

Note to readers: Because of production issues due to a change in production personnel, RW experienced a delay in publishing the April issue last month. For this reason, we are publishing a combined April/May issue. We thank associate editor Jean-Francois Mayer and Religioscope Institute for helping to publish this issue. We will return to our monthly schedule next month.

Researchers find Catholic Church's patterns of sexual abuse consistent across time and place

Recent reports of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in the U.S. show similar patterns to those found in the period before 2002 as well as in other Western nations, according to researchers speaking at an April conference at Fordham University in New York, which **RW** attended. Researchers Margaret Smith and Karen Terry of John Jay College compared recent findings on the priestly sexual abuse with the landmark research they conducted on the issue in 2002. Since their research, there have been 8,645 victims who came forward to report abuse, as reported in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' annual reports that are tallied by the Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University. Smith and Terry also looked at recent studies of priestly sex abuse in Australia and Germany and found similar patterns to those uncovered in their 2002 research: "80.9 percent of victims that we knew of in 2002 were male, and almost 60 percent between ten and fourteen...The percentages are exactly the same [in Germany and Australia]," Smith said.

These patterns also show up in the state commission reports of abuse cases, such as the one in Pennsylvania last year. Smith added that the intervening years' reports also confirmed that the peak period of abuse remained between 1974 and 1982. The percentage of priests involved in abuse cases in the other countries was similar to the 4 percent figure in the U.S., at 7 percent in Australia and 4.4 percent in Germany. In the U.S. male adolescents were the primary victims, and more than half of the priests involved had only one known victim. This was replicated in Germany and Australia as well. The conference participants agreed that the focus in 2019 has shifted from the abuse or abusers themselves to the accountability of leaders who covered up or allegedly covered up the allegations of abuse.

The concluding speaker at the conference, Hans Zollner, SJ, president of the Center for Child Protection at Rome's Gregorian University, said that the new spotlight on church leaders is most prominent in the U.S., but that in other regions, such as Central and Eastern Europe, addressing priestly abuse in general is not a priority in the churches. In 75 percent of countries "they have not started to talk about it," he said. The February consultation that Pope Francis held for bishops at the Vatican was "partly successful" in raising the seriousness of the accountability problem and trying to get the whole church on board to address this issue and abuse in general. But he said it continues to be the U.S., Ireland, Australia, and Germany that have put in place the highest standards, regulations and training programs for bishops regarding reporting abuse. He said that some of the measures discussed at the consultation may still be implemented, such as giving archbishops more power to discipline bishops (rather than just the pope, as is currently the policy) and creating oversight committees dealing with abuse for bishops who may be based in isolated dioceses.

(A video, transcripts and PowerPoint slides from the conference are available at: http://digital.library.fordham.edu/digital/collection/rc/search/order/date/ad/desc?_ga=2.100030040.77388631.1556630314-1724011478.1500325401)



February 23, 2019 - Vatican City (Holy See) Pope Francis during the Penitential Liturgy at the end of the third day of the works of meeting "Protection of minors in the church" with Cardinals and Bishops in Aula Regia at the Vaticanat. Credit Image: © Evandro Inetti via ZUMA Wire) Credit: Evandro Inetti/ZUMA Wire/Alamy Live News

Undercover policing in mosques meets resistance and self-censoring from Muslims

Police programs in the United States using undercover officers in mosques to monitor members suspected of extremism are facing pushback from the Muslim community, which tends to view such tactics as anti-Islamic and sinful, and are fostering distrust in Islamic institutions, according to Ibrahim Bechrouri of the Institute of Geopolitics at the University of Paris. Bechrouri was presenting the findings of his research on the New York Police Department's (NYPD) anti-terrorism program at a March meeting at John Jay College in New York, which **RW** attended. The NYPD program was one of the first U.S. police departments to use undercover surveillance of mosques, and the practice is now found in departments throughout the country, as well as in Europe to a lesser extent, Bechrouri said. He added that there have been 15,000 informants, according to FBI figures, and that in New York there were 171 active informants between 2006 and 2008. Three thousand informants were debriefed by the NYPD in the span of three months in 2014. There are also "hip pocket informants" who offer free intelligence to the police. More recent statistics are unavailable, though Bechrouri said that fewer informants are used in mosques today since Muslims have criticized the practice. Police informants have also been used in Muslim campus groups—with one such incident reported to have taken place at the Muslim Student Association at John Jay—as well as at cafes and parks where Muslims congregate.

In interviews with imams and other Muslims about such police tactics, Bechrouri found a widespread view that they violated Islamic teachings, with many labeling the informants as "sinners." They said the Koran condemns invasions of privacy in mosques and homes (teaching that visitors are to ask permission to enter homes), not to mention such tactics as phone tapping and intercepting texts from computers. The Muslims Bechrouri interviewed often viewed the undercover officers as violating Islamic teachings against hypocrisy, as they were "converting under false pretenses." He also found that some Muslims took a more nuanced view, allowing that suspicions of terrorism should be investigated. But still the crux of the matter was that "there has to be proof. And for many the bar is too low," he said. In some cases, a Muslim might be suspected of extremism because they appear to have become too religious, as evidenced by growing a beard or starting to pray five times a day. All of this has had a dampening effect on devotion and involvement in mosques, according to Bechrouri.

Those suspecting undercover police of having attended their mosques "self-censor" their views, with some, especially immigrants, abandoning traditional signs of belonging by shaving their beards and decreasing charitable giving and attendance at Friday prayers. "The goal [of the NYPD and other police departments] is to create a feeling of mistrust and division [in mosques] ...It's a strategy of divide and conquer," he said. While Bechrouri said that the relaxation of the NYPD's undercover program since 2013 may have eased self-censorship, the program has spurred mosques to engage in "surveillance to stop surveillance," installing cameras to spot someone suspicious who might be an undercover agent, as well as to post signs asking law enforcement agents to follow the rules of the mosque and identity themselves.

(Much of the research presented in this talk was based on Bechrouri's article in *Surveillance and Society*, which can be downloaded at: <https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/article/view/6895/8426>)



Source: Muslims for Peace, <https://muslims4peace.org/>

Coptic Orthodox assimilate and coexist through “majority” status in Nashville

Nashville, Tennessee, has emerged as a center of Coptic Orthodox Christianity in the U.S. and also serves as a case study of Muslim-Coptic coexistence outside of a context of conflict and persecution, writes Lydia Yousief in the blog *Public Orthodoxy* (April 17). There are 10,000 to 20,000 Copts in Nashville, based on counts of worshippers at Coptic church services. Although Muslims overall outnumber Egyptian Christian Copts in the area, the latter represent the largest national Arab-speaking group, which (with Muslim Arab-speakers tending to identify with their home countries) gives them the sense of being a majority, a status they rarely experience outside of a few villages in Egypt. Aside from Coptic churches, Yousief finds a visible Coptic presence throughout the Nashville and neighboring Murfreesboro area, with an array of Coptic stores marked with the banners of saints, even as they sell halal meat, advertise Ramadan specials and Eastern European chocolates, and sell fresh produce from local farms. The Copts also run a wide range of establishments aside from grocery stores—from hookah bars to immigration firms. “The visual representation and interactive connections of these stores as non-exclusively Coptic and inclusive spaces highlight a working class, immigrant community that is thriving with little government incentive or support, with a diverse customer-base,” Yousief adds.

She goes on to write that, “Nashville provides an example of a community...assimilating—just not into [dominant] mainstream culture...[S]toreowners learn English...to cooperate with farming agencies. Salon owners provide secure sections of their store for Muslim clients who are veiled. Ethiopian coffee shops are better sites for connection than a Starbucks for some Copts.” The Coptic Orthodox “imagining” that they are a majority gives them a secure identity that is “a rebuttal against memories in Egypt, as minority and marginalized,” and an ambition for tomorrow. She concludes that it is “in Nashville...that we begin to see new emerging Coptic voices that are shifting the mainstream discourse from persecution to racism, Christianity to Orthodoxy specifically, indigeneity to foreigner—all while identifying, still, as a Copt.”

(*Public Orthodoxy*, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2019/04/17/coptic-nashville/>)



Charismatic ministries, festivals disband and regroup

Charismatic ministries, festivals, and conferences around the world have recently been closing, though not necessarily for lack of success and numbers, reports *Charisma* magazine (March). Ministries and conferences including Onething, TheCall, the UK-based Soul Survivor conferences, and Germany’s Augsburg Prayer House conferences, which reached over 10,000 people annually, closed down in 2018 or will cease operations this year, with most of the organizers and leaders claiming a divine call to withdraw from such activities, writes Joshua Olson. One leader said that he had not witnessed so many closings before and compared it to the rapid founding of prayer ministries 20 years ago. In fact, several of the ministries ceasing operation are related to organizations such as the International House of Prayer and other

“houses of prayers,” such as Onething and TheCall. The reasons given for such closures often have to do with disenchantment with the business models and competitiveness of these operations that set them apart from congregations.

Mike Pilavachi of Soul Survivor said that the process in many ministries of business hiring and firing as they select the best from other organizations was seen to be counterproductive. A sense of burnout and the need to pass on the torch to younger leaders were factors in other ministries’ closings. Some of these ministries and conferences are spinning off smaller ones led by the younger generation. Soul Survivor will spawn three new charismatic conferences in its place, led by young leaders who grew up in it, while the Augsburg Prayer House will start a smaller conference called SCHON, which will seek to build bridges between Christian and secular communities in Germany. In the U.S., TheCall has led to The Send and The Briefing movements, which focus on prayer, prophecy, and evangelism.

(*Charisma*, <https://charismamag.com/>)



Source: Soul Survivor, <https://soulsurvivor.com/>

Quakerism’s struggle with the God question deepens

While liberal Quakers have allowed room for non-theists in the last century, the church body, at least in the northern hemisphere, is “increasingly open-minded on the ultimate religious question: whether or not there is a God,” reports *The Economist* (April 26). Ben Pink Dandelion of the University of Birmingham said part of the reason for this shift is that the appeal of Quakerism’s social values has drawn in many who do not typically hold Christian beliefs. A recent study by Jennifer May Hampton finds that fully 43 percent of British Quakers do not profess a belief in God. The contingent saying they definitely do not believe in God has increased from just three percent in 1990 to 14.5 percent today. The non-theists as well as the God-deniers could also be agnostics and those who believe in an undefined spiritual force. Hampton’s research found that Quakers who eschew conventional belief in God and the Bible are also less committed to the core Quaker teaching of pacifism in all circumstances.

The non-theist Quakers are also less likely to hold positions of leadership or to participate in collaborative decision-making which seeks to find out the will of God. That may change, however, as Quaker meetings are seeking to update their terminology. There are reports that there was an attempt that “ruffled feathers” last year to drop “God” from the meetings’ revised guidelines, though both theists and non-theists deny this was the case. But Dandelion says that secular language is increasingly used to describe what were previously considered spiritual processes. This can be seen in how the traditional Quaker phrase “God in everyone” is often replaced by the expression “Good in everyone,” and how reference to “discerning the will of God” is often changed to “discerning the sense of the meeting” during worship and decision-making.



Quaker Meeting House in Norwich (© 2018 Evelyn Simak, licensed for reuse under Creative Commons Licence).

Spiritualism, occult find new following in health care and Internet

Mediums or psychics are increasingly finding a prominent place in the holistic healing milieu, especially among women, reports Lisa Held in the *New York Times* (March 24). The new prominence of mediums, or “intuitives” as they are called today, was on display at the recent In Goop Health Summit, run by Gwyneth Paltrow’s wellness media empire. Held cites a market analysis that found that the “psychic service industry” has grown steadily over the past five years, reaching over \$2 billion in revenue in 2018 from activities such as readings and public talks. The market for such services was also suggested by a recent Pew survey that found that 62 percent of Americans believed in at least one of four spiritual practices or concepts identified as “New Age” (like astrology and reincarnation) and that 41 percent believed in psychics. Held adds that celebrities, such as Paltrow, who “have extended their brands to content (if only on their personal social-media accounts), increasingly include mediums in their self-care entourage.”

While media-savvy mediums are nothing new, their incursion into health care is drawing both followers and critics. Anthony William, a self-proclaimed “medical medium,” has started an Instagram-fueled celery juice craze which is medically supported only by messages he says he receives from a “Spirit of Compassion.” The Goop website is said to use only a minimum of messages by psychics, even if they have proven popular among users. Mediums are screened by phone, either by a Goop staffer or “trusted friend of Goop,” and their messages are labeled on the site as “fascinating but inexplicable” rather than “supported by science.” Prominent medium MaryAnn DiMarco, who authored the popular book, *Believe, Ask, Act*, said that she finds her clients asking less for predictions and more about “connections” that will help them make “transformations” in their lives.

The growth of the occult on the Internet has led to a rebranding of a whole range of esoteric and New Age-oriented techniques and practices that are as much driven by psychological needs as spiritual ones, according to “Internetting,” a special section on technology in the Sunday New York Times (April 7). Amanda Hess writes that the “mystical Internet has arrived. New apps like Co-Star Astrology and the Daily Hunch are part of a suite of Internet products rebranding the zodiac for the digital set. Astrological sign memes dominate Twitter. The Hoodwitch, an online retailer who sells ‘everyday magic for the modern mystic,’ has amassed over 260,000 Instagram followers for her #witchtips and beautifully staged tarot readings. Even Spencer Pratt, the archvillain of ‘The Hills,’ has reinvented himself as a crystal retailer.” Hess adds that much of this online growth of the occult is less about predicting the future and other deeply held beliefs in the supernatural than about “helping to understand ourselves.” She argues that online mysticism represents a turn to emotion “in the face of all the data that dominates the Internet. It’s a rejection of all the algorithmic, data-driven, hyper-logical, crypto-libertarian values that run so much of what we do online. In their place, it carves out room for intuition and empathy.” Hess also sees a “masculine mysticism” online, characterized by conspiracy theories, drawing connections between historical events and random images, even as the above “feminine mysticism seeks to draw spiritual connections between human beings.”



Source: Goop, <https://goop.com/the-goop-podcast/how-to-cultivate-intuition/>

Meditation apps grow in demand while secularizing

The growing interest in meditation practices—mostly disconnected from their traditional religious anchoring—means that some apps helping people to meditate are also enjoying an amazing success. In February, Calm, an application for meditating, relaxing and sleeping, with a stated mission “to make the world a happier and healthier place,” announced that it had succeeded in raising \$88 million in funding. The company with a team of 50 and “over 1 million paying subscribers” is now valued at \$1 billion.

In France, several media companies have paid attention to the success of Petit Bambou (“little bamboo”), a meditation app launched in 2014 and claiming more than 2.7 million users, not all of them subscribers. One of its co-founders, Benjamin Blasco (formerly with PayPal), explains that the meditation programs it offers have been “secularized and cleaned of any religious aspect,” according to a report in *La Croix* (March 21). It has also expanded its range of meditations to include those for getting better sleep. It launched Spanish and German versions in

2018 and has launched an English version this year. French Catholic observers remark that this meditation app has many more subscribers than French-language Christian apps with a spiritual content.



Source: Jianfa Ben Tsai, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bentsai81/>

Declining congregations in Canada reborn as community resources

While different denominations in North America and Europe have had to close and sell places of worship due to shrinking attendance or moves of their followers to new urban areas, the recent figures published by the National Trust for Canada, with estimates that 9,000 religious spaces in the country will be lost in the next decade, are nevertheless striking. There were more than 27,000 buildings used for religious purposes in Canada in 2019, and a third of them are likely to be sold or torn down, Bonnie Allen reports (*CBC*, March 10). She quotes National Trust for Canada Regeneration Project leader Robert Pajot, who remarks that it is not just about buildings but involves the loss of centers of local community life, including worship spaces hosting many activities beyond Sunday worship.

Money is a key issue linked to decline in attendance. Some attempt to avoid closure by sharing space with other users who will help in paying the bills. An Anglican church in Montreal has gone as far as partnering with a circus company for that purpose (*CBC*, February 17). Other churches are converted into places for secular uses. “Many churches have been transferred from

sacred to secular use as art galleries, concert halls, libraries, community centres and even micro-breweries,” Allen writes. Although the goal is to save the buildings for religious or community purposes, demolition sometimes remains the only option left when a building has deteriorated too much. Some old churches have thus been razed and replaced with affordable housing projects. Allen explains how the National Trust for Canada has partnered with the interfaith network Faith & the Common Good to launch a project called “Regeneration Works: Places of Faith.” The project offers consulting services to help communities “create successful strategies for their buildings and community.”

(Webpages for the project “Regeneration Works: Places of Faith”:

https://www.faithcommongood.org/places_of_faith

<https://regenerationworks.ca/places-of-faith/>)



Le Monastère performs at St. Jax Anglican, photo Natalie Bull.

Source: Faith and the Common Good, <https://www.faithcommongood.org>.

CURRENT RESEARCH

- **Congregational membership has dropped by 20 percentage points over the past two decades, hitting a low of 50 percent in 2018, according to a new Gallup poll.** Gallup found church membership to be at 70 percent in 1999, consistent with much of the membership rates throughout the 20th century. Since 1999, that figure has fallen steadily, while the percentage of U.S. adults with no religious affiliation has jumped from 8 percent to 19 percent (with some sources reporting the rate of non-affiliation to be as high as 23 percent). Among demographic groups, the biggest drops were recorded among Democrats and Hispanics. Among Americans identifying with a particular religion, there was a significant drop in church membership among Catholics—declining from 76 percent to 63 percent over the past two decades, which may be related to the clergy sex-abuse scandals. Protestant membership dropped from 73 to 67 percent over the same period.

- **Even among inactive members of churches in several European countries, a majority not only still pay a church tax imposed on all baptized Christians but have no plans to opt out of it even though they can, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center.** Church taxes have been viewed as contributing to the high rate of secularism in Europe, leading people to officially leave their churches to avoid paying these fees. But the survey found there are far more people more willing to finance their church than attend it. Six of the 15 countries studied have such mandatory taxes: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland (three—Italy, Portugal and Spain—have voluntary programs, while no church taxes at all are collected in Belgium, Britain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands and Norway). In those countries with the mandatory tax, most adults say they pay it, with the share of self-reported taxpayers ranging from 68 percent in Sweden to 80 percent in Denmark; and no more than one-in-five respondents in any country say they used to pay but have stopped. “In addition, among those who say they pay, large majorities describe themselves as ‘not too’ or ‘not at all’ likely to take official steps to avoid paying the tax in the future, including nearly nine-in-ten in Denmark and Finland.”

(The Pew study can be downloaded at: <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/04/30/in-western-european-countries-with-church-taxes-support-for-the-tradition-remains-strong/>)

- **With a substantial share of atheists, France is now one of the most secularized countries in Europe, along with what was formerly Eastern Germany, the Czech Republic and Sweden.** Pierre Bréchon (University of Grenoble), who will shortly publish a book that he has coedited with Frédéric Gonthier and Sandrine Astor, *La France des Valeurs: Quarante Ans d'Évolutions* (Presses Universitaires de Grenoble), on changes in values in France over the past forty years, has summarized some observations on the evolution of unbelief in France in an interview with the French newsletter *LaiCités* (March). Although there are various shades of nonbelief—from decided atheists, to people who have no religion and may be indifferent to religion, to those who are more open to the idea of the existence of God or some kind of spirituality—such nonbelievers now make up the majority of the French population. Religiously indifferent people rank highest (about 33 percent of the population), with atheists following

behind (about 20 percent). However, atheists make up a larger percentage among young people (about 30 percent). It is only among young Muslims that religious practice is on the rise.

A significant development is the rise in the percentage of people who have never been exposed to religion during their life. This was the case for 10 percent of the French population in 1998, and it is now close to 20 percent. This is important, since people who were religiously active in their younger years are more likely to remain believers, while relatively few people who were never religiously socialized later come to join a religious group. Bréchon sees the decline of religion primarily as a decline in affiliation with religious institutions. Antireligious activism has declined too. Diffuse beliefs, such as the possibility that there is life after death, appear to be more persistent. Both atheists and religiously indifferent people put more emphasis than believers on individual autonomy. As expected, they are found more often on the left of the political spectrum and tend to be more permissive on moral issues as well as less attached to traditional family values. But on some attributes, such as support of democratic values, trust toward other people, or feelings of happiness, there are no significant variations between believers and nonbelievers, Bréchon adds.

(*LaiCités*, 86 avenue du Général Michel Bizot, 75012 Paris, France; <http://www.laicités.info>)

Anti-Christian violence spreading worldwide

The violent persecution of Christians has intensified significantly in the last seven years, with much of this violence shifting to China and India, writes religion journalist Rupert Shortt in the British magazine *The Tablet* (April 20). Shortt reported on the widespread abuse and repression of Christians in his 2013 book *Christianophobia*, which, despite its title, was not a polemic about the “clash of civilizations,” with the author finding more anti-Christian prejudice and violence existing outside of Islamic militancy, often directed at the very poor. Today, “It is in the China of Xi Jinping and the India of Narendra Modi...that the plight of Christians has worsened most dramatically.” Shortt cites recent data from Open Doors UK and Ireland showing that persecution in China is the worst it has been in more than a decade, with some church leaders saying it is at its highest level since the Cultural Revolution that ended in 1976. He cites the example of the Church of Almighty God, which had close to 11,000 of its members arrested last year across 30 of the 34 province-level administrations in China. India has entered Open Doors’ World Watch List for the first time, as Hindu nationalists have launched increasing attacks against Christians and church buildings. Shortt adds that nationalism is also a factor in the growth of intolerance against religious minorities in Bhutan, Burma, and Nepal.

Shortt writes that notwithstanding India and China, Wahhabi Islam and violent jihadism, moving from their Middle Eastern center to the peripheries of the Islamic world, remain the chief threat to religious freedom worldwide. Indonesia has seen a growing number of attacks on churches, while Nigeria is “still the place where Christians are most likely to face violent deaths.” In the North and Middle Belt of the country at least 3,700 church members were killed in 2018, almost

twice as many as during the previous 12 months. Shortt criticizes European leaders for their silence on this wide-scale persecution, particularly in relation to Islamic extremism. He points out that while religion is over-blamed for conflict, it is not true that it deserves no blame at all. Shortt concludes by observing that, while there are different repertoires regarding violence in Christianity and Islam, “both faiths insist on the sanctity of the person, and from this there should follow a recognition of religious freedom as the first of human rights.”

(*The Tablet*, <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/>)



Source: Take Action for Persecuted Christians, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, <https://lp.billygraham.org/persecuted/>

Catholic schools in Ireland retaining loyalty, feeling government pressure

Contrary to headlines announcing the loss of Catholic Ireland and an accompanying loss of Catholic education in the country, Catholic schools continue to retain the loyalty of Irish parents, even though these schools are facing new secular pressures from the government. The Irish quarterly *Studies* (108:429) notes that the Catholic Church has been the main provider of education in Ireland, receiving generous support from the government. Many Catholic schools have transferred their means of support from religious congregations (which have seen a steep decline in vocations) to lay education trusts, ensuring their future as well as the continuation of

government funding. With the percentage of the population that is Catholic dropping due to new immigration and disaffiliation—from 84.2 percent in 2011 to 78.3 percent in 2016—schools have had to accommodate students of different and non-religious backgrounds. Still, the most ethnically diverse student bodies are found in Catholic schools; children from the Traveler community are more likely to be educated in these schools than in multi-denominational ones. With over 90 percent of primary schools and 50 percent of secondary schools under Catholic



Launch of new Catholic religious education curriculum and programme, 2015. Source: Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, <https://www.catholicbishops.ie>

patronage, there have been new initiatives to divest some primary schools of such patronage in areas where there are several Catholic schools, as well as to increase the number of schools with multi-denominational patrons—in some cases with the support of the bishops.

But the “reality is that parents who have children in local Catholic schools do not want to change what they know and value,” Marie Griffin writes. There are still a greater number of students attending even Catholic secondary schools than multi-denominational ones, with enrollment increasing in the former institutions. There has been a recent controversy over the practice of giving preference to Catholic students in instances when enrollment is oversubscribed. But Griffin argues that this has only been a problem for a very small minority of students in major cities that are experiencing a shortage of student places and where new schools are being built. Nevertheless, in 2018 the government passed an act prohibiting Catholic primary schools from using religion as a criterion for admission while allowing Protestant schools to do so. Moves to award patronage to new large multi-denominational schools have decreased the number of Catholic schools, especially in rural areas. The state has also issued new directives on sexuality and religious education that “may be directly in conflict with the Catholic commitment to educate the whole person and even with Catholic teaching itself...No one would wish Catholic schools to become the preserve of the socially and economically advantaged as in other countries, but if Catholic schools are forced to choose between that which is Caesar’s and that which is God’s, that may well be the vista for the future,” Griffin concludes.

(*Studies*, <http://www.studiesirishreview.ie/>)

German armed forces open to non-Christian chaplains

The first Jewish military chaplain in the German armed forces might start his work by the end of this year, reports the German Catholic newspaper *Die Tagespost* (April 10). This is actually a return to what had existed in earlier times in Germany, since 30 Jewish military chaplains used to serve in the German forces during the First World War. After the Second World War, military chaplaincy for German soldiers was reintroduced in the late 1950s, at a time when 98 percent of the soldiers were Christian. German soldiers are not requested to make their religious affiliation known, but estimates today are that only half of them are still Christian (with 53,000 Protestants and 41,000 Catholics). For the past seven years, the German Ministry of Defense has assessed the options for adjusting military chaplaincy to a more diverse religious environment—while already providing the opportunity for external non-Christian pastoral support to soldiers who request it, reports *Deutsche Welle* (April 2). The goal has been to find ways to include Jewish and Muslim military chaplains. There are currently around 300 Jewish soldiers and around 3,000 Muslim soldiers in the German armed forces, according to official estimates.

A state agreement will be concluded with the Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland (Central Council of Jews in Germany), with the council providing a list of suitable rabbis and the armed forces making the final choice. Regarding Muslims, there are still hurdles due to the lack of a representative body for all Muslims in Germany, making it impossible to devise a similar agreement. Other legal provisions will be used in order to hire military imams. The candidates will have to meet various requirements, including studies in Islamic theology completed at higher education institutions recognized by Germany.



German military chaplains during a funeral service at ISAF. © 2010 ISAF Headquarters Public Affairs Office, <https://www.flickr.com/people/29456680@N06>.

Growing ranks of women preachers enhance Islam's influence on family issues in Turkey

The decision to increase the number and duties of women preachers in Turkey has enlarged the influence and visibility of Islam, especially as it relates to family issues, writes Chiara Maritato in the current issue of the journal *Anthropology of the Middle East* (Winter). Turkey's Diyanet, a state-based apparatus under the control of the prime minister to manage religious institutions, including mosques, and the employment of religious officers, including imams, preachers, and muftis, has increased the employment of women, from 2,696 in 2004 to 109,332 in 2017. The "feminization of the Diyanet" can be further seen in the fact that while women made up four percent of the



Source: <https://muslimvillage.com>

bureau's personnel in 2004, they made up 16 percent in 2015 (the peak year of female employment). Maritato finds that the expansion of women preachers has helped the Diyanet to employ imams and preachers beyond mosques, as they provide counseling and religious recommendations on everything from the use of toilet paper to hair dye to Bitcoins. The expanded role of religious professionals influenced by the growth of female preachers has resulted in a state-sponsored and state-led diffusion of Islamic morality in the form of family welfare and healthcare ministries, as well as in addressing the concerns of the country's female population.

(*Anthropology of the Middle East*, <https://www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/ame/ame-overview.xml>)

Elections show way beyond Islamic versus secular politics in Turkey?

Although President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his party of nationalism and re-Islamicization remain in place in Turkey after the recent municipal elections, the race revealed the emergence of leaders who are more pragmatic in their approach to both religion and secularism, writes Mustafa Akyol in *The Navigator* (April 3), the blog of the Center for Global Policy. The elections were seen as a major setback for Erdogan and a major victory for the opposition, which in the past had been making little electoral headway as the country moved toward authoritarian rule. But these new challenges to Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) do not fall along the "Islam-versus-secularism" lines by which the president frequently characterizes his opposition. A

new opposition party being planned by former prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu would represent a moderate version of the AKP and its Islamic orientation. The winners of the Istanbul and Ankara elections were not the typical hardcore secular Kemalists who strongly oppose women wearing headscarves and any public expression of religion. Ekrem Imamoglu, who was elected mayor of Istanbul, is known for reciting the Koran. “Such actions have capitalized on the ‘religion card’ that Erdogan has exploited for too long,” Akyol writes.

(*The Navigator*, <https://www.cgpolicy.org/articles/not-the-end-of-history-for-turkey/>)



Source: <https://teyit.org/>

Singapore’s zoning constraints shaping ways religious groups operate

Faced with space constraints in urban environments such as Singapore, religious groups are responding in flexible ways, writes Orlando Woods (Singapore Management University) in the journal *Social Compass* (March). Singapore represents an ideal case study for such observations. All religious groups are treated equally by an authoritarian government that has adopted a secular approach for managing religious pluralism. Due to the limited land supply in this city-state, land for religious and other purposes has been strictly demarcated. Parcels of land are set aside by the state for new religious buildings, each parcel being restricted to one religion. This leads to strong intra-competition among Christian groups, with their rapid growth, since demand exceeds supply. “Between 2000 and 2010, the size of the Christian population nearly doubled, from 588,000 to 930,000, yet only two plots of church land were released for bidding between 2005 and 2010,” Woods writes.

Thus many groups do not have access to religiously zoned land. The consequence is that Christian organizations, especially the newer ones, operate within secular spaces, where they

compete with secular entities. This is the case for Singapore’s main megachurches, Woods adds, with one renting an auditorium for holding four Sunday services that are broadcasted to six other venues. But while this provides a solution—despite the challenges of “spatial impermanence”—it also means high rents and leads to a commercialization of religious practice in Singapore, for instance with the creation of business arms for financing expansion. Due to the need for stable locations, some megachurches partner with secular developers to build secular venues that can also be used for religious purposes. Woods’ analysis shows that this leads to a “desecularization of space” rather than its sacralization. Indeed, official guidelines forbid religious uses of such spaces to alter their secular nature, only allowing their use on a non-exclusive and limited basis. This shows that the shaping of urban environments by religious groups is only part of the story, and that the organization and operations of religious groups may also be shaped by the urban environment.

(*Social Compass*, <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/scpa>)



Source: ClusterAsiaEurope Channel, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXfl5Zih77WI2AS2X1oDJvg>

Findings & Footnotes

■ The current issue of the open-access *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* (Vol. 14) is devoted to the impact of online religion on faith communities. There is much conjecture about how online involvement affects religious belonging and community but not much actual research about this relationship in all its variety of settings and contexts. An introductory article focuses on the theoretical aspects on the online-community connection, arguing that existing research has too often viewed Internet involvement as detrimental to religious community, leading to eventual secularization. The editors and contributors tend not to see such a secularizing effect, and instead posit a more dynamic, “entangled” process, where both online and real communities interact with and affect each other. This is clearly on view in an article about how monasteries have changed through their heavy investment in an online presence.



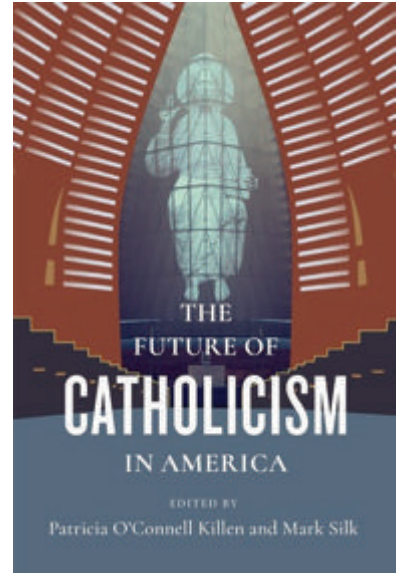
The online component of some monasteries has brought in financial revenue (through sales of books and artwork) as well as attracting more initiates —sometimes from far-flung places and unusual backgrounds—as a result of their personal searches on monasticism, bypassing the (often declining) role of local Catholic schools in forming such a vocation. The Internet, in effect, brings the world into the monastery, creating more connections with everyday life, but, on the downside, potentially threatens the quietude of the monastic community. Other articles in this issue include a look at how even Twitter users can create a new kind of community, using the case study of a British Muslim protest event; a study of how Jehovah’s Witnesses may show some discrepancies between personal and group views of their media and social media use; and an analysis of the way the multisite megachurch LifePoint, spanning three continents, uses the Internet both to promote official church teachings and activities and to build intimate and private communication between members. This issue can be downloaded at: <https://heiup.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/index.php/religions/issue/view/2388>

■ *The Future of Catholicism in America* (Columbia University Press, \$35), edited by Patricia O’Connell Killen and Mark Silk, sets out to chart the uncertain and most likely pluriform future of Catholics in the U.S. The book’s introduction divides recent American Catholic history into three phases—“Vatican II Catholicism” (1959–1978), marked by a liberal turn to social action and more progressive theology; the “Reform of the Reform” (1978–2013), where orthodox Catholicism, often tied to conservative social policy, reframed the meaning of Vatican II under Pope John Paul II and Benedict XIV; and “Restoring the Spirit of Vatican II” (2013–present), where Pope Francis is seeking to resume the liberal reforms of the first era. The editors acknowledge that there are themes and issues running across those timelines, such as the sex abuse crisis, and suggest that pluralism and conflict rather than liberal or conservative consensus will mark American Catholicism in the future. They also point out that Catholic social science has often reflected these divisions in the church, with “little of its analysis [having] escaped in-house

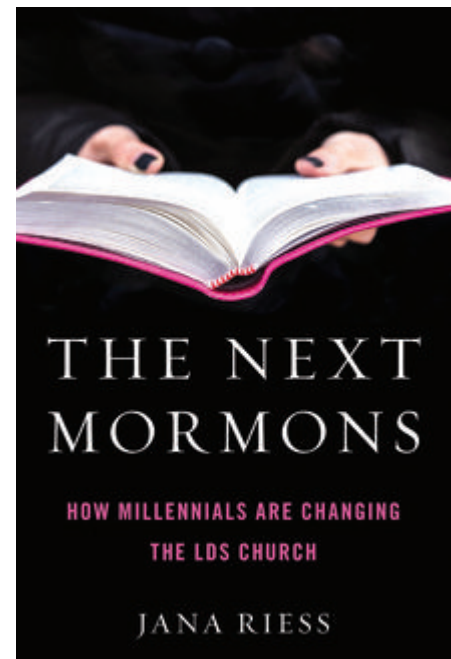
ideological struggles to control the narrative of the [Second Vatican Council] and to shape the meaning and interpretation of its outcome.”

The rest of the contributions reflect the theme of conflict and pluralism, with even the chapters on Latinos in the American church holding out the hope that they can transcend the liberal-conservative divide through both their evangelistic fervor and participatory style with its social justice thrust. Other noteworthy chapters include a look at how the different forms of ecumenism—first between Catholics, mainline Protestants, and Jews on social action and then in the 1990s between evangelicals and Catholics on prolife and culture war issues—often constituted the church’s public face, though these shifting alliances and networks have helped to fragment and weaken Catholic identity; a look at how worship itself has become a contested rather than a common ground for Catholics, vividly seen in how the “old” Latin

Mass has seen growing demand, not only from elderly but from younger Catholics as well; and a study of the public face of Catholicism by sociologist Richard Wood, which presents a case study of how different Catholic organizational actors are able to transcend narrow interests, as was seen in the health care debate of 2009–2010 (even if the sex abuse crisis has shown the opposite tendency, especially in the case of the bishops). The editors conclude with several forecasts about the probable American Catholic future, which include the unlikely return of the church to a well-defined subculture; the likelihood of a smaller church, as disaffiliation continues and a gap grows between conservative priests formed in the John Paul II era and more liberal people in the pews; the emergence of a more ethnically diverse church; and the continuation of disconnection and fragmentation.



■ *The Next Mormons* (Oxford University Press, \$29.95), by Jana Reiss, paints a picture of young Latter-Day Saints that is somewhat similar to portrayals of young members in other religious traditions—conflicted between allegiance to their communities and their lives in a pluralistic and individualistic culture. Based on a 2016 Next Mormons Survey conducted with political scientist Benjamin Knoll (several findings of which have been reported in **RW**), the book also fleshes out the statistical analysis with Reiss’ engaging historical and contemporary accounts and vignettes of young LDS members and their place in the church. She finds that the church has retained its young members to a greater degree than have other religious bodies, but she soberly looks at signs of diminished vitality and loyalty from the Millennial generation.



She sees the Millennials as being on the cutting edge of progressive views in the church regarding homosexuality (doubling from 24 percent in favor of the inclusion of homosexuals in the church in 2007 to 48 percent in 2016), changing gender roles, politics (Millennials are almost as likely to be Democrat as they are to be Republican), and creating a place for singles (because of the decline of marriage in this generation). The author devotes an interesting section to former Mormons and notes that Millennial “apostates” are actually more likely to retain a belief in God than older ones, even if their likelihood of returning to the fold diminishes the longer they stay out of the church. Reiss concludes that even though young LDS members have maintained strong involvement (especially among women, who now have greater freedom to join mission work), such loyalty can be unsettled if the church doesn’t revive its genius of balancing orthodoxy with adaptation to its surrounding culture.

■ In the book *Connected Jews* (Oxford University Press, \$37.50), edited by Simon J. Bronner and Caspar Battegay, contributors cover a wide range of case studies around the world to show both old and new ways that international Jewry is connected and how these affect Jewish identity and affiliation. The wide net thrown over sources of Jewish connectivity includes the Jewish popular music scene, bringing together secular and religious Jews, Jewish joke-telling through the Internet, and popular Israeli TV shows, such as *BeTipul*, about a Jewish psychoanalyst, and the way they are adapted to American television. In dealing with Jews and social media, the introduction makes it clear that the Internet can both connect Jews and divide them, serving as a source of apostasy and distraction from the faith, as reflected in Hasidic and ultra-Orthodox leaders’ efforts to discourage Internet and cell phone use among their followers. Yet Hasidic groups such as Chabad have also been in the front ranks of those using social media for outreach and connecting members, even if they use sophisticated methods to filter out objectionable material. The chapter on “cyber-shtetls” is particularly interesting, dealing with the online recreation of historic communities of Jews destroyed by the Holocaust.



■ A new book (in French) by Yann Raison du Cleuziou (University of Bordeaux), *Une Contre-Révolution Catholique: Aux Origines de la Manif pour Tous* (Seuil), focuses on the important segment of practicing Catholics in the French church. Their religious faithfulness is strongly based on family life, and they are successful in ensuring the transmission of faith to successive generations, having often been educated at Catholic schools themselves. They interact within various networks with their own media and intellectuals, but they are far from being homogeneous. Researchers should pay attention to this milieu, since it is proving influential in French Catholicism’s current developments, both religiously and politically. With the numerical decline of French Catholicism, these practicing Catholics have come to play a more important role. Du Cleuziou finds that 1.8 percent of French Catholics attend Mass every

Sunday, and the percentage only goes up to 4.5 percent if all who attend Mass at least once a month are counted. After a heavy decline in church affiliation and religious practice, the future of the Roman Catholic Church in France is now strongly linked to this small but active minority of those remaining faithful. Among those who go to Mass every week, some 30 percent are what are described as “observant” Catholics. While most accept the Second Vatican Council, they are more conservative than other Catholics on liturgical, theological, moral and political issues, and many of the younger practicing Catholics share such inclinations.

YANN RAISON DU CLEUZIQU

**UNE CONTRE-
RÉVOLUTION
CATHOLIQUE**

Aux origines de la Manif pour tous

SEUIL

ON/FILE: A Continuing Record of Groups, Movements, People, and Events Impacting Contemporary Religion

Halalopathy is a new therapy suggested by Palestinian scientist Jawad Alzeer as a way to give Muslims the extra religious assurances they need about their medical treatments. A researcher at the Institute for Organic Chemistry at the University of Zurich and the lead auditor for a Swiss halal certification body, Alzeer has started publishing articles in academic journals for developing his vision—the most recent one in the *Journal of Integrative Medicine* (May). According to this article, if “the drug and [a] human’s belief are compatible, trust in the rationally designed drug will be synergized and placebo effects will be activated to initiate the healing process.” Halalopathy is described “as a new model to integrate mind, behavior and health.” The purpose is to “combine the value of religion with the benefits of modern science,” according to another article published in 2018 in the *Journal of Molecular and Genetic Medicine*.

Beside food, the halal certification system has found many other uses. This includes halal pharmaceuticals, even if its share of the market remains much smaller than standard pharmaceuticals. Estimates put the market for halal pharmaceuticals at \$4.6 billion—compared to Muslim spending of \$87 billion on all pharmaceuticals in 2017. But not all manufacturers are eagerly marketing halal medicines, since they do not want to deter customers of other



Source: <https://halalopathic.com/>

faiths as well as non-religious ones. However, Alzeer believes not only that scientifically approved halal drugs could contribute to the recovery of patients, but that halalopathy would also resonate with the interest in personalized healthcare. He hopes to see halalopathic hospitals established in the future. Some Muslim doctors and scholars, such as Farah Naja (American University of Beirut), are supportive of holistic approaches to wellbeing, but are less comfortable with religious connotations and prefer to speak of “integrative health.” But other health professionals feel that the word “halal” in the concept is important and that it might indeed rapidly spread once launched. (**Source:** *Middle East Eye*, March 25)