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Religious minorities under Islamic State eye prospects after ‘genocide’ declaration

Alienation among the younger generation from their homelands and dealing with trauma among survivors of kidnapping and sex trafficking are only two of the issues facing religious minorities in their struggle against the Islamic State (IS), according to activists and foreign affairs specialists speaking at a recent conference. The May conference at Fordham University in New York, attended by **RW**, sought to address the prospects for religious minorities in Iraq and Syria, particularly after the U.S. State Department recently declared the Islamic State as genocidal. The March declaration was the first political statement to include all the “stakeholders” in the conflict—Christians, Muslims, and Yazidis, a syncretistic and mystical religion. The speakers stressed the growing generation gap among these groups about their future in their homelands. Haider Elias, president of Yazda, an international Yazidi advocacy group, said that younger Yazidis “don’t want to go back [to Iraq and Syria]. Most want to go to Europe or the U.S., because they say this is not the first time and it won’t be the last [time that they have faced persecution]. It’s not just ISIS; they’ve lost trust in the government and the surrounding community.” The Yazidi population, already less than one million throughout the world, has declined sharply in their home countries of Iraq and Syria, and 20 percent of them are in refugee camps.

Rev. Gewargis Sulaiman, a priest with the Assyrian Church of the East, likewise said that while members are more connected with the church, the younger generations have “lost their trust, even among the loyalists; they want a safe place to start their lives. People have lost faith in their own government and in the U.S. and Europe” in resolving the threat of the IS. Most of the speakers and specialists at the conference did not hold out much hope for international protective zones for these religious minorities or no-fly zones, although there was some distant hope that religious minorities could create self-determined communities. In Iraq, which received the most



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attention at the conference, there are five factions in the government working against each other, leading to the high of level of distrust, journalist Eliza Griswold said.

She also added that the need for reconciliation will be pressing, as neighbor has turned against neighbor over those who have cooperated with the Islamic State. The prospect of trauma in the return of many Yazidi women surviving kidnapping and sexual trafficking—often through family buying them back through undercover means—is real but is not as dire as feared, according to Elias. Highly respected Yazidi religious leaders have welcomed survivors back to the community, meeting with them in the faith’s shrines. “Spirituality has been just as effective as psychotherapy” for many of the returnees, he added. Douglas Padgett of the Office of International Religious Freedom of the U.S. Department of State closed the event by appealing for more assistance to relief organizations for the religious minorities and refugees, which has decreased sharply since 2014. He also held up the role of the churches and religious organizations in the region as they bypass governments and provide vital information about the condition of religious minorities to the State Department. Padgett added that secularists and other dissenting minorities also require assistance in their struggle against the IS.

Charismatic networks draw on Toronto Blessing while innovating

Recent expressions of the charismatic movement still find their inspiration in the Toronto Blessing movement of the 1990s, but they are more likely to stress supernatural miracles, the role of laypeople in healing, and ministry to the poor, writes Michael McClymond in the Pentecostal studies journal *Pneuma* (38). The Toronto Blessing, called the “laughing revival,” was known for its ecstatic worship and healing services and launched or influenced a number of ministries, most notably Catch the Fire, which innovated



“soaking services,” prolonged contemplative periods of silent prayer. More recently, such leaders and transnational healing networks as Global Awakening, led by Randy Clark, show the trademark of Toronto. Since Global Awakening is not a denomination, it is difficult to quantify its influence, but its practice of “democratized” healing and prophecy, teaching that all Christians should exercise such spiritual gifts, has gained wide appeal.

The recent emphasis on ministry to the poor in the post-Toronto networks is evident in Iris Ministries, led by Heidi and Rolland Baker, which has an extensive “mercy” ministry in Africa. Most of these leaders are part of a “Revival Network” and espouse teachings on the restoration of the biblical roles of prophets and apostles, although in a less dogmatic way than seen in the New Apostolic Reformation movement. A cover story in *Christianity Today* magazine (May) profiles Bethel Church, a key congregation in the post-Toronto stream. Pastored by Bill Johnson, the Redding, California, based non-denominational megachurch encourages its members to perform miracles and runs the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry, with 2,000 students. Evangelical

critics have targeted the church's miraculous claims, including reports of materializing gold dust, angel's feathers, and a "Shekinah glory cloud" during its services.

(*Pneuma*, <http://www.brill.com/pneuma>; *Christianity Today*, 465 Gundersen Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188)

Buddhist healing practices beyond meditation finding recognition

While Buddhist meditators have been prodded and probed by neuroscientists and medical researchers, a wider range of Buddhist practices and rituals have been hailed by practitioners for their healing benefits and are gaining new attention. In the Buddhist magazine *Tricycle* (Summer), C. Pierce Salguero writes that "Buddhist healing practices that one might think of as more 'traditional' have persisted and even flourish, despite being alternately repressed and ignored by modernizers. In almost 20 years of field study and research among Thai Buddhist healers, for example, I have seen firsthand that the entire package of Buddhist healing rites—including the invocation of deities, blessings, exorcisms, cleansing rites, chanting, incantations, binding rituals, the use of talismans or amulets, repentance, and confession—are still highly relevant for most Buddhist practitioners in that culture." In Thai Buddhist circles, educated people and the media follow the research on the health effects of such practices, and meditation is usually seen as compatible with this range of other therapies.

Salguero adds that "Anthropologists working in Myanmar, Taiwan, Japan, in Tibetan communities, and elsewhere around the Buddhist world have reported a similar range of practices



and beliefs said to have healing effects— often but not always including meditation." In researching Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Lao, and other temples and comparing them with meditation centers (sanghas) in Philadelphia that tend to cater to non-Asian converts, Salguero finds that the different Buddhists had conflicting opinions about which practices lead to health benefits: "In predominantly English-speaking sanghas, we tend to hear, we tend to hear a lot about

meditation...Meanwhile, the groups that are largely composed of Asian immigrants tend to place value on a wider range of practices, including meditation but also rituals, ceremonies and other group activities. Among the former practitioners we often hear about reduction of stress or anxiety; among the latter, we are just as likely to be told about receiving blessings, divine intervention, or good karma." Salguero concludes that scientists need to study the effects of these practices just as much as they have focused on meditation.

(*Tricycle*, <http://tricycle.org/>)

CURRENT RESEARCH

● **A recent survey finds that admiration of Pope Francis has dropped sharply.** In a survey by the British firm YouGov on the most admired men, the pope fell seven spots in 2016, from sixth down to 13th among the world's men, the biggest drop for anyone on last year's list, and is now no longer the world's most admired spiritual leader (the Dalai Lama) or even the most admired Argentine (soccer star Lionel Messi). The pope does remain the second-most admired man in the United States after President Barack Obama, according to the study. The pollster speculates the pope's drop may be explained by expectations of reform that distanced Francis from his predecessors, which have dimmed as his papacy has become "institutionalized," reports the Catholic website *Crux* (May 10).



(*Crux*, <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2016/05/10/admiration-for-pope-francis-in-sharp-decline-study-shows/>)

● **Although the Anglican situation is often portrayed as sharply divided between growing and conservative churches in the Global South and shrinking liberal churches in the West, world Anglicanism shows more variation than usually claimed.** In the *Journal of Anglican Studies* (May), David Munoz conducts one of the first quantitative studies of the Anglican Communion based on differentiating between "inner circle" (regular church attenders) and "outer circle" members (those who are listed as Anglican by affiliation or census). Using mixed methods



based on records from national and provincial churches and data gathering and analysis of national, provincial, diocesan, and parish websites, Munoz finds a total outer circle count of 77,427,201 and inner circle number of 8,795,425. The proportion in the relationship between inner circle and outer circle varies by continent, with Europe and Africa having an inner circle of, respectively, just 7 and 8 percent of the outer memberships. In Asia, meanwhile, the inner circle is about 90 percent of the outer circle.

In a cross-continent comparison, Munoz finds that while Africa may be the largest single group of Anglicans, it loses its predominance in its inner circle. In contrast, while North America's outer circle is very low, its inner circle represents a quarter of inner circle Anglicans worldwide. In comparing churches in the Global South (mainly Africa but also Asia) to the other segment of world Anglicanism (including the north but also other unaffiliated churches, such as in Latin

America and parts of Asia), Munoz finds that the Global South represents more outer circle and less inner circle Anglicans (at approximately 55 percent and 40 percent), while the latter has about 45 percent outer circle and about 55 percent inner circle Anglicans. He seeks to confirm this pattern through case studies of Global South churches of Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria and finds wide disparities between their outer and inner circles and indicators of decline (mostly from competition with Pentecostal churches). Munoz concludes that between Anglicans in the Global South and in the West, “the divide is real but also fairly even.”

(*Journal of Anglican Studies*,

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayIssue?jid=AST&tab=currentissue>)

● **The Korean missionary movement is showing signs of decline and growing concerns about its lack of sustainability after a period of sharp growth, according to a survey published in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (April).**

The survey, conducted by the Korean Research Institute for Mission, found that as of December 2015, there were 20,672 Korean missionaries serving in 171 countries. From 1998–2006, there was an annual increase of 1,000 missionaries. But in 2014, the annual growth rate dropped significantly from 2.9 percent in 2012 to 1.90 percent and then declined to 1.01 percent in 2015. This growth rate was the smallest since 1990. Also in 2015, the growth rate of interdenominational mission agencies was only 1.05 percent, while for denominational agencies it was 1.00 percent. Stagnation in Korean church growth and the churches’ declining emphasis on missions were identified as the main reasons for waning sustainability.



(*International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, <http://internationalbulletin.org/index.html>)

● **The most religiously adept and knowledgeable members of the Islamic State are the least likely to be on the front lines of suicide bombing, according to the study *The Caliphate’s Global Workforce*, by West Point’s Combating Terrorism Center.**

Co-authors Brian Dodwell, Daniel Milton, and Don Rassler write that “If martyrdom is seen as the highest religious calling, then a reasonable expectation would be that the people with the most knowledge about Islamic law (sharia) would desire to carry out these operations with greater frequency.” But in analyzing 4,600 Islamic State personnel records between early 2013 and late 2014, the researchers found that whereas 7.3



percent of individuals with basic sharia knowledge end up identifying as suicide bombers, only 3.9 percent of individuals with advanced knowledge of sharia do so. They did find the distinction is less clear with those volunteering to become “suicide fighters,” with 5 percent of individuals with basic sharia knowledge and 4.6 percent of those with advanced sharia knowledge falling into this category.

(The Caliphate’s Global Workforce, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-caliphates-global-workforce-an-inside-look-at-the-islamic-states-foreign-fighter-paper-trail>)

GENERAL ARTICLES

Latin America's 'Emerging Jewish' movement drawing on Catholic, Protestant disaffection

There is a small but growing wave of conversions to Judaism in Latin America, with many of these converts coming from evangelical backgrounds, according to journalist Gabriela Mochkofsky. In an interview on the Jewish magazine *Moment's* website, she notes that this movement is distinct from the Latin Americans who discover their hidden Jewish ancestry (known as “converses”) and subsequently convert to Judaism. The newer wave of converts tends to follow a different trajectory from Roman Catholicism to evangelicalism and then to Judaism. Mochkofsky has mapped the “emerging Jewish” movement as including about 60 communities in 14 countries in Latin America, from Mexico to Chile. Only in Argentina and Uruguay are there no such convert



communities. She estimates that the movement numbers from 10,000–15,000, with Colombia having as many as 30 communities now. Mochkofsky's “hypothesis is that once people decided that they could get away with not being Catholic, they decided they didn't need to be Christian, and they had this freedom to become whatever they wanted—which is very 21st-century. Almost everyone speaks about this search for religious identity and how the search starts when they stop being Catholic. So when some pastor comes or when someone in the family has become an evangelical, that's when they start looking.”

She adds, “Some of these evangelical churches have an interest in the Old Testament. So they start reading the Old Testament. They have a connection to Israel within the evangelical movement. There is this idea in some Christian movements...that they have to be closer to Israel, or they have to convert to Judaism so the messiah will come.” This community has been through considerable ordeals to become Jews—including adult circumcision and paying thousands and thousands of dollars just to learn—and yet faced skepticism and rejection from their families, local rabbis, and Israel's Chief Rabbinate itself. Mochkofsky adds, “In most of these 14 countries where you have these converts, you always find a clash with the traditional Jewish communities. It's really two separate Jewish lives: You have one that is very religious, and then you have a very secular Jewish life. But you also have a big social divide, because these new Jews are also working-class, from impoverished parts of these countries, and you find that a lot of the traditional Jewish life is more well-off, or middle-class. I think part of the suspicion is that these new Jews are social climbers. That's the prejudice behind it. And I think part of the appeal of the conversion is that you become someone with a new identity that connects with a richer cultural history, but also with an intellectual, cultural background that they didn't have in their Catholic starting point.”

(*Moment*, <http://www.momentmag.com/interview-new-jews-latin-america/>)

Swiss evangelicals perceived as minor but dynamic brand of Christianity

Media reports in Switzerland (and neighboring countries) tend to associate evangelicals with dynamism and growth, thus contrasting them with other, established branches of the Christian faith, according to **RW** associate editor Jean-François Mayer, who was speaking at the 10th anniversary of the Réseau Évangélique Suisse (Swiss Evangelical Network) in the town of Tavannes. Mayer was drawing on research from his recent book on the evolution of evangelical Christians and the way they are perceived in French-speaking Switzerland, noting that evangelicals have been represented since the 19th century as a small but well-known segment of the religious landscape in traditionally Protestant areas. Thus they were not ignored. Moreover, Billy Graham came for evangelization meetings in Switzerland as early as 1955, and his brother-in-law came in 1966. The famous International Congress on World Evangelization, which left a deep and lasting impact on evangelicalism worldwide, took place in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. The event was reported too, but media did not realize at that time the potential of evangelicals for future growth in Switzerland proper.



Mayer traces the awareness of evangelical growth to the 1980s and 1990s; articles started to appear about an evangelical “wave” or “booming evangelicalism” in French-speaking Switzerland. Packed evangelical assemblies, with many young people, were intriguing to journalists at the same time that mainstream churches registered sparser attendance. From that time, whether in a positive or in a critical light, evangelicals have been associated with the idea of vibrant communities on the rise. While there

is definitely truth in that perception, Mayer observes that—as evidenced by recent academic research—not all evangelical churches are growing; some are losing members. In addition, some younger churches on the rise gather a significant number of faithful who had previously belonged to other evangelical denominations—internal circulation is strong, for a variety of reasons. While not exceeding 1.5 to 3 percent of the Swiss population at this point, evangelicals are growing. Mayer added that in the current Swiss context, it is already a success for a church to manage not to decline.

One factor in evangelical growth has been the planting of churches in traditionally Roman Catholic dominated areas of the country, partly for serving a more mobile population coming from other cantons but also attracting new converts. Another significant factor has been the addition of a number of churches formed by non-European migrants in urban areas of Switzerland. This influence will likely contribute to changing the shape of evangelicalism in Switzerland. The Swiss Evangelical Network, which currently includes the majority of evangelical congregations in

French-speaking Switzerland, and its local branches, are making an effort to integrate these immigrant groups. This integration is one of the reasons leading Mayer to emphasize the importance of a cooperative body such as the Swiss Evangelical Network—it gives a common profile to a fragmented and diverse evangelical milieu. It also fulfills a need for outsiders (other churches, civil authorities) to be able to enter into a dialogue with a representative body. Except for Hindus, all major religious families in Switzerland now have such representative institutions or committees. At its 10th yearly assembly last month, the Swiss Evangelical Network indicated that it was still intending to become part of the Swiss Council of Religions, thus reaffirming its desire to make evangelical voices heard in wider society.

(J. F. Mayer, *L'Evolution des Chrétiens Evangéliques et leur Perception en Suisse Romande*, Geneva: Réseau Evangélique Suisse, 2016; Swiss Evangelical Network - <http://www.evangelique.ch>)

Seventh-Day Adventists—between ecumenical opening and restoration

In recent decades, Seventh-Day Adventists (SDA) have managed to a large extent to discard their image of being a separate community aside from other Christians and have increasingly become part of local and regional mainstream ecumenical councils and working groups. But this reformist approach has led sections of the SDA church to become concerned about the dilution of specific SDA teachings as they seek to restore their centrality, writes German Protestant theologian André Bohnet in *Materialdienst der EZW* (May). Bohnet's article is based on monitoring the situation of the SDA in Germany, but the trends have taken place worldwide, especially in the USA, where liberalizing trends have spread at Adventist universities, downplaying peculiar SDA teachings and seeking closer ties to the Protestant mainstream, even as conservative segments of Adventism react. Unlike his predecessor Jan Paulsen, the current president of the SDA General Conference, Ted Wilson, puts emphasis on those teachings that make SDAs unique (such as on the writings of founder Ellen White and Sabbath observance).

In Germany, the perception of Adventists by other Christians has significantly improved since the 1990s; there was a new theological openness and an interest in ecumenical dialogue. But some Adventists have felt that such developments were at risk of betraying their faith, and splinter groups have also been active in criticizing them. By 2010, the SDA leadership in Germany became aware that it had to deal cautiously with further reforms. According to Bohnet, the



situation is especially acute in the German *Land* (State) of Baden-Wurttemberg. The regional SDA association seems to be completely opposed to such theological and ecumenical openness. In 2014, it even attempted to create its own, separate Union of Churches, directly under the General Conference. Its publications stick to traditional SDA teachings on controversial issues (e.g. the papacy as Antichrist). Interest in interaction with other Christian denominations is low. Bohnet suggests that mainstream Christian theologians involved in ecumenical dialogue and related issues

should pay more attention to the existence of those “restorative” trends within Adventism. He emphasizes that the existence and impact of such trends make it currently impossible to offer a global assessment of the SDA Church in Germany; it is a complex situation that needs to be evaluated at local or regional levels.

(*Materialdienst der EZW*, Auguststrasse 80, 10117 Berlin, Germany – www.ezw-berlin.de)

French Catholic publishing houses restructuring

While the pope’s encyclicals or books inspired by him are selling well—already more than 50,000 copies of the French translation of *The Name of God Is Mercy* have been sold—Catholic French-speaking publishing houses are facing serious economic hurdles, writes religion journalist Claire Lesegretain in the French daily *La Croix* (May 3). Some challenges are shared with secular publishing houses—the average age of people reading books is getting older. But other challenges are specific to religious publishers, including lower levels of religious practice and interest in transmitting the faith and more interest in books by non-Catholic authors, thus decreasing Catholic publishers’ market shares. Finally, Catholic publishing houses have long relied on networks of religious bookstores due to difficulties in positioning their publications well in secular bookstores, but more religious bookstores are closing each year, making it harder for Catholic publishers to reach their niche audience. Among the Catholic publishers’ responses is a trend toward concentration, with smaller but viable publishing houses being acquired by larger ones while keeping their label. At the Paris Book Fair in March, twenty publishing houses gathered at a single, large booth in order to increase visibility. Editors are also actively looking for Catholic authors able to attract readers belonging to the younger generations, and the French bishops have started a committee to promote religious publishing.



(*La Croix* - <http://www.la-croix.com>)

Quakers fall in the West and rise in Kenya



Following a pattern similar to many other older religious groups, the Society of Friends has been losing members in the United Kingdom and the United States (around 25 percent between 1972 and 2002). But the movement is growing in Kenya, reports Nathan Siegel in *Roads & Kingdoms* (May). The shift to the Global South in Quakerism mirrors what is happening across Christian denominations. Quakerism reached Kenya as early as 1902. In 2002, a third of the 300,000 Quakers around the world were reported to live in Kenya. According to more recent statistical data (2012), there are now up to 377,000 Quakers worldwide, and this development is due to a large extent to Kenyan Quakers, now reaching 146,000. In the United States, by contrast,

Friends have decreased from 86,837 in 2007 to 76,360 in 2012. World Quaker distribution compiled by the Quaker Information Centre indicates that 52 percent reside in Africa, 20 percent in North America, 15 percent in Caribbean and Latin America, 7 percent in Europe and the Middle East, and 6 percent in the Asia-West Pacific area.

The growth of Kenyan Quakerism is due to “evangelism, new churches and services that appeal to a younger, more mainstream Christian crowd,” Siegel writes. This innovation even includes radio and street evangelism. The article contrasts the silent, “unprogrammed” Quaker meeting for worship—attended by only a handful of foreigners at the Friends International Centre in Nairobi—with the packed Sunday services including choirs, bands, and praise and worship of the local “noisy Quakers.” Siegel mentions tensions between Western and African Quakers, including on the typical issues such as same-sex marriage. While this dispute may lead Kenyan Quakers to rethink their ties to the West, they are still dependent on their Western partners for the funding of a number of programs, and observers do not think that they will cut these ties entirely. But they will continue to develop and affirm their own style of Quakerism.

(*Roads & Kingdom*, <http://roadsandkingdoms.com/2016/the-future-of-quakerism-belongs-to-kenya/> Quaker Information Centre, <http://www.quakerinfo.org/resources/statistics>)

Asian cities becoming more Muslim in numbers and culture

Muslim cities are not only likely to grow in numbers but also in Islamic identity and diversity in the near future, writes Nile Green in the journal *History and Anthropology* (May). A recent Pew Research Center study found the world's Muslim population is expected to rise by 37 percent by 2030, with Green adding that there is "little doubt that it will be Asia's cities (and, through emigration, cities beyond Asia) that will be the chief locations for these larger Muslim populations." These cities, which range from Karachi to Kuala Lumpur, are likely to struggle economically because of their large populations and reliance on low-cost, mass-produced exports, with China exercising an ongoing brain drain of their most talented workers. These cities will likely become more Islamic in culture both because of the continuing trend of religious minorities departing them and the migration of observant Muslims from the countryside. Because of greater Muslim influence and observance, these cities will be more segregated by sex, with more Muslim women raised or pressured into wearing hijab and, in some cases, niqab (full covering).

But these cities will not be monolithically Islamic, united, or necessarily peaceful. There will likely be more divisions between traditional ethnic and Muslim sectarian communities, as well as "inter-group competition, ranging from exclusive business arrangements to violent gangsterism." At the same time, the growth of the religious marketplace will expand in such cities, with the Internet having a leveling effect on religious authority, except in places where state actors are able to suppress religious innovation or create their own religious establishments. Islamic entrepreneurs will trade in everything from supernatural medicine—filling in the gaps left by Western biomedicine—to the "bleaker corners of Muslim religiosity that range from black magic to honor killing... [to potentially violent] millennial religious firms," Green writes. These religious economies can also provide a large number of jobs and create tangible services, such as charities and schools. Meanwhile, in architecture, aside from the massive projects in these cities funded by oil wealth, religious organizations will likely "provide the built public spaces of Asia's urban Muslim future."



(*History and Anthropology*, <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/ghan20/current>)

Islamic State's piracy, drive for purity depleting Middle East's cultural heritage

The Islamic State (IS) has engaged in the greatest threat to the Middle East's cultural heritage and religious sites since World War II, writes Michael Danti in *Anthropology News* (May/June). Danti, who was part of a U.S. Department of State team assisting Syria in preserving its cultural patrimony, writes that while other extremist Muslim groups, such as the Taliban, have destroyed pre-Islamic art, the IS "has since elevated cultural cleansing...to the level of a systematic pogrom." The IS believes that each act of destruction of "shirk" (sites and art associated with "idolatry" and polytheism) as well as sites of non-complying Muslims "advertises their Salafist power and primacy." The IS's "methods for exploiting heritage for propagandistic purposes have morphed as new acts are formulated to outdo the last," Danti adds. The organization has conducted its public executions on well-known heritage sites, and sometimes executions are carried out simultaneously with destruction of these sites.

These images and messages are promoted in an "iconoclastic multimedia blitz" in social media, exhorting followers to embrace cultural cleansing. These IS "actions have set the script for the launching of affiliates elsewhere and have steadily raised the extremist bar for other organizations competing for territory, followers, media exposure and bandwidth," Danti writes. At the same time, the IS displays a "brutal pragmatism regarding its financial bottom line," including theft and sale of portable cultural property to fund its operations and its failure to staunch looting among its fighters. "Much as it was with the organization's failed predecessors, such as Al Qaeda in Iraq, the inevitable internal contradictions in pairing violent jihad with parasitic organized crime have fueled growing anger in the 'caliphate.'"



(*Anthropology News*, <http://www.anthropology-news.org/>)

Findings & Footnotes

■ We're pleased to announce that the archives for the issues of **RW** from June 1997 to January 2016 are now online. Readers can go to the archives of this site to find a link to the earlier RW Archives or click on <http://www.rwarchives.com/>. Although the site is independent from the ISR-Religion Watch site, it features a state of the art search engine and a PDF converter for back issues. We thank RW associate editor Jean-Francois Mayer for his work in transferring the new site, as well as Debra Mason and Religion Newswriters Association for developing and designing it in the first place.



■ Just as denominations and religious professionals draw on the research of sociologists of religion, the secular humanist magazine **Free Inquiry** (April–May) turns to scholars from the emerging field of “non-religion” or secular studies for advice on how to reach out to the secular non-affiliated and “sustain the growth of unbelief.” A longtime dilemma of organized secular groups has been the difficulty in mobilizing more than a small minority of atheists and secular humanists to involvement and activism in the cause.

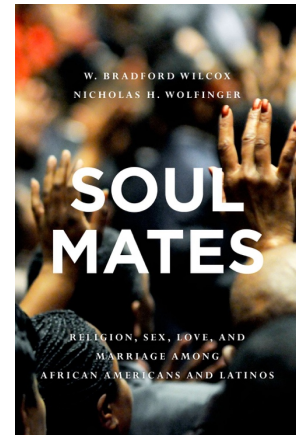


Sociologist Ryan Cragun writes that organized secularism will have to choose either to create a vital counterculture by competing with religions or going mainstream and encouraging a more secular society through actively promoting modernization and pluralism (according to the classic secularization theory). Jesse Max Smith looked more to the growth of the Sunday Assemblies, church-like services celebrating secularism, in creating a viable secular movement. The Sunday Assemblies’ “inclusive, expressive nontheism focuses on celebrating normative cultural values and finding common ground,” as opposed to the antireligious and polemical approach of the new atheism.

This stance is more relevant in a society based on pluralism, competition, and voluntary association, helping “unbelief shed its stigma and become a normalized part of pluralist America,” Smith adds. Barry Kosmin argues that secular organizations should reflect the growing numbers of non-affiliated (though he notes that only about 5 percent self-identify as atheist or agnostic)—more Asian, male, ex-Catholic, and Western. He adds that secular groups should be modeled more on affinity organizations (such as AARP) rather than congregations. They should be more tolerant to appeal to Millennials, yet Kosmin adds, “We need to ensure that secularism is linked

in the public imagination with the benefits of urban modernity, while religion is relegated to an association with poverty, superstition, and the prejudices of the rural past.” The scholars of non-religion in this issue are open about their secularist sympathies. As sociologist Phil Zuckerman writes, “Religious faith—with its evidence-less claims, damaging superstition, childish morality, contributions to tribalism and nationalism, patriarchy and homophobia, and divine justifications for injustice—thwarts human progress. The widespread weakening and waning of religion is, therefore, welcome news.” For more information on this issue, write: *Free Inquiry*, <http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php/articles/category/freeinquiry>.

■ The new book ***Soul Mates*** (Oxford University Press, \$27.95), by W. Bradford Wilcox and Nicholas Wolfinger, looks at how religion interacts with married life for America’s poor minority groups, often in positive directions. Based on ethnographic and survey research, the book finds that church-going is associated with a significant increase in the odds of marriage (between 30 and 60 percent) and a smaller increase in the odds that both partners report being very happy. But the authors see complications as well as benefits. On marital stability, religion has no impact at all for blacks and Latinos, nor did religious attendance reduce the chances for divorce among these groups (though it does among whites). The lack of religious effect on out-of-wedlock births may be due to the fact that preachers and congregations with large numbers of single mothers and out-of-wedlock couples are not eager to preach about life-long marriage.



Wilcox and Wolfinger write that strong friendship networks and shared prayer may explain these religious effects. They rule out that these benefits are due to “selection effects” (already stable couples and families seeking to reinforce their already existing orientation and commitments), finding the impact of religion largely causal. The authors conclude that both “religious civic” and secular initiatives are needed strengthen family life, including efforts to close the gender gap in congregations.

■ ***Salvation With A Smile*** (NYU Press, \$35), by Phillip Luke Sinitiere, is more than a biography of televangelist and megachurch pastor Joel Osteen. The book is as much about Osteen’s Lakewood Church as it is about its charismatic pastor, examining the way both have effectively worked their way into the evangelical mainstream, though not without controversy and division. Sinitiere makes it clear that Osteen’s ministry is unique in American religious history—the succession from John Osteen to his son was virtually seamless, with the second generation outshining the founder. As might be expected, the book focuses on Osteen’s prosperity gospel and how it extended the traditional Pentecostal emphasis on healing to include fitness, health, and psychological well-being and positive thinking.

But Osteen's rehabilitation of televangelism may be his greatest innovation, as he harnessed social media, marketing, traditional television, and such new platforms as SiriusXM Radio into what one scholar calls a "digital convergence." At the same time, Osteen has encouraged a "charismatic core" at Lakewood that allows a diversity of leaders, including women and minorities, to share the ministry. Sinitiere argues that the peak of Osteen's influence came at a time of transition from a Republican to a Democratic president, when he was able to navigate between the Christian Right and religious left without politicizing his message. Even evangelical and specifically "New Calvinist" critics have not been able to make much of a dent in Osteen's popularity, as he has developed a "piety of resistance" that aligns his convictions with the teachings of Jesus in a way that disarms his critics.



■ Through the use of unique experiments, the new book ***Why Muslim Integration Fails in Christian-Heritage Societies*** (Harvard University Press, \$45), by Claire Adida, David D. Laitin, and Marie-Anne Valfort, pursues questions about the interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims that lead to the conflicts over immigration that mark most Western societies. The political



scientists argue that "Islamaphobia" marks European life and affects the social and economic prospects of immigrants but then test how and why these attitudes are formed through a series of game-based experiments. The subjects were Senegalese immigrants, who match in most aspects of their lives except for their Muslim and Christian backgrounds, and a sample of people of French background who played

experimental games that tested the trust they felt for other players. The authors find that both Muslims and the host society (in this case France) play a part in discrimination and the lack of Muslim integration. The host society holds a cultural "distaste" toward Muslims, especially their overt religiosity that upsets secular sensibilities, which was seen in one experiment where the French subjects favored Christian resumes over Muslim ones.

In response to these negative attitudes, Muslims have increasingly separated themselves from society and have adopted strategies that prevent greater integration—a pattern that continues even into the third generation. The authors analyze data sets from other European countries and the U.S. and find a similar pattern of Muslim disadvantage and lower rates of integration to the

host society. Adida, Laitin, and Valfort also compare multicultural societies to ones stressing assimilation and find that in the latter, Muslims are less likely to suffer discrimination and to respond with greater separation from society. The authors conclude by returning to their French case study, calling for the toning down of both “non-rational” components, host society discrimination—such as in allowing for greater religious expression in the workplace—and Muslim separatism—through discouraging the use of Islamic first names and encouraging French-trained Muslim leaders.