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*Religion Watch is a newsletter monitoring trends in contemporary religion. For more than two decades we have covered the whole range of religions around the world, particularly looking at the unofficial dimensions of religious belief and behavior.*

## RELIGIOSCOPE

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## Small-town religion retaining loyalty; feeling frayed community ties

While Robert Wuthnow's *Small-Town America* (Princeton University Press, \$35) is about far more than religion, the sociologist of religion provides a compelling portrait of how faith and congregational life still impact town communities. Wuthnow and his associates conducted interviews with a representative sample of 700 people across the U.S. seeking to understand the state of community life in small towns. They found that aging members are, not surprisingly, a key challenge-- both for these congregations and their respective small towns as well. It follows that participants viewed these congregations as vitally important, fulfilling both social and spiritual roles. Churches are found to be more visible in small towns not only because they are less popu-

lated but also because there are more churches per capita in these areas than in more populated places.

Wuthnow additionally found that identification with small town churches is based more on life-long habits of participation rather than spiritual experiences or adherence to congregations' beliefs (although the rate of attendance in small towns is only five percent higher in comparison to higher population cities). Lifetime religious habits are fostered by public pressure for loyalty (especially among community leaders and upscale residents who have a 15 percent high-

er attendance rate compared to their counterparts in larger population areas), which discourages congregational switching and engaging

Identification with small town churches is based more on life-long habits of participation rather than spiritual experiences . . .

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## Pentecostal prosperity teachings enhance 'American Dream' for immigrants

For many Latino immigrants the "American Dream" of success and a better future has become fused with Pentecostal prosperity teachings that provide a greater sense of empowerment and hope to these newcomers. While the "American Dream" has been eulogized since the burst of the housing bubble, the hope for a more prosperous future, including home ownership, drives many immigrants, writes Tony Tian-Ren Lin in the

summer issue of the Hedgehog Review, the journal of the Institute for the Advanced Studies in Culture of the University of Virginia. Lin found that Word of Faith Pentecostalism, a movement that teaches that God desires believers' healing and prosperity and that followers have the power to make such miracles a reality, has found a wide hearing

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## End-times prophecy leaving young evangelical immigrants

Interest in the end-times, a staple of evangelical culture, is stagnating among young evangelicals and charismatics as issues of social justice and environmentalism have gained new traction among this age group, reports *Charisma* magazine (June). The trend has been a decade in the making, but it has been increasingly evident on the conference circuit. Crowds at prophecy events have thinned out considerably, with the average age of attendees usually in the 60-something range. Judging by the offerings of last year's Catalyst East Conference, which draws more than 13,000 pastors and church leaders to hear cutting edge advice and leadership trends, topics such as human trafficking outnumbered eschatology and

prophecy. Evangelical critics such as Brian McLaren point to the false alarms recently sounded by prophecy teachers, souring younger evangelicals toward end-times fervor. One false alarm incidence was Harold Camping's end of the world prediction in 2011

Some young adults involved in the postmodern Emerging church movement hold that an emphasis on biblical prophecy leads to an evasion of responsibility in society. Connected to the disinterest in prophecy are the shifting attitudes toward

Israel among many young evangelicals, writes Jim Fletcher. The move toward social action tends "to garner more sympathy among

Millennials for the Palestinian people, who tend not to see modern Israel as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy but rather as an oppressor of the indigenous Arab population."

These changing positions on end-

times are also worrisome to evangelical leaders because it may diminish missionary zeal among the younger generations.

(*Charisma*, 406 Rhinehart Rd., Lake Mary, FL 32746.)

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**An emphasis on biblical prophecy leads to an evasion of responsibility in society.**  
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## Pentecostal prosperity teachings (continued from p. 1)

among Latino immigrants and is having a "transforming effect in this large community." A 2007 Pew survey found that the majority (73 percent) of all Latino Christians believe that God grants wealth and health to those who have faith.

In interviewing Latino Pentecostal immigrants, Lin found that a sense of "divine entitlement" validates their presence in a society that often marginalizes them and "emboldens them to be proactive in all they do, although not always to their benefit." The strong posi-

tive thinking thrust of the Word of Faith approach gives the believer a sense of control over their lives even while they hold that only God can provide such prosperity. Most Word of Faith Pentecostals Lin encountered did not become prosperous, even as they worked extremely hard and applied the formula to their efforts. He witnessed many incidents of bankruptcies, unpaid loans, and even divorces that resulted from getting caught up in a cycle of endless failure. But the Word of Faith teachings

were also found to inspire hope for a better future and transform lives for the better. As prosperity teachings spread across the world, they are also extending and indigenizing the "American Dream" to those who could never come to the U.S. Lin cites the rise of "boss Christianity" in Wenzhou, China, where Chinese workers are motivated to convert to Christianity by the wealth of their Christian bosses.

(*Hedgehog Review*, [www.iasc-culture.org/THR/index.php](http://www.iasc-culture.org/THR/index.php).)

## Small-town religion *(continued from p. 1)*

in ministry to outsiders. Faith also transcends particular congregations, with public mourning rituals and other social services done on a cooperative level. These could include addiction and unemployment programs, as well as the creation of new congregational partnerships with those in developing societies.

But even such cooperation may be waning in small towns, particularly as more competitive non-denominational churches that may have less long-standing community ties have gained promi-

nence. The large percentage of conservative churches in small towns may also make some towns likely targets of Christian right organizations' activism. This is another factor that may reduce community ties. Aside from potential division and aging members (and clergy), Wuthnow concludes that challenges to small town congregations include their tendency to resist mergers even when they are too small to operate on their own (and a smaller number of sister churches to provide assistance) and the need to adapt to greater ethnic diversity.

# Egypt's Christians take on public profile amid unrest

**E**gypt undergoes increasing division and instability, Christian churches in the country are finding new unity and revitalization, according to a report in *Charisma* magazine (June). Although there are also reports of Christians leaving Egypt in fear of growing violence and restrictions, the magazine finds churches are swelling in attendance, gaining a public profile, and even drawing in Muslim followers. As the political chaos may lead Christians to be more outspoken, there are a growing number of public prayer events that are no longer held underground that draw both evangelical and Coptic Orthodox believers together, writes Ken Walker.

Bishop Tawadros, the Coptic pope appointed last November, has supported such ecumenical initiatives, whilst the Internet and satellite TV (i.e. California-based network Alkarma) has "played a role in the spiritual groundswell." Many of these prayer gatherings started underground in the 1990s and early 2000s but have gradually taken on a more public presence, Walker adds. Over the past three years attendance at Kasr Al Dohara, Egypt's largest evangelical congregation located in Cairo, has increased from 700 to crowds that regularly overflow the capacity of the 2,500-seat sanctuary.



Map of Egypt with capital city Cairo circled

SOURCE: NordNordWest via Wikimedia Commons

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## WHAT THE

# CURRENT RESEARCH

## REVEALS ABOUT TODAY'S RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

**01** American entrepreneurs are similar to most other Americans in terms of belief in God, religious affiliation, and religious service attendance, but they do tend to have a more personal view of God and favor places of worship that are friendly to business concerns, according to a Baylor University study.

Researchers used a national random sample of U.S. adults and found that nearly nine out of 10 entrepreneurs are affiliated with a religious tradition, with one-third being evangelical Protestant, one-quarter mainline Protestant, and slightly less than one-quarter Roman Catholic. Two-thirds have no doubt God exists while five in 100 identify as atheist.

Entrepreneurs are very similar to the American population as a whole, attending religious services about monthly on average, and about a third of entrepreneurs attend services weekly or more. In

the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (June), researchers Kevin Dougherty, Jenna Griebel, Mitchell Neubert, and Jerry Park note that entrepreneurs are more likely to believe that God is interested in their problems and affairs and put less emphasis on a public role for their faith. Finally, the sociologists found that entrepreneurs tend to favor congregations that are amenable to other business people and their concerns.

(*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1468-5906](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1468-5906).)

**02** A new study by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) finds that anti-Semitic incidents declined for the second year in a row.

The ADL's annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents reported a 14 percent decline in 2012. Incidents monitored include vandalism, assaults, and threats and harassment

against Jewish individuals. The ADL Audit, conducted annually since 1979, found 926 anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. last year and 1080 in 2011. But the picture of overall decline in these incidents is complicated by a proliferation of anti-Semitism online, as well as a rise in vandalism by 33 percent in 2012 compared to the previous year. Most of the vandalism took place on public property or individual homes, and 13 percent of these attacks were on Jewish institutions.

**03** Census data recently released by Statistics Canada shows the continuing free fall of Christian affiliation and identity in Canadian society, moving closer to a European pattern of secularization.

In the e-newsletter *Sightings* (July 18), John Stackhouse of Regent College reports on the 2011 census data showing that 67.3 percent claim a Christian affiliation, compared to 83 percent in 1991.



Along with the decline in Christianity, 25 percent of Canadians espoused no affiliation, an increase from 17 percent a decade earlier and from about 13 percent in 1991. Canada's multicultural policy, welcoming those from religions around the world, has only slightly altered the nation's religious landscape, according to the census. World religions beyond Christianity only accounted for eight percent of the population, increasing from about six percent ten years ago.

**04** **A new study finds the percentage of religious conservatives shrinking in each successive generation, with "religious progressives" representing one-in-five Americans.** The Economic Values Survey, conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute, found that aside from religious progressives, 38 percent are religious moderates, 28 percent are religious conservatives, and 15 percent are non-religious. The survey found that religious progressives are younger and more diverse than religious conservatives; they had a mean age of 44 while the mean age of religious conservatives is 53. In the Millennial generation, there are nearly as many religious progressives as there are non-religious (22 percent). As far as religious makeup, Catholics (29 percent) constitute the largest share of religious progressives, followed by mainline Protestants (19 percent), the non-affiliated who still claim that religion is at least somewhat important to them (18 percent), non-Christian Americans (13 percent), trailed by evangeli-

als (4 percent). Religious progressives tended to characterize their religious commitment on the basis of doing good works, while religious conservatives say that being religious is more about having the certain beliefs.

**05** **A long-range international study finds that both discrimination against and support for religion have increased in the last two decades.** The study, conducted by Jonathan Fox of Bar Ilan University in Israel, uses new data from the Religion and State Round 2 dataset, which measures religion's influence on politics in 177 countries from 1990 to 2008. In a forthcoming issue of the journal *Religion and Politics*, Fox finds that the increase in support for—measured by government support for religious policies or institutions—and discrimination against religion was robust and consistent across world regions and religious traditions. This finding contradicts the once predominant paradigm of secularization, which argues that religion's public influence would decline, particularly in the West. In contrast, Fox writes that this study is based on a longer time frame and more comprehensive variables than previous ones. With this method, it shows that "every country is essentially a battleground between the supporters of religious and secular ideologies."

*(Politics and Religion, <http://journals.cambridge.org>.)*

**06** **In the next decade, the world will grow more religious while**

**atheists and agnostics will represent a smaller proportion of the world's population, according to an analysis by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.** The new study looks at the changing demographics of Christianity over a 50-year period (1970-2020). In the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (July), researchers Gina Bellofatto and Todd Johnson find that in 1970, nearly 80 percent of the world's population was religious. By 2010, that figure had grown to 88 percent and by 2020, the projection is up to about 90 percent. Due to the resurgence of Buddhism, Christianity, and other religions in China and Christianity in Eastern Europe, in ten years atheism and agnosticism will decline to 10.7 percent of the world's population from 11.8 percent in 2010. Yet by 2020, the U.S. will have the most Christians (263 million). It will also have more agnostics and atheists (almost 53 million) than any other country after China.

Bellofatto and Johnson add that while Christianity and Islam will predominate as the world's largest religions, there will also be more religious diversity in most countries (i.e. the Baha'i have a greater "global spread" than any other religion besides Christianity), but because of the particular growth of Christianity and Islam in the global south, this region will show less diversity by 2020. Among the countries likely to show the greatest growth rate for Christianity in the next ten years are China and Mongolia.

*(International Bulletin of Missionary Research, 490 Prospect St., New Haven, CT 06511.)*

## 07 Religiosity is regressing in Europe not only in its

**institutional forms, reinforcing trends toward individualization, new family models, and moral liberalism over time, writes Pierre Bréchon (Institute of Political Science, Grenoble, France) in the journal for prospective studies *Futuribles* (July-August).**

Bréchon's analysis is based on the data collected periodically since 1981 through the European Values Study in nine Western European countries (other ones were later added), including France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. In the nine European countries under consideration, the percentage of people without a religious affiliation has grown from 15 percent to 35 percent (9 percent claiming full atheism, up to 18 percent in France). Both Catholics and Protestants have decreased, while Muslims have been on the rise as a consequence of migration.

Attempting to assess levels of religiosity with a variety of indicators (religious attendance, belief in God, feeling religious, etc.—the presence of at least seven out of ten indicators being seen as a sign of strong religious commitment), the percentage of people with strong religiosity has decreased, from 41 percent in 1981 to 32 percent today. Young people are on average less religious than older generations. It is higher among Muslims than among Christians, higher among Catholics than among Protestants. The survey also makes clear the key role of early religious socialization: the more people attended religious services frequently at the

age of 12, the more likely they are to be religiously committed currently in adulthood. Among people who never attended religious services as teenagers, only 6 percent have a strong level of religiosity as adults. The analysis of the results of the survey shows no indication that the current secularization trends could be reversed in Western Europe in the foreseeable future (at least until the mid-21st century), since the variations appear to be strongly generational (lower levels of religiosity among younger people). This is bound to have deep social consequences, beyond purely religious ones.

*(Futuribles, 47 rue de Babylone, 75007 Paris, France – www.futuribles.com.)*

## 08 While Italy still used to be seen in the 1980s as a Catholic country with a very small percentage of other believers (one percent), the religious landscape has undergone significant changes in recent decades: 7.6 percent of all residents (out of a population of more than 60 million) belong to religious minorities, reported PierLuigi Zoccatelli (Center for Studies on New Religions, CESNUR) at the 2013 CESNUR conference.

The changes in the religious composition of Italy's population are due more to migration than to switching affiliations. Indeed, if only Italian citizens are considered (including people of foreign origins who acquired Italian citizenship), those belonging to religions other than the Roman Catholic Church make up 2.5 percent, Zoccatelli

stressed. According to CESNUR estimates on migrants, there are 1,360,000 Muslims and 1,294,700 Eastern Orthodox; in the latter group, Romanians make the largest part. Obviously, the percentage of people of other faiths having Italian citizenship is bound to increase over years, through the process of naturalization.

Still, there are also people of Italian descent who embrace other faiths, particularly Protestantism. Among the 435,000 Protestant Italian citizens, only 14.9 percent belong to "historical" Protestant denominations, while 72 percent (313,000) belong to Pentecostal churches. It should also be mentioned that there are more than 400,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in Italy. Data on religion in Italy are presented in much more detail in the 3rd edition of *Encyclopedia of Religion in Italy* (available only in Italian), coedited by PierLuigi Zoccatelli and Massimo Introvigne, released in April. This volume of more than 1,200 pages provides detailed information on 836 religious groups (there had been 658 in the 1st edition in 2001).

*(For additional information on the *Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia*: <http://www.cesnur.org/2013/enciclopediaireligioni2013.htm>.)*

## 09 While Belgium has been rated as one of the most secularized European societies, the country has recently witnessed a significant growth of Protestant, particularly Pentecostal churches, reports the British newsletter on religious trends and research, *Future First* (June). Although Catholic

Mass attendance has fallen sharply since the 1970s, Protestant churches have shown steady growth since the 19th century, although they have remained small, representing about two percent of the population by 2012. But the new growth of Pentecostal churches has outstripped those of the older mainline churches, tripling in number from 69 in 1980 to 242 in 2012. Part of this growth is due to the growth of immigrant churches that minister to newcomers particularly from Africa in non-Belgian languages. But these congregations do not seem themselves as national churches reaching out to a particular ethnic group but rather see themselves as reaching out to all of Belgian

society. Not all of the growth is in new Pentecostal churches; some of the historic churches have taken a charismatic turn as Belgians are drawn to Pentecostal practices and spirituality.

*(Future First, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Ave., Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PW UK.)*

**10** A new study by the Pew Research Center finds that countries that underwent the Arab Spring have not lessened religious restrictions on minorities and in fact have often increased them. The study, which measured religious restrictions by

world regions on an index, finds that the Middle East and North Africa showed restrictions growing from a median score of 4.7 to 5.9 from 2007 to December of 2011. Along with measuring government restrictions, the index also looked at social hostilities against religion. Before the Arab Spring, both government restrictions and social hostilities were higher in the Middle East and North Africa than in any other region of the world. In late 2011, government restrictions remained high (the region next highest in such restrictions was Asia-Pacific at 3.2), while social hostilities markedly increased—starting at 3.7 in 2007 and going to 5.4 in 2011.

## Update: Unificationist first family, movement face new turmoil

Many Unificationists had expected Rev. Sun Myng Moon's youngest son, Hyung Jin (b. 1979), to guide the movement after his father's death. However, the wife of the founder of the Unification Church (Hak Ja Han) actually clearly emerged as the leader, reported Dan Fefferman (International Coalition for Religious Freedom, Washington D.C.), himself a church member, at the international CESNUR (Center for Studies of New Religions) conference meeting in late June at Dalarna University (Falun, Sweden), which Religion Watch attended. The death of Rev. Moon was expected, but not at the time it took place: his followers had expected him to live longer, at least until February 2013, a month seen

as the culmination of his life. Thus the "Foundation Day" on February 22 took place in somewhat difficult circumstances. Besides the physical absence of Rev. Moon himself, there were reports of a continuing schism between Moon and his eldest living



Unification Church Symbol  
SOURCE: RicHard-59  
via Wikimedia Commons

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# ON / FILE

## A CONTINUING SURVEY OF NEW GROUPS, MOVEMENTS, EVENTS, AND PEOPLE IMPACTING RELIGION

**01** The worship immersion tour run by the interfaith organization Faith House in New York guides visitors through the city's religious communities during three or four day retreats. Faith House director Samir Selmanovic, a Seventh Day Adventist pastor from Croatia, started the tours to help visitors learn about other faiths by having them enter into a liturgy or sacred space on their own terms. Faith House had initially held interfaith dialogues and encounters that brought together Jews, Christians, Muslims, and atheists in neutral places (called Living Room events) but Selmanovic found that "people respond better when something is happening in their places because they have ownership of it." (Source: Christian Century, June 26)

**02** Jesus Youth, a Catholic charismatic movement that is growing in Britain—and the rest of the world-- by way of Kerala, India, is a major example of how Indian charismatics are influencing Catholicism in the UK. Jesus Youth originated 25 years ago in the Indian state of Kerala, which

is considered India's Bible belt because of its large Christian population, but has now spread to other parts of the world through economic migration. The strategy of the group has been to gather existing members of Jesus Youth together and then reach out to Indian Catholics, including the second generation born in England. Finally, the movement seeks to reach the indigenous population. It is this last more difficult stage that Jesus Youth has just embarked on and it seems to be having some success.

The group was given a disused inner-city parish at risk of closure and started conducting 24-hour adoration of the Eucharist sessions, eventually drawing new families to the church from surrounding areas. Jesus Youth also holds intensive prayer between Ash Wednesday and Pentecost that now encompasses 35 parishes. Another charismatic network with its roots in Kerala started "Second Saturday Conventions" that feature preaching and "signs and wonders," now drawing crowds of up to 3,000 and including those with non-Indian backgrounds. (Source: The Tablet, May 18)

**03** Malkhaz Songulashvili, head of the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia (EBCG), is becoming well-known in the ecumenical world for his method of contextualizing Protestantism in an Eastern Orthodox culture. The Evangelical Baptist Church is the largest Protestant church in Georgia (though with only 17,000 members) and under Songulashvili has incorporated Orthodox practice and worship into its services, such as using chanting and incense. Yet the church also has a female bishop and practices liturgical dance in its services, leaving the Georgian Orthodox Church puzzled about its identity. Because the Orthodox Church withdrew from the World Council of Churches in 1997, the EBCG has become the main ecumenical representative in the country. The EBCG has also faced alienation and criticism from fellow evangelicals in Russia and Eastern Europe (as well as from a new dissident Baptist church in Georgia), especially since Songulashvili has been friendly to the West and critical of nationalism. But the EBCG is reported to be growing and attracting a following among Georgian young people. (Source: Christianity Today, June.)



## Unificationist update *(continued from p. 7)*

son, Hyun Jin (aka Preston, not to be confused with his youngest brother Hyung) and the resignation of a charismatic daughter of Rev. Moon, In Jin, following the disclosure of an affair. Furthermore, Kook Jin and Hyung Jin Moon played important roles in different sectors of the reprioritization of the movement [see November/December 2012 RW for more on this trend.]

The rebellion of the eldest son goes along with lawsuits for control of assets, which continue to be a major financial drain for the church. While people who follow him are small in numbers, they control a large part of the assets of the Church. Regarding the two sons who were asked to resign from the board of the Tongil corporation (Kook Jin Moon) and from the leadership of the movement in America (Hyung Jin Moon), they are

not in schism, but neither are active currently; they both reside in the US. There are different centers of power in the church. Ultimately, one of the “True Children” (i.e. the children of Rev. Moon) should emerge to take the reins of the movement. But Moon’s wife’s control is currently not challenged.

Regarding the reprioritization of Unificationism, it is likely to mean less money spent on expensive projects, less international conferences sponsored by the church, and greater emphasis on evangelism. There has been no mass exodus from the church, but following the current turmoil, members have become more vocal in their doubts and questions. The new priority on evangelism might actually even lead to a membership growth in some countries in the years to come.

# RAGING IDEOLOGIES

## *Buddhist-Muslim clashes on the rise in Asia*

**T**he recent eruptions of violence of Buddhists against Muslims in Burma/Myanmar and in Sri Lanka inspire fears that such incidents might lead to a Muslim backlash. However, there are other cases involving the faithful of both religions that show that even such violent interaction is not necessarily doomed to escalate into a religious war, writes *The Economist* (July 27).

While a minority of 5 percent of the population in Myanmar, Muslims are now the targets of hate speech and action by Buddhist nationalists. It started with rounds of violence by local Ara-

kanese against Muslim Rohingyas in the Rakhine state. While there had been outbreaks of ethnic violence in the past, it has now led to a complete separation between both ethnic groups, and to sectarian violence across Myanmar. Moreover, anti-Muslim rhetoric is built around the idea of protecting Buddhism and preventing the country to be overrun by Muslims due to alleged higher birthrates.

In Sri Lanka, where criticism of Islam had been brewing among nationalist Buddhist monks for years, as a Religion Watch correspondent was able to observe during research travels to that country in recent years, the recent incidents against Muslims (10

percent of the population) have centered around issues such as halal food and the slaughtering of animals in Muslim tradition. For instance, on May 25, a monk self-immolated in protest. Previously, crowds led by monks vandalized shops run by Muslims. Other issues have been agitated by monks for years, focusing on topics such as Christian missions and conversions: groups involved in anti-Muslim violence have attacked both mosques and churches. Self-preservation is invoked by Buddhist activists, similar to Myanmar’s Arakanese people.

While violence builds on

▶ **Continued on page 11**

# 2011 disasters making Japan more open to Christianity?

**J**apan has been among the most resistant nations to Christianity, but the 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster in the north of the country appears to have brought churches closer together to get more involved in social relief efforts, Christianity Today magazine (July/August) reports. In an interview, Tokyo pastor and theologian Atsuyoshi Fujiwara said Japan has had several encounters with Christianity usually during times of crisis, when the nation was open to Christianity but then rejected the faith when greater stability was achieved. Fujiwara says that the Japanese are at a new point in their history in giving Christianity a fresh look. Today, only about one percent of the population

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is Christian. After the 2011 disaster, Fujiwara said that “churches and organizations worked together beyond denominational walls to deliver food and supplies...Before the disaster, Japanese churches had been isolated from society without participating in regional festivals and activities, which were often connected to Shintoism and Buddhism...People saw the genuine motivation of Christian volunteers. Now churches are trusted.” Fujiwara adds that churches have a stronger presence, at least in northern Japan where the disaster hit: “Buddhist monks now show respect to pastors who have strong Christian convictions and suffered together with them in helping people...”  
*(Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188.)*

## London and Sydney show religious vitality, conservatism

Although global cities are often viewed as more secular and cosmopolitan than other regions of their respective countries, London, England and Sydney, Australia show a different reality. A report on the 2012 London Church Census in the newsletter Future First (June) finds that London is unique in England “in that its churches are growing and people are flocking to them.” The census, commissioned by the London City Mission and conducted by researcher Peter Brierley, found a 16 percent growth in attendance and a 17 percent increase in new congrega-

tions since the last census in 2005. Brierley writes that the characteristics of this London resurgence includes a church planting campaign in certain Inner London boroughs targeted to blacks and based on the philosophy of establishing neighborhood congregations. There is also growth in churches, often large ones with evangelical (such as Hillsong) but also Catholic backgrounds, that offer special outreach to particular groups of people, particularly immigrants

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## Buddhist-Muslim clashes *(continued from p. 9)*

primarily economic issues in addition to religious differences, it finds a kind of legitimation through religion. This also creates fear of a Muslim backlash, especially after a series of blasts shook the Bodhgaya temple complex in Bihar, India, the holiest Buddhist shrine in India. There are suspicions that Muslim militants may have supported the (low-intensity) bombings. In Indonesia, Muslim radicals have been arrested for planning to bomb the Myanmar embassy, while other Muslims are suspected of providing support to Rohingya exiles in Bangladesh. There is a fear that some Muslims affected by violence might turn to jihadist groups for help and training.

On the other hand, while there is an international impact of such incidents, it has not yet developed into a wider conflict. The Economist remarks that Thailand has been fighting for years against Muslim insurgents in the Southern part of the country, that insurgents have targeted Buddhist monks, and that there are all-Buddhist self-defense forces located in Thailand. However, this has failed to cause a Buddhist backlash against Muslims in other parts of the country. The insurgency led to the death of Buddhists, but it is not perceived as a fight against Buddhism itself. Moreover, the king and the political leadership exercise more control over Thai monks. As observed during research travels

to that country in recent years, the recent incidents against Muslims (10 percent of the population) have centered around issues such as halal food and the slaughtering of animals in Muslim tradition. For instance, on May 25, a monk self-immolated in protest. Previously, crowds led by monks vandalized shops run by Muslims. Other issues have been agitated by monks for years, focusing on topics such as Christian missions and conversions: groups involved in anti-Muslim violence have attacked both mosques and churches. Self-preservation is invoked by Buddhist activists, similar to Myanmar's Arakanese people.

While violence builds on primarily economic issues in addition to religious differences, it finds a kind of legitimation through religion. This also creates fear of a Muslim backlash, especially after a series of blasts shook the Bodhgaya temple complex in Bihar, India, the holiest Buddhist shrine in India. There are suspicions that Muslim

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## London and Sydney trends *(continued from p. 10)*

but also those catering to highly mobile and young adults. Brierley concludes that London is special because of its diverse ethnic makeup and because churches are able to afford full-time leaders and a strong volunteer base compared to the rest of the UK.

In the case of Sydney, the Australian city has become a magnet for religious conservatism. *Pointers* (June), the newsletter of the Christian Research Association in Australia, focuses on how the development of Anglicanism in Sydney lent it a distinctive conservative and evangelical tone, but notes that similar dynamics are seen in other faiths. The newsletter cites the book *Sydney Anglicans and the Threat to World Anglicanism* by Muriel Porter. The book shows how the Sydney Anglican Church's congregationalism and conservative interpretation

of the Bible has led to sharp conflict with the rest of the Anglican communion, not only on controversial sexual issues but also over its practice of lay leadership. The newsletter adds that "several other denominations also have their most conservative expression in Sydney," most notably the Catholic Archdiocese under Cardinal George Pell. But this is the case also with Baptists, the Churches of Christ, Assemblies of God, and also the Muslims in the city. The conservative tendency may be in reaction to cultural trends in Sydney: "...while opposition to homosexuality is probably stronger in the Sydney churches than in any other city in Australia, there is no other city which hosts such a strong expression of homosexual pride as the Sydney Mardi Gras."

*(Pointers, <http://www.cra.org.au>.)*

## EXPLORE THIS ISSUE'S

# FINDINGS & FOOTNOTES

**01** As with other religious communities, American Judaism is faced with disaffection from the Gen X and Millennial generations, particularly on issues related to the religion's ethnic identity and

ties to Israel, writes Rabbi Sidney Schwarz in the new book *Jewish Megatrends* (Jewish Lights Publishing, \$24.99). But Schwarz's book is far from a eulogy of American Judaism; he sees the "stirring of Jewish revival" taking place on "margins of the commu-

nity." The rabbi spends the first quarter of the book highlighting the contours of such a revival: The disaffection toward Israel among younger Jews, largely over the Palestinian situation, is being countered by the Birthright program. Birthright has sent close



to 300,000 Jewish young people to Israel on free 10-day trips. As a result, Birthright alumni are found to be significantly more likely to be committed to Israel and to marry other Jews. The shift from a “tribal” (or ethnic) Jewish identity to a spiritual or “covenantal” identity has lowered levels of involvement with traditional Jewish organizations, yet it also has created a new interest in Jewish learning, even if in a more “do-it-yourself” mode. The lack of communal identity among young Jews has nevertheless led to new community-building efforts and engagement in social action, Schwarz concludes.

Schwarz’s “bad news-good news” approach is echoed by most of the respondents who contribute to the rest of the volume. Jewish philanthropy is in serious eclipse yet funders are realizing that the decline of umbrella organizations, such as the federations, has given way to new non-profits and more individualized and public-private forms of funding. A chapter on denominations confirms that the non-Orthodox branches are commanding less allegiance, though attempts to chart a post-denominational course, such as the Synagogue 3000 project, still tend to be sponsored and housed under Reform or Conservative auspices. A chapter on Orthodoxy suggests that these synagogues’ flexibility—moving to areas where congregants are—and adherences to tradition are increasingly appealing to young Jews seeking religious “authenticity.” Schwarz concludes the book by noting that forging a new tribal identity along with the covenantal-spiritual component will be the best way

to ensure the American Jewish future.

**02** There Is No God: Atheists in America (Roman & Littlefield, \$36), by sociologists David Williamson and George Yancey, provides provocative data and analysis to the rapidly growing literature on secularism and non-religion in the U.S. The book focuses on “everyday atheists” rather than atheist leaders and intellectuals and the various humanist and secular movements and groups, and is based on an open-ended online survey of 1,451 atheists (mostly members of atheist organizations) and more in-depth interviews of 51 atheists in the Midwest and South. While not a probability sample, or information about the size of the atheist movement, the survey was large enough to locate patterns among secularists. The book confirms that atheism is still strongest among highly educated, older white males and that most come from non-religious backgrounds. Many come to atheism less through personal contact with other atheists than through reading secularist literature, such as books by new atheist authors Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens.

The book is most interesting in its chapter on politics, showing that while atheists are critical of those holding religious beliefs, believing they are irrational, they hold particular animus toward those who apply their faith to politics. Yet the atheists surveyed see politics as integral to their own atheism, often co-joining secularism with liberal or leftist political views. Williamson and

Yancey argue that the way atheists (at least those connected to secularist organizations) connect their non-religion to liberal politics makes them at least as politicized as conservative Christians. The book identifies a subset of the more “militant” atheists as being “fundamentalists” (a label most atheists vigorously deny). However, regardless of label, the definition may apply to a segment who accept the concern voiced by Dawkins-- that raising children in religion is immoral and could even be a form of brainwashing. The authors conclude that atheist outspokenness and activism is inevitably tied to its ongoing conflicts with conservative religion and its political implications. From their interviews with Southern atheists, Williamson and Yancey find that the more contact they have with conservative theists, the less likely they were to fear the political control of these believers.

**03** The Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Initiative (PCRI) at the University of Southern California has recently issued two publications that suggest much of the older Pentecostal churches and structures are being outpaced by newer “post-denominational” or “next generation” renewal organizations and congregations. The PCRI, funded mainly by the Templeton Foundation, has focused on the global South Pentecostal and charismatic churches, which reveal diverse and even conflicting trends in these movements. A new report from the PCRI, entitled *Moved by the Spirit*, documents the growth of these next generation renewal groups that

tend to eschew earlier Pentecostal tendencies of separation from the world and favor engagement with culture and social action.

The report also notes that the lines are increasingly blurring between evangelical, charismatic and even mainline churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (though there is an interesting aside on how Lutherans and charismatics in Brazil came to a parting of the ways).

The report is very upbeat about these next generation groups, citing how there are small yet growing gay-friendly fellowships in Brazil, charismatic groups in Indonesia open to cooperation with Muslims, and networks in Nigeria and Latin America fighting for social change and eschewing right wing politics found in the older Pentecostal churches. But it doesn't give much evidence that these tendencies are embraced beyond a small, if growing, circle of younger charismatics. For instance, there is the claim that prosperity theology (teaching that believers can claim financial blessings) is increasingly disdained by next generation churches, yet the report acknowledges that this school of theology is still popular in many churches in the global South. Even if "next generation" charismatics are found to represent more than half of the neo-Pentecostal groups existing outside of the older denominations (according to a Pew study), it is not clear how many would espouse the liberal directions portrayed in the report.

A more sober reading of the Pentecostal/charismatic situation is found in the new book *Spirit of Power* (Oxford University Press,

\$29.95), edited by Donald Miller, Kimon Sargeant, and Richard Flory, who are all involved in the PCRI. The book brings together much of the ongoing and mushrooming Pentecostal research being conducted in the global South and includes chapters on Pentecostalism and its relation to gender, missions, democracy, and globalization. In the Introduction, Miller highlights the creative nature of the Pentecostal upsurge, where new congregations and networks are easily formed often by self-taught religious entrepreneurs while meeting emotional and social needs of the marginalized and displaced in the developing world (while also recently becoming appealing to the new middle class).

Particularly interesting is Robert Woodberry's study of Pentecostalism and democracy, where he finds a "moderate positive impact" on the spread and stability of democracy--expanding civil society where it is weak (while also noting that initial Pentecostal movements in politics were clamorous with corrupt leaders). Other chapters look at places where the Catholic charismatic movement is weak—Paraguay--and strong—Brazil—and how the religious marketplace shapes these outcomes, the growing role of "reverse missions" of global South Pentecostals in the West, and the emerging leadership roles of Pentecostal women, particularly in Africa. For more information on the *Moved by the Spirit* report, visit: <http://www.usc.edu/crc>

**04** Rupert Shortt's new book *Christianophobia* (Eerdmans

Publishing, \$26) is clearly a spin off of the widely used term Islamophobia. Shortt argues that "Christianophobia" is a fear and hatred of Christianity, often by Islamic extremists, that is the real or actual threat to human rights and religious freedom today. The book documents the persecution of Christians around the world by secular as well as religious antagonists, although it does not pretend to be exhaustive. Shortt, the religion editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, does not defend the thesis of a "clash of civilizations" between Islam and Christianity, but rather argues that the causes of violence against Christians are complex—ranging from fear of non-Christians who witness Christianity's historic ties to the West and missionary activity to envy of the faith's positive effects on education, democracy, and financial prosperity. Shortt pays particular attention to Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey, India, Burma, Vietnam, and the Holy Land. While some of the cases of persecution that Shortt records are well-known, others are less well known, such as activities of friendly allies to the U.S., including Turkey, whose religious directorate campaign targets converts from Islam to Christianity. He makes it clear that in many of these cases, the majority of Muslims and those of other religions also protest the violence against Christians. In Nigeria, Muslims have organized to protect Christian churches from destruction while Christians have done the same for mosques.

## INTERNATIONAL FRONT

# RUSSIA'S CULTURE WARS MORE HOME-GROWN THAN IMPORTED

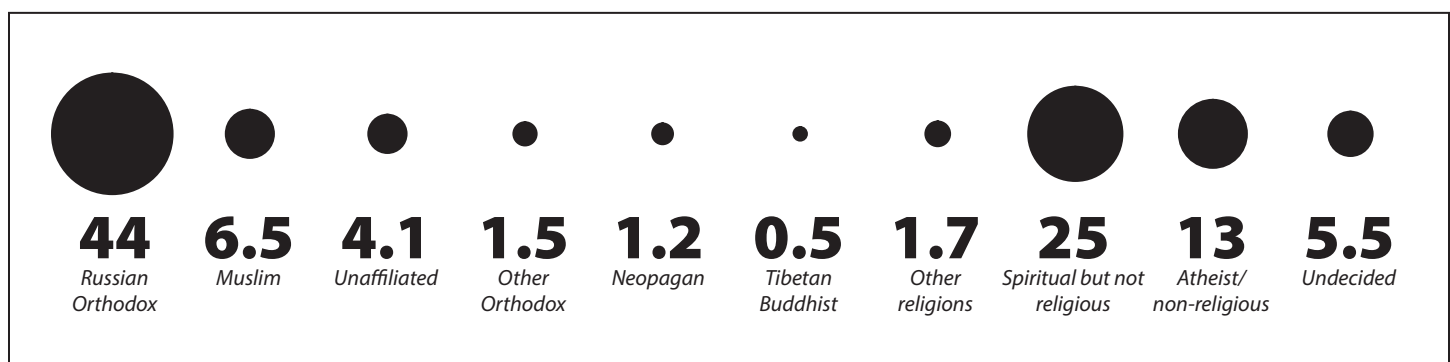
**I**s Russia undergoing an American-style culture war or are the conflicts embroiling the former Soviet Union over sex and other cultural issues more homegrown? In the *Journal of Church and State* (summer), international relations specialist John Anderson casts doubt on the idea that Russia has been strongly influenced by either American or global currents; in fact, he writes that there is “little evidence that a conservative Christian movement might emerge in Russia or that these issues enjoy the same political salience in Russia as they do in the United States.” But events and controversies taking shape since the 1990s in Russia might seem familiar to Americans. Creationism has been taken up by Russian evangelicals and even some Orthodox leaders as they battle with

government schools over the role of religion, church leaders have fought museums over allegedly sacrilegious art displays, and there have been growing church-state attacks—with approval from President Putin and other higher-ups—against gay rights. The first case stems from public suspicion about evolution (a 2009 survey found more Russians supporting the idea of teaching creationism along with evolution than Americans). Anderson argues that the material on creationism used by Russian proponents may be linked to similar movements in the West, particularly the U.S.

But the key creationist activists have become “invisible,” with little access to Russian elites recently and there is no Russian “heartland” to draw on for mass support as is the case for American creationists: “In addition, a strong

materialist scientific tradition broadly supported by the political elite makes it hard to see this issue gaining traction in the political arena.” The protests against offensive art displays did gain strong support from church leaders, but the Russian argument against perceived sacrilegious art was also “located in the rejection of individualism that prioritized personal choice above all else and in an appeal to traditional and national values.” As for gay rights, Russian leaders did appear to “have picked up some of the language of conservative Christian communities in the West, with their emphasis on opposing the ‘propagation’ or ‘propaganda’ of sin as somehow normal,” Anderson writes. While there is an “internationalization” of anti-gay discourse, there is little

► Continued on **page 16**



Religious affiliations in Russia. Figures based from 2012 data and are expressed in percents.  
SOURCE: *Atlas of Religions and Nationalities in Russia*.

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## Russian culture wars *(continued from p. 15)*

interest from the Orthodox Church in building coalitions with other religious communities; it is more likely that the conservative religious agenda is promoted by the leadership of a church

whose preferred modus operandi is working through a close relationship to the state.”

(Journal of Church and State, [www.oxfordjournals.org](http://www.oxfordjournals.org))

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