

Vol. 32, No. 5**March 2017****FEATURE STORY:****Mainline seminaries partner with megachurches, while Harvard takes a left, secular turn**

The Christian Century (February 15) reports that mainline seminaries are increasingly partnering with megachurches for financial reasons as well as to draw on their expertise in evangelism, church growth, and leadership. Residential-based seminary education, with its high tuitions and other living expenses, has increasingly been falling out of favor with seminarians and potential clergy, who are opting for online and distance learning programs that they complete without leaving their homes and careers. Mainline seminaries' continuing financial problems due to low enrollment and the resulting difficulties in maintaining old buildings are other factors that have moved megachurches into the theological education field. Those seminaries that have shown some resilience are the ones that have teamed up with larger churches to deliver their educational services, writes Jason Byassee and Ross Lockhart. Saint Paul's School of Theology in Kansas City was forced to close its campus in the center of the city and start holding its classes in the 20,000-member Church of the Resurrection in the suburbs.

This United Methodist megachurch provides the school with practicums that offer “nuts-and-bolts topics like funerals, stewardship, and youth ministry.” There is some tension in the fact that Saint Paul's is more liberal in theology and oriented more toward social action than the centrist evangelical megachurch. Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky is another example of this trend, though in this case the unaffiliated (and more evangelical) school in the Wesleyan tradition



has “planted” a satellite seminary in another United Methodist megachurch in Memphis, Tennessee. The new campus makes little effort to offer on-campus formation, instead drawing on the congregation’s extensive ministry in downtown Memphis. St. Mellitus College has pioneered a similar kind of partnership in the U.K. The seminary, with about 400 students, was the result of a merger between two diocesan theological programs associated with the evangelical “megaparish” Holy Trinity in Brompton and St. Jude’s Church in the west of London.

Meanwhile, the flagship seminary of liberal religion in the U.S., Harvard Divinity School, is moving away from specifically Christian traditions toward more social activism and secular spirituality, according to the *Harvard Crimson* newspaper (February 16). Although traditionally in a liberal Christian-Unitarian framework since the early 1800s, a reorganization of its curriculum in 2005 moved the school to put as much emphasis on non-Christian as Christian traditions, embracing pluralism to such a degree that critics charge that the institution has lost its center of gravity. Only 40 percent of 2015’s incoming class chose to pursue a Masters of Divinity, which is usually the preparation degree for those entering the ministry. The majority study for a Masters of Theological Studies, a two-year academic track that serves as preparation for the Ph.D. Jon Levinson, a professor of Jewish studies, says that in many ways, the school functions as a “religious studies department that for historical reasons is constituted as an independent faculty rather than part of the [Faculty of Arts and Sciences].”

If a center of gravity still exists at the school, it is based in students’ preparation for work in religious and secular progressive NGOs. The Divinity School Racial Justice and Healing Initiative, one of many activist groups on campus, embodies such a center, organizing a recent “Week of Resistance” consisting of protests and workshops. Several programs at the school look at what can be called secular spirituality. The Ministry Innovation Fellows study groups like SoulCycle and CrossFit for their emphasis on community and how they may function like religious groups. The Science, Religion, and Culture program uses “religious community as a starting point for building new, non-religious connections,” such as “creating green spaces [and] STEM education for girls.”

(*Christian Century*, <https://www.christiancentury.org>; *The Crimson*, <http://www.thecrimson.com>)

ARTICLES:

Jehovah’s Witnesses’ educational and professional deficit

Jehovah’s Witnesses’ low levels of education compared to other religions has affected members’ job prospects and led to a high rate of underemployment, according to a report on *National Public Radio* (February 19). The report cites Pew Research figures showing that only 9 percent of Jehovah’s Witnesses get an undergraduate degree, well below the national average of 30.4 percent and the lowest of any faith group. The likely reason for this trend is that Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that secular education is spiritually dangerous, reports Luke Vander Ploeg. JW leaders discourage secular education with a video on the Watchtower organization website warning members of the ways higher education can erode religious beliefs and values. While the Jehovah’s Witnesses have traditionally accepted public schools, it seems home schooling is popular today, with some members saying their parents weren’t equipped for this task.

Among the 100 former Witnesses interviewed for the report, most said they felt short-changed of getting a better education to be able to reach their career plans. “The lack of higher education can translate into more tangible problems for Witnesses. Pew research shows that Jehovah’s Witnesses are among the lowest earners of any religious group,” Vander Ploeg reports. George Chrystides, a specialist and author on the Witnesses, told **RW** that a “convergence on trades and self-employment enables JW’s to have the needed flexibility for their house-to-house work, and in my experience they are quite good at discovering ways of saving money, while not engaging in austerity.” He added regarding Witnesses’ involvement in home schooling, “I think this is generally to avoid the children getting bullied and also to remove them from the pressures to observe festivals such as Christmas, Valentine’s Day, Halloween and the like.”



Western Rite parishes under Russian Orthodox Church emerge in U.S.

In late February Metropolitan Hilarion, Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR, which is part of the Moscow Patriarchate since 2007) ordained as an Orthodox priest Sam Seamans, a former bishop in the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), reports Fr. Victor Novak on his blog (March 3). Along with his parish in Arkansas, former Bishop Seamans decided to join the Orthodox Church in 2015 but is serving in the Western Rite, a small but growing movement within ROCOR. Until a few years ago, most Western Rite parishes under Orthodox bishops belonged to the Western Rite Vicariate of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese in America. ROCOR has now become the other player in what remains a minor (but potentially significant) movement within American Orthodoxy. The development seemed to be an unlikely one. While in 1959 ROCOR actually accepted a Western Rite group of parishes in France and consecrated a bishop in 1964 for that purpose, a break in the movement led the Synod of the Bishops of ROCOR to declare that the Western Rite would not be allowed.

In the 1990s, however, the current Metropolitan started accepting a handful of small Western Rite groups and established a vicariate in 2011. It now has a dean, currently a former Anglican archdeacon, and several Western Rite liturgies are approved for use in ROCOR parishes. Western Rite parishes enjoy stavropegial status under Metropolitan Hilarion (which means that they stand directly under him, wherever they may be). ROCOR lists the parishes in its official printed directory as well as on its website. There are currently more than 25 parishes plus a few small monastic communities. They are mostly located in the United States. There are a comparable number of parishes (23 according to current



listings) in the Antiochian Archdiocese. Metropolitan Hilarion's openness to Western Rite groups for missionary reasons — especially in response to former Episcopalians — seems to have been a major factor in the current presence of such parishes within ROCOR. What is unclear at this point for the movement's long-term prospects is how many other ROCOR bishops would be as open as Metropolitan Hilarion for allowing a space for the Western Rite within the Russian Church.

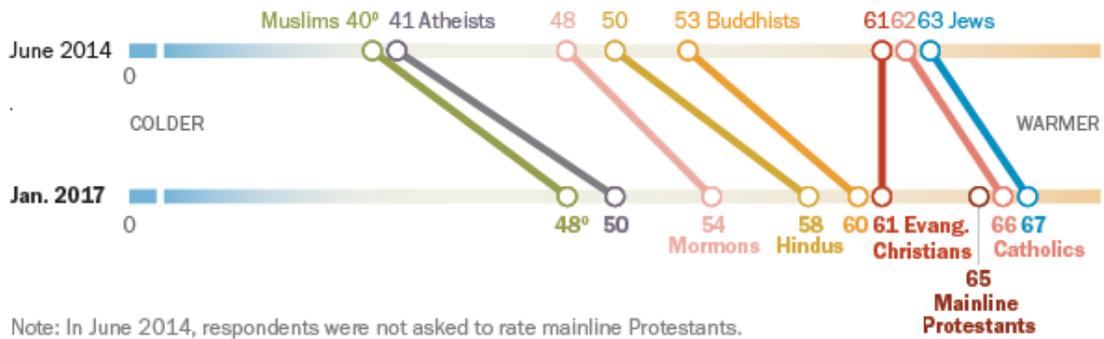
("Former Anglican Bishop Sam Seamans ordained Orthodox priest," <http://frnovak.blogspot.com/2017/03/former-anglican-bishop-sam-seamans.html>; ROCOR Western Rite - www.rocor-wr.org)

CURRENT RESEARCH

● **Americans hold warmer feelings towards various religious groups than they did just a few years ago, according to a new Pew Research Center survey.** Atheists and Muslims still registered less favorable responses as measured by a "feelings thermometer" ranging from zero to 100. But warmth of Americans' feelings toward these two groups has increased from 40 for Muslims and 41 for atheists to 48 and 50, respectively. Jews and Catholics remain among the groups receiving the warmest ratings—even warmer than the last such survey in 2014. Mormons and Hindus have shifted from more neutral places on the thermometer to relatively warmer scores of 54 and 58, respectively. Buddhists have moved up from 53 to 60. Evangelicals were the only group to stay the same, remaining at 61 on the scale.

Americans feeling warmer toward variety of religious groups

Mean thermometer ratings



Note: In June 2014, respondents were not asked to rate mainline Protestants.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 9-23, 2017.

Americans Express Increasingly Warm Feelings Toward Religious Groups

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

(Pew Forum, <http://www.pewforum.org>)

● An analysis of 40 countries looking at the relation between religiosity and “economic communitarianism,” or compassionate concern for the well-being of others, finds that religious involvement and an orthodox orientation positively affect extending compassion to those less fortunate, according to a study by Tom VanHeuvelen and Robert V. Robinson. Writing in the journal *Social Currents* (online March), the authors analyze the European Values Survey from 2008–2009 focusing on the three dimensions of religiosity: belief, behavior, and belonging (such as congregational involvement). Contrary to the popular notion that orthodox religion fosters an exclusive attitude toward whom adherents regard as a “brother,” the analysis finds that frequent attendees at services and “high-attending religious orthodox people” are more universalistic in extending compassion equally across social categories than those who attend infrequently or low attending “modernists.”

The authors tested the criticism that orthodox concern for others would mainly consist of care for those within their own faith tradition and found that compassionate concern “for a wide range of social categories are remarkably robust.” While previous studies have found Protestants to be individualistic, the authors find that this tradition is not any less communalistic than others, though they were less universalistic than Muslims and Jews. The communitarian concern of Muslims, especially for the well



being of immigrants, suggests that their immigration to Europe could “benefit left parties focused on economic protection.”

(*Social Currents*, <http://journals.sagepub.com/toc/scu/current>)

● **British young people tend to disagree that their country has a specific religious identity, though they think religion does play an important part in people’s lives, according to a survey of the newly launched Faith Research Centre.** The survey found that adults aged 18–24 were the least likely to describe Britain as a Christian country (31 percent) and the most likely to describe Britain as a country with no specific religious identity (41 percent). Older adults were significantly more likely to view Britain as a Christian country (74 percent). But the percentages were higher for young people believing that religion is important in tackling terrorism and in understanding the world (at about 50 percent).



(*Faith Research Centre* is being launched by the consultancy firm ComRes: <http://www.comresglobal.com>)

● **A study of friendship networks among young people in Germany finds a divide between Muslims and other students, with each group preferring one another’s company more, according to a study in the *European Sociological Review* (February).** Lars Lezszensky and

Sebastian Pink look at school-based friendship network panel data, specifically at friendship choices of Christian, Muslim, and non-religious students in Germany. They find the tendency to have friends of the same religion among both Christians and Muslims, but the former tended to befriend non-religious youth as often as their Christian peers, and vice versa. Christian and non-religious youth were hesitant to befriend Muslim peers, suggesting that the same negative feelings about the rapid growth of the Muslim population as found among European adults may already be in place during the teen years. Against expectations, the youth in the study were no more hesitant to befriend highly religious teens in either group than more moderate ones. In fact, Muslim students even preferred highly religious over less religious Christian peers, suggesting that religion's importance may override religious difference and create new bonds.



(*European Sociological Review*, <https://academic.oup.com/esr/issue/33/1>)

● **After reaching a peak in 2010, the annual number of people leaving the Roman Catholic and the Reformed Churches in Switzerland diminished in 2011, but then started to increase again, with a more marked increase in 2015, the most recent year for which data is available, writes Judith Albisser in a three-part report released by the Swiss Institute for Pastoral Sociology (January 26, Feb. 8, and Feb. 20).** In 2013, 8 out of 1,000 members per year left one of the historical Churches. In 2015, 10 out of 1,000 did so. While there are regional variations, the trend can be observed in nearly all areas of Switzerland. The decline in members is especially strong for the Reformed Church, both in percentage and absolute numbers. The Reformed made



up more than 56 percent of the Swiss population in 1950. In 2015, their share was down to less than 25 percent. In Geneva, long seen as a world center for the Reformed faith, Reformed believers now make up only 10 percent of the population. While the share of the

Catholic Church declined percentage-wise as well (37.3 percent of Swiss population in 2015), it

managed to remain stable in absolute numbers due to its larger share among migrants. Regarding migrants to Switzerland, 53 percent belong a Christian denomination, while 28.6 percent have no affiliation and 13.4 percent are Muslims.

(*Schweizerisches Pastoralsoziologisches Institut (SPI)*, <https://spi-sg.ch>)

● **A survey of Syrian refugees provides a revealing if not necessarily representative snapshot of their political and religious beliefs and attitudes, suggesting that the differences between those loyal to the government and those supporting the rebels are not very significant.** The unsettled and temporary situation of Syrian refugees, with only about two-thirds of them registered, makes a representative sample of this population difficult, but a survey of 2,000 respondents conducted by households in a refugee camp in Lebanon finds that there was not a strong political component to their faith. In the *Hoover Digest* (Winter), Daniel Corstange writes that a little over half of the respondents to the poll he conducted in cooperation with the Beirut-based Information International supported the Syrian opposition and about 40 percent supported the government, though the Arab majority did not uniformly line up with the latter.



The view that those supporting the rebels were fervently religious, supporting Islamic politics, while government supporters were largely secular did not hold up. The refugees as a whole expressed a good deal of Islamic devotion, with more than three-quarters saying they pray daily and read the Quran weekly, and opposition supporters did see a greater role for politics in Islam. But within the opposition, nationalist supporters were no more secular than their Islamist counterparts. Only about a third of all the respondents said that religion is even somewhat important in either economic or political affairs.

(*Hoover Digest*, <http://www.hoover.org/publications/hoover-digest>)

ARTICLES:

Religious changes leading to new church-state relations

Since January 1st, the Lutheran Church in Norway is no longer a state church, and its 1,250 bishops and ministers are no longer being paid by public funds. Separation had already become a reality in neighboring Sweden in 2000. According to French historian and sociologist Philippe Portier, interviewed by Bernadette Sauvaget in the French daily *Libération* (Feb. 13), the disappearance of

state churches is a sign of deeper changes in the management of religious pluralism across Europe, driven both by the presence of growing Muslim communities and by the increasing percentage of unaffiliated Europeans since the 1970s. While the trend is a general one, there are variations in practical implementation from one country to another. In Denmark, the links between the Lutheran Church and the state persist, but advantages have been given to other religious groups (e.g. Muslims, Jews, and Roman Catholics), such as subsidies for their social work as well as the recognition of the civil roles of their religious weddings. Portier observes that state church systems in countries in the northern part of Europe have managed to persist longer due to the fact that those churches have mostly gone along with the secularization of society rather than opposed it. Authorities in Scandinavian countries admit that the influence of the decisions made by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which are binding for them, have also played a role in those developments. While the ECHR has no religious policy of its own and thus does not oppose a state church system, it does emphasize the need for the state not to discriminate between its citizens. Portier has recently published a book titled *L'État et les religions en France* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016), presented as an “historical sociology of laïcité” (i.e. the French form of secularism and state secularity). In that book he notes that affiliation has indeed undergone a strong decrease but that diffuse beliefs remain strong. Moreover, in French secular society, interactions between the state and religious groups have actually increased, both as new forms of recognition (e.g. state support for establishing a representative body for Muslims in France) and surveillance or control (regarding “cults” and radical Islam). While national histories in respect to relations with religious groups have been quite different across European countries, they tend to be converging more recently, especially in relation to challenges presented by the Muslim presence, Portier concludes.



(*Libération*, http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/02/13/philippe-portier-en-europe-du-nord-les-eglises-protestantes-ont-accompagne-la-modernisation-et-la-pl_1548237)

Central Asia states using Islam for authoritarian and nationalist purposes States of Central Asia are using “traditional” or “official” Islam for both strengthening national identity and legitimizing authoritarian regimes. Moreover, structural and political problems are explained away by references to an “Islamist threat,” writes Mariya Y. Omelicheva (University of Kansas) in *Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West* (February). For most Kazakhs, Tadjiks, and Uzbeks, ethnic identity and Islam cannot be dissociated. This understanding of Islam puts more emphasis on the Islamic legacy of the local people as an identity marker rather than on strict implementation of Islamic rules. Muslims make up a clear majority of the population in all Central Asian countries (more than 90 percent in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan). Their constitutions define those states as

secular and guarantee religious freedom. In practice, however, there is strong state control over religious activities, and registration is mandatory for all religious groups. This control has become stronger in recent years. Omelicheva describes “official” Islam as a “vague category,” circumscribed by the literature, practices, institutions, and individuals approved by state agencies in charge of the management of religious life. Officially approved religious leaders denounce Islamic groups that want to practice their faith outside of the official framework as “pseudo-Islamic,” and these groups then face prosecution. Official religious structures are enjoying a monopoly over religious training as well as relations with Muslims in the rest of the world. This “official” Islam is described as “tolerant,” “authentic,” and “moderate.”

Due to the association of Islam with ethnic belonging and local culture, most of the people are actually opposed to radical forms of Islam. But Central Asian governments are emphasizing the threat of “radical Islam,” using the need to defend their fellow citizens against it as a source of legitimacy. Moreover, “radical Islam” (usually called “Wahhabism” or “fundamentalism”) is blamed for failures in providing social services or implementing political reforms. Thus, Central Asian political leaders position themselves as defenders of “traditional” Islam against dangerous foreign influences.



(*Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West*, Birmensdorferstr. 52, P.O. Box 9329, 8036 Zurich, Switzerland - <http://www.g2w.eu>)

Giant Hindu statues and the spread of Indian public religion

A new genre of monumental statues of Hindu deities is proliferating across India and its diaspora, merging tourism with the new public role of Hinduism. In the journal *Current Anthropology* (February), Kajri Jain writes that these giant-sized statues have been increasingly appearing since the 1990s, aided by the growth of automobile use and tourism. The erection of huge statues in India has ancient lineages, going back to the colossal rock-cut statues of Buddha and Jain of the second and sixth centuries and medieval period, respectively. But Kajri Jain writes that the modern revived phenomenon is partly a Hindu response to take back public space after Dalit (or untouchable) and Buddhist statues and monuments started going up to challenge the caste system and press for social inclusion. Despite the secular entertainment and political value of these newer

statues, they also have strong Hindu links, “confounding any sequential narrative of progress or transformation from the religious to the secular.”

These statues, such as the 108-foot Shiva completed in 2011 and part of a “one-stop Shiva” shopping complex, are tied into circuits connecting “public welfare, religious patronage and the private capital of the family firm,” Jain writes. In the case of the many Shiva statues, they have been incorporated into existing Shiva pilgrimage routes in the north and south of the country now accessible by car. For example, Bangalore-based financial tycoon R. N. Shetty has established control of his small coastal town as well as its temple, building a 123-foot Shiva near his golf club that creates a “circuit between tourism-led development and religious legitimation,” she adds.



In one sense the location, size, and visibility of these giant statues overcome the limits of caste and religion, “offering a panoply of innovative forms of ritual participation,” even as they serve to exclude non-Hindus more consistently than annual religious festivals and “enable a host of new actors to participate in religious-cum-developmental patronage and gain social or political status to match their economic wealth or access to resources.”

(*Current Anthropology*, <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/ca/current>)

American-style religious freedom battles take root among evangelicals in Korea

The conflicts over religious freedom and evangelicals’ stance against LGBT rights in the U.S. are having global repercussions, most notably in South Korea, according to an article in the social science journal *Society* (January/February). Researchers Joe Phillips, Joseph Yi, and Gowoon Jung write that the debate about LGBT rights in Korea, which is at an early stage, has reflected the controversies over religious freedom for evangelicals acting on their beliefs in the U.S. over these issues, especially among political parties with strong evangelical representation. The Korean evangelical media likewise report “emotional scenes of Christians censored, fired, and legally penalized by LGBT officials,” not only in the U.S. but in Europe. These concerns have galvanized Korean evangelicals to help block national legislation on LGBT rights, persuading officials to withdraw their support for same-sex marriage. This “narrative of victimhood” has influenced younger Korean evangelicals, who tend to be more tolerant about gay rights but who nevertheless “resent the supposedly excessive power of the LGBT [movement] and their abuse of the state apparatus against religious believers.”

The researchers find a “counter-narrative” concerning how Christians need to love and understand LGBT people. Especially compelling are the accounts by Christians who experience same-sex



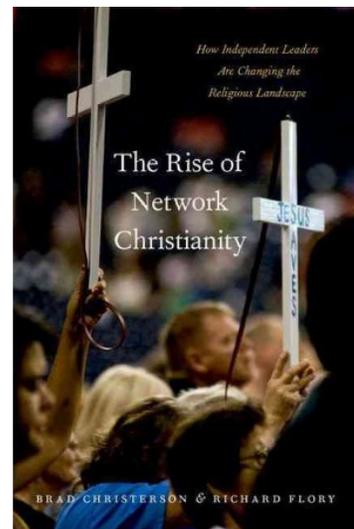
attraction or who were sexually active until they converted and adopted a celibate lifestyle. The 2016 evangelical documentary “I Am No Longer Gay” (which premiered in Los Angeles though it was produced in Korea) has given Korean evangelicals first-time exposure to gay Christians who have varying views on homosexuality (such as whether it is innate). Philipps, Yi, and Jung conclude that the results of the 2016 U.S. elections could accelerate the

emerging Korean polarization between religious conservatives and the LGBT community. But the growth of the counter-narrative and the recent, if limited, visibility of gay Christians in Korea could also help turn back the culture wars and bridge the divide between the LGBT and evangelical communities.

(Society, <https://link.springer.com/journal/12115/54/1/page/1>)

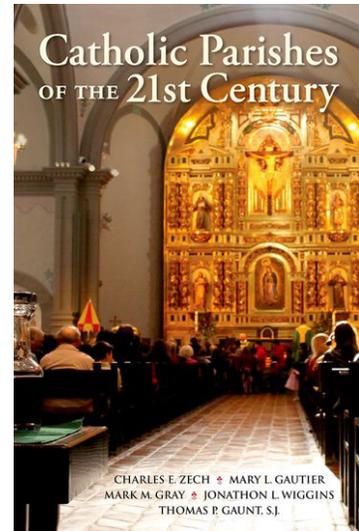
Findings & Footnotes

■ In their book on a new stream of charismatic groups and leaders, *The Rise of Network Christianity* (Oxford University Press, \$29.95), Brad Christerson and Richard Flory find that the shift from movement to informal networks of cooperation has been a central factor in their growth. Unlike earlier movements, such as the Vineyard Fellowship, that attempt to franchise congregations under a particular name, these networks promote “a set of principles through conferences, events and media products.” The book is an updating of Donald Miller’s study of what he called “new paradigm” churches, such as Vineyard, Calvary Chapel, and Hope Chapel. The authors find that these older charismatic movements have become more institutionalized and report slower growth than in the 1990s. What Christerson and Flory call “INC Christianity” is made up of such groups and leaders as the late C. Peter Wagner, Che Ahn, and Bill Johnson, and ministries such as Global Spheres International and the International Coalition of Apostles. These groups and leaders have been associated with prosperity and New Apostolic teachings, which hold that biblical gifts and offices (such as apostles and prophets) are still active.



Just as controversial have been their teachings on the “Seven Mountains of Culture,” which holds that the kingdom of God can arrive on earth through Christians’ involvement in different spheres of society (such as education, media, and business). Christerson and Flory contrast the more conventional means of Christian right activism, working within the political system, with the network leaders, who lack institutional capacity to influence the various sectors of society as they pray and prophesy for social transformation—though one of the movement’s apostles did “pray over” Donald Trump during the campaign. The authors add that these networks and their leaders are not bounded by the regulations of bureaucratic organizations such as denominations and can therefore configure and reconfigure around short-term or long-term projects. Such structures can also lead to corruption and exploitation of their followers, but they can regroup easily because such leaders operate independently of other leaders. They conclude that other sectors of Christianity may follow the lead of INC Christianity in how they encourage the involvement of lay people (allowing them to assume leadership), build on new extra-congregational financial models, and take an experimental approach to novel beliefs and teachings that attract people in a saturated religious marketplace.

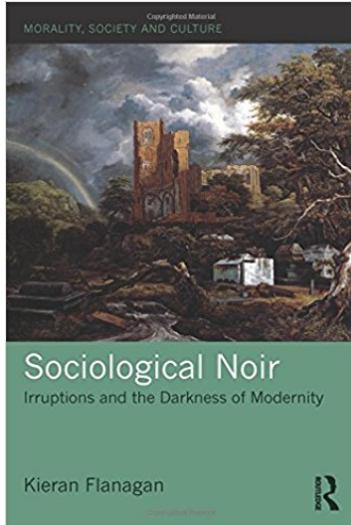
■ Years of data gathering and analysis on American Catholic life have gone into the new book *Catholic Parishes of the 21st Century* (Oxford University Press, \$24.95), by Charles Zech, Mary L. Gautier, Mark Gray, Jonathon Wiggins, and Thomas P. Gaunt, S.J. Using statistics from the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Life from the 1980s as a source of comparison, the book looks at the way the church has an oversupply of infrastructure in declining areas of the Northeast and Midwest while experiencing a shortage of such facilities and resources in high-demand regions like the South and West. In this situation, the local church changes from the neighborhood parish to the “regional community parish,” where a team of priests serves in collaboration with laypeople and members of religious orders.



These changes relate to the ways in which the Catholic population is growing, despite church membership losses; the continued growth of immigrants from Catholic countries also complicates the picture. Whether the church is in serious decline or not may also depend on how one views the steady decline of nuns, priests, and other religious vocations. More liberal Catholics are not as adverse to lay-led leadership and initiatives and the supply of 18,000 deacons who can carry out many priestly functions, while conservatives would mourn the diminishment of the hierarchical church. Other chapters look at the financial implications of these trends, with Catholic giving patterns still dwarfed by Protestants, while an updating of the Notre Dame study shows similar levels of satisfaction and preferences with liturgy and preaching in their parishes.

■ *Sociological Noire* (Routledge, \$150) is not the typical book that we review, but author Kieran Flanagan’s meditation on the suppressed role of religion and what he calls its “dark irruptions” in modernity stands out in the literature on secularization. Flanagan, an Irish Catholic sociologist, argues that even as European and especially British people have become more secular and sociology dismisses theology as an irrelevant discipline, religious and quasi-religious emotions and other hidden aspects of modernity have a way of creeping back to the surface of things. Flanagan examines the role of commemorations, the presence of church and monastery ruins, and how what he calls the “dark gothic” and its depiction of evil in culture (from architecture to horror movies and the Internet) all serve to disrupt secular rationality. Flanagan sees the new interest in commemorations and the collective memory as forcing museums and galleries not

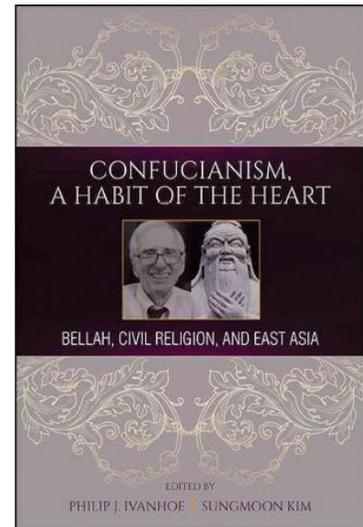
only to conserve religious objects but also to have to “mount narratives that convey the place of these artifacts in the beliefs governing their constitutions and use,” thereby resisting secularity “that treats these objects with indifference.”



The incomplete and fractured condition of church ruins which dot the European landscape likewise “deposit inescapable claims on the imagination,” raising questions about suffering, death, and the afterlife, Flanagan writes. There is a strongly Catholic element throughout this study, nowhere more evident than in the author’s treatment of the dark gothic. Flanagan argues that the suppressed history and culture of Catholicism provides the images and vocabulary for the dark gothic in matters ranging from demon possession, the powers of the supernatural, “nefarious feelings of terror,” and computer games dealing with the struggle between good and evil. Throughout the book Flanagan calls for a “sociological noire” to deal with issues including suffering and the presence of sin and evil—all things that mainstream sociology ignores but resurface nowhere more clearly than on the Internet and the way it captures and enables extremist terror. Flanagan’s book is self-admittedly limited, only dealing with “dark matters” that hint at the gaps in the reach of secularity; his next book will focus on “the light” in modern culture that

is likely to focus more on explicit religious manifestations such as apparitions.

■ In *Confucianism, A Habit of the Heart* (SUNY Press, \$24.95), edited by Philip J. Ivanhoe and Sungmoon Kim, a book inspired by the work of sociologist Robert Bellah, various scholars discuss the possibility of Confucianism as a civil religion in Japan, Korea, China, and possibly on a global level. Fenggang Yang writes that a new surge of interest in Confucianism in China is mostly based on political motives spurred by the nationalistic attempt to make Confucianism a “state religion.” He casts doubt on this prospect, instead suggesting a civil religion based on both Confucianism and Christianity. Anna Sun, whose academic expertise is on the religiosity of Confucianism, investigates the Chinese Communist Party’s attempt to coopt Confucian values as a state morality. Given the ambiguity of Confucianism as a religion and the atheistic position of the party, she assumes that it may be difficult for Confucianism to become “a habit of the heart” in China. In a similar vein, Takahiro Nakajima refers to a new interest in Confucianism as a civil religion for Japanese people, though Japanese Confucian interest is unique in its concentration on Confucius as a sage. He concludes the Japanese, like the Chinese, are interested in Confucianism as a tradition and a form of non-Western morality.



In a chapter on Korea, Sungmoon Kim criticizes the scores of Confucian scholars who legitimize a premodern Confucian idea in the guise of fashioning postmodern narratives. Professor Kim, however, reminds us how Korea’s authoritarian government was justified in the name of Confucian community spirit. Although the prospect a Confucian civil religion is provocative, there seems to be more differences than commonalities within Confucian tradition among various countries in East Asia. For example, some scholars trace Shintoism in Japan, which inspired an invasion of Japan to neighboring countries, to Confucianism. Unless these obstacles are overcome, Confucianism will not be regarded as a civil religion

in East Asia in the way that Bellah conceived of this possibility in America. At the end of the book, Bellah, who passed away in 2013, looks seriously into the possibility of a global civil religion.

—Reviewed by K.T. Chun, a New Jersey-based writer and researcher

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

ACT for America, a self-proclaimed national security advocacy organization, is now in the spotlight in the Trump era for its anti-Islamic activism. The organization, started a decade ago, has been in the news recently for its advocacy supporting the travel ban targeting several Muslim nations, but its wide ranging agenda on issues regarding Islam has attracted the most attention and criticism. ACT has galvanized its claimed 500,000 “grass-roots warriors” to battle on issues such as Islamic extremism, the alleged attempt to spread sharia law, and the construction of mosques. It presses for groups that practice and advocate sharia to be disbanded and for restricting all Muslim refugees. Its main antagonist is the Council of American Islamic Affairs (CAIR), a Muslim watchdog and defense group that ACT views as a front for the Muslim Brotherhood. Trump’s election has buoyed founder Roy White to redouble his efforts in eliminating Islamic influence. Whatever ACT’s influence on the Trump administration, White is trying to add the Muslim Brotherhood to the list of terrorist organizations—a measure that some in the Trump administration have considered. (Source: *The Washington Post*, February 18).

