



INSIDE

Page 2:

- ◆ Evangelical support for Israel waning?
- ◆ Conservative Christians support charter schools

Page 4:

- ◆ Churches embrace drive-through model
- ◆ Quebec rejects strict political secularism

Page 5

- ◆ Current Research

Page 7

- ◆ South America increases reverse missions to Europe

Page 8

- ◆ Israeli Christians' legal status changes

Page 9:

- ◆ B.J.P.'s pragmatic shift not convincing Hindu right

Page 10:

- ◆ New Muslim spaces grow in urban Asia
- ◆ Findings & Footnotes



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

Religion Watch is produced by Religion News and the Center on Religion and the Professions, in cooperation with the Religioscope Institute. © 2014 RW

Another Calvinist moment in American Christianity?

In the last two decades, scholars have spoken of both the “Baptistification” and the “Pentecostalization” of American Christianity, referring to the wide influence these traditions have on other churches and denominations. It might be stretching things to speak of a similar process of “Calvinization” occurring, but there is little doubt that Calvinist beliefs and practices are spreading rapidly beyond their Presbyterian and Reformed church precincts. This is most closely seen in the Southern Baptist

Convention (SBC), where the growth of Calvinism has caused a new divide in the last decade, but Reformed theology also seems increasingly adaptive to the wider non-denominational evangelical and charismatic milieu. *Christianity Today* magazine (May) reports on one of today’s fastest-growing international church planting networks, Acts 29, which manages to bring together non-denominational, SBC and conservative Presbyterian churches,

▶ Cont. on page 3

Ex-Jewish Orthodox movement finding voice in activism, books, media

From existing on the fringes of Jewish society only a few years ago, ex-Orthodox Jews are increasingly organized and speaking out via newly published memoirs and other media, reports *Forward.com* (May 30). The number of books and media detailing the “de-conversion” of Orthodox Judaism, usually Hasidism, includes Leah Vincent’s memoir “Cut Me Loose,” Shalom Auslander and Deborah Feldman’s “Exodus,” documentaries such as “Leaving the Fold” and “Unorthodox,” and even the podcast on post-Hasidic life called “The After-Life.” Ezra Glinter writes that the ex-Orthodox movement—known as OTD—“has come out from underground. It is responsible for events, organizations and publications and has a lively presence on social media. When the Orthodox hold rallies . . . the OTD world shows up to protest. This trans-

formation, from a scattered collection of individuals to a broad social movement, is the OTD story writ large.”

Glinter adds that there are two kinds of OTD accounts: One stresses the above activist route out of Orthodoxy, while the second kind explores how ex-Orthodox people try to find their own paths and create new lives. These accounts follow a familiar plotline of starting with hardship and oppression and continue with challenges to be overcome, then conclude with the author’s success in the secular world. These stories “play to outsiders’ curiosity about the Orthodox world, to Jewish anxieties about demographically resurgent Orthodoxy and to Orthodox feelings of vulnerability in regard to the larger culture.”

(<http://www.Forward.com>) ■

Evangelical support for Israel waning?

Evangelicals' support for Israel can no longer be counted on, especially as they are being "confronted with an evangelical-friendly, anti-Israel narrative," writes David Brog in the *Middle East Quarterly* (Spring). The attempt to promote the Palestinian cause among evangelicals is nothing new, but the center-right political complexion of at least American evangelicals made such appeals fall on shallow ground. Brog argues that sympathy with the Palestinian cause is now seeping from the evangelical left into the mainstream, gaining credence with the millennial generation. He writes that recent evangelical videos and films on Israel show a clear Palestinian bias, such as the 2013 documentary "The Stones Cry Out." The Palestinian cause has also been popular on American evangelical college campuses, such as Wheaton, Oral Roberts University and Bethel College.

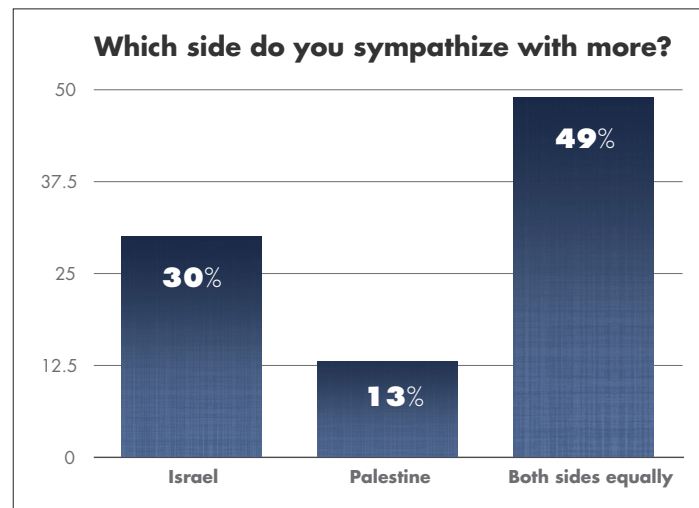
The Bethlehem Bible College in the West Bank launched a biennial Christ at the Checkpoint conference that brings evangelical leaders, including

megachurch pastors Bill Hybels and Joel Hunter, to experience "Israeli occupation." Similar sentiments are voiced by such evangelical gatherings in the U.S. as Empowered21 and Catalyst. Brog makes it clear that Christian Zionism, as represented by

such a pro-Israel organization as Christians United for Israel, is still the majority view of most evangelicals. Yet he sees the current development as following the precedent of main-line Protestants who were originally pro-Israel but then turned against the Jewish state after the 1967 war. A Religion News Service article in the *Christian Century* (May 14) notes surveys show that evangelical support for Israel has remained relatively stable in the last five years. What

also may be changing is that biblical prophecy teachings, which usually highlight the role of Israel in the end-times, have lost appeal to many younger evangelicals [see July-August 2013 *RW* for more on this development].

(*Middle East Quarterly*, <http://www.meforum.org/meq/>) ■



The majority of U.S. evangelical leaders sympathize with Israel and Palestine equally. // Graphic by T.J. Thomson ©2014 Religion Watch; Data from a 2010 Pew Research Survey.

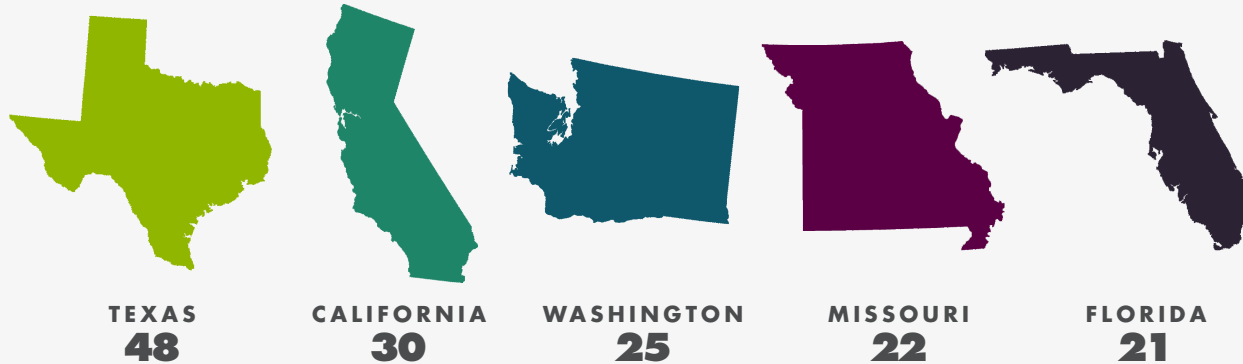
Conservative Christians rallying to charter school movement

Support for charter schools has often been viewed in largely pragmatic terms, but the movement to establish this popular alternative to public schools has had significant religious and particularly evangelical involvement and interest, according to a study in *Social Science Quarterly* (June). Author Andrea Vieux writes

that conventional wisdom suggests religious conservatives would most likely favor school choice policies, such as school vouchers, allowing parents to utilize

► Cont. on page 4

States with the highest concentrations of Acts 29 churches



Another Calvinist moment? *(cont. from p. 1)*

as well as Calvinism and charismatic practices and beliefs. The new leader of Acts 29, Matt Chandler, pastor of the 11,000-member Village Church in Dallas, says it is based on the idea of churches planting other churches and is united on Calvinist beliefs while allowing differences over methods of baptism, the practice of charismatic gifts, and the use of contemporary or traditional worship.

An informal survey of the Acts 29 churches in the U.S. shows that the vast majority use non-denominational names (such as “Summit Church” or “Reflect Fellowship”) and even their websites often do not disclose their denominational affiliations—if any—but rather link to Acts 29 or to regional networks of similar churches that have been planted. Chandler and other Acts 29 officials insist that the network is not becoming a denomination. Chandler, a charismatic in the SBC, adds that the network has 500 churches with 500 more in the process of joining and is aiming to increase its ethnic membership and European church plants. The new Calvinist adaptability can also be seen in a movement of Reformed churches taking a more sacramental and “catholic” approach to ministry. In the journal *Pro Ecclesia* (Vol. XXIII, No. 2), J. Todd Billings writes that a “catholic-Reformed” tradition is being revived in theology and at the congregational level. Theologians such as James K.A. Smith and Kevi Vanhoozer are seeking to place Reformed theology within a wider

Catholic tradition, an example of which is the recently announced 15-volume *New Studies in Dogmatics* series from the publisher Zondervan Academic.

To illustrate how the catholic-Reformed tradition is finding its way to the congregational level, Billings compares the Willow Creek megachurch with the City Church of San Francisco, a leader of city-center church plants around the U.S. Willow Creek is based around providing contemporary services and programs to meet “felt needs” to seekers—from dealing with conflicts to improving family life. The City Church’s worship services are “seeker-comprehensible,” but are also “deeply Catholic and Reformed. Weekly worship includes a proclamation of God’s word together with a celebration of the Lord’s Supper, in the tradition of the early church and Reformers, such as Calvin who desired a weekly celebration of the Supper. Rather than try to ‘catch up’ with the pop culture around it in the strategy of Willow Creek, City Church is unafraid to create its own culture—a culture celebrating creation, the arts, and service to those most vulnerable in the city. City Church is mission oriented, but in a way that sees God’s work through word and sacrament as central to this mission.”

(Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188; *Pro Ecclesia*, <https://rowman.com/page/ProEcclesia>) ■

Conservative support for charter schools *(cont. from p. 2)*

public monies to send their children to private religious schools. But, the strong opposition that school voucher advocates have faced and the far greater acceptance of charter schools across the states have complicated this situation for religious conservatives. Vieux finds that states with larger religiously conservative populations will tend to have less restrictive charter school laws.

She finds that the percentage of both evangelical and Mormon populations is a statistically significant predictor of charter school regulations. There is an especially clear inverse relationship between fewer

charter school regulations and higher evangelical populations. States where even just a quarter of the population is evangelical are most likely to allow charter schooling with little or no regulation. Vieux argues that evangelicals and Mormons share the common ground of being highly mobilized and have “moved under the radar” to limit regulations, while teachers' unions and legislatures have been unable or unwilling to enter into conflict with these groups.

(Social Science Quarterly, http://socialsciencequarterly.org/Home_Page.html) ■

Churches embracing drive-through praying

Although there have long been outdoor or “drive-in” churches, a number of congregations have taken the concept further and started “drive-through” churches. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (May 28) reports that churches are “embracing what community banks and pharmacies have utilized for decades: the drive-through.” These churches hold drive-through hours where they offer prayer and other services, seeing it as entry point to congregational life for the unchurched. Drive-through congregations have start-

ed in Lancaster, Pa., Wichita, Kan., Richmond, Va., Aurora, Ill.; and Modesto, Calif. These churches are particularly targeting the growing young non-affiliated population, who may be intimidated to enter churches. The feeling of newcomers that they will be judged by a church group, makes the private nature of drive-through churches appealing, writes Terri Aikman. Hope United Methodist in Voorhees, Pa. actually bought and refurbished a bank, retaining its drive-in window for religious purposes. ■

Quebec decides against strict secularism

The recent ousting of the Parti Québécois (PQ) from power in the Canadian province of Quebec was more a rejection of the party's secularist agenda than its separatist policies, according to many observers. In the elections, the PQ retained just 30 seats while the Liberal Party gained 70 in the National Assembly, seriously setting back the party's drive to have the province separate from the rest of Canada. But it was the PQ's Charter of Values, known as the Secular Charter, which sought to prohibit the display and wearing of religious symbols in public that drew the most opposition, especially because it could affect the jobs of 600,000.

The Tablet (May 3), a British Catholic magazine, interviews Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor on this development and what it says about secularism in Quebec. Taylor says that voters “realized that the nurse looking after their grandmother would be the person who would lose their job [under the Secular Charter] and be out on the street because she also wore a hijab. And they didn't like it. The defeat discredits the Charter.”

Taylor adds that the PQ didn't realize that many people in Quebec seek at least a nominal connection to religion. In the rural areas of the province, the parish system remains strong, providing people

with a social structure and sense of the community. The baby boomer hostility to religion (Catholicism in particular) that has been prevalent in urban areas such as Montreal is giving way to a more relaxed response among younger generations as the Catholic Church has lost much of its political power. “The boomers are still raging mad, but their grandchildren just don't understand it.” While the Liberal party may not entirely discard the Secular Charter, Taylor does not see a wholesale junking of Quebec's religious past. “Religion remains powerful in memory; but also as a reserve fund of spiritual force or consolation.” (*The Tablet, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/>*) ■

WHAT THE

CURRENT
RESEARCH

REVEALS ABOUT TODAY'S RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

01 Public displays of religious devotion by American athletes are nothing new, but such actions can prove divisive to fans if they are too closely associated with a particular faith, according to researchers writing in the American Sociological Association's magazine *Contexts* (Spring). The two most recent examples of public piety by American athletes have been basketball player Jeremy Lin and former NFL quarterback Tim Tebow, who gained notoriety for striking a prayerful pose on the field. Both players received an avalanche of media attention, although the media treatment of Tebow was more critical. Quinnipiac University researchers Grace Yukich, Kimberly Stokes and Daniella Bellows compared the New York Times's coverage of Lin and Tebow from 2009-12 and found that Lin received more positive media treatment than Tebow. They find that Tebow's public religious displays carried were more "Christocentric" compared with Lin's more generic statements on his faith (two-thirds of Lin's statements were Christocentric

compared to 85 percent of Tebow's). Tebow's support for Christian right causes contributed to portrayals of him and his faith as disruptive rather than uniting.

The fact that Tebow is white and Lin is Asian may also be a factor in the different media portrayals and fan responses. As with African-American athletes who regularly mention their faith, Lin's faith could be interpreted as cultural rather than as strictly religious, conforming to Asian-American stereotypes, and "less of a challenge to the boundary separating religion and sports." The researchers write that Tebow's religious displays, in contrast to Lin and other athletes, took place during the game, disrupting the flow and enthusiasm that builds unity for fans. The media coverage thus constructed a "narrative of sports fandom that while sanctioning religiosity in sports at certain moments, calls upon us to make the sporting arena a unifying space where we can momentarily cheer for a team—and build social bonds—without being distracted by our differences."

(*Contexts*, <http://contexts.org/>).

02 A new study confirms that Americans tend to exaggerate their church attendance, especially if they participate in telephone surveys as compared to self-reporting online. The study, by the Public Religion Research Institute, finds that in phone interviews, 36 percent said they attended services weekly and 30 percent said they seldom or never go. However, in anonymous online questionnaires, 31 percent said they attended weekly while 43 percent said they seldom or never attend. The three groups most likely to inflate their attendance rates were mainline Protestants (29 percent reporting no attendance by phone compared to 45 percent online), Catholics (15 percent by phone and 33 percent online), and the 18-29 age group (31 percent on the phone and 49 percent online). Before this technological method of comparison was available, research in the 1990s has shown the pattern of attendance inflation by comparing survey

► Cont. on page 6

Current research *(cont. from p. 5)*

results with actual head counts at church services.

03 A study in the journal *Mobile Media & Communication* (Vol. 2, No. 2) of religious applications or “apps” on mobile devices finds that they are most often used as aids to religious practices or as providing interaction with digitized versions of sacred texts.

The study, conducted by Heidi Campbell and a team of researchers from Texas A&M University, examined 451 Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist applications. The researchers find that developers tend to “concentrate their app design around reminding users when to practice their religion, or helping users practice their religion whenever, wherever they are,” according to Wendi Bellar, one of the researchers. Aids to religious practices include the *Lulav Wizard*, which is a digital replica of a palm tree’s frond, teaching users how to swing it during the Jewish festival of Sukkot. Apps embedded with sacred texts tend to mix secular and religious uses; the Islamic Free Quiz app uses a game show format to teach users about basic Muslim teachings.

(*Mobile Media and Communication*, <http://mmc.sagepub.com/>).

04 The Pew Research Center finds further drift of Latinos from the Catholic Church going either toward Protestantism or into non-affiliation. Nearly one-in-four Hispanic adults (24 percent) are now former Catholics, according to the survey of 5,000 Hispanics. The pattern is now one of increasing religious polarization in the Hispan-

ic community as Catholics hold the middle ground between Protestants and the non-affiliated on measures such as church attendance, frequency of prayer and their view of the importance of religion. While the Catholic share of Hispanics has been decreasing for the past few decades, the decline has dropped 12 percent in just the last four years. This long-time decline may reflect both Latin American trends, as new immigrants are coming from countries seeing both an upsurge of evangelical churches and non-affiliation, and the U.S. realities of religious switching and the growth of “nones.”

05 Governmental regulations and social norms relating to religion are a key factor in whether personal happiness is related to religiosity, reports the science of religion blog *Epiphenom* (May 27). Past studies have linked personal happiness with greater religiosity, but researchers have been puzzled that this is not always the case around the world. The blog cites the recent study by David Hayward (University of Michigan) and Marta Elliot (University of Nevada) which looks at how governmental regulation of religion affects attitudes toward it. Using data from the World Values Survey, they created a model predicting how happy people are in countries with either few or many religious people, and either little or much governmental regulation of religion. They “found there was quite a strong interaction,” blog editor Tomas Reese reports.

Thus, as religious service attendance increases so does happiness—except in countries with both high religious attendance and strong reg-

ulation of religion. In these nations, people who attend a lot of services are actually less happy. The same relationship holds true for the variable of the importance of God in peoples’ lives. Hayward and Elliot note that the strength of this association tends to increase as religion becomes more normative. Thus, “high regulation tends to intensify the contrast between the effects of fitting in with or deviating from the religious norms of the nation.”

(*Epiphenom*, <http://epiphenom.fieldofscience.com>)

06 Religious freedom contributes to better business and economic outcomes than do restrictions of religious practice and belief, according to a study in the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* (Vol. 10, No. 4). Researchers Brian Grim, Greg Clark, and Robert Edward Snyder looked at economic vitality as measured by the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Index (which consists of “pillars” of competitiveness ranging from innovation to technology training to market size and efficiency) in comparison with levels of government restrictions on religion and social hostilities involving religion. Grim, Clark and Snyder find that societies with higher levels of religious freedom rate higher on the competitiveness index. The researchers further tested the relationship between GDP growth and religious freedom. By controlling for other variables, they find that religious freedom is one of only three

Current research *(cont. from p. 6)*

variables that remains a significant predictor of GDP growth.

(Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion, <http://www.religjournal.com/>)

07 While there are differences in the level of interest in various practices from one country to another, the percent of people actively involved in the holistic milieu seems to be comparable in different European countries, independent of the local strength of institutional religion, report Liselotte Frisk (Dalarna University, Sweden), Franz Höllinger (University of Graz, Austria) and Peter Åkerbäk (University of Stockholm, Sweden) in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* (May). The “holistic milieu” is used by the authors to describe what is usually associated with “New Age,” “alternative spirituality,” “modern esotericism” or “spiritual marketplace.” Replicating earlier research conducted by a team led by Paul Heelas in Kendal (England), the research done in two areas of Austria (Klagenfurt and Leoben) and one in Sweden (Dalarna) mapped local

practitioners offering courses, workshops or individual therapies in the fields of holistic spirituality and complementary healing. In all, 348 practitioners were identified in the Austrian case study and 439 in the Swedish one.

While general patterns were the same in both countries, with 70 to 80 percent of the offered practices related to healing and health improvement (half of them with Indian or Far-Eastern roots), there were some differences, too. For instance, in Austria, due to the strong presence of kinesiology, complementary Western healing techniques had a larger share than in Sweden. On the opposite, there were more providers of yoga in Sweden. A majority of practitioners are not working full-time in holistic activities: more than half (in both countries) had fewer than 10 clients per week. The comparative research confirms the prevalence of female practitioners—two-thirds in Austria, about four-fifths in Sweden. Information regarding the number of clients provides an assessment of the proportion of the population regularly engaged in

holistic activities (on a weekly basis): 2.7 percent in Dalarna, 3.8 percent in Klagenfurt and 2.6 percent in Leoben.

Compared with research in other countries, it appears that the level of involvement is more or less similar in all European countries. Moreover, despite significant cross-national differences in church attendance in European societies (weekly attendance is three times higher, around 9 percent, in Austria compared with Sweden) they do not seem to lead to different levels of involvement in holistic practices. This would seem to contradict expectations of a close relationship between the decline in Christian religiosity and the growth of the holistic milieu. “Holistic health methods and self-awareness techniques seem to be an attractive option for a certain section on the population in all highly developed, post-modern Western countries.”

(Journal of Contemporary Religion – <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjcr20>) ■

South America’s reverse missions to Europe—strengthening preachers’ status back home?

The much publicized missionary work in Europe conducted by networks of South American preachers only attracts small European followings, but it serves to reinforce the legitimacy of send-

ing churches and their leaders, writes Ari Pedro Oro (Professor of Anthropology at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil) in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* (May). “Reverse mission”

to Europe is popular among Latin American and African churches. Europe is said to have strayed from the path, but evan-

► **Cont. on page 8**

S. America's reverse missions to Europe *(cont. from p. 7)*

gical groups from the Southern hemisphere feel they have a mission to launch a new religious awakening. Mimicking the early Christian expansion, they intend to “conquer Europe spiritually” and “Christianize” the old continent, in contrast with earlier missionary work originating from Europe.

Oro distinguishes between three models of evangelical propagation in Europe. First, there are Latin American missionaries (mostly Baptist or Assemblies of God) who come to help local European churches in need of manpower as they are confronted with an influx of Latin-American faithful. Second, some churches open branches in Europe (and other parts of the world); two well-known examples are the Brazilian-born Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, now present in 120 countries, and the God Is Love Church, with branches in 100 countries. Third, there is “the network organization of temporary missionary travel to Europe by charismatic preachers,” such as Carlos Annacondia, who comes from Argentina, but constantly travels to other coun-

tries. Oro’s research focuses on that third type: those preachers have been influenced by the beliefs of the “New Apostolic Reformation,” that emphasize “conquering all world nations for Christ” as well as spiritual warfare.

Oro observes that there has been no significant success brought by those efforts to “re-Christianize” Europe and suggests that they should be interpreted as part of symbolic struggles in the highly competitive South American religious market (both within the evangelical milieu and between it and the Roman Catholic Church). Europe is seen both as modern and the cradle of Christianity: being invited there confers an elevated status, plus some material benefits. More than “Christianizing Europe,” these missionary trips and international connections boost the legitimacy of South Amer-

ican preachers in their local religious market, Oro concludes. But “reverse mission” can also be vested with other meanings, for instance in the case of African churches sending missionaries and establishing branches in Europe. ■

////////////////////////////////////

"Mimicking the early Christian expansion, they intend to 'conquer Europe spiritually' and 'Christianize' the old continent, in contrast with earlier missionary work originating from Europe."

////////////////////////////////////

Change in Christians' legal status in Israel showing strategy of 'divide and conquer'?

In February, Israel’s Knesset adopted new legislation meant “to distinguish between Muslim and Christian Arab citizens and to heighten involvement of Christians in Israeli society,” according to its sponsor, MP Yariv Levin. Providing separate attention and separate representation to Palestinian Christians holding Israeli citizenship is supposed to connect them more strongly to the Jewish State, while critics denounce the new legislation as an attempt to create more divi-

sions among Palestinians, writes Emily Hauser in a *Forward* blog post (March 3). According to an article by Joanna Paraszczuk in the *Jerusalem Report* (June 2), Arab citizens of Israel currently number around 1.57 million (20 percent of the population). A large majority of Israeli Arabs are Muslims (82 percent), while Druzes make 8 percent and Christians 10 percent (belonging to various denominations). There has been a slight growth of the Christian population in Israel in

2012 (3,000 more), which contrasts with the shrinking of the Christian population in other areas of the Middle East.

Most Arab Christians interviewed by Paraszczuk do not show much interest in the new legislation and are suspicious about being recruited as “natural allies” of the Jewish State. Some sectors of the Christian population in Israel have,

► **Cont. on page 9**

Change in Israeli Christians' legal status *(cont. from p. 8)*

however, welcomed the new developments, which they see as paving the way to full integration into Israeli society. In July 2013, a group of Christians founded a new party, B'nei B'rit Hahadasha (Sons of the New Testament). Among other things, it encourages Christians to serve in the Israel Defense Forces (military service is not mandatory

for Arabs in Israel). Members of the party are reported to emphasize an Israeli identity as Christians, and some distance themselves from an Arab identity, thus approving the separate approach promoted by the new law. In 1957, Israel recognized its Druze population as a distinct minority, and most Druze men serve in the military. While

they speak Arabic, many of them no longer feel part of the Palestinian community. Critics of the new law claim its purpose is to reach the same goal with the Christian minority.

(Forward, <http://www.forward.com>; The Jerusalem Report, <http://www.jpost.com/JerusalemReport/Home.aspx>) ■

B.J.P.'s pragmatic turn not convincing Hindu right

The victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (B.J.P.) and Narendra Modi as prime minister of India has been seen as pointing to a resurgence of Hindu nationalism and anti-Muslim sentiment, but the party has shed much of its sectarian fervor and divisiveness, according to several reports. *India Today* magazine (May 26) reports that B.J.P.'s landslide victory, gaining an unprecedented vote share of 31.5 percent, demonstrates how the party has moved beyond identity and religious politics. The B.J.P. found strong support across all sections of the voter demographic. But a post-election poll found that Modi's message has been less well received by Muslims, dalits (untouchables) and Sikhs as they have retained allegiance to the Congress Party. Yet somewhat surprisingly, the B.J.P. increased its popularity among Muslims by 7 percent.

The New York Times (May 11) reports that Modi had sidelined many Hindu nationalist concerns during his campaign, especially as he

courted corporate investors and disavowed the protectionist policies of the Hindu right. But regardless of the B.J.P.'s disclaimers that they are not advancing Hindu nationalism, the party's foot soldiers, many from the Hindu revival group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)

insist that it is only a matter of time when Modi's Hindu agenda will be revealed. The RSS "has provided many of the same electoral advantages for the B.J.P. as megachurches in the American heartland do for candidates: a highly disciplined and structured canvassing force, and village-level networks of contacts." RSS leaders and activists hope Modi will revamp the nation's textbooks to stress Hinduism rather than give equal space to Islam, pressure Western publishers about issuing the controversial history of Hinduism by American scholar Wendy Doniger, and finish the reconstruction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, on a spot where a 16th century mosque once stood.

(India Today, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/>) ■



Narendra Modi in 2013.
Creative Commons image by
Narendra Modi.

New Muslim spaces and identities growing in urban Malaysia and Indonesia

Both a growing demand for diversity of Islamic expressions among the urban Muslim middle-class and a desire to forge “an Islamic way of modern living” are evident in the new Muslim spaces being created in Malaysia and Indonesia, reports the *IIAS Newsletter* (Spring). Hew Wai Weng, a research fellow at Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin, observed during field research in these countries that since 2000, at least 10 Chinese-style mosques have been built, inspired by the design of old mosques in mainland China. However, most of the congregation members are non-Chinese and sermons are preached in local languages. Different motives for the choice of such architectural expressions can be identified. Chinese Muslims want a distinctive representation of their own identity; Muslim groups sponsor them as a way to show Muslim inclusivity; moreover, the places can also be promoted for religious tourism.

Similarly, in the last 10 years, Chinese halal restaurants have mushroomed, first in Malaysia, and now expanding to Indonesia. Chinese converts or Muslim immigrants from China are key players, but many customers are middle-class Malay Muslims. They are

also convenient places for Muslims to meet non-Muslims. At the same time, Weng notes attempts to create Muslim gated communities and “Islamic cities.” He sees gated communities as an expression of growing piety and the influence of the market economy. These are places where Muslim middle-class families can find an environment that is both modern and Islamic (including mosques and religious activities), even in architectural features.

Some existing cities in Malaysia (e.g. Kota Bahru) and Indonesia (e.g. Bogor) have declared themselves recently to be “Islamic” or “halal” cities. Both “Islamic” architecture and abiding by moral (Islamic) rules are required. Similarly, in some gated communities, residents are reminded (and required) to perform prayers and behave “Islamically.” Thus, this “Islamic way of modern living” shows attempts to reconcile sometimes contradictory aspirations: “These places are sites of negotiation between Islamic movements and consumer culture, between religious piety and urban lifestyle,” Weng concludes.

(*The Newsletter*, International Institute for Asian Studies, P.O. Box 9500, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands – www.ias.nl.) ■

EXPLORE THIS ISSUE'S



FINDINGS & FOOTNOTES

01 The *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* is a new journal that looks at the diversity of religions both in China and in

different Chinese populations and diasporas throughout the world. The multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary journal defines religion in a broad way as including various

spiritualities and “meaning-making systems of belief and practices.” The first issue features an interview

▶ **Cont. on page 11**

Findings & Footnotes *(cont. from p. 10)*

with the late sociologist Robert Bellah on Chinese religion, an article by Richard Madsen on the paradoxical way China embraces atheism and diverse forms of religion, and a study of the diverse forms of civic involvement by Catholics in three Chinese societies. For more information, visit: <http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/22143955>

02 The journal *Zygon* devotes much of its June issue to the future directions of the science and religion field without making too many of its forecasts sound like science fiction. Danish scholar Niels Henrik Gregerson notes that the science and religion field is now firmly established, with a plethora of courses, societies, specialists, conferences, and books now available, and it is unlikely to diminish in the near future. But he sees more attention being given to how the world's religions and their related societies interact with science and how they pose different scientific questions; for instance, the Buddhist and Muslim take on evolution is different than that of Western religion. Gregerson writes that the new emphasis among scientists on biological and cultural information as fundamental to physical reality will likely bring religious questions back to the surface.

In another article, Philip Clayton writes that the battles between the extremes of the new atheists (who argue that the science and religion field is an oxymoron) and their theist antagonists have set the science and religion field back by a decade, but the serious work and bold initiatives in the near future will be

done by “those who are still around when the dust settles.” Clayton adds that younger scholars in both religion and science are basing their views more on empirical studies than on historic polemics and triumphalism, which place themselves as being on the winning side of history. Ted Peters concludes the section with a look at how religions will need to develop theological responses to the fledgling theories and findings of astrobiology, which is increasingly making the case for the reality of multiple universes. For more information on this issue, visit: <http://zygonjournal.org/issues-index.html>

03 In his new book *Ancient Religions, Modern Politics* (Princeton University Press, \$39.50), historian Michael Cook seeks to answer the question of why Islam plays such a large role in contemporary politics by comparing the religion with Hinduism and Christianity. Cook argues that the “Islamic heritage” provides a greater range of “assets and liabilities” than these other faiths, which compels Muslim on to the world political stage. In 542 pages, Cook carefully traces how today's Islamic revival draws on a repertoire of political values and resources, such as Muslim unity and “brotherhood,” jihad and warfare, the caliphate, and “divine jealousy,” with God monopolizing the “cultic loyalties of his followers,” all of which create a strong Muslim political identity.

The author examines the historical and contemporary cases of Hinduism and Catholicism in Latin America and finds that while they may offer some of these resources,

they do not present them in “package” form for its followers as does Islam. Of course, Muslims can choose the conservative version of the package of “fundamentalism” or a more liberal version of Islamism, or, as is the case with most, “muddle through” by selecting both Western values—democracy—and Islamic responses. But Cook concludes that, compared to its competitors, the “Islamic heritage engages the predicament of Third World populations on a broad front, providing resources that can be used for thinking, feeling, and talking about it.”

04 *Inventing the Muslim Cool* (Transcript-Verlag, \$45), by Maruta Herding, examines the formation of an Islamic youth culture in Europe, which is revealed in such forms as religious rap, Islamic comedy and urban fashion and media products with pious messages or slogans. Based on ethnographic interviews and participant observation, Herding focuses on practicing (rather than cultural) Muslim youth in England, Germany and France, and finds that their culture is distinct from that of young Muslims elsewhere. But she notes that many young European Muslims do find inspiration from the popularization of Islamic teachings coming from the Muslim world, such as the Islamic “televangelism” of Egyptian preacher Amr Khaled. The hybrid and consumerist nature of Islamic youth culture—drawing on an Americanized (including African-American) global culture as

STAFF/ CONTACT

Editor:

Richard P. Cimino

E-mail:

relwatch1@msn.com

Associate Editor:

Jean-Francois Mayer

Designer:

T.J. Thomson

Website:

www.religionwatch.com

Publisher:

Debra L. Mason
573-882-9257



Business Office:

Religion Watch,
30 Neff Annex
Columbia, MO 65211

E-mail:

subs@religionwatch.com

JUNE 2014

Volume 29, No. 8

© 2014 Religion Watch

Findings & Footnotes *(cont. from p. 11)*

well as national youth cultures—has been seen as a sign of secularization. The author questions this view, arguing that the reverse is true, as non-religious objects and practices are infused with religious meaning.

From Herding’s case studies of European Muslim rappers and comedians, it seems clear that there is a political message to these performances, with a strong critique of the injustices youths experience, but they are first and foremost Islamic, appealing to their listeners to embrace—or return to—Islam. In fact, there are a large number of converts who are involved in Islamic rap, particularly in England where Caribbean blacks have adopted the faith. Meanwhile, Islamic fashion and media in Europe is much more of a global Muslim trend and is tied to consumer branding of the religion. Islamic social media shows a good deal of vitality in Europe, particularly in England, where sites such as Waymo and MuslimYouthNet allow users to tailor their content and interact with other young Muslims modeled on their secular counterparts of Facebook and YouTube. Herding concludes that this Islamic youth culture represents a novel way that Islam is being transmitted to the young outside of the traditional channels of family and mosque. The culture’s blend of having fun and experiencing pleasure with piety may serve as a counterweight to the influence of Islamic extremism among Muslim young adults in Europe. ■

About Religion Watch

Religion Watch looks beyond the walls of churches, synagogues and denominational officialdom to examine how religion really affects, and is affected by, the wider society. It is through monitoring new books and approximately 1,000 U.S. and foreign periodicals (including newspapers, newsletters, magazines, online content and scholarly journals), and by first-hand reporting, that Religion Watch has tracked hundreds of trends on the whole spectrum of contemporary religion.



Subscribe

Please clip and mail to 30 Neff Annex, Columbia, MO 65211-1200, U.S.A.

- \$33/new or renewed U.S. subscription (PDF online)
- \$45/international subscription
- \$36/new U.S. library subscription

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ ZIP Code: _____
 Country: _____
 E-mail: _____

Payment (payments in U.S. dollars):

- U.S. check made out to RNF.
- or **pay online via Paypal** – you can use your credit card with Paypal, it is simple and safe, visit our website: <http://www.religionwatch.com/subs.htm>

Mail payments to our business and circulation office:
Religion Watch, 30 Neff Annex, Columbia, MO 65211-1200, U.S.A.