of Youth and Religion, the U.S. Census, and the Religious Congregations and Membership Study, looked at the predominant religion of a geographic context (the “moral community”) rather than one’s individual religion in affecting one’s use of marijuana. In looking at population shares without considering the moral culture on the county level, being Catholic actually is positively associated with marijuana use, while such use is negatively associated with Protestant population share. The researchers add that the “Catholic contextual effect on marijuana use is diffusive, an outcome that influences almost everyone sharing the same geographic location regardless of individual Catholic affiliation.” Nie and Yang speculate that the negative association between Catholic population share and marijuana use may be related to the generally safer environment in Catholic counties, with lower crime rates and more law enforcement officers per capita. Since the study was based

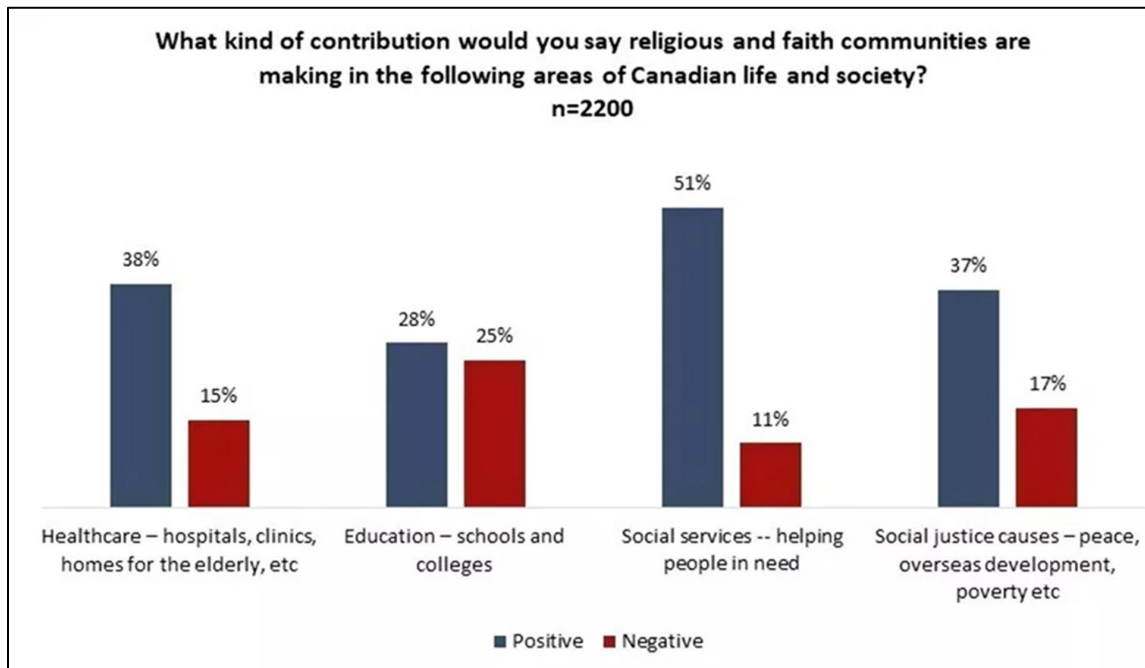
on 2012 data, it could be the case that the Catholic effect has been weakened by the growing legal and personal acceptance of marijuana use.

(*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/14685906>)



● **Although viewed as a secular country approaching European levels of secularity, a recent study finds significant Canadian support for religion in public life.** The survey, called “Faith in the Public Square” and conducted by the Angus Reid Institute, found 59 percent of Canadians saying that the free expression of religion in public life makes Canada a better country. Done in partnership with Cardus, a nonpartisan, faith-based think tank, the survey asked 2,200 Canadians 17 questions about their openness to faith in both their own life and the public square. It found that proponents of increased faith in public life tend to be younger, more highly educated and more likely to have voted Liberal—the equivalent of the Democratic Party in the United States. Angus Reid, chair of the institute, said the finding was notable, but understandable. “Millennials are more accepting of almost everything,” he said, noting that they are also more open to LGBTQ people and to seeing Canada accept more refugees. An outlier to these findings is Quebec, where the role of religion in public life is viewed much less favorably. “Looking at Canada, one could get the feeling it is on an inevitable march to secularism, like in Europe, but that might not be the case,” Reid said.

(The survey can be downloaded at: <http://angusreid.org/faith-public-square/>)



● **Contrary to stereotypes, Muslim-majority nations are “likely to be leaders rather than laggards when it comes to free-market institutions and policies,”** writes Indra de Soysa of Norwegian University of Science and Technology in the journal *Politics and Religion* (online December). De Soysa conducted a study using an Index of Economic Freedom, based on a time-series, cross-sectional dataset that now includes 150 nations. The researcher looked at countries where 50 percent or more of the population was affiliated with one religion. The results showed mixed effects, “with majority-Muslim countries sometimes even outperforming the Protestant countries and other Christian groupings.” Actually, majority-Protestant nations had a negative association with limited government and free trade, two important parts of the Economic Freedom Index. While legal security and property rights were more highly regarded in Protestant nations than Muslim nations (particularly in regard to property rights for women), the latter nations supported economic freedom in every other component area, including access to sound money, freedom to trade, and lower business regulation. “Moreover, religiosity in my analyses show positive, not negative effects, both independently and conditionally with the population share of both Protestantism and Islam,” de Soysa concludes.

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



● **For Western Muslims, Sharia law is becoming more “ordinary” and less a legal system that runs parallel to existing legal systems, according to a study in the journal *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* (December).** Researchers Adam Possamai, Selda Dagistanli, Bryan S. Turner and Malcolm Voyce conducted ethnographic interviews with 50 Muslim legal professionals in Sydney, Australia, and New York City to explore their experiences with Sharia. Much of the current debate over Sharia has been stalled over the prospect of “group-based loyalties that depart from citizenship and national allegiance.” While Sharia is not officially recognized in the U.S. or Australia, it was found to inform the ideas and practices of these Muslim professionals in various ways, even as they remained “underground.” The researchers found that informal, community-based Islamic tribunals were already active in deliberating on a host of issues affecting the Muslim communities beyond the domain of the formal legal system, including disputes between parties, family law matters involving marriage, divorce, and child custody, and financial matters.

The New York respondents tended to be more positive about Sharia family law and to support a more community-based view of Sharia in general than their counterparts in Australia, while the Sydney interviewees were more positive about Sharia-compliant finance and held to a more formal system. The authors speculate that this difference may be because Islamic finance has received

recent positive media coverage in Australia. Most female respondents in both cities did not agree that Sharia treats women unfairly, though they acknowledged that they faced more difficulties in achieving equality with these laws. But the researchers note that Sharia practice was embedded in the respondents' everyday life, as they saw it as a flexible body of teachings that could be adapted to different contexts. They conclude that, "for Muslims in these two cities, the everyday life of Sharia is common and ordinary and tends to work along with this non-Western law within the existing system rather than in parallel."

(*Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cicm20>)



ARTICLES

Bolsonaro's rise showing Brazilian evangelical strength and Catholic division?

Evangelicals in Brazil played a significant role in the election of hard-right President Jair Messias Bolsonaro, writes Filipe Domingues in the Jesuit magazine *America* (December 10). Bolsonaro, who took office on January 1, ran a religion-themed campaign that resonated with Brazil's evangelicals. On social media, the candidate indicated that God had special plans for him and his people—a sign of which was his surviving an assassination attempt last September. According to Magali do Nascimento Cunha of the Methodist University of São Paulo, Bolsonaro's campaign, which borrowed Donald Trump's message of restoring greatness to the nation, struck a chord with both conservative Catholic and evangelical voters. Domingues writes that he attracted voters who

resist “ideas that are associated with the political left—offering more rights to L.G.B.T. people, normalizing abortion, revising the concept of family and redistributing private property.”

But Catholics in Brazil are almost equally split between the political right and left, with many concerned both with such social issues as the rights of the poor and with traditional values, as reflected in the agenda of the National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil (CNBB). While the Catholic Church did not endorse any candidate and the CNBB remained faithful to Pope Francis’s views, Nascimento Cunha observes that “conservative Catholics have shown themselves quite comfortable with some leaders that have shown explicit support to Bolsonaro. Some of them even repudiate the leadership of the C.N.B.B....The Catholic Church is experiencing a crisis in Brazil, a division that has always existed but which now appears within the perspective of this new government.” Meanwhile, as with his American counterpart, Bolsonaro has moved quickly to appeal to his evangelical base. *Charisma* (January), a magazine strongly in the “pro-Trump” camp, reports that the Brazilian president's first promise is to join the U.S. in relocating its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

(*America*, <https://www.americamagazine.org/>)



European churches inoculating Christians to resist far-right surge?

European churches are having an unexpected impact on turning back the influence of far-right populist parties, especially in Germany, writes Tobias Cremer in *Religion and Global Society* (December 20), a blog of the London School of Economics. Surveys have found that Western Christians have been more “immune” to voting for far-right parties in Europe than less religious

people, but there has not been much exploration of why this is the case. Cremer focuses on the recent elections in Bavaria, Germany, where the Christian Social Union (CSU) party won its lowest share of the vote since 1950 (37 percent), with 54 percent of the deserting voters saying they had done so because the party had “given up on its Christian convictions.” Yet these voters did not switch to the far-right AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) but instead voted for the left-wing Green party. The AfD had made many statements about Germany’s Christian heritage and “Judeo-Christian identity,” but it consistently scored lower among Catholic and Protestant voters than among the unaffiliated. In light of this, it is not surprising that the CSU’s recent attempt to copy the AfD’s politicization of Christian symbols by ordering the display of crucifixes in public buildings as an assertion of Bavaria’s cultural identity ended up receiving little support from voters.

Cremer argues that one overlooked factor behind the religion gap when it comes to the far right is that “Germany’s mainstream churches have been able to erect a powerful social taboo around voting AfD. Thus, by positioning themselves clearly in the pro-immigration camp, demonstrating at AfD party conferences...or by excluding AfD politicians from speaking at the national church days...affection for the new right is associated with significant social costs among church members. And since Germany’s church-friendly constitutional system endows the churches with a comparatively high social status throughout society, such measures also matter beyond the practicing flock.” He adds that similar dynamics can be seen in countries such as France, Austria, and Italy. “By contrast, in countries where churches are less outspoken, such as the US or Poland, or in regions where the churches are institutionally less powerful, the ‘religion gap’ appears to be much weaker or is limited to frequent church-goers.”

(*Religion and Global Society*, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety>)



Turkey seeing a rise in young people rejecting Islam

Although the current Turkish government is supportive of Islam, various observations confirm a trend among a number of young Turkish people of rejecting institutional religion and turning either to deism or to atheism, writes Mucahit Bilici (City University of New York) in the *Middle East Report* (Fall). He quotes a Muslim professor of philosophy at a university in Istanbul, to whom several young women reportedly confided that though they continued wearing their headscarfs they had actually become atheists. Bilici explains that the current Muslim elites in Turkey were convinced that they would be able to raise a “pious generation” after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002 and continued to get wide support since then. But the reality is one of “an internal collapse of religiosity among the new generation of pious Turks.” Apparently, not a few of them are disappointed with the moral failure and perceived hypocrisy of those who are supposed to represent Islam, including politicians. Moreover, now that the pressure of state secularism has disappeared in Turkey, a number of parochial Islamic preachers and leaders feel free to express eccentric views that are seen as embarrassing to young, intellectual people (and even to the regime itself, actually).

Such reports have displeased religious and political leaders. The initial reaction of religious authorities was to reject the very existence of such developments or—not untypically—to attribute them to foreign conspiracies, although the trend is clearly indigenous. Subsequently, however, the existence of the problem was acknowledged, although a consultative body that gathered in September 2018 argued—while conceding that youth were drifting away from religion—“that deism belongs to a European context and as such cannot be found in Turkish society.” Bilici remarks that this is a grassroot phenomenon of organic secularization, in contrast with the state-enforced secularizing attempts of previous decades. The use of Islam by politicians has left a number of youth disillusioned “not only with institutional religion, but with faith as a whole.” And this is happening at the very moment that access to the Internet has allowed for the easy discovery of various criticisms of Islamic practices, including criticism coming from Muslims themselves.

(*Middle East Report*, <https://merip.org/>)



Iranians seeing Turkey as promised land for evangelical Christianity and passage to West

The conversion of Iranians to evangelical Christianity is more evident in Turkey than in Iran due to the greater freedom and the presence of refugees in that country, according to a *National Public Radio* report (December 14). In Turkey and across the Middle East and Europe, Muslim refugees are encountering and, in some cases, converting to Christianity as they seek to emigrate to the West. This includes refugees from Iran, where conversion to anything but Islam is illegal. There are hundreds of thousands of Christians in Iran, with those considered members of the native Christian communities permitted to practice their religion with restrictions, while a Muslim converting to Christianity is considered an apostate, reports Fariba Nawa. The Iranian government jails converts, especially those who proselytize Muslims. The authorities see it as a Western plan to turn Iranians against Islam and the Islamic regime, according to converts in Turkey. The converts in Turkey can apply for asylum to a third country through the United Nations if they claim they would face religious persecution if they returned home. But Nawa finds that Turks are becoming increasingly intolerant of refugees. While the Turkish government allows freedom of religion and even protects churches in many cities, refugees are assigned to live in small conservative towns where they may face discrimination from the local population suspicious of evangelicals.

Many foreign evangelicals left Turkey after a failed coup attempt in 2016, when American preacher Andrew Brunson was imprisoned and charged with terrorism. This prominent case was a further strain on Turkish-U.S. ties until Brunson was released in October. But Christian refugees are now returning, and the demand for more churches has increased. Sebnem Koser Akcapar, a sociology professor at Istanbul's Koç University, says she has witnessed the rise in conversions. “The numbers of Iranian refugees converting have grown tremendously over the years. A small church consisting of 20 to 30 families has become a much bigger congregation housing 80 to 100 people on a regular Sunday,” she says. Akcapar adds that only some of the refugees are genuine believers, with others using religious persecution as a way to emigrate to the West. But the odds are against resettlement. Only a handful of Iranians resettled in the U.S. last year; and aid workers involved with refugees say religious persecution cases among converts have become so common that the UN has become distrustful. One church group, the United Pentecostal Church in Denizli, has trouble meeting the demand. It has churches in eight Turkish cities and refugees are calling on them to open more. The pastor says the church provides a spiritual outlet for refugees, not financial support, and that many who may not be believers at first become sincere in their faith.

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



Moldova's Orthodox churches quietly divided

Two Orthodox churches exist within the territory of the Republic of Moldova—one associated with the Russian Orthodox Church and the other with the Romanian Orthodox Church—but the Patriarchates of Moscow and of Bucharest are downplaying this conflict, writes Mihai-D. Grigore (Leibniz Institute for European History, Mainz, Germany) in *Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West* (November). At a time when church conflict over Ukraine has been escalating between Constantinople and Moscow, this shows a difference of approach from one case to the other. The historical roots of the situation go back to the occupation of Romanian-speaking Bessarabia by the Russian Empire in 1812. The local dioceses then came under the Russian Orthodox Church. After the area reunited with Romania in 1918, the Russian Patriarch Tikhon gave Moldovans the choice between the Russian Church and the Romanian Church, and the latter was chosen. The area remained under the Romanian Church until WWII, when it was conquered by the Soviet Union and the local church became a diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church.

When Moldova became independent in 1991, an autonomous Metropolis of Chișinău and All Moldova was established by the Russian Church. It currently has six dioceses and is reported to gather up to 85 percent of local Orthodox believers, according to a 2017 survey quoted by Grigore. However, in 1992 a bishop and clergymen in disagreement with the metropolitan organized and asked the Romanian Church to accept them, which it did, establishing its own Metropolis of Bessarabia, strongly associated with Romanian identity. It gathers less than 7 percent of local Orthodox believers, although some other figures give a higher number. It took a decade and legal struggles going up to the European Court of Human Rights for it to get official registration. There

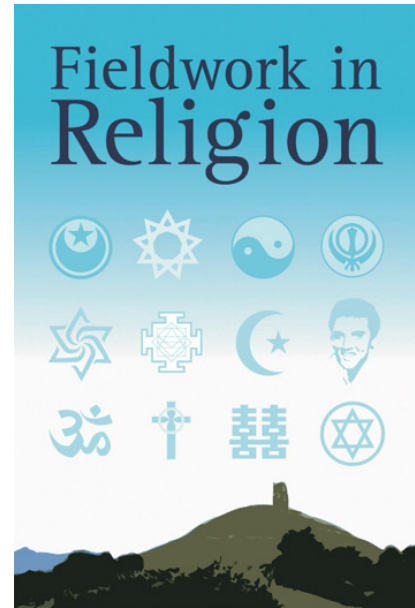
were subsequent tensions, especially in 2007, when the Romanian Patriarchate reactivated additional dioceses in Moldova. The rivalry is obviously a political one, related to the core of what Moldovan identity is. However, unlike Ukraine, this unsolved division within Orthodoxy is being downplayed. When the Romanian Patriarch Daniel and the Russian Patriarch Kirill met twice in 2017, they reportedly did not even discuss the issue. This quieter front may be related to the relatively small number of people who belong to the Bucharest-supported Metropolis of Bessarabia. Secondly, the Moldovan authorities are paying less attention to this issue, and only some pro-Moscow Ukrainian bishops see it as a dangerous precedent. The problem of a small Moldovan Orthodoxy is seen as minor compared to the other challenges facing Russia and its church, especially in Ukraine.

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

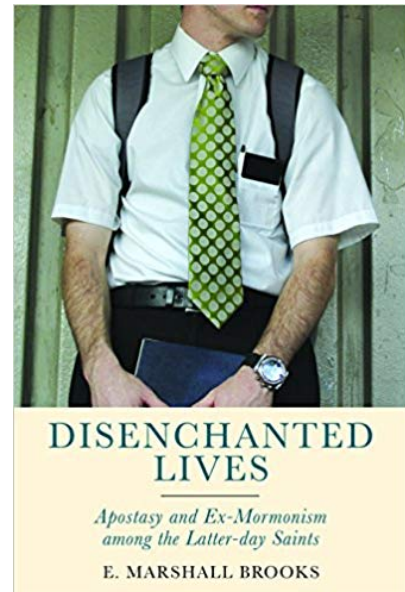


Findings & Footnotes

■ British researcher Sophie Gilliat-Ray gained notoriety in 2005 (mainly among Muslims) for an article detailing the lack of access she experienced in trying to study the seminaries of a strict form of Islam practiced by Deobandi Muslims (whose name derives from their origins in an Indian town by that name). Now in the current issue of the journal *Fieldwork in Religion* (13:2), Gilliat-Ray returns to these Deobandi seminaries in the UK and finds a sea change in their openness to society. The researcher writes that the closed attitude of these schools reflected the attitudes of Deobandis who had settled in the UK in the 19th century and maintained a separation from and conflictual posture against non-Muslims. Their increased openness has resulted from changes in the educational landscape for younger generations of Muslims and the need for graduates of these institutions to be integrated and employable in British society, given the shortage of positions for imams in the UK. For more on this article, visit the journal at: <https://www.equinoxpub.com/home/journals/fir/>.



■ As the number of LDS members leaving the church is said to be growing, *Disenchanted Lives* (Rutgers University Press, \$34.95) by E. Marshall Brooks investigates the distinctive subculture that has developed among Mormon apostates. Brooks conducts ethnographic research among ex-Mormon support groups, online forums, and informal gatherings in Utah. The book does not see Mormon apostasy as stemming from members who already have “one foot outside of the door of the faith,” but rather as the result of internal tensions and contradictions in the church that affect dedicated members who had few intentions of departing from the faith (one chapter looks at the “sudden” nature of many cases of Mormon apostasy). Brooks notes that his sample of ex-Mormons do not necessarily reflect most people who have left the LDS church, and there is little indication that the much-publicized departures and public protests of church liberals, feminists, and gay rights activists are widespread. But Brooks still tends to stress that cases of Mormon disaffection represent a “crisis of apostasy.” This fits with his treatment of these ex-members as experiencing trauma, bigotry, stigma and “social suffering” at the hands of a church that has repressed its history and a religious culture too dismissive of doubt and dissent. The ex-members’ anger, depression, and atheism are viewed by Brooks as constituting a “reasonable response” to a dysfunctional and harmful religion.



The sympathetic treatment of ex-members extends to how Brooks finds that they experience apostasy not just as a rational dismissal of church doctrine but also as a bodily effect of lifelong observance (in a

similar way to recent studies of ex-Hasidic Jews). There have been other studies of apostasy in new religious movements that are less exclusively focused on ex-members' portrayal of their former group in mostly negative terms and that attempt to balance their treatment of the group with accounts by current members and historical experiences. Brooks does include a short section distinguishing "angry ex-Mormons" from "middle-way Mormons" who still identify with the Mormon people even if not with LDS beliefs, but he does so to show how the former group uses anger to patrol boundaries between themselves and the church and to "insulate themselves from its pernicious influence."