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Religion in the News

Religious harassment around the world

Religious harassment abounds in the world—even in the Americas (not just the U.S.), where 11 percent of Christians, 11 percent of Muslims, and 29 percent of Jews claim some form of harassment for their faith. In European nations, 51 percent of Christians, 71 percent of Muslims, and 69 percent of Jews claim to have been harassed. It comes as no surprise that 65 percent of Christians and 70 percent of Jews in the Middle East and North Africa have experienced some form of harassment, given the fact that Islam is by far the dominant religion in that part of the world. What is surprising is that in this same region, 75 percent of Muslims claim to have been harassed for their faith. This is no doubt due to the strong antipathy that exists between Sunnis, Shiites, and other smaller groups of Muslims. —Pew Research Center

Religion on the moon

In September 2007, Google announced that it was offering $20 million to the first privately funded team that lands a robotic spacecraft on the moon by the end of 2015. Eighteen groups have signed on. Now, an Israeli project called Torah on the Moon hopes to include a capsule on the first spacecraft that would contain a handwritten copy of the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible). The capsule would be designed to protect the Torah scroll from damage by the harsh lunar environment for more than 10,000 years. The purpose of the project is to maintain something of Earth's culture away from Earth should an apocalyptic event destroy the planet. Subsequent privately sponsored moon landings might carry copies of other significant cultural documents, such as the Hindu Vedas and an ancient Chinese philosophical work called the I Ching. The Torah would not be the first religious document to be left on the moon. The Apollo 15 astronauts left a Bible on their lunar rover when they departed the moon in 1971.—Washington Post
Who’s pro-choice, pro-life?

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Source: Gallup’s annual Values and Beliefs survey, beginning in 1995.

**Canadian religious rights controversy**

Requests for religious accommodation keep getting more complicated. York University in Toronto, along with most other universities, offers many online courses. In September 2013, a male student asked, for religious reasons, to be excused from participating in a required face-to-face focus group that included female students. (The student’s name and religion were not disclosed by the media.) He had purposely taken only online courses in order to avoid compromising his religious beliefs.

The professor forwarded the student’s request to the university administration, which sided with the student and instructed the professor to accommodate him. Defending its decision, the administration said that it had consulted with the university’s legal counsel, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the university’s own human rights center. However, based on his own moral convictions, the professor refused to accommodate the student, who complied and participated in the focus group.—*Toronto Star*
Tell The World About Jesus

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Torah scrolls found

Hungarian rabbi Slomo Koves recently uncovered 103 Torah scrolls in a Russian library that had been stolen from Hungarian Jews by the Nazis during World War II. Koves found the scrolls in the Lenin Scientific Library in Nizhny Novgorod. Some of them are centuries old and in poor condition, making their restoration and preservation Koves’s most immediate concern. “We have initiated talks with the Russians,” he said, “and we asked them that before we even talk about ownership we be allowed to restore them.” He does not expect ownership of the scrolls to be a serious problem, since Russian restitution law favors the return of religious artifacts to their religious communities. At the time he discovered the scrolls, Koves was actually looking for other Hungarian war loot that had been housed in the library in Nizhny Novgorod.—Reuters

As Quoted
“I don’t think these religions are claiming the moon. It’s about saving our culture.”

—Naveen Jain, chief executive of Moon Express, which is one of 18 groups attempting to land a spacecraft on the moon, about a proposal to include a capsule containing religious documents on their spacecraft for safekeeping on the moon.