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For more than two decades, Religion Watch has covered religions around the world, particularly looking at the unofficial dimensions of religious belief and behavior.



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When Muslim converts don't stay converted

While the number of people converting to Islam in the West is growing, new converts face a variety of significant challenges, both from inside and outside the community, leading a segment to drop out after some time. "Apostates" among converts remains an under-researched and difficult topic, according to several participants at sessions on "Moving In and Out of Islam" at the World Congress for Middle

Eastern Studies, which RW attended in Ankara, Turkey in late August. Muslims actually prefer to speak of "reverts," since babies in their natural state are supposed to be born sinless Muslims. The convener of the sessions, Karin van Nieuwkerk (Radboud University, Nimegen, Netherlands), suggests seeing conversions as an

▶ **Cont. on page 3**

Gay rights making Korean-American Christians more public and more insular

While the recent battles over same-sex marriage have brought once apolitical older Korean-American clergy and laity into the public square, the rapid victories and new protections granted to gay rights have created a mood of insularity among more integrated second-generation Korean-American evangelicals, according to political scientists Joseph Yi, Joe Phillips and

Shin-Do Sung. In an article in the social science journal *Society* (July-August), the authors note that Korean Christians, like their Latino and African-American counterparts, have registered stronger opposition to gay rights, particularly on the issue of ordaining gays and lesbians,

than white Christians (with significant dissent of Korean Presbyterians over the issue in the Presbyterian Church, USA). In 30 interviews with Korean-American clergy and laity, the authors find that gay rights controversies, such as Proposition 8 in California, prohibiting same-sex marriage, spurred the conservative older first-generation members to openly address a once taboo subject among themselves and opponents and to enter mainstream politics.

Activism for Proposition 8 also "nurtured a deeper, pragmatic understand-



"Korean Christians, like their Latino and African-American counterparts, have registered stronger opposition to gay rights . . . than white Christians . . ."



▶ **Cont. on page 2**

Gay rights' impact on Korean-American Christians *(cont. from p. 1)*

ing of plural democratic politics, similar to white evangelicals in the 1990s,” write Yi, Phillips and Sung. Yet, more assimilated second-generation Korean American evangelicals see gay rights gains as isolating them from their mainline denominations and the elite secular world they have entered. The fact that several prominent colleges have expelled or have considered expelling evangelical campus groups over

gay rights issues has “fed a widespread paranoia-myth among Korean and other evangelical Christians that they should not publicize their religious affiliations when applying to and interacting with elite, secular institutions.” There is a similar reluctance of Korean evangelicals to discuss their views at their workplaces, though the authors found that “secure, high-status professionals in politically heterogeneous set-

tings felt more freedom to discuss their views.” They conclude that the degree of Korean American insularity or social engagement relating to gay rights may be determined by whether it “becomes viewed like the clear-cut issue of interracial marriage or the more ambiguous one of abortion.”

(Society, <http://www.springer.com/social+sciences/journal/12115>.) ■

Celibacy gaining credence among gay evangelicals

After a period of leadership controversies and disbanding of ex-gay evangelical ministries, groups stressing the importance of celibacy for gay evangelicals are gaining popularity, reports Sarah Pulliam Bailey in *Religion News Service* (Aug. 4). When the prominent ex-gay ministry Exodus shut down in 2013, it was a sign that the reparation therapy model that it was based on, the concept of changing one’s sexual orientation, was coming under new challenges. While new ex-gay ministries stepped in after Exodus closed, such as Restored Hope Network, “many religious leaders are now encouraging those with same-sex attraction to consider a life of celibacy,” Bailey writes. The evangelical shift away from reparation ministries has come at a time of rapidly changing societal views on homosexuality, as well as various states banning or considering bans on reparation therapy for minors.



Eve Tushnet is a conservative, Catholic writer and celibate lesbian. Photo courtesy May Goren

Several former ex-gay ministry leaders have denounced the practice as harmful in the last two years. Earlier this year the 50,000-member American Association of Christian Counselors amended its code of ethics to eliminate the promotion of reparation therapy, and encouraged celibacy in its place, according to Bailey. But gay evangelicals promoting and practicing celibacy often feel marginalized in society and in churches, which prioritizes marriage. Gay evangelical author Matthew Vines says “it’s a subtle but significant shift. They’re saying, ‘There’s nothing wrong with being gay in and of itself,’ and that is a big change.” Some evangelicals are mining the Catholic Church long tradition of celibacy. Eve

Tushnet, a 35-year-old writer whose book “Gay and Catholic” comes out in October, is emerging as a significant voice in support of celibacy and the Catholic tradition. ■

Muslim converts who don't stay converted *(cont. from p. 1)*

ongoing process, rather than always putting the emphasis on a radical break with the past.

When people embrace Islam, reports Mona Alyedreessy (Kingston University, London), many actually join a subgroup, such as Salafi, Sufi or Ahmadi, without being initially aware of it. And whatever the group, they face minor challenges, such as changing habits, as well as major ones, like fitting in the Islamic community, lack of support or difficulties with their family. Not to mention the media stereotypes that make them suspects. According to Alyedreessy's research, those in her sample who suffered most from leaving their original religious community were people of Hindu background. A segment of converts abandon Islam after some time, for reasons ranging from disappointment and bad experiences with the Muslim community, which include marital failures or racism, to social and emotional hardships. Some exit peacefully and other ones publicly, but there are also closet disaffiliates who do not reveal their apostasy, partly due to fear that it could be taken very seriously. According to a survey, 36 percent of British Muslims believe that apostasy should be punished by death.

During her research on Dutch female converts living in Egypt, Karin van Nieuwkerk explains that there were various reasons for moving from the hope of gaining religious knowledge and providing religious upbringing to children, to a wish to follow the wishes of husbands. But adjusting to daily life in Egypt does not prove easy, starting with stronger class differences and the material consequences for women coming from a European middle class background. Long-term religious trajectories are often not the same for husbands, who have less difficulties. For many women, there have been ups and downs, leading to a reconfiguration of their relation with Islam. For some women, coming to Egypt has made it easier to practice their religious duties and has furthered their commitment. A few slowed down after investing much energy in their initial embrace of the faith and observing every rule; after maturing, several of them started to explore Sufism. For those experiencing disillusionment with their husbands, there are often consequences for their faith, too.

(Among support groups for new Muslims: Solace for Revert Sisters in Difficulty - <http://www.solaceuk.org> – deals with some of the above issues.) ■

Christian Scientists' ecumenical involvement brings changes to faith

Christian Scientists are forging new links with other Christians in such areas as prayer and fellowship since their church has engaged in ecumenical dialogues, according to the current issue of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Spring). The Christian Science Church began a series of informal dialogues with the National Council of Churches about five years ago, and such ecumenical contact has had direct and indirect influences on members. Shirley Paulson writes that language differences between Christian Scientists and other Christians remain a divisive issue, since the church under founder Mary

Baker Eddy developed a distinct and unorthodox vocabulary. But the dialogues have inspired a number of Christian scientists to re-examine Eddy's original concepts of Christianity, paying special attention to the eucharist and baptism (sacraments the church doesn't practice) and the role of the cross in the healing practice. Whether or not it is directly related to the dialogues, there has also been a new awareness about the church's biblical roots.

"A cultural shift—especially among a number of younger Christian Scientists—is moving from a very private individual religious practice to a more community-ori-

ented experience," Paulson writes. One sign of this is young Christian Scientists' participation in the popular game *Radical Acts*, which is both played online and is a kind of card game where players learn about the teachings of Jesus in an ecumenical context, with interpretation left open to anyone who participates. Another fairly new practice has been Christian Scientists praying for other Christians and their churches, "because they are within our own Christian family," Paulson concludes.

(Journal of Ecumenical Studies, <http://journal.jesdialogue.org/home/>.) ■

WHAT THE

CURRENT RESEARCH

REVEALS ABOUT TODAY'S RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

01 A recent survey finds that 36 percent of Americans report experiencing or witnessing some form of religious discrimination at work, with nearly half of non-Christian workers (49 percent) reporting so. Tanenbaum's 2013 Survey of American Workers and Religion finds that almost the same percentage of white evangelicals (48 percent) report experiencing or witnessing religious non-accommodation at work, with 40 percent of atheists likewise. Such non-accommodation can mean being denied the right to display a particular religious object or the right to pray during the day or being required to work on a Sabbath or holy day—the most common complaint (24 percent). *The Weekly Number* blog (Aug. 11) reports that the survey also finds that less than half of all workers report that their companies have such policies as flexible work hours to permit religious observance and materials explaining the company's policy of

non-accommodation.

(*The Weekly Number*, <http://theweeklynumber.com/weekly-number-blog.html>)

02 Arab-Americans who are Christian tend to stress their faith over their ethnicity to differentiate themselves from Muslims as well as presenting their faith as a more ancient and authentic form of Christianity than that of other Americans, according to Randa Kayyali of American University. The study, presented at the meeting of the American Sociological Association in San Francisco in August, was based on 51 interviews with Arab-American lay people from Orthodox and Melkite (Eastern Catholic), with additional interviews of clergy, and found that two-thirds of respondents wore crosses, with many using English translations of their biblical names and even acknowledging that they ate pork. They also tended to claim that their Christian faith was older and more genuine than that of oth-

er Christians. They did not identify as Lebanese or Jordanian but as Orthodox or Catholic. But many did identify as Arab, especially the Orthodox respondents. Even those who are non-religious still identified as Christian. But while Christian identity was stressed, there were few attempts to insult Islam, according to Kayyali.

03 While whites may be in the minority in Latino congregations, they still play an influential role in such churches, according to a study by Brandon Martinez and Jeffrey Tamburello of Baylor University presented at the meeting of the American Sociological Association in San Francisco, which RW attended. Congregations have become more multicultural in recent years—from about 8 percent in 1988 to about 15 percent today. In their study of 25 predominantly Latino congregations (making up 47 to 100 percent of their member-

► Cont. on page 5

Current research *(cont. from p. 4)*

ships) and 17,000 attendees from the Congregational Life Survey (2001-2008), the researchers found that both whites and Latinos were equal in decision-making roles. The more rare whites were in congregations, the more likely they were to report being asked to take up a leadership role. Martinez and Tamburello conclude that there remains a racial hierarchy in Latino congregations where whites hold a disproportionate amount of power.

04 North Korean Christians face considerable difficulty in inte-

grating into the Korean-American community, according to a study presented at the August meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion in San Francisco. The number of North Koreans who have settled in the U.S., mostly as political refugees, is very small, totaling 146 people, according to Hien Park of Vanguard University. Park interviewed 31 refugees in Los Angeles and found that six were "born-again," 10 did not believe in God, and 15 were church-attending but did not believe in God. She found that the Korean churches have not embraced these new-

comers, and those that attended services did not see the benefits of involvement that marked immigrants in the wider Korean community. Interestingly, those who say they are "born-again" Christians were the least church-attending group in the sample. Such non-attendance may be due to Christians rebelling against the public religion that was imposed on them in North Korea and thus shy away from outward rituals and religion, Park said. Many of these refugees first lived in South Korea where they felt stigmatized and then made their way west. ■

Ireland's 'extra-institutional' religious turn

While there has been a sharp decline in Mass attendance and religious vocations in Ireland, there is also the emergence of "extra-institutional" religion, which tends to be ecumenical with a concern for spirituality, community, personal growth and social justice, according to sociologist Gladys Ganiel of Trinity University of Dublin. In a paper presented at the conference of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, Ganiel said that these new types of religious groups are filling a niche in a country that has seen declining Mass attendance and vocations since the Irish tiger prosperity period of the 1990s and especially during the more recent priest sexual abuse crisis.

Ganiel conducted Internet surveys of about 1,600

clergy and laity, and case studies of groups and people that espouse such "extra-institutional" religious space. They include the "media priest" Brian D'Arcy, who has gained a wide following speaking out about priestly sexual abuse and a new Benedictine monastery, run by French monks, that has become a popular center of spiritual growth. Another initiative is the Jesuit-run Sli Elle, "another way," which works with young people and has a social justice and ecumenical orientation. Such organizations, though small, are viewed as a seedbed of reform and renewal

in the church, and they are also valued by Protestants and other religious minorities as "legitimizing their place in Ireland," Ganiel concluded. ■

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"These new types of religious groups are filling a niche in a country that has seen declining Mass attendance and vocations since the Irish tiger prosperity period of the 1990s . . ."

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Eastern Christian, Muslim immigration forges new church partnerships in Sweden

The recent immigration of Muslims and Eastern Christians to Sweden is leading to new public and private interfaith and ecumenical initiatives, says Johan Garde, Ersta Skondol University College. Speaking at the meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, Garde notes that there has been a one-third increase of Muslims and Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christians in Sweden since the early 2000s. There are now over 500,000 Muslims, with 200,000 Iraqis (who are also Christians) in the country once considered to be largely secular. Eastern Christian and Muslim affiliation is even growing among

the second generation. Social work among this burgeoning population of immigrants has been the catalyst in forming new ecumenical and interfaith partnerships. In case studies of such initiatives, Garde finds that shrinking Lutheran congregations have at the same time become very active in engaging in social work with other churches and even mosques, which is replacing traditional homogenous diaconal and charitable work.

A social service initiative may lead to shared building arrangements between Lutherans and Catholics. In one case an initiative stemming from social work led to the formation of “God’s House,”

a shared building arrangement between Catholics and Lutherans that now includes an adjoining mosque. These hybrid groups and networks are spread throughout Sweden (largely because Swedish immigration—by law—is proportionally distributed around the country) and are seen as public-private partnerships because they can draw on European Union funding targeted to such issues as immigration and homelessness. These initiatives are “creating a new discourse of solidarity” among Swedish religious groups, even as they have proven divisive to religious leaderships, particularly among the Muslims, Garde concludes. ■

'Muslimism' — the new face of Islamic orthodoxy?

Not convinced by vague expressions such as “moderate Islam,” which tells one little about content and rather describes what that type of Islam it isn’t, Neslihan Cevik, of University of Virginia, identifies new Islamic orthodoxy as “Muslimism.” Although paying special attention to the Turkish case, Cevik said her observations can be applied, at least to some extent, to other areas as well. She presented her paper at the World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES) in late August. “Muslimism” neither rejects modernity nor does it submit to it. It aims at finding ways to live in the modern world while preserving one’s identity and piety. “Muslimists” move away from traditional establishments, such as Sufi orders. In relation to the state, they tend toward a liberal polity. Educated, urbanized and upwardly mobile Muslims are the

agents of Muslimism. Islamic and modern political values are seen as congruent with each other.

The Muslimist discourse is not anti-secular, but it is critical of State secularism as it developed in Turkey. Life and institutions must be submitted to the sacred, but the state’s business is not to tell people to be religious. It redefines Turkish secularism by giving religion its autonomy, while the state has its autonomy as well. Muslimism is critical both of Islamic and secularist State models. This leads to a political and cultural tolerance, with a reluctance to support top-down policies (e.g. no alcohol ban, but the duty of the state is to warn about its dangers). Contrary to some observers and critics, Cevik argues that Muslimism is not a mere strategic trick; it really does represent an innovation within Turkish Islam. ■



The Twelve Imams, each representing a different aspect of the Universe, is a common Alevi belief. Public domain image by Naməlum

Alevis' relations with Turkish government hangs in balance

In the late 2000s, the Turkish government seemed to be on the way to giving public recognition to the significant Alevi minority in Turkey. But there is reluctance to grant them a status equal to that of Sunni Islam in Turkey, and the Turkish Sunni foreign policy in the Middle East has had a boomerang effect on the Sunni-Alevi divide in the country, according to Pinar Tank of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), who presented a paper at the World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES). A syncretic faith, Alevis make up between 15 and 25 percent of Turkey's population. They carry an ancient Turkish heritage, but they were viewed with suspicion as an expression of heretical or, at best, misunderstood Islam during the Ottoman period. They do not follow most of the fundamental practices of Islam.

Alevis were supportive of Kemalism and its secular approach, but those secular policies, aiming at a strict control of Islam more than at a real separation between state and religion, also had consequences for Alevi institutions. The Diyanet (Directorate of Religious Affairs) promoted an interpretation of Sunni Islam and made no place for Alevism. Until recently, it was not mentioned at schools. But denial and exclusion have strengthened Alevi identity; many Alevis have also been supportive of leftist political groups. During the 2013 protest in Turkey, a high percentage of participants were apparently Alevis. But with the decline of leftist ideologies, there has been a rediscovery of Alevi religious identity since the late 1980s, a trend supported by efforts to organize the Alevia diaspora in Western Europe.

Alevis demand religious equality, recognition on their houses of worship and an end to the Sunni bias

in teaching in schools. In 2009-2010, for the first time, there were serious institutional efforts to solve the Alevi question. A report was released, making various proposals, including a restructuring of the Diyanet for serving the Alevi community as well. The government's Alevi Initiative created a favorable climate, but an over-cautious approach of the government toward the feelings of its Sunni electorate came at the expense of the trust of the Alevis, according to Mehmet Bardakçı (Yeni Yüzyıl University). It approached the Alevi issue from a Sunni perspective, instead of dealing with it as an issue of human rights. Some significant measures were taken (e.g. teaching on Alevism introduced in the curriculum of some religious classes, Alevi programs on a State television channel during the holy month of the Alevi calendar), but it failed to initiate changes in the Diyanet or to give legal status to Alevi houses of worship. Moreover, the government forged close ties with one rather conservative Alevi group, leaning toward an understanding of Alevism as a branch of Islam, while leaving out groups with leftist roots and more prone to emphasize a separate Alevi identity.

Tensions on Turkey's borders are also having an effect on the Sunni-Alevi divide. Safe passage granted to Islamist militants crossing to Syria has damaged the fragile sectarian balance in border areas. The 600,000 Arab Alevis in South-Eastern Turkey, while having theological differences with Syrian Alawites, have sympathy for and relations with them. Arab-speaking Alevis have also started to develop connections with other Alevis in Turkey. There are fears that the current developments in the Middle East, with their sectarian dimensions, might also create new faultlines in Turkey itself. ■

Hinduism's appeal in religious marketplace fueling extremism in India?

If Islamic extremism is often linked to socio-economic malaise in Muslim societies, the current wave of Hindu extremism can be attributed to India's success, writes Shikkha Dalmia in the libertarian magazine *Reason* (August/September). She notes that India continues to belie forecasts about secularization, as its burgeoning Hindu revival has grown alongside a rise in prosperity and technological innovation, and its intellectual and elite classes are among the most religious elements in society. Hinduism "has rapidly metamorphosed into a religion of prosperity," flourishing in a "competitive religious marketplace that offers devotees a wide array of spiritual options..." Whereas Hinduism's

many rituals were largely confined to women and wives, "...Now it has become fashionable for men and women alike to partake in public and showy religious ceremonies." Religious pilgrimages and temple donations are at an all-time high, mostly led by those whom Dalmia calls the "Hindu nouveau riche."

More traditional fields that were once seen as being swept away by modernization are being revived; "solace seekers," scripture-based counseling, are now finding new clients, as the "stigma against going to therapists is driving Indians into the arms of gurus." Religious institutions are also now playing important social roles to fill in for India's inefficient and corrupt

governments, Dalmia adds. "Nearly every order promotes some pet cause, whether it's environmental cleanup, rural education, organic farming, or simply tending to the poor." She sees the revival of Hindu nationalism, including the recent election of Narendra Modi as prime minister, as an effort by India's Hindus to shed the perception that Hinduism is a "loser religion"...in part by straining to make sure that India's economic rise is attributed to its spiritual source. Hence, they have undertaken a program of pro-Hindu scientific and historical revisionism, which involves dissing minority religions."

(*Reason*, 5737 Mesmer Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90230.) ■

Sikhs gaining center stage in Bollywood, even as stereotypes endure

Recently, Sikh characters have found a popular place in Bollywood films, though such portrayals tend to perpetuate the stereotype of Sikhism as an exotic and warrior-based religion, according to an article in the journal *Sikh Formations* (published online Aug. 21). Today, top Bollywood actors are vying with each other to play Sikh characters, and such films as "Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year," and "Singh is Kinng" have created what author Anjali Gera Roy calls a "Sikh cool." Sikhs' prominent representation in India's military and their more rural backgrounds have established Sikh characters as rustic and masculine; the

turban and beard only highlight these features and add to their sex appeal. Roy adds that in more recent years, the portrayal of the Sikh as embodying rustic authenticity has progressed to a Sikh playing the figure of the self-made entrepreneur. But in the majority of films, the Sikh is seen through the camera lens as reaffirming "family ties, community, traditional values, sincerity and conviviality that is contrasted with the aspirations of an urban middle class globalized India towards an individualized, instrumentalist, modern and work-centered ethic," Roy concludes.

(*Sikh Formations*, <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rsfo20/current#.VAbQcix0y1s>.) ■

EXPLORE THIS ISSUE'S



FINDINGS & FOOTNOTES

01 Questions about the knowledge of religion gathered through and derived from surveys, polls and census data are examined in ten articles of a thematic issue of the journal *Religion* (July). The special issue, edited by Abby Day (University of London) and Lois Lee (University of Kent), includes a good deal of statistical data. Clive D. Field's (University of Birmingham and University of Manchester) article on the history of measuring religious affiliation in Britain to the 2011 census makes clear how varied the understandings of religious identity may be in self-identification. Religious affiliation can no longer be seen as a way of differentiating between the religious and the irreligious; multiple indicators are required for quantifying religion. Ariela Keysar (Trinity College, Hartford, CT) documents the methodology of the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS). While most Americans, 80 percent, adhere to a religious identification, a majority are not members of a religious congregation. The methodology followed by ARIS is to ask an open-ended question, "What is

your religion, if any?" and to let people define themselves, without submitting a list of potential answers. This allows researchers to capture rarely recognized groups.

The way to ask a question may have a significant impact on answers. Conrad Hackett (Pew Research Center) notes that if religion is measured with a one-step question, it results in higher percentage of religious affiliated than with a two-step question, as many surveys do in Europe (starting by asking if a person considers himself or herself to belong to a religion, and then only asking which one). Among many other issues cited in his article, Hackett finds that surveys often fail to account for religious syncretic identities. Generally speaking, it is helpful to measure separately religious identity, beliefs and practices, since they are not always coherent.

An article by Lois Lee draws attention to the lack of methodological attention to generic nonreligious categories, such as "nones," which create a form of cultural identification lacking meaning or relevance, or even entirely absent in the lives of respondents. It fails to "capture concrete nonreligious

categories such as 'atheist' and 'humanist'." It should not be ignored also that among people describing themselves as nonreligious, there are also part of those who see themselves as "spiritual but not religious" (alternative spiritualities). This issue becomes important as increasingly large numbers of people choose the nonreligious option. For more information on this issue write or visit: *Religion*, Routledge Journals, Taylor & Francis, 325 Chestnut Street, 8th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19106 – <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rrel20>.

02 Both Christians who denounce yoga as a cover for spreading Hinduism and Hindus who criticize postural yoga as a corruption of authentic, Hindu-rooted yoga, attempt to impose an essentialist definition on the practice of yoga, with protesters on both ends defining it as fundamentally Hindu, writes Andrea Jain (Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis) in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

Findings & Footnotes *(cont. from p. 9)*

(June). But yoga actually functions “as a source for a wide range of meanings and functions,” with a variety of appropriations and practices across yoga studios and ashrams, “thus illustrating that the quest for the essence of yoga is an impossible task.” For decades, Christian groups in the U.S. and elsewhere have been suspicious of postural yoga, seen as incompatible with Christian teaching [see Sept., 2005 RW]. “Yogaphobia,” as Jain labels it, sees the practice of yoga as an association with false, pagan, or even demonic religion. A former American yoga practitioner turned critic has even been promoting since 2001 a “Christian alternative” to yoga, called PraiseMoves ([www.http://praisemoves.com](http://www.praisemoves.com)).

In 2010, the Minneapolis-based Hindu American Foundation launched a campaign “Take Back Yoga—Bringing to Light Yoga’s Hindu Roots.” Far from being “yogaphobic,” they value yoga, but see it as more than merely postural yoga and feel that the latter fails to give due credit to Hinduism. They see yoga as having become victim of “property theft” by people primarily interested in marketing it. However, they think that yoga, while Hindu, brings benefits (including health benefits) to believers of all religions who practice it. Like Christians, but for different reasons, they are critical of the New Age movement. The problem with both positions, from the perspective of scholarly analysis, is that they construct yoga as homogeneous tradition and ignore that it has been constantly reinvented by

those practicing it. The popularization of yoga becomes seen as a threat to what are perceived as “bounded traditions” (Christianity and Hinduism). But “religious phenomena arise from continuous processes of syncretism, appropriation, and hybridization. Yoga is no exception.” For more information on this article, write: Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Oxford University Press, 825 Houston Mill Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30329-4211 – <http://jaar.oxfordjournals.org>.

03 While sociological and other research on Muslims in Western Europe has been proliferating in recent years, another numerically significant section of religious migration has remained surprisingly ignored by most scholars: the (Eastern) Orthodox Churches. Co-edited by Maria Hämmerli (University of Fribourg, Switzerland) and Jean-François Mayer (**RW** Associate Editor), *Orthodox Identities in Western Europe: Migration, Settlement and Innovation* (Ashgate) represents an attempt to offer glimpses of the “socially invisible” Orthodox presence in that part of the world. Research still being scanty, it is not possible to cover all countries, and the approach has not been to provide a country-by-country coverage, but to gather various contributions that could help readers to understand the dynamics of Orthodox migration through various approaches. While most of the contributions deal with Churches in the Byzantine tradition, plus one chapter by Mayer on attempts

to establish Western Rite parishes under those jurisdictions. There are also two chapters on Syriac/Assyrian communities.

The coming of Orthodox believers in the West confronts them with new experiences. Not only can church life no longer be arranged as it is in countries with an Orthodox legacy and high density of Orthodox population, but even relations between the clergy and the faithful shift, as made clear by Berit Thorbjørnsrud (University of Oslo) in her chapter on Orthodox priests in Norway. A number of clergy need to have a secular job aside from their church duties and, while playing a central role in church life, they are also confronted with powerful parish councils. Several Romanian priests in Italy—where the Romanian Church has become a very large religious group numbering in the hundreds of thousands—think that very well-trained priests need to be sent in order to deal with pastoral challenges quite different from those in their home countries, according to Suhna Gülfer Ihlamur-Öner (Marmara University, Istanbul).

Some of the authors use the expression “Orthodox diaspora,” but the editors themselves are critical of it. There may be ethnic diasporas among Orthodox migrants, but this does not mean that all those ethnic communities taken together form an Orthodox diaspora—they are not coalesced by the shared faith in a way that would make them into a single diaspora. It rather looks like a cohabitation of ethnic/national diaspora-minded communities with their respective churches. Moreover, there are also

Western converts. While they are a tiny minority, maybe around 1 percent, their role can be important, and they are sometimes over-represented among clergy. In Ireland, remarks James A. Kapaló (University College Cork), they “have acted as significant mediators between the migrant Orthodox Churches and between Orthodoxy and Irish society.” While the Orthodox Church is much attached to tradition, observations made in several chapters show that it does also innovate in order to adjust to a new environment, even if it will do it by invoking the spirit of tradition. Individual subscribers to **RW** (not libraries or institutions) who would like to order this book are entitled to a special discount, if

they order directly via Ashgate’s website: <http://www.ashgate.com/default.aspx?page=637&calcTitle=1&isbn=9781409467540>. Please give the code 50AEX14N when ordering to receive a 50 percent discount on the website price.

04 *The 2014 Yearbook of International Religious Demography* (Brill, \$99) has recently been published, presenting an annual overview of the state of religious statistics around the world. The yearbook, edited by Brian Grim, Todd Johnson, Vegard Skirbekk and Gina Zurlo, documents the continued growth of religious populations, particularly since they are younger than secular

populations. The book does not so much show religious variations from one year to the other as much as present new data on long range trends and projections, but it offers many interesting facts, such as: in 2013 Asia had five times as many atheists and agnostics than Europe; Muslims are expected to grow twice as fast from 2013 to 2030 in Africa as they are in Asia; and Muslim women were more likely than Protestants or Catholics to report high fertility, and non-use of any modern contraceptives. The book also has several chapters of case studies, including how Jews became a “demographic avant-garde,” fertility trends by religion in Mongolia, and the size and demographic structure of religions in Europe. ■

CORRECTION

In the article on Jehovah’s Witnesses’ change in recruitment in the August issue, the sentence starting in the 5th line in the third column should read: “One

volunteer says the non-confrontational approach is better for secular and busy people, giving them more control in finding out about the religion.”

Religion Watch transitioning to digital-only platform

Last month, we unveiled our upgraded website — religionwatch.com. Beginning next month, Religion Watch will fully transition into a digital-only publication, which

will allow you to access optimized content from the convenience of your computer, tablet, or smartphone. We have added “printer friendly” functionality to the website so that subscrib-

ers wishing to may still print a hard copy of each month’s content in one place — <http://www>.

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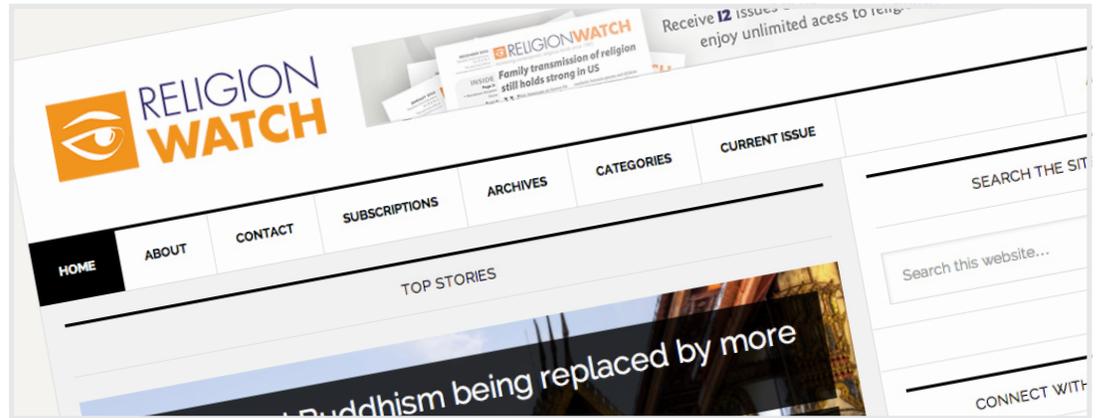
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