RELIGION WATCH

BAYLOR INSTITUTE FOR
Studies of Religion

BAYLOR ISR

AN ONLINE PUBLICATION OF **BAYLOR ISR**

Religious factor playing a new role in minority voting?

On first impression, the religious complexion of the recent U.S. elections showed more similarities than differences to voting behavior in 2016. Republican and Democrat voting patterns showed secular and unaffiliated Americans, along with religious minorities lining up with the latter while a significant share of active Protestants and Catholics, particularly evangelicals, sided with the former. Looking at exit polls, sociologists and pollsters addressing a post-election webinar hosted by the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion found that COVID and other events since 2016 did not stop the vast majority of evangelicals and over half of white Catholics from voting to re-elect Donald Trump in 2020. Gerardo Marti of Davidson College argued that surveys conducted during the election season revealed that many evangelicals no longer tolerate Trump's questionable morality and support him mainly for his

defense of conservative Christian concerns as was the case in 2016 but rather have come to praise the president's moral qualities and even his "anointing" as a leader. The fact that almost one-quarter of Latinos—and not only Cubans– voted for Trump shows the inroads that evangelicalism has made in this diverse ethnic group. Marti added that an affinity for the Christian right is developing as Latinos turn to evangelical churches. "Latinos are moving into the same networks as white Christians," he said.

Newsweek (November 9, 2020) reports that exit polls showed that Trump's support among white evangelicals slipped around five percentage points nationwide to 76 percent, and more in some battleground states. Trump's losses in Georgia and Pennsylvania, and Michigan, including Kent County, considered an evangelical stronghold, helped give Biden more votes than Hillary Clinton had four years earlier. Minnesota pastor Doug Pagitt, founder of the pro-Biden Vote Common Good, said his group's data suggests 70 percent of white evangelicals voted for Trump, down from 81 percent four years ago. He added that the group's research indicates that 300,000 white evangelicals statewide ditched Trump, more than the 157,000 non-evangelicals who did likewise in the state. Meanwhile, writing on the website of the *Interfaith Youth Corp* (November 16, 2020), Columbia University sociologist Musa al-Gharbi accented the growing divide

between secular Democrats and religious Republicans that even shows up among religious minorities. Al-Gharbi writes that since 2016, there is a pattern of white disaffection from the GOP while people of color have moved more toward the Republicans. Trump did worse among white people than he did in 2016 while he picked up more votes among blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. Al-Gharbi said that much of this shift has to do with religion.

In a trend that preceded Trump, a segment of minority voters has become alienated from the social liberalism of the Democrats, even if they might continue supporting the "bread-and-butter" issues of the party, according to al-Gharbi. Even Muslims, a group that Trump conflicted with early in his presidency, showed almost a three-fold increase in turning out for him compared to 2016. "This marks a stark contrast to Barack Obama and George W. Bush, who lost a significant chunk of these voters after their first stints at the White House," al Gharbi writes. This shift among some Muslims may reflect the greater African-American vote for Trump since a segment of blacks are Muslim, but it may be due to Trump's more moderate tone toward Muslims later in his presidency and his support for withdrawing troops from the Middle East, he adds. Amplifying on these findings, Princeton University's Robert George writes in the *National Catholic Register* (November 6, 2020) that the small yet growing movement of minorities to the Republicans may show that the "key to winning for Republicans, at least today, is to combine economic populism with social conservatism…What was the thing that kept minorities from getting on board with the Republican Party? What stopped the Republican Party from at least getting maybe 25 percent? It was not social conservatism. Minorities tend to be disproportionately more religious and socially conservative than non-minorities, especially when we're talking about Black and Latino minorities…If they're smart, the Republicans will do a big outreach to two kinds of Catholics: white, Mass-attending Catholics and Latino Mass-attending Catholics. Those constituencies will likely find the combination of social conservatism and economic populism extremely appealing."

But Christianity Today (October 27, 2020) reports that not all religious minorities are moving in a Republican direction. The presidential election has split Asian Americans along generational and cultural lines, especially those of Chinese background. This year, the Chinese was the Asian ethnic group with the largest proportion of undecided voters in the presidential election (a high 23 percent). This tendency may be because most recent Chinese immigrants come from mainland China, unlike previous generations that came from more democratically inclined Hong Kong and Taiwan. Many of the older Chinese-American follow pro-Trump Chinese pastors and speakers online and also conservative evangelical leaders like Focus on the Family founder James Dobson. It is a different story for second-plus-generation Chinese Americans; every young Chinese-American evangelical interviewed for the article was voting for Biden, "and their top issues—climate change, gender and racial equality, immigration, and the pandemic—had almost no overlap with that of first-generation immigrants. Their view of the gospel often extended beyond personal piety and single issues."

Holy See seeking stricter control over new Catholic communities

In an effort to reign in new Catholic communities and the concern about their potential abuses, the recognition of new institutes of consecrated life and new societies of apostolic life in Catholic dioceses will now first require the written approval of the Holy See, according to an Apostolic Letter (Motu proprio) titled *Authenticum charismatis*, published by Pope Francis on November 4. Canon 579 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law stated: "Diocesan bishops, each in his own territory, can erect institutes of consecrated life by formal decree, provided that the Apostolic See has been consulted." But a bishop could consult Rome and then still go ahead whatever the answer, remarks an emeritus professor of Pontifical Lateran University, Msgr. Patrick Valdirni, in an interview with *Vatican News* (November 10, 2020). In his analysis of the new document, a French expert on canon law, Fr. Cédric Burgun (Catholic University of Paris), notes that the Pope had already repeated this requirement in 2016, stressing that such a consultation was necessary, otherwise any erection of a new institute or society would be considered as null and void (*Droit canonique*, November 6, 2020). The fact that new and stricter rules are now enforced suggests that the previously existing rules had not always been properly followed. Some bishops have continued to grant diocesan status to new communities without asking Rome first, reports *I.MEDIA* (November 16, 2020), a news agency with a focus on Vatican affairs, But such independence should no longer be possible with the new rules.

The rationale for stricter rules is that bishops have lacked discernment when granting a status to new communities and that some founders who had failed in getting approval from a bishop had wandered from one diocese to another until they found a bishop willing to give his blessing, Burgun adds. While he writes that oversight may promote centralization, it may be the only realistic option for dealing with such issues in a time of globalization, with founders of new communities able to cross diocesan and national borders in their quest for legitimation. Moreover, once an institute or society is founded, its impact may go widely beyond diocesan boundaries. Jesús Miguel Zamora, general secretary of the Spanish Conference of Religious, shares the example of a proliferation of diocesan institutes of consecrated life in Latin America, which then spread around the world (Religión Confidencial, November 5, 2020). *Authenticum charismatis* is understood as a part of the current efforts by the Holy See to fight abuses and prevent the recognition of potentially deviant communities, usually gathered around a charismatic founder. There is still a lot to do for dealing with such issues, since the group in charge of dealing with diocesan institutes at the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in Rome is reportedly understaffed, according to *I.MEDIA*. The new rules have been enforced from Nov. 10, 2020, in contrast with the three months waiting period usually allowed before canonical changes take effect. According to Burgun, the likely

reason is that the Pope wanted to prevent the risk of hurried recognitions of new communities by some diocesan bishops if a longer transition period had been allowed.

CURRENT RESEARCH

● **Megachurches continue to grow in attendance, even as these congregations are subdividing into smaller satellite churches, according to a study by Scott Thumma and Warren Bird.** The Hartford Institute for Religion Research-based study confirmed that the majority of participants continue to be white and college educated, although these racial patterns are changing. While megachurches experience people leaving the pews, nearly two-thirds have been at their churches for more than 5 years. The growth in racial diversity in megachurches has increased markedly; only two decades ago, 21 percent of megachurches were multiracial, while today half of them (58 percent) are. The expansion of megachurches shows up mainly in the growth of separate worship services offered weekly across their multisite campuses. Back in 2000, 23 percent of megachurches were multisite, but now 70 percent have adopted this strategy. The commitment of megachurches to church planting is seen in growth of this activity; only 18 percent of megachurches claimed to have helped start or plant a new church between 2010 to 2015, but almost half (48 percent) said they done so in the last 5 years (2016 to 2020).

(*This report can be downloaded here:*
http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/2020_Megachurch_Report.pdf)

● **Canada's churches and other congregations contribute close to $15.5 billion dollars in economic benefit, with a "value equivalent to approximately 0.7 percent of Canada's GDP, according to a study by Mark Wood Daly in the journal *Studies in Religion* (49:4).** What has been called the "halo effect," which is the economic benefit that religious institutions yield to their society, has been studied in the U.S. and other countries. Daly adapted the method used in the U.S. study to the Canadian context, using variables that included direct spending, open space, education, individual impact, and community development. Focusing on a pilot study of Toronto to determine the impact of Canadian congregations on their community, Daly found that the average socioeconomic benefit of each congregation was $4.5 million, with a spending index of

$4.77. "In other words, for every dollar a congregation spent, the surrounding community received, on average, $4.77 in economic benefit," he writes.

In a wider study, including 76 churches from every province, the average congregational impact was found to be approximately $2.7 million, with a median value of $2.0 million. For every dollar these congregations spend, Canadian society receives $3.87 in socioeconomic benefit. The newsletter *Counting Religion in Britain* (October 2020) cites a similar study for the UK, finding that its 40,300 churches generate at least 12.4 billion pounds in economic and social value each year. The study, conducted by State of Life on behalf the National Churches Trust, and found the benefits of market value and replacement cost of 2.4 billion pounds and 10 billion pounds non-market (social and wellbeing) value. The two main aspects of the latter figure are 8.3 billion pounds of wellbeing value to individuals benefitting from community good and 1.4 billion pounds wellbeing value of weekly church attendance.

(*Studies of Religion*, https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/studies-religionsciences-religieuses;*Counting Religion in Britain*, http://www.brin.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/No-61-October-2020.pdf)

● **The percentage of Catholics leaving the church in recent years is similar in Switzerland to the trends observed in other countries, writes Urs Winter-Pfändler in a new online analysis published by the *Swiss Institute of Pastoral Sociology* (November 19, 2020).** Those leaving the church mostly make their decision between 25 and 35, but the share of those exiting between 51 and 60 is on the rise. In 2019, a record number of 31,772 Catholics left the church in Switzerland, i.e., 1.1 percent of the faithful (25 percent more than compared to 2018). In the same year, less than 1,000 adults joined the church. In many Swiss cantons, a church tax is raised by the state on behalf of religious bodies with a public law status (mostly Catholic and Reformed); thus, saving money may play a role. Indeed, in those four cantons where leaving the church has no impact on taxes, the percentage of those who leave is lower. If those four cantons are left out of the statistical data, 1.4 percent of Catholics in the remaining cantons have left the Catholic Church last year. In comparison, the percentage for 2019 was 1.2 percent in Germany and 1.3 percent in Austria, two neighboring countries. There are strong differences from one area to another, with the urban canton of Basel showing a 4.9 percent dropout rate of Catholics in 2019. In comparison, this percentage goes down below 1 percent in rural, traditionally Catholic areas.

The analysis focuses on the canton of St. Gallen, which can be seen as representative of the average situation in Swiss German cantons. There had been a first wave of people leaving the Church in 2010, and then a second ongoing wave in recent years. They seem to be linked to the public discussions on sexual abuse, but also to Catholic sexual morality relating to the issue of divorced people who

remarried and thus are banned from receiving communion, as well as concerning the position of women in the church. This raises issues of credibility for the church in segments of the population. However, a comparison with Reformed statistics (the Protestant Church used to be the largest religious body in Switzerland fifty years ago, but now occupies second rank due to a marked statistical decline) shows that losses of members are experienced by both historically established churches in Switzerland with relatively similar rates (for instance, in Basel, 3.5 percent of the Reformed left the Church in 2019). Thus, the current trend cannot be reduced to issues in the Catholic Church—it is church membership in itself that is being increasingly called into question (around 28 percent of the population had no religious affiliation in 2018, compared to 11 percent in 2000).

Source (in German): https://kirchenstatistik.spi-sg.ch/die-kirchenaustritte-in-der-katholischen-kirche-unter-dem-mikroskop/

Significant numbers of young refugees converting to Christianity in Sweden

In Sweden, a country where the established church has been in decline, unexpected new members find their way to the Lutheran as well as other churches (e.g., Pentecostal), since thousands of young people with a Muslim background, who had arrived as unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs), have converted to the Christian faith, becoming active and engaged members of their congregations, writes Jonathan Morgan (Lund University) in *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* (Fall, 2020). URMs represent a phenomenon observed in many European countries. Between 2014 and 2016, 44,617 URMs (under 18 years old) have found their way to Sweden. While the author does not deny attempts to accrue asylum capital (although conversion does not increase likelihood of being offered legal residence), he also sees other elements at work in such conversions, based on fieldwork with two groups of URMs in Southern Sweden (converts to the Church of Sweden) Morgan finds a sense of belonging in a new environment attracts new conversions. The young converts start by belonging to the community before later believing in the doctrine of their newly embraced religious denomination. Coming with traumatic experiences from difficult backgrounds and sometimes from war zones, far from familiar surroundings, they are looking for supportive adults, who may sometimes be pastors or teachers.

The converts are asking pastors for ongoing advice on a variety of subjects, far more than what most Swedish church members would expect. Beside participation in church activities, the URMs also have activities of their own (e.g., Bible-reading groups). Reactions from relatives who have stayed in Muslim majority countries are diverse. Some families completely reject the converts, while other ones tell them that they should feel free to do what they want. Morgan observes how his respondents felt relieved from the pressure of performing religion "regardless of whether they believed or not." This allowed them to question their beliefs in a way they wouldn't have been able to; the author suggests that embracing pluralism paved the way to embracing a new faith. In contrast with a religious background which they had to automatically accept, they found a great deal of agency and a lack of pressure on their way to becoming Christians. They felt free to discuss issues related to faith—something that they had never

experienced before. Morgan sees their conversion as an adaptation from an environment into which religion is unchallenged to a new place where religion becomes an option. Thus, conversion is "part of a process of accommodating the secular, as these young people move from a society with a hegemonic religious culture to secular Sweden." Christianity could thus be understood as "an intermediate point between home and host societies."

(*The Review of Faith & International Affairs*- https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rfia20/current)

North Korean migrants convert through the 'Christian passage' and take up the missionary calling

Religion plays a significant role for North Korean refugees and migrants seeking a sense of belonging in their new homelands, a phenomenon that has been largely neglected by scholars, writes Jin-Heon Jung in the online journal *Religions* (October 9, 2020). Jung writes that after being exposed to Protestant missionary networks while staying in Northeast China or en route to the south, close to 80 percent of these North Korean migrants/refugees affiliate themselves with Protestant churches once they are in South Korea. He calls this migration from North Korea the

"Christian passage," as migrants are given shelter and protection by evangelical missionaries. In South Korea, they are considered lower status members in the church hierarchy. But the migrants' evangelical experience empowers them to claim a leadership role in a national evangelization effort. They see this as their calling, even when they migrate to secular Europe (especially Germany). In ethnographic interviews with over 200 North Korean migrant-refugees, Jung finds that unlike other religious migrants, the North Korean were non-believers when they escaped their country and only became Christians while staying in the Sino-North Korean border area. Their conversions not only provided them with a sense of belonging but also an imagined future homeland where they hope to return to North Korea to evangelize its people.

(*Religions*, https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/11/10/510)

Jihadist terrorism declines in Europe even as home-grown threats remain in sight

Although there has been a recent spate of terrorist attacks in Europe, jihadism on the continent has declined markedly, according to *The Economist* (November 3, 2020). The number of completed Islamist attacks fell every year from 2017 to 2019, while the number of failed or foiled ones rose, according to Europol, the EU's law-enforcement agency. Only ten people were killed in 2019, mostly by the Islamic State (IS), which has recruited up to 5,000 or so European recruits. When the IS "caliphate" was defeated in 2019, European security officials feared that these returned jihadists would be difficult to keep track of. In reality, IS veterans "have not proven as numerous or violent as feared, even if the group's ideology has remained potent." Yet the threat of radicalization continues to loom for security services. In a speech in October, Ken McCallum of MI5, Britain's domestic-intelligence service, said that Islamist extremism remained potent, with the plots becoming harder to foil "as more terrorists have gone for basic attack methods requiring little preparation."

None of the recent attackers in Europe are thought to have reached Iraq or Syria to join the IS, though the suspect in Germany had been convicted of recruiting on behalf of the group. The magazine adds that "The problem seems to be less about hardened combat veterans than those with looser ties to the jihadist ecosystem turning to violent action," Propaganda continues to circulate freely online, with one European Parliament measure to remove online propaganda remaining dormant for almost two years. Another concern is that European deradicalization programs in prisons have been ineffective or inactive. The suspects in the recent cases were either let out of prison early or released days before the attacks. One had completed a deradicalization program. "In many European countries the priority was to get people locked up," says Peter Neumann of King's College London, "and then to forget about them, with many becoming further radicalized in prison."

State-approved Chinese Buddhism exported worldwide

China is exporting its own version of Buddhism throughout the world that is sympathetic to the Chinese government and the Communist party as way of spreading its "soft power," according to Yoshiko Ashiwa of Hitotsubashi University and David L. Wank of Sophia University. Speaking at a webinar series on how religions are serving as a form of soft power by sponsoring nations (mainly looking at the Islamic world) at the Berkley Center for Religion and World Affairs of Georgetown University in mid-November, Ashiwa and Wank noted that China is using Buddhism to exert such international influence as it has previously done with Confucianism.

China's establishment of Confucian Institutes in the early 2000s around the world raised charges that the country sought to covertly advance its political agenda and interests. The promotion of a distinctly China-based Buddhism abroad has been far less confrontational and political than the Confucian Institutes, as such efforts are not promoted under one brand and rather seeks to extend its national Buddhism through different organizations working in different countries. Ashiwa and Wank said that China and its president Xi Jingping are not so much interested in spreading Buddhism as a religion as much as using Buddhism as a way to promote Chinese culture, particularly in countries where it has strategic interests.


The Buddhism being promoted is based in "patriotic" associations—much as state approved Christian churches and mosques belong to patriotic societies—that are registered and supported by the Communist Party. The policy of spreading Buddhism as form of Chinese culture was inaugurated in 2015 and has various objectives depending on the region it is targeting. In most Asian countries, the patriotic Chinese Buddhism seeks to work with established Buddhist groups and establish fraternal relations among Buddhist clergy and monks while strengthening their ties to China. In other Asian countries, such as Japan, India, and Taiwan, China is competing with Buddhist bodies and institutions to establish its supremacy and leadership, which may have an impact on the homeland. For instance, "Chinese clerics and devotees are recovering the Shingon school of the Vajrayana tradition that disappeared in China but still exists in Japan. This will create an alternative Chinese Vajrayana school to Tibetan Buddhism within the PRC," Ashiwa and Wank add. Meanwhile, in Western countries, a deliberate strategy of Buddhist temple building has been pursued to serve the many immigrants from mainland China. In strongly multicultural societies such as Australia and Canada, newly created pilgrimage sites draw Chinese tourists and Buddhists while they also serve as Chinese culture theme parks for the general population. Ashiwa adds that "social welfare" projects sponsored by the new Chinese Buddhist groups are also common as are meditation centers that are "open to non-Buddhists, offered to Westerners in a manner similar to that of Chinese cuisine" served to the non-Chinese. The researchers concluded that the new China-sponsored Buddhism will encounter a diversity of ecumenical Buddhist groups in the U.S. and may be influenced by such pluralism as much as they attempt to shape American Buddhism.


Findings & Footnotes

■ The state of the patriotic or "Three-Self" church movement in China is the subject of the current issue of *ChinaSource Quarterly* (September 2020). Patriotic churches, which can be of various denominations, are registered with China's government but are not necessarily subservient to the Communist Party in terms of their teaching and practices, as was the case in earlier years, according to several articles. Some congregations may join the association for mutual benefit and greater communication with the

government, whose office of oversight had become weakened, writes editor Wayne Ten Harmsel. Yet the current Sinicization drive under Xi Jiping is likely to make the situation of registered churches and believers more difficult. An especially noteworthy article looks at how both registered and unregistered churches have adapted new media technology, such as WeChat, in the face of the pandemic, and will likely not abandon such involvement after the virus. The issue can be downloaded at: https://www.chinasource.org/about/publications/chinasource-quarterly/
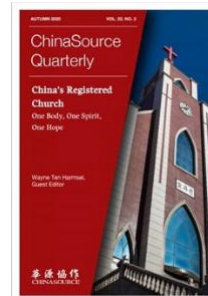
■ "Transformational" festivals—from Burning Man to Wanderlust—have served as institutional carriers of a countercultural spirituality and are the subject of Amanda J. Lucia's provocative new book *White Utopias* (University of California Press, $29.95). As its title implies, Lucia argues that the white racial composition of these festivals goes a long way to explaining their growth and their use of one of "native" forms of spirituality. The book argues that these festivals appropriate indigenous practices and traditions and then render them exclusive even as they promote an "inclusive" spiritual community. In fact, Lucia finds in her ethnographic study that it is the homogenous nature of these events that resonate with participants, giving them a feeling of finding a spiritual home.
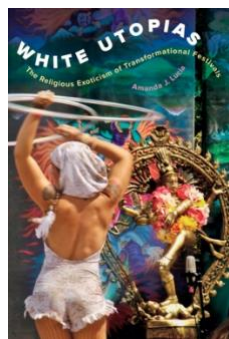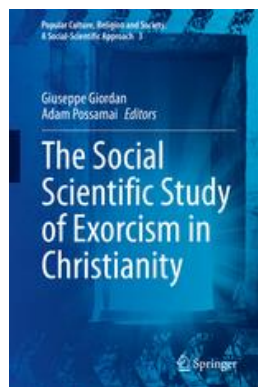
The view on appropriation of indigenous spirituality has often been associated with critiques of the New Age and other syncretistic movements, though Lucia adapts the argument to current critical theories on race and "white supremacy." Thus, the author writes of the irony that such practices and teachings as meditation, yoga, use of the psychedelic Peyote, and sweat lodges are detached from their hierarchical and exclusive traditional religions and democratized to be seen as universal and "authentic" to spiritual consumers (even as the "burners" in the Burning Man festival inveigh against consumption and capitalism). But this "expansive and universalistic ethos ends up denying the authority of nonwhite voices to represent the authority of their traditions," Lucia writes. Whether or not the reader agrees with the critical "whiteness" theory that Lucia employs throughout this book, it provides compelling accounts of participants and the value they find in these festivals and their rituals and practices. Lucia herself finds hope that the spiritual community and unconventional mystical practices in these "countermodern" gatherings have the potential to create the "communitas in shared human experience."

■ A book-length study of the phenomenon of "new Calvinist" congregations, ministries, and networks has been a long time coming (RW has reported on the movement since the late 1990s), but Brad Vermulen's *Reformed Resurgence* (Oxford University Press, $99) ably fills that need, providing an in-depth look at a vital movement within evangelicalism. One might even say that the study has a retrospective quality to it (focusing on the years 2012-2016), even as Vermulen provides an update of this fast-changing movement in an appendix, since many of these networks and their leaders have seen defections and other losses experienced by evangelicals as a whole. Vermulen distinguishes the "new Calvinists" from other Reformed churches and denominations in their strongly evangelistic and activist stance typified by leaders and groups such as Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, John Piper, Acts 23 Network, Mars Hill Church of Seattle, Mark Dever of Capitol Hill Baptist Church.

The new Calvinists are also marked by their denominational diversity, embracing conservative Reformed denominations, such as the Presbyterian Church in America, but also Reformed and Southern Baptists, charismatic megachurches, and non-denominational church planting networks (and a small but influential African-American contingent). Vermulen notes that the size of the new Calvinism is difficult to estimate; it has a large but diffuse presence on social media (John Pieper has a Twitter following of 800,000), with anywhere from three million to nine million followers. Through participant-observation and in-depth interviewing, the author argues that much of the Reformed resurgence (whatever its size) represents a contestation and a protest force among evangelicals over theology and social issues, even if many of its rank-and-file church members are unaware of these matters and their congregations' Calvinist convictions. The new Calvinists have specifically targeted changes wider evangelical world involving the perceived rise of postmodern and therapeutic influence and namely such culture war issues on gender, sexuality, and abortion. The new Calvinists' firm and certain stance on these contested issues and their blending of tradition with innovation has attracted a large number of young adults, giving it an advantage in competing with other theological and church movements, such as the postmodernist Emerging church movement, within the evangelical world. The new Calvinists have also pioneered in urban ministry (under such leaders as Tim Keller), engaged the culture and the arts, and has sought to be non-partisan (while veering to the right on most issues). Vermulen concludes that with the retirement or deaths of important leaders and scandals at some key new Calvinist churches (such as Mars Hills), the movement may have peaked in its "emotional energy." But the large and engaged number of new Calvinist laity and the web of institutions, suggests that the movement will endure, providing an alternative worldview within evangelicalism.
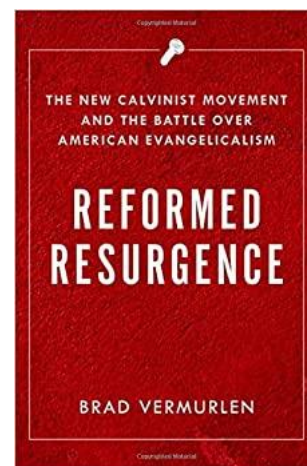
■ *The Social Scientific Study of Exorcism in Christianity* (Springer, $89), edited by Giuseppe Giordan and Adam Possamai, collects several fascinating accounts and studies of exorcists and exorcism at a time and in places where these type of rituals and phenomena are supposed to be extinct due to secularization. The editors note that the growing significance of the rite of exorcism is both a challenge to secularization and a sign of how religion is less beholden to experts as it incorporates elements of magic and therapy. The book's case studies capture the many hues of contemporary exorcism—from a new cadre of exorcists commissioned by the Vatican to the Pentecostal Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil to a controversial case of Eastern Orthodox nun-exorcists in Romania—and how their practitioners borrow techniques and teachings from each other. Most of the authors bracket the question of whether there is validity to exorcists'—and the exorcized—claims of actual demonic possession, but they often report that the various ceremonies can have beneficial results from the afflicted. More central to this collection is the way that exorcism is a source of competition between its various providers in the religious marketplace. For instance, one chapter argues that the Catholic Church in Brazil (and much of the West) revived and adapted its rite of exorcism as a result of competition with Pentecostals and their deliverance ministries.

Contributors also a focus on the demand for as well as the supply of exorcism, as they argue that the explosion of interest in the occult starting in the 1960s and 70s (helped by such horror films as The Exorcist) provided a ready-made market

of people seeking spiritual assistance with demonic influences (it is made clear that full-blown demonic exorcism cases, in contrast to deliverance prayer ministry, are still relatively rare). The relation of demonic oppression and possession to psychiatry and mental illness is covered by several contributors, who find that the latter is usually ruled out before exorcism and deliverance is attempted and even in those cases, there is cooperation as well as conflict between religion and therapy. This is driven home in a compelling chapter on the aftermath of an exorcism in Florida where a clear resolution to this affliction is not easily found. The individual under question experienced a catharsis from the ceremony but still suffered the stigmatizing impact of the experience years after, requiring therapy. A religious professional dealing with such cases said long-term effects from deliverance attempts are not uncommon, especially when there is a negative community response to such activity. In such instances, support structures provided by the family and religious community are important. In attempting to explain the burgeoning supply and demand of exorcism, the editors suggest that it may be the result the "over-policing" of the devil engaged in by religious specialists as they regularly point out demonic influence in society. They add that the interchanges and syncretism of practices and teachings evident in contemporary exorcism—if not its subject matter— are mediated by the processes of migration, globalization and rationalization of religion.