



## Vol. 34, No. 11

*Readers may have noticed that our publication schedule has changed in recent months. Although issues will now be arriving in the third week of each month, we plan to keep the newsletter timely, with our coverage extending past the usual end-of-month deadline.*

### **How the mainline factor still shapes civic and international landscape**

While mainline denominations and many congregations continue to decline, new research suggests that the distinctive cultures, beliefs, and practices of these mainstream Christian bodies are still playing an important social function—in the U.S. and abroad—especially in the areas of civic life and international development. This mainline effect was seen in a study of volunteering and the rise of the non-affiliated from 1990 to 2018 that Dingeman Wiertz of University College-London presented at a session of the New York meeting of the American Sociological Association, which **RW** attended in August. In looking at state-level data on both secular and religious volunteering rates using the Current Population Survey from 2002 to 2015, the American Religious Identification Survey, and Pew surveys, the researcher did not find much decline in volunteering related to the growth of the non-affiliated or “nones” in the population. There was a 20 percent decline in the hours devoted to religious volunteering in areas with high rates of disaffiliation. But changes in such measures as church attendance only lowered the rate of religious volunteering and not secular volunteering.

Wiertz found more secular volunteering overall, but it mattered where these nones were coming from geographically and which groups they were disaffiliating from. In areas with a high rate of disaffiliation from mainline Protestant churches, there was also a significant decline in civic volunteering. He concluded that, “There are different civic landscapes in the country. If people are leaving the mainline Protestant churches, there is a significant decline in civic volunteering.” Another paper, this one presented at the Association for the Sociology of Religion meeting held across the street from the ASA conference, found that areas of the U.S. with large numbers of mainline Protestants tend to be negatively associated with hate crimes. Shawn Ratcliff of the University of Nebraska looked at the incidence of hate crimes, as reflected in FBI and other law enforcement data, in relation to counties’ religious composition and found that in counties where mainline Protestant adherents were more dominant there were both less incidents of hate crimes and less crimes in general. Ratcliff argued that mainline Protestants are more likely to act as “stewards of society” discouraging such anti-social behavior.

In Africa, the Pentecostal movement has attracted the most attention for its high growth rates and large churches, but the mainline denominations brought to the continent by the first missionaries continue to represent important sources of community life and support for congregations and their members, writes Beth Ann Williams in the *Journal of Religion in Africa* (online in August). The researcher conducted interviews with rural and urban women in Nairobi and northern Tanzania,

looking at the way mainline churches unite people across divisions of ethnicity, nation, and class. Williams found that while African women have felt a new sense of agency and emotional support in the Pentecostal and African Independent (indigenous) churches, the stability of the mainline congregations, especially the Anglican, Lutheran, and Presbyterian churches, has preserved their appeal for many women. Unlike the Pentecostal and African Independent congregations, which often deny women full participation and leadership roles, the mainline churches have opened their doors to women leaders, even if in practice few have attained high leadership positions. The stability of the mainline churches has permitted these women to anticipate and access benefits from their church networks and gain strength through consistent religious practices.

These “mission churches” provide resources to poor women and girls beyond those of their hometowns and ethnic and kin relations, serving as sites of aid distribution, networking for loans (often provided by members pooling their resources), or as an emergency safety net. Even those who claimed that they did not receive such benefits valued the sense of community they felt in such churches. For upper-class African women, the mission churches provided connections with international partners who supplied resources beyond what a local congregation could provide. This could take place either through encounters between single actors or through congregational partnerships, such as “sister churches,” as well as through overseas sponsors and scholarships for educational opportunities. Churchwomen regularly attended regional conferences for training and developing new skills. Williams notes that the standardized lessons, lectionaries and other printed material, and even the church uniforms, provided by bodies such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania gave members a structure and a sense of unity that they valued in their lives. She writes that this sense of empowerment often took place regardless of whether “church leadership [had] ideological or political roles for religious programming[, as] members often grasp[ed] onto different facets of church life for their own ends, from leveraging prayer groups into rotating loan cooperatives to wearing their church uniforms to avoid harassment when traveling.”

(*Journal of Religion in Africa*, <https://brill.com/view/journals/jra/jra-overview.xml>)



## CURRENT RESEARCH

● **Among alumni of evangelical schools and homeschooling there appear to be elements of Christian nationalism but also a reluctance to engage in politics, according to research by David Sikkink of the University of Notre Dame.** Sikkink analyzed the 2019 Cardus Education Survey of alumni between the ages of 24 and 39 from 1,905 private schools and 400 other schools. He found that graduates of evangelical private schools and those who were homeschooled showed a greater sense of alienation, feeling more than other respondents that the mainstream culture was hostile to them. There was also lower trust in the mass media and science among this group, although trust in the government was about the same for public and evangelical school alumni but lower for homeschoolers. Homeschoolers were more likely than the other groups to support the exercise of free speech even when considered offensive. Both graduates of evangelical schools and those who were homeschooled showed a greater commitment to local and national than global agendas. They “didn’t feel like citizens of the world,” Sikkink added. But in general there was a reticence to engage in politics among the evangelical and homeschooled groups, especially in the latter population. There was solid support for political conservatism among evangelical school alumni and those who were homeschooled, with the former graduates more likely to support Donald Trump for president than homeschoolers (somewhat unexpected since this group has been assumed to be among the most politicized). Sikkink concluded that there may be elements of nascent Christian nationalism among evangelical school and homeschooled alumni but also a tendency not to be strongly involved in politics, suggesting they may be more involved in family and church life.



● **Aging in Western populations may have the result of slowing the rate of secularization, according to a study in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (online in July).**

Researchers Sergey Shulgin, Julia Zinkina and Andrey Korotayev analyzed data from five waves of the World Values Survey (1981–2014). Their analysis looked at various measures of religiosity in high-income nations, such as church attendance and self-reports on the importance of religion, and found that in all cases individuals were more likely to be more religious as they aged. The cohort or generational effect was found to be less significant in predicting religiosity than age. “It is mainly



in the developed countries that global aging may have the most pronounced effect on slowing down the transition from religious to secular values or, possibly, even on some increase in religiosity,” the researchers write. There are already signs of this effect in countries that have advanced the most in aging, such as Japan.

(*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, <https://brill.com/view/journals/jra/jra-overview.xml>)



● **Pro-choice and pro-life attitudes around the world are shaped by laws on abortion that are in turn influenced by dominant faith traditions, with mainline Protestantism promoting the most liberal views and Islam the most conservative ones, according to a study by sociologist Amy Adamczyk.** In a paper presented at the recent meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion in New York, Adamczyk analyzed the World Values Survey (waves 4–6) on country-level attitudes towards abortion across 17 nations. “While people from nations dominated by mainline Protestant faiths have the most liberal attitudes, residents of Muslim nations have the most conservative views,” she said. But the effect of moral communities, meaning the values and norms created by religions, on abortion attitudes was not found to be significant at the country level. Views on life issues and sexual morality did help explain individual religious influences, and personal religious importance had a greater influence on abortion attitudes in richer rather than poorer countries. But it was the laws allowing for or restricting abortion that had the strongest independent effect on these attitudes, Adamczyk concluded.

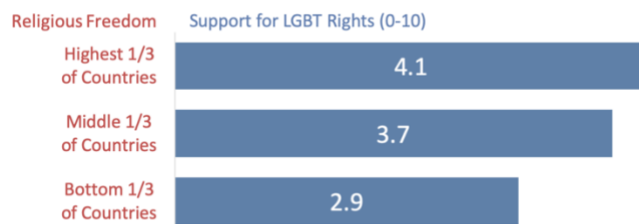


● **Rights regarding religious freedom and the LGBT community in the U.S. “seem to rise and fall together,” even though they are often opposed to each other in the culture wars, according to a new study by the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation (August 17).**

Researcher Brian Grim looks at the intersection between religious freedom and LGBT rights by using global religious freedom measures calculated from data gathered by the Pew Research Center and comparing them with public opinion data on LGBT rights from around the world put together by the Williams Institute, a UCLA Law School think tank. Grim finds that among the 137 countries that have both religious freedom and

LGBT data, “the average level of support for LGBT rights is 38 percent higher in countries with higher religious freedom than in countries with low levels of religious freedom. In the third of countries scoring the highest on religious freedom, the level of support for LGBT rights was 4.1 [on a Global Acceptance Index (GAI) scale of 0–10] compared with only 2.9 in the third of countries scoring at the bottom of the scale on religious freedom.” The level of support for LGBT rights is significantly more likely to be expanding in religiously free countries than in those nations restricting religion. Among the 25 countries with the highest levels of religious freedom, the LGBT GAI increased by 0.11 points between 2004 and 2013. In contrast, among the countries with the worst record on religious freedom (the lowest 12), the GAI decreased on average by 0.53

#### Countries With Higher Religious Freedom Have Higher Support for LGBT Rights



Analysis: Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, 2019; Religious Freedom Data: Inverse of the Pew Research Center's 2017 Government Restrictions on Religion Index (GRI); LGBT Data: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, 2009-2013 Global Acceptance Index (GAI). Number of countries in both data sets, 137.

points. The average level of religious freedom is 36 percent higher in the countries with higher levels of support for LGBT rights than in those with low levels of support for these rights.

(This report can be downloaded from:

<https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/2/post/2019/08/new-global-study-do-religious-freedom-and-lgbt-rights-have-common-ground.html>)

● **Being from a Catholic country seems to provide an inoculation against voting for parties skeptical about European Union membership, while Protestant nations are much more likely to be hosts for party politics critical of the EU, according to a study by Margarete Scherer of Goethe University.** In the journal *Politics and Religion* (online in August), Scherer notes that Europe has long been divided between Protestant nations that have emphasized the nation-state and Catholic nations that have been more supportive of internationalism. In analyzing data from the 2014 European Parliament elections, she confirmed the finding that countries with a Catholic background tend to vote for pro-EU parties while Protestant nations tend to vote for anti-EU parties. The more unexpected finding was that the Catholic background would not even seem to “provide a public sphere where European attitudes are related to a Europe-related vote choice...What is new from this study is the claim that Protestantism drives EU issue voting, while Catholicism limits it,” Scherer writes. In predominantly Catholic countries, it doesn’t make a difference whether voters oppose or support an open policy of immigration or agree or disagree on a transfer of competencies to the European level; they are still not likely to vote for an anti-EU party.

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



● **A study of megachurches in the Netherlands finds a pattern of growth, although such expansion is due largely to a “circulation of the saints,” that is, an addition of those who are already religious.** The study, presented by Paul Vermeer of Radboud University at the mid-August meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion in New York, examined six thriving evangelical megachurches (having over 1,000 attendees) whose recent history has been characterized by sometimes spectacular growth: a Nazarene church, two Baptist churches, an evangelical church mainly attended by people from Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles, and two

free evangelical churches with ties to Willow Creek. Although not representative of the entire evangelical population of the Netherlands, the 584 attenders of these churches Vermeer examined through an online survey closely matched demographic features of evangelicals, including their high-income status.

Vermeer found that the evangelical congregations he studied were exceptional compared to mainline and Catholic churches for the high rate of switching, with only 20.4 percent of their current membership having also belonged to an evangelical congregation during adolescence. New members were more likely to come from mainline Protestant (26.9 percent) and orthodox Protestant (24.4 percent) churches, and even from secular ranks (25.7 percent), than from evangelical congregations. There were few from Catholic backgrounds (2.6 percent). Secular converts differed from stable church members in that they had a more “intrinsic religious orientation” (with a religious upbringing) and were also more likely to have a partner who switched or converted to an evangelical congregation as well. Vermeer concludes that the growth of these congregations is “both a matter of religious switching *and* of successfully reaching out to the unchurched... In short, these evangelical congregations basically attract religious people. But if this is how religious congregations can withstand the secularizing forces in secular Dutch society, there are also clear limits to their success and ability to grow.”



## Post-Brexit drive for Irish unity may face new religious “troubles”

The likelihood of Brexit becoming a reality is leading to new hopes of Irish unity, although religious factors quite different from the ones that have marked Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland for over a century may complicate things. In the social science magazine *Society* (July–August), John Rodden writes that with the Republic of Ireland firmly in the European Union camp and Northern Ireland fearing the economic costs of Brexit and thus more likely to consider leaving the UK, the dream of a united Ireland may not be far off. Northern Ireland has been long opposed to Irish unity because of the fear of Catholic dominance by the republic to the south. But even if Catholics retain a demographic advantage, the anti-Catholic stance of the north has weakened due to the wave of liberalization that has occurred in the south. Rodden writes that Protestants in the



north are “gratified yet incredulous, if not outright astonished, that ‘the priest-ridden Republic’ of their youth has become the most tolerant and open-minded nation in all of Europe, boasting its most liberal abortion and same-sex marriage laws, along with a gay prime minister [along with slight anti-immigrant sentiment].” But while the factors combining to promote unification may be influential, they may also pose significant setbacks.

Rodden continues, “Conservative Catholics who



oppose the secularist social agenda (liberalized abortion, gay marriage, and LGBTQ rights) usually regard the evangelical Protestant north as a citadel of decency in the culture wars. Many of them believe (and hope) that the Republic's betrayal of godly values could sour northern Protestants on unification. Ironically, that possibility is far more likely to nix NIRExit than the old fears of Ulstermen such as Ian Paisley of living under a papist 'Catholic' Ireland. From a conservative standpoint, Eire today is no longer a 'Catholic' nation at all. (Fewer than half of the Republic's Catholics self-identify as religious.) In their view, Eire's loss of a Catholic identity may mean that demographics (i.e., a Catholic majority) may not be a decisive factor driving unification after all."

(*Society*, <https://link.springer.com/journal/12115>)

## Outreach to Russia's intellectuals growing in Orthodox heartland

Russian Orthodoxy and its relation to Russia's intellectual and cultural life is often seen through the prism of the church hierarchy and its conservative and nationalist sympathies, but on the parish level one finds a pattern of innovation in social ministry and theology, writes Wallace Daniel in the *Journal of Church and State* (online in August). The Russian Orthodox Church has had a difficult relationship with secular society due to internal factors of traditionalism as well as communism and nationalism. In the post-communist period, Orthodox leaders and theologians like Alexander Men led the way in creating innovations in ministry and establishing interchange with intellectuals and activists, although much of this activity stalled with Men's murder in 1990. But Daniel notes that change often takes place at a distance from the ruling elite of the Moscow Patriarchate, who have little power over "the actual religious life in Russian provinces, where legacies of the past, local leaders, and different behaviors exert strong roles in how Orthodoxy is practiced and how the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Russian intelligentsia is best expressed." Based on the wide-ranging research of Russian sociologist Sergei Filatov, who heads the project, "Encyclopedia of Religious Life," Daniel cites the strong diversity of religious practices that have emerged in the last decade as well as the growth in ministries to intellectuals, the poor, the elderly, children and youth.

This change is evident in cities of central Russia in particular, but also in St. Petersburg, where a group of emerging leaders are "challenging the old inward-looking viewpoints and frameworks" of the church. Tending to have entered the priesthood during perestroika, they include such St. Petersburg-based priests as Alexander Stepanov, Aleksandr Tkachenko, and Konstantin Golovskii, head of the Association of Orthodox Youth Communities. Stepanov's Brotherhood of Saint Anastasia has been at the forefront of juvenile delinquent rehabilitation but also runs a radio station with cultural programming. He has criticized the church for catering only to those supportive of the government and turning its back on those who speak out about the state. Sergei Filatov has found examples of Orthodox Church leaders who are reaching out to members of the local intelligentsia and attempting to involve them in discussions about how the church might speak openly and effectively on the problems of Russian society. "These cases contradict the oft-repeated stereotypes of Orthodox priests and are much



Alexander Men (center) with parishioners in 1974.

more than isolated examples. Collectively, they are spawning a new milieu in which the relationships between the Orthodox Church and Russian society are being reconceived,” Daniel concludes.

(*Journal of Church and State*, <http://academic.oupcom/jcs>)

## Scandinavia’s silent rooms go from religious accommodation to privatized spirituality

“Quiet rooms” established in public institutions in Scandinavia to accommodate religions in increasingly pluralistic and secular societies have taken on more private uses, revealing a shift from collective religion to a more individualistic spirituality, according to a study published in the journal *Sociology of Religion* (Online in August). A team of researchers studied these “rooms of silence” on the campuses of universities in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. “One of the most striking results of the study of the rooms of silence is how strongly room regulations discourage collective uses and encourage private and ‘spiritual’ use,” write Henrik Reintoft Christensen, Ida Marie Høeg, Lene Kühle, and Magdalena Nordin. These rooms are designed throughout Europe for silence, which excludes some types of religious and spiritual practice and has resulted in a convergence between religious and spiritual rooms.



The rooms had been established for group worship by the majority Lutheran churches and their chaplains in these Scandinavian societies, and the changes in use can also illuminate the way these churches have moved away from doctrinal orthodoxy toward a more liberal and privatized religion. The universities themselves have various reasons for approving of this shift. “The names of the rooms have changed. They no longer have any references to religion, which supports the idea of equality in a religiously diverse society and may be attractive in the competition for the best students in an international and globalized field of education,” the authors note. They add that the architecture and location of the rooms make some practices more likely than others. The rooms are not designed for Islamic collective rituals in a period of rapid growth of Muslim students, though these students have adapted their practices to this new environment.

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

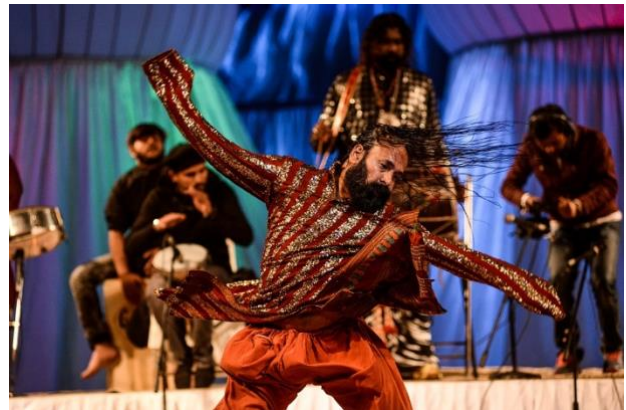
## The “Izala effect” and the decline of Salafi Islam in West Africa and Southeast Asia

Not only have recent Salafist political projects failed to materialize, but Salafis themselves are gaining less of a hearing and less influence among Muslims in a wide range of Islamic countries and contexts, write Muhammad Sani Umar and Mark Woodward in the journal *Contemporary*



*Islam* (online August). While the campaigns of jihadist Salafist coalitions in Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, and Mali have met resistance if not mass flight, the authors note that the “limited success of the larger Salafi religious, cultural and social agendas has not yet received the attention it deserves.” Salafi Muslim organizations have spent millions seeking to peacefully promote their strict form of Islam around the world through the building of mosques and through scholarship programs for study in Saudi Arabia. Umar and Woodward look specifically at Indonesia and Nigeria, two of the world’s most populous Muslim countries in which Salafi Islam has invested but found limited appeal. Despite vocal Salafists’ apparent dominance of public discourse in these countries, Umar and Woodward, in their ethnographic investigation of how people resist this movement, find what they call an “Izala effect”—a reaffirmation of local culture in response to Salafist promotion, “Izala” being an abbreviated name for the Nigerian Salafist group from which the violent Boko Haram organization emerged. The “Izala effect” signifies that the growth of Salafism has had the unintended consequence of reaffirming the local beliefs and practices it has been determined to eradicate, including a reassertion of “the Quranic bases of Sufism [mystical Islam], and...intensification of Muslim cultural practices that are deeply influenced by Sufi spiritual teachings.”

Nowhere is the Izala effect seen more clearly than in the failure of Salafists to stem the tide of religious songs and popular cultural practices that form important parts of Muslim identity, especially in Southeast Asia. The failure of the Salafist critique against Sufism can be seen in the growth of Sufist orders and the way that ever more flamboyant and exaggerated expressions of that movement have become increasingly widespread, according to Umar and Woodward. “Many rituals have been ramped up from home- or mosque-based events that attract tens of devotees to massive public spectacles attracting hundreds of thousands. The Salafi interdiction of songs and music is drowned in the tidal waves of thousands and thousands of fans who attend musical performances by virtuoso Sufi artistes.” Umar and Woodward cite surveys of Southeast Asia and West Africa showing a low number of Muslims identifying with Salafi groups, which, they add, is also the case in diaspora communities in the UK and Sweden. Whereas in the past Sufi groups have ignored or resisted Salafi condemnations of their beliefs and practices, or “domesticated” them by mixing them with their own doctrines, the authors write that most recently they have gone on the offense, “impugning their Islamic piety, accusing them of greed [and] sexual depravity, belittling their pretensions to Islamic learning, and praying to God to consign them to hellfire.” This aggressive backlash has the potential to radicalize Sufism in a similar way to Salafism, which can already be seen in violent episodes in Nigeria where Sufis and Salafis have clashed over the control of mosques.



(*Contemporary Islam*, <https://link.springer.com/journal/11562>)

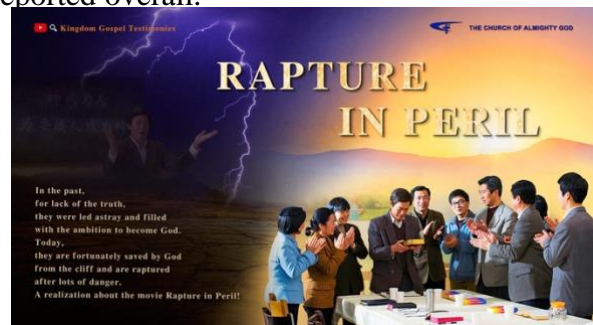
## **Church of Almighty God members facing repression from Chinese government and obstacles in gaining asylum**

The quasi-Christian group, the Church of Almighty God (CAG), has become the most outlawed

religion in China, while its members face obstacles in gaining asylum in the West, according to one presentation at a session on the movement that was held at this year's conference of the Association for the Sociology of Religion in New York, which **RW** attended. Massimo Introvigne, a scholar of new religious movements, reported that CAG has replaced Falun Gong as the Communist Party's number one "evil cult," particularly as members of the latter group are already in jail or now living in exile. The government has accused the group of violence and criminal activity, although many of its charges (including a murder in a McDonald's restaurant in 2014) have not been proven. But new restrictions against gathering for worship and having religious books in one's home have been enough to restrict the group, along with other religions, during a period of growing religious repression in China. Introvigne said it is estimated that about 400,000 members of CAG have been imprisoned and that there have been reports of regular torture against these believers. Although Christian groups have been hostile toward CAG, largely due to its aggressive promotion of a teaching that God has been incarnated again in the form of a woman, the recent repression has brought CAG closer to other religions.

Introvigne said that repression has brought CAG together with house church groups, Tibetan Buddhists, and Uyghur Muslims feeling particular pressure from the Chinese government under such auspices as the U.S. State Department's Coalition to Advance Religious Freedom in China. CAG is also similar to Falun Gong in that its leaders, including the woman who is said to be the second incarnation of God, are now in exile in New York and its members are increasingly seeking asylum in the U.S. and other Western countries. James Richardson presented another paper at the session focusing on the obstacles CAG members have experienced in migrating to Western nations. He finds that while there are currently 5,800 CAG members seeking asylum in these nations, less than 10 percent have been granted that status, although it is also the case that few CAG members have been deported. Leading the list for CAG members granted asylum are New Zealand (85 percent granted asylum) and Sweden (78 percent), followed by Canada, Italy, and Germany (five to 10 percent), with the U.S. at a low two percent. But in the U.S. there have been no deportations, and only nine members have been deported overall.

Richardson adds that CAG members face obstacles as immigration control officers often demand from members more knowledge of the theological particulars of their faith than most adherents of other religions would possess. Furthermore, in such efforts to weed out those entering foreign countries under false pretenses, immigration officials have studied CAG's presence on the Internet, where much of the information is inaccurate.



## Findings & Footnotes

■ The phenomenon of the non-affiliated or "nones" has been prodded and probed from every available angle, although most often by social scientists and religious professionals concerned about what the rising tide of nones means for the future of institutional religion. *Public Discourse*, the electronic weekly newsletter of the conservative Witherspoon Institute, devoted its August 18 issue to looking at the broader societal impact of the rise of the nones, including on education, politics, the family and sexuality. As might be expected, the articles on politics and education relate the none trend to conservative concerns: the increasing acceptance of socialism among the millennial generation is seen as due to the growth of utopian and this-worldly political concern in the absence of a transcendent reference. The article on the nones'

impact on sexuality and the family by sociologist Mark Regnerus is based on more empirical research, including a survey of 5,285 Americans conducted by the research firm Ipsos in November 2018, just days after the midterm election. He notes that there has been a sharp 35 percent increase in the practice of cohabitation among nones under 30 in less than four years.

“Since it’s unlikely that the unreligious have recently changed their minds about the morality or pragmatics of living together, my bet is in the other direction: cohabiting leads many to no longer identify as religious at all,” writes Regnerus. On other measures of family behavior, the non-religious are not very different

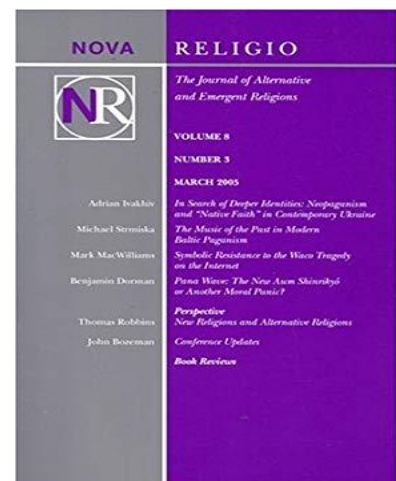


from their religious counterparts. But on measures of permissive sexual attitudes, such as support for open marriage (even if a low percentage actually practices it) and transgender rights for minors, the unreligious differ substantially from evangelicals and Catholics, showing a high level of support that has also grown significantly in a short

period of time. Yet Regnerus concludes that the growth of “permissive sexual attitudes and practices have not stimulated the religious revival many Christians claim the Sexual Revolution will yet yield. I see no evidence of it. On the contrary: Christians seem to grow more complicit—or at least more quiet about their misgivings—by the year.” For more information on this issue of *Public Discourse*, visit:

<https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2019/08/53246/>

■ A special issue of the new religious movements journal *Nova Religio* (May) is devoted to the ways new religions use archeology to buttress their claims of both ancient and divine origins. Editor Jeb J. Card notes that religion has rarely mixed with archeological research, with scholars often labeling any such ventures into the esoteric or religious realm as “pseudoarcheology” (though that may be changing, as several of the articles in this issue were originally papers presented at a special session of the Society for American Archeology in 2017). For the new religionists’ part, modern archeology is limited, refusing to go beyond recent memory to recover “mythic origins and events and entities larger than everyday human life,” although popular representations of archeology have often involved esoteric themes since the 1960s. Contributions include Card’s own article on how early archeology, such as Egyptology, looked for “survivals” that might open the pathway to a mythic past; how Theosophy and its practitioners’ hunger for knowledge about the past is fed both from excavation and the reception of knowledge from unseen sources; and the way in which paranormal investigators research accessible historical objects not controlled by experts (such as an abandoned house) using a materialist scientific approach, but then infuse these objects with mystification. For more information on this issue, visit: <https://nr.ucpress.edu/content/22/4>



■ Religious trends and the prospects for religious tolerance and interfaith efforts in the Western Balkans receive extended treatment in the current issue of the open access journal *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* (39:5). The issue contains religious demographic snapshots of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, and then features more in-depth articles on each country, including surveys of national elites on questions of religious tolerance and the importance of religion. The issue also includes articles on separate topics, such as a case study of an interfaith council in the Western Balkans and the role of religion in conflict prevention in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A cross-country comparative article suggests that national elites in most of

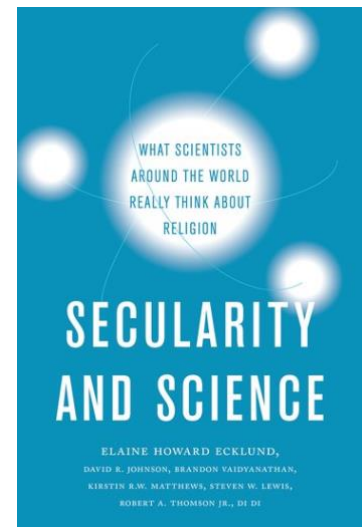




these countries agree on religion's importance (although more so in Bosnia and Herzegovina than in Albania), and even that religious bodies can have a role in fostering religious tolerance. Another general finding is that most respondents view more ethnically pluralistic regions or countries as being more likely to experience religious conflict. Respondents from more ethnically homogenous countries such as Albania and Kosovo reported greater religious harmony. To download this issue, visit: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/>

■ *Secularity and Science* (Oxford University Press, \$29.95) represents an impressive effort to chart the varied terrain of science and religion throughout the world by focusing on the views and practices of working scientists. The book, written by a team of sociologists headed by Elaine Howard Ecklund, is an extension of her earlier work on American scientists and how they see the relationship—or what many see as a conflict—between science and religion. Based on ethnographic and quantitative studies of scientists (biologists and physicists) in France, the UK, the U.S., China, India, Italy, Taiwan, and Turkey, the book continues its line of inquiry about the conflictual nature of the religion-science relationship. Ecklund and her colleagues, David R. Johnson, Brandon Vaidyanathan, Kirstin R.W. Matthews, Steven W. Lewis, Robert A. Thomson, Jr., and Di Di, find considerable variation among scientists on this central question mediated by their national religious contexts and scientific cultures.

A substantial majority of the scientists in these eight national contexts do not see an inevitable conflict between science and religion, although most uphold the ideal of the independence of science from religion and other spheres. But there are also significant differences at the national and micro levels. The assertive secularism of France has led to a divide between religion and work in science (where the former is strictly a private matter, if anything), in contrast to the religious and spirituality-permeated society surrounding Indian scientists. But even here Indian scientists speak of their faith and work as separate (although with a widespread acceptance of Indian astrology); there is just more accommodation of religious differences, shaped by India's particular form of secularism. The book also discusses other factors likely to influence different contexts, not least, the role of immigrant scientists and the minority religious influence that they bring into the workplace. When evaluating the prospects for dialogue between religion and science in the West, the authors find that Italy has a less conflictual stance than the other countries (with the U.S. and UK scientists holding the most conflictual views). The higher degree of religious pluralism in Eastern countries may also allow for greater coexistence between science and religion.



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

1. **Charis**, short for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service, is the new office for charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church established by Pope Francis to coordinate this often unwieldy movement and bring it more into line with his papacy's emphases on ecumenism and social justice. The charismatic movement had formerly had two liaison offices at the Vatican, the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services and the more recent Catholic Fraternity. In 2015, Pope Francis asked the two organizations to merge and more recently established Charis to streamline this consolidation. While not personally a part of the charismatic renewal, the pope has increasingly come to value the vitality and spirituality of the movement in its leadership role in the "new evangelization." The new organization's



purpose is to bring more unity to the movement, which in some precincts has fallen under the sway of authoritarian and self-enriching leaders. Unlike its predecessors, Charis enjoys what canon law calls a “public juridical personality,” which means that it was established by the Holy See yet is still independent of it. But this canonical status will also mean tighter Vatican oversight. Observers say that such oversight will not attempt to establish legitimate charismatic identity for the vast range of local and national prayer groups and leaders that make up the movement. But Francis has suggested

that charismatic Catholics should be at the forefront of ecumenical efforts, especially with evangelicals, while linking their spirituality to greater social justice missions, especially in his native Latin America.

(Source: *America* magazine, August 5)

2. **Sacred Stones** is a new ministry in the United Methodist Church that adapts the “circuit riding” tradition of Methodism (a term taken from the time when Methodist preachers would travel to different congregations by horseback) to the use of deacons to serve and rotate among different churches. The organization, started by three deacons in the denomination, enlists deacons to serve multiple communities by working in a particular ministry in a contract or part-time capacity. None of the congregations they work with can support a full-time deacon, though they may receive funding for limited projects. The ministries of these circuit-riding deacons may include planning and helping to get new church projects off the ground, writing liturgies for particular worship services or seasons of the church year, and developing Sunday School curricula. Sacred Stones sees itself as part of a paradigm shift towards delegating work that once may have belonged to clergy in a small-church context unable to support full-time church workers.

(Source: *Christian Century*, July 17)

