



Vol. 35, No. 1

LDS stagnation: secularization or shortfalls in Mormon culture?

While the worldwide growth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) may be stalling overall, its variations in membership loss and pockets of growth and the vitality of rival global faiths suggest that there is no easy explanation for this trend, according to papers presented at the mid-October meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in St. Louis, which **RW** attended. Anthropologist Henri Gooren of Oakland University considered the recent view that the stagnation of LDS membership in much of Latin America has tracked a secularization trajectory, with high economic growth and human development leading to lower rates of Mormon (and other religious) growth. But Gooren found a checkered pattern of growth, stagnation, and decline that did not always follow the economic patterns. While it is true that in 16 out of the 20 Latin American countries he studied low membership growth has tracked higher economic development, there are significant outliers. Panama and Costa Rica, with high rates of human development, also show Mormon growth. Conversely, Haiti has very low levels of social development but nevertheless shows low Mormon growth.

Another paper, by David Stewart of the University of Nevada School of Medicine, took a different tack on LDS stagnation, focusing on the internal cultures and traditions of the LDS, the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), and the Jehovah's Witnesses and on their unintended consequences for growth. Analyzing church statistics for the three bodies (which are often compared for their "restorationist" teachings and global reach), Stewart found a continuing pattern of stagnation and even decline in the LDS that contrasted with the other groups. In 2017, while LDS growth rates fell to their lowest levels since 1937 and convert baptisms dropped to a 30-year low, the Jehovah's Witnesses' growth remained steady and the SDA showed a net membership increase of almost one million. Growth in LDS congregations increased by only one percent over the last 20 years, compared to Jehovah's Witness congregations tripling between 1981 and 2017 and SDA churches quadrupling during that time. Stewart argued that certain early decisions and policies of the LDS negatively impacted its later development, such as the decision to locate "Zion" in Utah, which did build a cohesive society and have the immediate effect of sharp growth but did not encourage indigenous and permanent leaders for the long term. In contrast to itinerant leadership, the Jehovah's Witnesses and SDA built indigenous leadership as part of a permanent growth model.

Because missionary work has been seen as the priesthood duty of adult males in the LDS, women have not been "systematically engaged in personal evangelism, notwithstanding research from other faiths that women are more likely to engage in personal evangelism than men." According to Stewart, since LDS women are the primary spiritual nurturers of children, their lack of experience in personal evangelism has influenced young men as well as women, leading to Mormons sharing

their faith far less than Jehovah’s Witnesses, SDA members and even other Christians. Among other factors that have affected the retention and growth rates of the LDS is the celebrity status of leaders, removing them from everyday church life and members, and an emphasis on traditional families in cultures where those family structures are relatively weak. A policy of building expensive U.S.-style meetinghouses for small international audiences contrasts with the humble and local-based structures of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and SDA, and such an international focus shifts resources away from further expansion into receptive areas. Stewart added that in its missions the LDS has concentrated on “stagnant areas” where Mormons and Christianity in general have had a long presence, shying away from more unreached places where the Mormon message might find more traction. Although much is made of the importance of the Book of Mormon, Stewart found that distribution of the sacred text has trailed far behind Jehovah’s Witness and Adventist literature promotion. He concluded that it would be difficult for the LDS to remedy these deficits, since they are the result of tradeoffs and unintended consequences from church decisions made decades, if not over a century, ago. The church may have to settle for a “constrained optimum” that would minimize or avoid any further unintended consequences.



Ecumenical exorcism on the rise

Exorcism has been growing in Catholic and Protestant corners for some time, but the perception of high demand for the practice among church leaders of both traditions is leading to greater cooperation and consultation, reports Griffin Paul Jackson in *Christianity Today* magazine (October). According to Andrew Chesnut of Virginia Commonwealth University, “Pope Francis and many Catholic exorcists believe that fighting the Devil and his minions is of such urgency and import that it’s better to join forces with Protestant demon fighters than compete with them.” In the last decade, the Catholic Church has been rehabilitating its rituals surrounding exorcism as well as training and appointing a growing number of new exorcists [See RW, Vol. 34, No. 2]. While evangelicals are becoming more active in this field, Pentecostals and charismatics (as well as Catholic charismatics) have long practiced deliverance ministries.

The Catholics’ more scientific approach, working in collaboration with doctors and psychiatrists, is becoming more common among Protestants, writes Jackson. In response to growing requests for exorcisms, partly because of increased occult involvement by younger generations, these different deliverance and exorcist ministries are increasingly collaborating. This year, for the first time, a handful of Protestants attended the Vatican’s annual training on exorcism and deliverance. The attempt to find common ground may not be simple; there are differences over whether Christians can be possessed and whether priests and the permission of bishops are needed to engage in exorcism, as Catholics teach.



(*Christianity Today*, 465 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188)

Ethnic Lutheran congregations feel pressure under new drive for diversity

While German-speaking Lutheran congregations in America have long been agents for preserving a specific tradition, pressures for change are creating new dilemmas, writes Thorsten Wettich (University of Bremen, Germany) in the monthly Protestant journal *Materialdienst der EZW* (October). A researcher specializing in the study of German-speaking Lutheran congregations abroad, Wettich's observations are based especially on the case of the Immanuel Lutheran Church, which serves Northeast Philadelphia and Lower Bucks County and is one of the 87 German-speaking congregations within the mainline Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Like many others, it offers services both in German and in English. While it is listed as a congregation abroad by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), it does not receive financial support from abroad, in contrast to congregations such as St. Paul's German Evangelical Lutheran Church in New York City, which is partly supported by the EKD. Recruiting new members is a challenge for such German-language communities—as is the promotion of diversity that is being encouraged by the ELCA.

Often the 40- to 60-year-old children of faithful congregation members no longer live in the same area, and there is no prospect of substantial numbers of German-speaking Lutherans immigrating, as was still the case in the 1960s. Moreover, the younger generations' decreased church attendance is also felt. For some of those attending Immanuel, "God seems to be closer in the German language," as a member of the congregation told Wettich. Members are attracted by what they can recognize as familiar, thus leading to a rather traditional form of worship. While some members welcomed the current minister's decision to come nearer to the recommended ELCA practice of weekly Holy Communion by offering it twice a month instead of once, others remembered that it had been offered only on Easter and Christmas when they were children in Germany and felt that the change detracted from the special nature of the event. On the other hand, innovative ways of preaching had been requested when hiring the new minister. The ELCA would like to reduce the ethnic and national dimensions that have long been characteristic of Lutheran congregations in the U.S. The need for German-speaking services in American Lutheran congregations is declining, and the future of the German Evangelical Lutheran Conference in North America (DELKINA) is uncertain.

(*Materialdienst der EZW*, Auguststrasse 80, 10117 Berlin, Germany – www.ezw-berlin.de;
Immanuel Lutheran Church, <http://www.immanuelphilly.org/>; DELKINA,
<http://www.delkina.org/en/>)



CURRENT RESEARCH

● **According to a study of congregational ties by Jennifer McClure of Samford University, African-American congregations have the strongest social networks while older clergy in general have weaker ties.** McClure, who presented a paper at the recent meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in St. Louis, studied ties between 438 congregations in eight counties of the southeastern U.S. She looked at the reported frequency of social connections, joint events, and friendships among the lead ministers of these churches. She found that black pastors and those clergy between the ages of 40 and 54 had the most social ties, while those over 60 had fewer ties. McClure noted that just as strong social networks assist personal health, African-American churches' more robust social networks may have led to their leadership in the civil rights movement.



● **A new census of Pentecostalism finds its fastest growth areas to include new denominations tied to the prosperity gospel and megachurches and new apostolic networks stressing prophetic teachings and New Testament-style leadership offices.** In a paper presented at the recent meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in St. Louis, J. Gordon Melton (Baylor University), a specialist on new religious movements, found that among the 300 Pentecostal denominations in the U.S., less than 25 are reporting their church statistics. While older Pentecostal denominations continue to show signs of growth, it is the Word/Faith movement that has seen the most significant growth, represented by televangelists Kenneth Copeland, Creflo Dollar, and Kenneth E. Hagin, and churches in the RHEMA church network, Liberty Fellowship, World Changers Church, and Believer's Voice of Victory Network. Hagin's son, Kenneth W. Hagin, has the largest network with 150 congregations, according to Melton.

The other growing sector among Pentecostal denominations is what is called the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), teaching such concepts as the "seven mountains," which urges believers to conquer secular spheres of society (such as art, entertainment and politics), intercessory prayer, and spiritual warfare. Melton said that the fast-growing movement includes the Christian International



Apostolic Network, the Federation of Ministers and Churches International, the International Coalition of Apostles, and the International Coalition of Prophetic Elders, led by Cindy Jacobs. Melton counted more than 100 different denominations and networks in the NAR. Many of these networks could be considered an "invisible religion," with their headquarters based in the churches headed by "apostles," of which there are about 300 in the U.S. Many of the congregations are in Texas, Florida, and Georgia, Melton concluded.

● **In contrast to the view that there is a "war**

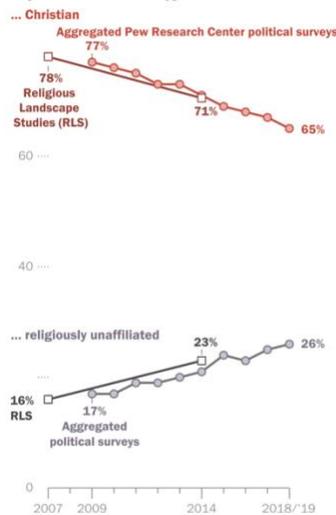
on science” influenced by religion, recent research suggests that more specific battles are being waged by various groups on such issues as climate change, evolution, and vaccine safety. Jonathan Hill of Calvin University, presenting a paper on his research at the recent meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, looked at rates of “science skepticism” using the National Study of Religion and Human Origins (with 2,645 respondents). On the issue of evolution, religion was the primary driver of such skepticism, particularly among evangelical Protestants. But on the issue of climate change, it was politics that drove skepticism, with political conservatives showing more opposition to science claims than political liberals. On skepticism regarding the safety of vaccines, religion and politics were not found to matter; rather, it was age that was the most important driver, with young people being the most skeptical on this issue.

Hill concluded with the observation that only a small percentage of the population is skeptical on all three issues, suggesting that rather than an overall war on science there are “distinct drivers for each form of science skepticism.” He added that the idea that “cultural cognition”—the level of critical thinking and science education—drives support for scientific theories did not hold on the issues of evolution and climate change. Political conservatives and evangelical Protestants, respectively skeptical of climate science and evolution, actually scored higher on cultural cognition than those (liberals and non-evangelicals) who were not skeptical. On the safety of vaccinations, however, there did seem to be a correlation between deficits of cultural cognition and skepticism on the issue.



In U.S., smaller share of adults identify as Christians, while religious ‘nones’ have grown

% of U.S. adults who identify as ...



Source: Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Studies (2007 and 2014), Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted 2009-July 2019 on the telephone.
 In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace
 PEW RESEARCH CENTER

● **The proportion of non-affiliated American adults now stands at 26 percent, up from 17 percent in 2009, according to the Pew Research Center’s latest survey.** Sixty-five percent of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, which is a decrease of 12 percentage points over the past decade. Both Protestantism and Catholicism are experiencing losses, with 43 percent of American adults identifying with Protestantism, down from 51 percent in 2009. Twenty percent of adults identify with Catholicism, down from 23 percent in 2009.

(The Pew study can be downloaded at:

https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/pf_10-17-19_rdd_update-00-020/)

● **Conservative Christians publicly adopting liberal stances on such issues as immigration rely more on theological beliefs, while liberal Christians supporting conservative positions, such as prolife concerns, more often focus on their political aspects, according to a new study.** In a paper presented at the recent meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Baylor University sociologist George Yancey reported on his study of nine “progressive” Christian blogs and 11 blogs

sociologist George Yancey reported on his study of nine “progressive” Christian blogs and 11 blogs

of conservative Protestants, where he focused specifically on how they supported issues not typically matching their theological orientations. The progressive blogs, which included those of Sojourner’s founder Jim Wallis and of theologian David Gushee, showed a greater willingness to attack other pro-life groups on political grounds and less willingness to press for pro-life legislation.

In the conservative Christian blogs, such as those of Southern Baptist leader Russell Moore and of Hispanic evangelical leader Samuel Moore, there was more citation of scripture and a greater reliance on theological beliefs in supporting views on immigrants’ rights and reform. There was little criticism of other immigrant movements or groups, while showing a non-radical approach; eight of the 11 blogs called for securing borders while supporting immigration reform for undocumented immigrants. Yancey concluded that in these cases of “mismatch” between theological beliefs and support for unpopular political movements and issues, there was a greater salience of theology for conservatives and of politics for progressives.



● **About three-quarters of mainline Protestant clergy shy away from preaching on controversial issues to congregants with a plurality of political views, according to a recent study.** The study, conducted by Leah Schade of Lexington Theological Seminary and Wayne Thompson of Carthage College and presented at the recent meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in St. Louis, was based on a 2017 survey of 1,205 mainline clergy from 44 states. While the survey was based on a convenience sample, it matched the Faith Communities Today (FACT) survey in representativeness. It found that clergy were mostly liberal (62 percent) and registered Democrats who had voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016 (also 62 percent), but that many served in “purple zones”—congregations having a mix of “blue” and “red” political sentiments. Schade and Thompson found one-quarter of these clergy saying they preached on controversial issues rarely or never, half saying they did a few times a year, and another quarter saying they did so frequently. The more controversial issues most frequently preached on were race, poverty, hunger, and homelessness, while abortion, fossil fuels, a critique of capitalism, and LGBTQ issues were more often avoided in the pulpit.

As to why controversy was so often avoided in preaching, 23 percent said they preferred a different setting for approaching these issues, 20 percent said they were concerned about church division and conflict, 17 percent feared pushback by congregants, and 17 percent said they were not equipped to deal with such issues. As to what these clergy actually experienced when they did preach on

controversial issues, 37 percent heard reports of angry congregants, 32 percent received angry remarks, 21 percent heard of members quitting, and 16 percent heard of members withdrawing their offerings to the church, while only a small percentage heard of calls for them to resign (five percent) or were actually let go (one percent). Schade and Thompson were surprised to find that it was in the larger congregations where clergy had more secure positions that they were more likely to preach on more controversial issues. The researchers explained that having full-time positions with larger memberships provided a cushion where preaching on such issues was less risky to their ministry and careers. United Methodist and Lutheran clergy were more likely to preach on controversial issues, while those from American Baptist churches and even the very liberal United Church of Christ were less likely to do so.



● **A qualitative study of United Methodist seminarians finds them reluctant to leave the denomination or forsake their plans for ordination, even as they register a high degree of uncertainty about their place in a church body divided over questions of sexuality.** It has often been reported that the recent decision of the denomination to retain and strengthen prohibitions against gay clergy will inevitably lead to a schism of liberals from the church [see RW, Vol. 34, No. 2]. But a study by David Eagle (Duke University) of 15 recent seminary graduates who were planning to enter the ministry prior to the United Methodists' 2019 adoption of what is known as the "traditional plan" to bar LGBTQ clergy suggests more ambivalence about such a departure. In in-depth interviews, Eagle found that most of these seminarians took a "wait-and-see" approach, hoping for a possible redressing of the issue in 2020 even as they put their career plans on hold. They were uniformly opposed to the traditional plan and accepting of LGBTQ clergy, but they also saw the difficulty of creating inclusivity in the denomination. Eagle found that they adopted a strong "us versus them" mentality in viewing the denominational situation.

Their harshest views were reserved for American church leaders who supported the plan, accusing them of exploiting international members (who have been opposed to LGBTQ clergy) for their supposed white supremacy and conservatism. The seminarians saw these international members (who mainly reside in the global South) as being largely innocent pawns of a "colonialist" takeover by white American leaders and members. The "exaggerated portrait of conservatives" in these seminarians' narratives suggested



the “intractability of this debate.” Liberals appear to be using conspiratorial terms and to show little interest in including conservatives in the church or engaging in conversation with them. “It’s hard to see how the United Methodist Church can remain unified,” Eagle concluded.

● **Filipino church leaders’ attitudes toward President Duterte’s “war on drugs” are determined more by their moral views of drug addicts than their denomination, according to new research.** The Duterte campaign, involving violence and death penalties against users and sellers, has been largely supported by Filipinos (both in the Philippines and in the diaspora), though leaders of the Catholic Church have registered the strongest opposition to these policies [see RW, Vol. 34, No. 5]. In a qualitative study of churches and religious leaders in the Manilla area, the findings of which were presented at the October meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in St. Louis, Jayeel Cornelio and Erron Medina found a range of views among church leaders on the validity of the war on drugs, with some closely reflecting Duterte’s policies and even supporting the death penalty as a weapon in fighting drug use. Other church leaders saw addicts, especially affected young people, as victims of poverty and of the drug trade and called against state violence to stop drug use. The researchers found that while the denomination of the church leaders mattered, it was more often their views on drug addicts’ spiritual status and the degree of their pastoral experience with them that determined their attitudes toward the war on drugs. Cornelio and Medina concluded that the silence of many church leaders on the ethical implications of the war on drugs stemmed from the absence of a public theology that would help people deliberate on the common good.



New attention paid to training imams for the integration of European Muslims

Muslim imams are viewed in Europe with a mixture of fears about radical preachers and hopes that they might provide crucial help in the integration of Muslims, concerns which are drawing new attention to how they should be trained in the context of Western societies. As Hansjörg Schmid and Noemi Trucco (University of Fribourg, Switzerland) note in a newly released report, the role of imams in the Muslim “diaspora” encompasses much wider functions than in the home countries of Muslim immigrants, making them not only religious experts but also community leaders, social

workers, chaplains, and contact persons for the civil authorities and other religious bodies. In Switzerland, there are currently around 130 regularly active imams (around 40 in 75 Albanian mosques, 13 in 20 Bosnian mosques, between 55 and 60 in Turkish mosques, and 15 to 20 in Arabic mosques). They were trained either in their home countries (Balkans, Turkey) or in Egypt (at Al-Azhar University) or Saudi Arabia, and there are also those who have been self-taught. There is no training for imams available at this point in Switzerland, hence the interest there in the experiences of other countries on this issue.

Since 2010–11, thanks to a large grant from the German Federal Government, institutes of Islamic theology have been created at several German universities. But few people who have been trained at these institutes have been able to find employment as imams until now, partly due to salary expectations that most Islamic associations could not fulfill. Moreover, the primarily academic training does not necessarily qualify the students for practical, pastoral work. One university also offers continuing training for people already working as imams, however. In Austria, thanks to the legal status granted to Islam, Islamic religious education programs have been offered at public schools since 1982, creating the challenge of finding qualified teachers. This has led over time to the development of training for Islamic theology and religious education at Austrian universities. Continuing education is also offered for imams at the University of Vienna, but this is far from fulfilling hopes for locally trained imams. In the Netherlands, efforts at offering local academic training for imams have either met with limited success or failed to agree with Islamic groups. The strong association of those initiatives with a security and integration discourse has not helped. Moreover, many students did not follow the training to the end, since they could not invest the time without a lowering of their incomes and interference with their professional and family commitments.

In France, since the country follows a policy of separation between state and religion (with the exception of Alsace and Lorraine, where other arrangements continue due to historical circumstances), only private institutes offer Islamic theological training at this point, while public universities only offer Islamic studies (considered inadequate for the training of imams by Muslim associations) or diplomas in religion and society, which could at most complement theological training. But there is an ongoing discussion about how far local training for imams is required to assist an emerging form of French Islam, and new ways are being explored for filling the gap. From these various cases, some lessons can be drawn for the future. For the time being, training in the home countries of immigrant populations, or at prestigious traditional institutions such as Al-Azhar, continues to enjoy more attraction than training at Western institutions. Some countries—such as Turkey—prefer to train imams in their own, government-controlled institutions and then send them for five-year periods to Western countries. The cases show the difficulties of offering in Western countries a training similar to that offered in Muslim countries, including training in the practical aspects of the work of imams.

(The report, in German, by Hansjörg Schmid and Noemi Trucco, Bildungsangebote für Imame—ein Ländervergleich aus Schweizer Perspektive, can be downloaded at: https://www3.unifr.ch/szig/de/assets/public/uploads/Recherche/Schmid_Trucco_2019_Bildungsangebote_fuer_Imame.pdf)



African way of Orthodoxy emerging?

With dioceses covering the African continent, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria is increasingly ministering outside of Egypt, primarily to people with African roots who have felt attracted to the Orthodox faith and may come to add a new dimension to the church, writes Ciprian Burlacioiu (Ludwig-Maximilians University) in *Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West* (October). Originally, most Orthodox members following the Byzantine tradition in Africa were people of Greek descent, residents of Egypt or twentieth-century settlers in various sub-Saharan countries. But the Greek diaspora in Africa declined as a consequence of political turmoil and decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s. There are today some 100,000 Greeks or people of Greek descent living across all of Africa (primarily in Egypt, Ethiopia, Congo, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, and Zimbabwe). Financial and other forms of support coming from Greece and Cyprus have become crucial for the Patriarchate. However, Byzantine Orthodoxy is expanding these days among other groups of faithful. Alongside a few Arabic-speaking parishes as well as Eastern European Orthodox residents in African countries, most of these members are indigenous African people who joined the church (and there have been similar trends toward the Coptic Orthodox Church, although this is not discussed in Burlacioiu's article). Interestingly, this has been to a significant extent the result of autonomous decisions—what Burlacioiu labels “self-mission.” The prototype was a group of Christians in Uganda who left the Anglican Church in the 1930s and self-identified as Orthodox, first coming into contact with the (independent) African Orthodox Church (based in the U.S. and South Africa), and later received by the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

While the integration of such groups has not always proceeded without tensions and sometimes splintering, there are now indigenous parishes in a number of African countries. Most of the 35 bishops of the Patriarchate are still Greeks, but five are indigenous Africans, as are most of the clergy outside of large cities. Indeed, most of the expansion has been taking place in the

countryside. Five additional dioceses were created in various parts of sub-Saharan Africa in 2018 to take pastoral care of this growing Orthodox flock. The Byzantine Liturgy has already been translated into a number of local African languages and plays a missionary role. Greek support for this mission is important, mainly through its missionary agency Apostoliki Diakonia, which brings qualified candidates for the priesthood to Greece for study and offers other financial assistance. Some Greek monks are supported by their monasteries or by the faithful to spread the Orthodox faith in Africa. What remains to be seen is how this new Orthodox population will develop from a Greek Orthodox into an African Orthodox church. According to Burlacioiu, although the Orthodox faith has also attracted converts in other places in the world (as in Asia), nowhere has it met with the success it has in Africa, raising the possibility of an African enculturation of Greek Orthodoxy in the future, including in the theological field.

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



Myanmar's Buddhism provides legitimacy to nationalist agenda

Hybridizing indigenous and Western concepts, contemporary Burmese nationalist ideology presents the Buddha as a patriot and conceptualizes the nation from a Buddhist framework, writes Niklas Foxeus (Stockholm University) in the journal *Religion* (October). Following clashes between Buddhists and Muslims in 2012, Buddhist nationalist and anti-Islamic movements, led by monks, appeared in Myanmar, and the unrestricted propagation of their views reached its high point between 2012 and 2015. Foxeus analyzes the sermons that these monks preached to huge audiences, as well as conducting interviews with leading monks and their followers. He finds that “Buddhist myths and legends are recast as national narratives,” with the Buddha himself presented as having been a devout nationalist. Buddhist leaders go so far as to claim that the Buddha had not been an Indian but looked Burmese. The Burmese people are presented as blood descendants of the Buddha’s clan, thus fusing Buddhism with an endogamous national identity. The idea of Buddhism as the source of Myanmar’s national identity had already been developed in the early twentieth century against British colonizers and Indian immigrants. According to Foxeus, resentment against the Indian immigrants, whom the British encouraged to come to Burma and who were thus perceived as part of the occupying forces, was turned into hostility against Muslims in the 1990s,

with the same emphasis on threats to Burmese culture and fears of foreign takeover.

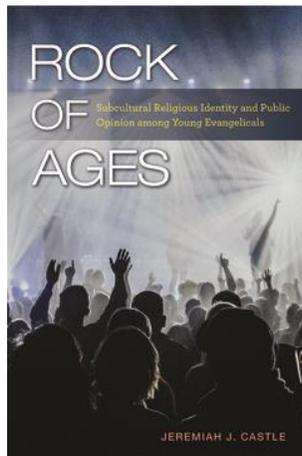
Just as one should provide for one's immediate family before the larger community, nationalist preachers stress the Buddhist principle of "working for the benefit of relatives" as practitioners' first duty while interpreting "relatives" to mean the nation, arguing that first making the nation peaceful and safe then makes it possible to fulfill the higher duty of "working, without discrimination, for the benefit of all sentient beings in the world." Muslims are perceived as wealthy and growing in number, thus endangering the survival of Buddhism. To defend it, a nationalist discipline is established, stating that one should only marry someone of the same race and religion, that children should be taught about nation and religion, that one should only buy from people of the same nation and religion, and that only Buddhist leaders should be elected. Discriminatory practices come to be seen as legitimate "because they are recast as genuinely Buddhist practices that serve the aim of saving and protecting the Buddha's dispensation." Building on Buddhist imaginations and Western concepts of race and nation inherited from the colonial period, this Buddhist nationalism mobilizes laypeople and allows Buddhists to "acquire a sense of unity and purpose."



(*Religion*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/rrel/>)

Findings & Footnotes

■ While surveys have found that younger evangelicals are not substantially more liberal than their older counterparts, the media still regularly reports on the growing gap in political views between younger and older evangelical cohorts. The new book *Rock of Ages* (Temple University Press, \$34.95), by Jeremiah J. Castle, confirms previous studies showing relatively minor differences between committed evangelical young people and older evangelicals. There is some liberalization on gay marriage, welfare, and immigration, but pro-life concerns and fiscal conservatism remain high. Some of this gap is due to age-based differences among "low commitment" younger evangelicals, meaning those who are less active in their congregations. But a liberalization of views on homosexuality, the environment, and welfare is common among both low- and high-commitment evangelicals and may be related to changes in the broader culture (such as the postponement of marriage and the wide acceptance of gay rights), according to Castle.

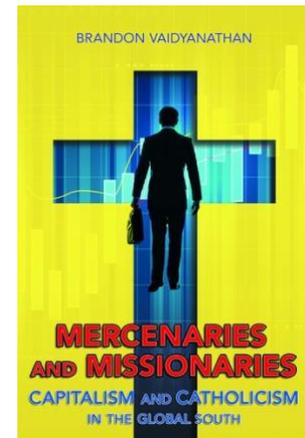


Through an analysis of Pew and Public Religion Research Institute surveys, Castle argues that the changes that have occurred in younger evangelicals' views, mainly on immigration and the military-diplomacy tradeoff, have come

more from forces outside of evangelicalism than within it (for example, from leadership changes or modifications in theology and practice). Because neither of these two issues are culture war issues and central to the evangelical tradition, Castle argues through a subcultural theory of religious identity that evangelicals have largely been able to sustain their beliefs. Evangelicals are able to build a subculture where political attitudes are transmitted to members, and the more one is immersed in this subculture the greater the conservatism. Even liberal evangelicals are more conservative on culture war issues than their secular counterparts, and Castle doesn't see them advancing a distinct political movement. As for younger conservative evangelicals, because of the reduced political salience for them of gay rights issues (though he seems to underestimate their prolife activity and influence), Castle sees them involved in a shift from an offensive strategy to one of defending their freedoms.

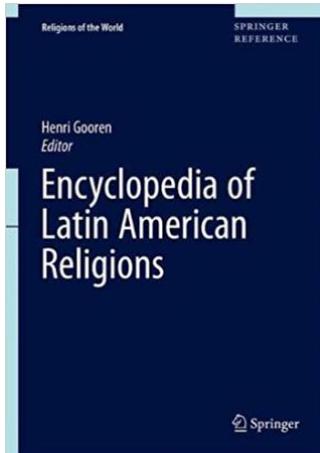
■ Brandon Vaidyanathan's new book *Mercenaries and Missionaries* (Cornell University Press, \$29.95) is a fascinating account and analysis of how global capitalism intersects with equally global forms of Christianity in the everyday lives of highly mobile IT professionals in Asia and the Middle East. The Catholic University of America sociologist studied the professional and religious lives of hi-tech guest workers in Bangalore (India's Silicon Valley) and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates through in-depth ethnographic interviews and observations. The "mercenaries" he refers to in the title of the book are the latest wave of young business professionals, lured by promises of high salaries, bonuses, and consumerist lifestyles, and for whom high mobility (they often travel between India and such new business and offshore "call centers" as Dubai) and "cut-throat competition" are signs of ambition and success. At the same time, the workers profiled in the book seek solace and support through their churches and try to spread this Christian influence in their changing locales. Vaidyanathan is especially good in showing the contradictions that emerge from these professionals' dual identities as mercenaries and missionaries, although not in the traditional way that sociologists have argued about the incompatibility of modern capitalism and globalization with traditional religion. In fact, the author argues that global capitalism's creation of more "existential insecurity" for these workers increases the appeal of religion. The nature of these professionals' work and its clash with their personal ethics and faith often leads them to reject its value as a vocation.

Their tendency not to trust company higher-ups and their own colleagues due to experiences of workplace backstabbing and even spying exacts an emotional toll that leads to a further divorce between their work lives and personal lives. All of the professionals in this study attend churches and prayer groups that are part of what Vaidyanathan calls Evangelical-Charismatic Catholicism (ECC), which draws inspiration from both American televangelism (both Catholic and Protestant versions), the Catholic charismatic renewal, and orthodox Catholic practices. These parishes and particularly prayer groups provide a strong source of support and nurturing for these workers even if they rarely question the injustices of their workplace or the consumerism it encourages, fostering what the author calls "therapeutic individualism." These believing professionals do see themselves as extending God's presence to their workplace, even if in discreet ways (especially in Dubai, where Christian proselytizing is prohibited). And religious practices, such as tithing, prayer, and retreats, as well as involvement in civic life, did indirectly help some limit consumerism, even convincing some workers to exit or downscale corporate life. Vaidyanathan concludes that the capitalist mindset is difficult to escape in work and church environments and that without a "theology of work" that addresses these challenges for the laity, the contradictions of being both a mercenary and a missionary will likely continue.



■ The massive two-volume *Encyclopedia of Latin American Religions* (Springer, \$599.99), numbering 1,665 pages, is the result of a five-year undertaking by its editor Henri Gooren. The volumes amply document the vitality and trends in various new religions and the revival and transformation of older faiths throughout Latin America. With entries by more than 250 specialists, the encyclopedia looks at the

demographics, history and current situations of religious groups both imported and more indigenous, many of which have been rarely documented in English. The various facets, movements (especially the Catholic charismatic renewal and liberation theology), and leaders of Roman Catholicism in each country and continent-wide are given expert treatment. The various Pentecostal groups that have mushroomed throughout Latin America are also given in-depth attention, both as stand-alone organizations and denominations and in relation to the role they play in the history of each nation (as, for instance, with Pentecostalism's role as a major demographic, social, and political force in Brazil). The same can be said for such not so "new" religious movements as Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as the New Age movement (receiving a treatment of over 35 pages) and other transplants, such as Islam and Buddhism.



In fact, Buddhism and Islam each receive almost 45 pages of attention compared to the much less space given to mainline Protestantism, which arguably has had more influence in the region than those two world religions, even if they show greater current growth. The Presbyterians are the only mainline denomination that has a separate entry (five pages), while Lutheranism (which has been especially prominent, at least historically, in Brazil and Argentina) and Methodism are only cited in the national profiles and statistics. Even much faster-growing groups, such as the non-charismatic and non-Pentecostal evangelicals (especially the Baptists) receive little attention (there is no entry on evangelicalism). It may be that the entries reflect the current state of research on Latin America, with those topics falling below the radar of academic researchers receiving fewer entries. Nevertheless, the match between current research and literature and the entries in these

ambitious volumes often works to the benefit of the reader. For instance, the extensive treatment given to secularism and atheism in Latin America may surprise readers who see the continent as overwhelmingly religious. Yet the various entries on non-affiliation and non-religion, especially in the southern cone of South America, suggest the existence of secular competition as a challenge to religious and even spiritual groups and movements.

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

1) **Hyattsville**, Maryland has become a living example of what is called the "Benedict option," the idea that Christians should form countercultural communities that eschew politics in the face of a hostile secular society. Young conservative Catholic families have been moving into the suburban town just outside of Washington, DC and the section known as "little Rome" (for the large number of Catholic institutions based there) and have congregated around St. Jerome Catholic parish, transforming its liturgy into a more traditional form and turning its parochial school into a classical Christian school. This core group of Catholics started convincing other Catholics to move into the neighborhood. Most of the interaction and organization of the community is carried out through the St. Elizabeth Listserv and social events such as a "Mom's Cocktail Hour." The town is known as a progressive community with urban amenities such as walkability, the presence of "third places," and plentiful job opportunities. But Catholics are using the same amenities found in the "bourgeois-bohemian suburbs" that urban theorist Richard Florida argues attracts the secular creative class to build this community, which has caught the attention of the media and of *The Benedict Option* author Rod Dreher himself. One concern is that this ingathering of mainly



white, well-educated and well-off Catholics may further diminish the diversity in this neighborhood in a similar way to that which “creative cities” have experienced.

(Source: Paper presented by Audra Dugandzic of the University of Notre Dame at the meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion)

2) The Lord of Miracles is a Peruvian devotion that has recently taken on national dimensions, honored by laity, clergy, and civil authorities. The Lord of Miracles, a copy of a fresco of Jesus’ crucifixion painted by an Angolan slave in the seventeenth century that has survived earthquakes, has drawn on African and native traditions and deities, such as Pachacamac. While its syncretistic components have been condemned by Catholic clergy, a Creole of aristocratic lineage who claimed to be cured by the veneration of the Lord of Miracles lent it wide legitimacy, and it has expanded and taken over Spanish-imported devotions, such as Captive Lord, a devotion based around miraculous beliefs in a human-sized statue of Jesus. Today the Lord of Miracles procession, run on several days in October by numerous fraternal groups, has dominated the shrinking procession for the Captive Lord. An October poll found that 70 percent of Limenians consider the procession important or very important. As evidenced by Pope Francis controversially blessing a native Pachacamac statue during the Amazon Synod, his papacy has encouraged such devotions as the Lord of Miracles. Clergy themselves now see the Lord of Miracles devotion as a strategy to reach nominal Catholics and safeguard against the growth of Pentecostalism. Although a non-confessional state, Peruvian officials and authorities feel pressured by the public to participate in the rituals, with various politicians making use of the Lord of Miracles to promote their popularity. President Alan Garcia declared the Lord of Miracles the “Patron of Peruvian Catholic Religiosity and Spirituality.”

(Source: Paper presented by Veronique Lecaros of the Pontifica Universidad Catolica del Peru at the meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion)

