

Vol. 32, No. 3

January 2017

FEATURE STORY:

Religious politics and political religion mark 2016

*The Chinese curse of “living in interesting times” took on special resonance in 2016 as political upheavals and conflicts as well as actual violence became a reality for many. These tumultuous events reverberated in the world of religion, as will be obvious by our focus on religion and politics for our annual review of 2016 and preview of trends unfolding in 2017. Citations of **RW** issues where we cover the trends below in greater depth follow each item; we also cite outside sources for trends reported for the first time here.*



1) The election of Donald Trump will have numerous implications for religion, some of which are only in their infancy. Despite the abrasive and divisive campaign Trump ran and the way that it divided Republicans, subsequent polls have shown that the religious configurations marking the electorate for the last two decades have not changed much. It is not clear if evangelicals' and other religious conservatives' investment in the Trump presidency—with notable dissenters—will revive the religious right and its agenda (see “The religious right’s populist turn,” below), but their worries about secularism and the loss of institutional religious commitment among many Americans will not likely subside even with political support from Washington. Their association with a controversial and potentially unpopular administration may well exacerbate the situation (*December RW*).

2) A more activated religious left emerged from events in 2016, most notably Trump's election but also the Standing Rock oil pipeline protests in North Dakota. Trump's presidency presents the religious left (and center in some cases) with a full menu of causes and concerns—from immigration to interfaith relations and religious freedom to the environment. We will likely hear of a revived sanctuary movement for undocumented immigrants, for instance. The Standing Rock protests brought mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish activists into greater contact with a new generation of American Indians and their spirituality, according to the *Washington Post* (December 5). There have been reports of higher attendance at mainline churches since the election, but that effect may be temporary according to *The Atlantic* (December 11). It remains to be seen if the more diminished institutional strength (compared to only a decade ago) of progressive religion can mobilize shrinking constituencies or inspire unchurched Americans to activism on these issues.

3) Last year the Islamic State's (IS) move to bring its terrorism to the West became clear, as seen in the attacks in France, Germany, and the U.S. At the same time, the IS lost key strongholds in decisive battles, leading analysts to argue that the movement may further target its jihad against "infidels" in the West (*September RW*; see also "*Islamic State's center of gravity shifts to Yemen?*" [p. 15] and "*Findings & Footnotes*" below).

4) The long-awaited Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church finally took place in Crete last June, but the churches of Antioch, Bulgaria, Georgia, and Russia did not attend, undermining the message of unity that the gathering was supposed to send. The Russian church recognized the Council as an important event but not as a pan-Orthodox one, thus seeing it as part of pre-conciliar preparations and not a Council proper. Due to competing views and competition among Orthodox churches (especially between Constantinople and Moscow), it is unlikely that a genuine pan-Orthodox Council can take place soon. The preparations for the event over many years, however, have brought some fruits. For instance, local Assemblies of Orthodox Bishops of all jurisdictions have been established in several countries where they had not existed before, thus ensuring a start for a better common representation of Orthodox communities in diaspora countries (*July RW*).

5) After many years of cooperation, the relations between the Turkish government under President Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Hizmet movement of Fetullah Gülen first turned sour in 2013. Following several measures taken by the AKP government against educational and other institutions run by the Hizmet movement, the final break came with the failed coup last summer. Gülen and his followers now stand accused of backing the coup, an accusation they deny strongly. Harsh repression has targeted everyone associated with the movement. Gülen's followers abroad are also feeling the heat, and the movement is denounced in mosques associated with the Turkish government. Due to the presence of Hizmet in different parts of the world (Gülen himself has resided in Pennsylvania since the late 1990s), it remains to be seen how the movement might reinvent itself. According to recent reports, in Germany there is an internal discussion among Gülen's followers regarding the option of opening their own mosques, something the movement has not done before (*Katholische Nachrichten-Agentur*, December 5).

6) Since Chinese President Xi Jinping assumed office in 2013, the state's attitude toward religion seems to have been hardening, not sparing representatives of the state-sponsored "Patriotic" churches (both Catholic and Protestant) in 2016, particularly in those cases when they were not willing to adhere closely to the government's line. In April, the president warned of foreign infiltration through religion (*Reuters*, April 24). While the Holy See continues a discrete dialogue with China and showed conciliatory tones before the recent 9th National Assembly of Catholic Representatives (an official body under government control), there was no sign of changes. High officials addressing the Assembly stressed the need for independence of Chinese Catholics from Rome. The news agency *Eglises d'Asie* (December 29) noted, however, that the Chinese side was careful to act in a way that would not close the path to continuing negotiations. With what is at stake, one can expect such talks to endure until reaching a solution agreeable to both parties.

FEATURES:

The religious right's populist turn

Throughout the past election season, pundits and scholars predicted the demise of the Christian Right—as they have done since the movement started in the 1980s. Before the election observers predicted that Hillary Clinton's landslide victory and Donald Trump's defeat would drag down the religious right and social conservatives who supported him. After Trump's election the same pundits predicted that his administration will use and then dispense with Christian Right leaders, discrediting the evangelical brand in the process. Recent reports, though, suggest that the prospects for the religious right in the Trump era hinge less on the president-elect himself and more on growing international ties between fellow religious conservatives and, ironically enough, their common opposition to globalization. In *The Imaginative Conservative* blog, Stephen Turley writes that both the religious right and Trump see globalization as the enemy, even if for different reasons. Beginning in the 1990s, religious right leaders began to "see their domestic struggle with the ascendance of secular lifestyle values in far more globalist terms.... The involvement of Christian organizations such as Focus on the Family, Family Research Council, and Concerned Women for America in various United Nations policy disputes demonstrated that the international arena has become integral to the mission of the Christian Right."

Turley adds, "With his emphasis on nationalism, protection of Christians, and promise of appointing pro-life judges, Mr. Trump's campaign represented a mutual defense of these three sovereignties, making his candidacy a natural attraction for proponents of traditional values." The former growth of nationalist populism as well as the resurgence of the Russian Orthodox Church and the unexpected Brexit victory suggests that "in many respects, the political influence of the religious right is just beginning," he writes. Already global alliances among conservatives and traditionalists, such as the strong ties between Anglican evangelicals in the North and the global South and agreements between Eastern Orthodox and Catholic leaders on the persecution of

Christians in the Middle East, are common; such coalitions to combat what are seen as secular and anti-Christian tendencies “[appear] to be more and more likely as political power increasingly aligns with populist sentiments.”

The recent populist turn of the religious right draws a measure of inspiration from Vladimir Putin’s Russia according to *The New York Times* (December 4). Putin increasingly aims his messages against gay rights and other forces of moral decay to populist groups abroad, a voice amplified through Russian Orthodox think tanks and media



outlets like Russia Today that cater to foreign audiences. The *New York Times* article paints with a broad brush, seeing Putin as galvanizing far-right neo-Nazi groups like Hungary’s Jobbik Party as well as more moderately-right populist groups that may have issues with Putin’s foreign policy. The conservative magazine *Chronicles* (December) reports that the expansions of the role of religion in the public sphere occurring in Russia and also in Poland and Hungary are “challenging the secular-liberal outlook” that is seen as increasingly dominating the West. Poland’s Law and Justice Party are strongly anti-abortion, anti-gay marriage, and anti-euthanasia, while Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has become a strong advocate for the reassertion of religious values in society, including establishing a new financial system that has allowed church-owned schools to proliferate since 2011.

(*The Imaginative Conservative*, <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2016/12/donald-trump-global-religious-right-stephen-turley.html>; *Chronicles*, 928 N. Main St., Rockford, IL 61103)

The logic of patchwork religion

Many Americans’ tendency to patch together different elements of religions may not be as idiosyncratic as it may appear, according to recent research. In an article in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (December), Emily Sigalow writes that “broad social factors structure and pattern how individuals combine religious options in America.” Sigalow’s theoretical propositions are based first on her own research on the particular case of JUBUs (Jewish Buddhists), while discussing the results in the light of other cases. In contrast with well-known models of religious conversion, social networks played little role in the religious mixing by JUBUs (none had a Buddhist spouse, even for those living in mixed marriages). On the other hand, an individual who belongs to more than one religious community “is more ‘culturally available’ to

joining socially similar religious groups” than dissimilar ones. JUBUs’ first contact with Buddhists “was largely rooted in social contingencies,” sharing a similar social world (culturally, economically, politically).

Sigalow also writes that individuals are more culturally available to borrow from religious groups not perceived as being in historical tension with their own faith. Evangelical Christians view Jews very positively and are eager to borrow practices from them in some cases, while the reverse is not true. At the same time, Pew research has shown that American Jews view Buddhists more positively than any other religious tradition with which there is no historical issue. Sigalow adds that individuals are more culturally available to borrowing from other traditions “that they have been socialized into, perceiving [them] as compatible with their own tradition.” Due to different socializations, Taiwanese and Cambodian Buddhists who convert to Protestant Christianity in America do not see the possibility of keeping some Buddhist beliefs and practices in the same way—one group sees this retention as incompatible with their new faith, while there is an acceptable fluidity in the eyes of the other group.



Finally, the degree of organizational rules in religious communities will impact the degree to which one can mix religious goods, with loosely bound organizations expectedly allowing more freedom to engage in religious syncretism. Some boundaries limit the degree to which a member can engage in syncretism. Evangelical Christians can borrow from Jewish rituals but not adopt Jewish beliefs, which would contradict their own statements

of faith. Buddhist meditation centers do not focus on the socialization of children, thus making it possible for JUBUs to combine their Buddhist practice with their belonging to a (liberal) synagogue. There is no perception of conflict. Moreover, loosely bound organizations “permit individuals to take what they want from other religious traditions” rather than what their religious group wants them to take.

(Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 825 Houston Mill Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30329—4025 – www.aarweb.org)

Online ordinations diversify, competing with organized faiths

Online ordinations come in a variety of forms and practices that are increasingly competing with organized religion writes Michel Clasquin-Johnson in the *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* (Winter). The Universal Life Church (ULC) runs the oldest and most popular online ordination service and mainly focuses on providing alternative wedding officiants instead of traditional clergy, but others take their mission to certify clergy with some degree of theological seriousness (see February 2015 **RW** for more on the ULC). Clasquin-Johnson found 36 websites where one could apply for ordination, with most operating in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain. The ULC, which has ordained and married upwards of 10 million people, is the most non-sectarian, allowing for secular services, but it also permits other non-conventional religions to offer online ordinations, including Satanist and New Age/Esoteric groups, with officiants using such titles as priest, shaman, Reiki healer, rabbi, and interfaith chaplain. Even Judaism has seen an influx of rabbis ordained by a non-traditional institution. Three Soto Zen priests were recently ordained in an online ceremony.



Clasquin-Johnson finds that there are different levels of religious and theological commitment among these groups. Beyond the non-creedal ULC, which grants ordinations with no requirements, the second largest group, American Marriage Ministries, requires an affirmation of legal and ethical guidelines. Arke Ministries Organization International only requires that its ordained are Christian, with no doctrinal guidelines, but the Ministers-Best-Friend reserves its ordination for those deemed sufficiently evangelical Christian and requires an agreement not to participate in same-sex marriages. A few online ordination groups even include training and the granting of degrees, Clasquin-Johnson adds, although no mainline churches or academic accreditation agencies recognize these degrees. Most of these ministries are united by a belief that marriage is a sacred union while insisting that every couple has the right to choose how they will observe it. Far from marriage being secularized, Clasquin-Johnson argues that the phenomenon points to a “constant, or possibly increasing, need for a religious element in the lives of what may be otherwise largely secular people.” But it also means that religion now “finds itself in an open, competitive market, and it will increasingly have to defend its role rather than taking it for granted. Certainly, we see no action by any established religion to compete with the online ordainers directly.”

(*Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, <http://jsri.ro/ojs/index.php/jsri>)

Faith-based schools, scouting have integrating effects on U.S. Muslims

Second-generation American Muslim parents value Muslim schooling and Boy Scouts not only as a way for their children to retain their faith but also as a way to join the academic and professional class, according to research by Rebecca Karam. She presented an ethnographic study of two K-8 Muslim schools in Michigan and the scouting programs they sponsor at a seminar at the Committee on Religion at City University of New York in early December, which was attended by **RW**. Karam found that the parents valued spirituality over ethnic traditions and were strongly anti-isolationist in their outlook. They tended to approve of their children continuing with secular education after graduating from these schools (there are few Muslim high schools in the U.S.). Most of the conflicts that these parents experienced were not with their children but with their own parents over issues such as the latter's opposition to celebrating Halloween or holding yoga classes in the schools.

Karam found that 30 percent of the teachers in the schools were non-Muslims and that religious education classes included an introduction to the world's religions. A relatively high proportion of the Muslim teachers were white converts. The school's scouting programs are likewise seen as stepping-stones to integration and success in mainstream society, as well as a promotion of patriotic activity and sentiments. Men run these Boy Scout programs more frequently than most scouting programs and infuse them with Islamic teachings. Although Karam conducted her research only a few months ago, she added that the election of Donald Trump and his more critical stance on Islam was already having an impact on the parents. They are more concerned with bullying and conflicts coming from anti-Islamic prejudice than was the case when she started her research last year.



Bible shortages in hotels—a case of supply or demand secularism?

The hotel industry is cutting back its distribution of religious literature in its rooms, although it is unclear whether this reduction is the result of customer disinterest or due to the secular perceptions of those in the hotel industry. The *Los Angeles Times* (December 6) reports that hotel managers and franchises are feeling the need to diversify but are also facing protests from secularist groups about their traditional practice of placing Bibles and other sacred texts in hotel rooms. Marriott International, the world's largest hotel company, has recently decided to offer no religious



materials at two of its newer millennial-oriented hotel brands, even though the company supplies a Bible and the *Book of Mormon* in the rooms of every other hotel in the franchise. Marriott's decision mirrors others in the industry, who are quietly phasing out the long-held tradition of stocking religious material in hotel rooms. Reporter Hugo Martin adds that it is hard to gauge how many of the country's 53,000 hotels still put Bibles in the rooms because most

major hotel franchise companies leave it up to individual hotel owners and managers whether to offer such texts.

A recent survey by STR, a hotel research firm, found that the percentage of hotels that offer religious materials in rooms has decreased significantly over the last decade, from 95 percent of hotels in 2006 to 48 percent this year. Industry experts cite such factors as the need to appeal to younger American travelers who are less devout than their parents and the concern not to offend international travelers from other faiths. Hotels also have been under pressure lately from atheist groups. STR officials cautioned against reading too much into its survey, noting that managers representing only 2,600 of the more than 8,000 hotels responding to the survey answered the question about religious material in rooms. In its latest fiscal year, Gideons International spent about \$100 million to distribute Bibles to hotels, prisons, hospitals, and other locations—about the same amount as in 2015. On the supply side, hotels such as Travelodge in Britain removed Bibles from their rooms “in order not to discriminate against any religion,” the company said. Intercontinental Hotel Group, the giant British company that operates the Holiday Inn brand among others, does not require managers of its more than 5,000 hotels to put Bibles in each room.

Current Research

● **Christian colleges that come from more communal religious traditions are more likely to support LGBT rights and groups on campus compared to schools coming from individualistic traditions, according to a study by Monmouth College sociologist Jonathan S. Coley.** In an article in the journal *Social Currents* (4:1, 2017), Coley analyzed a list of 682 colleges self-identifying as Christian and their policies on inclusion of LGBT people and groups and then classified them in either communal or individualist traditions. Most scholars and observers have argued that the divide between acceptance and rejection of LGBT policies and organizations runs along a conservative-liberal spectrum. Coley instead finds that colleges that belong to communal denominations, which he defines as emphasizing “social justice,” tend to have non-discrimination policies on sexual orientation, even if they teach that homosexual relations are sinful, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the United Methodists, and the historic Black churches do. He adds that it may be the case that schools associated with individualist traditions, which he defines as emphasizing “personal piety,” “are much more likely to see themselves as serving students who actively identify as Christians, and thus most have no qualms excluding students who do not actively agree with their beliefs. Christian schools associated with communal traditions, however, generally view themselves as serving broader communities,” even if they actively promote their religious identification.



(*Social Currents*, <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/scu>)

● **Jews continue to show the highest educational attainment—or years of formal schooling—while Muslims and Hindus have the lowest, according to an analysis by the Pew Research Center (December 13).** While whether one lives in a developing region or country has significant impact on the educational status of religious groups, the analysis also finds that religions living in close proximity show different rates of educational attainment. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, Christians tend to have higher educational attainment than Muslims, which

may be due to historical factors such as missionary activity during the colonial period. Drawing on data from 151 countries, the analysis also finds that there are different rates of educational



attainment by gender within religious groups. For example, Muslim men have 6.4 years of formal schooling compared with 4.9 years among Muslim women, while Hindu women have 4.2 years of schooling while Hindu men have 6.9 years. The educational gap between Muslim men and women is narrowing across three generations, however, with women now making the greatest educational gains.

(To download this study, visit: <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/12/13/religion-and-education-around-the-world/>)

- **Surveys reveal that the public in France, Italy, Belgium, and Germany significantly overestimate their countries' Islamic populations and their growth rates, reports *The Guardian* (December 13).** An Ipsos Mori survey that measured the gap between public perception and reality in 40 countries in 2016 found French respondents were by far the most likely to overstate their country's current and projected Muslim population. The average French estimate was that 31 percent of the population was Muslim—almost one in three residents. According to Pew Research, France's Muslim population actually stood at 7.5 percent in 2010, or one in 13 people. French respondents were also widest of the mark when it came to the projected Muslim population in 2020. The average prediction was that Muslims would make up 40 percent of the French population in four years' time, almost five times the 8.3 percent Pew Research projection. The French were not the only ones to hold such misconceptions: Italian, German, and Belgian respondents all



presumed that more than a fifth of the resident population was Muslim, while in reality the figure ranges from 3.7 percent in Italy to 7 percent in Belgium. All three countries also greatly overstated the expected proportion of Muslim residents in 2020.

● **France’s National Front (FN) party has been held up as an example of a far-right group moving away from strongly anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic views toward moderation, but a new survey suggests that many members of this party still hold these views.** Since Marine Le Pen gained leadership in 2011, she has sought to distance the National Front from far-right views, especially on questions of anti-Semitism, race, and opposition to Muslims, dramatically illustrated when she expelled her own father and FN founder Jean-Marie Le Pen from the party. The French online magazine *Books and Ideas* (December 22) cites the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights’ annual survey of 6,090 respondents, which rates “ethnocentric” views on a scale of 1 to 100 from 2009–2014.



In the current context of economic crisis and political disaffection, supporters of other parties, especially on the right wing, have become more anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and racist. FN supporters, however, have continued to stand out from supporters of other parties, especially in their opposition to the public expression of Islam. Negative views reached 41 points for the ritual of sheep sacrifice, 39 for prayer (understood as street prayer), and 37 for wearing the veil, compared to 30 for respecting Ramadan and food prohibitions.

On the anti-Semitism scale, FN supporters’ very high level of anti-Semitic prejudices contrasted with others; more than half have high scores (above 3), compared to a quarter of supporters of other parties. The article concludes that “not only did Marine Le Pen taking up the reins of the party not lower the relative level of anti-Muslim prejudice among its supporters, but their levels of anti-Semitism increased, even though this remained much lower than their Islamophobic prejudice.”

(*Books & Ideas*, <http://www.booksandideas.net/The-Front-National-Still-Racist-and-Xenophobic.html>)

FEATURES:

Taboo lifting on contemporary dance for Orthodox Jews in Israel

While the creation of new forms of dancing remains vibrant in Israel, this environment has barely made an impact upon Orthodox Jews, who limit their dancing to traditional forms, especially at weddings—until recently. While still unusual, there are now a few contemporary dance companies formed by Orthodox Jews, reports Aude-May Lepasteur in the Swiss daily *La Liberté* (November 26). The journalist interviewed researcher Ana Laura Rodriguez Quinones (University of Lausanne), who confirms that women are facing strong hurdles, starting with the fact that they have few opportunities to train at young ages. Orthodox Jewish women have a hard time justifying the practice of contemporary dance since Orthodox Judaism emphasizes the concept of *tzniut* (modesty), associated with an appropriate moral behavior.

In order to provide legitimacy to modern dancing expressions, Orthodox Jewish dance companies tend to choose topics related to Jewish religious traditions, refer to rabbinical writings, describe dancing as a way to glorify God, and keep Orthodox clothing when dancing. Moreover, most female dancing groups only perform in front of female audiences.



Rodriguez Quinones has identified three female (Halelu, Tehalelia, and Carmia) and one male (Ka'et) Orthodox Jewish contemporary dance companies currently active in Israel. The last one comes from a less conservative Orthodox milieu and also performs in front of mixed audiences. Te Ka'et Ensemble also invites well-known rabbis or musicians to perform along with them, thus attempting to gain recognition of their artistic work within Orthodox circles. While still limited in size, this trend is emerging and potentially expanding.

(*Halelu* - <http://www.haleludancecompany.com/home>)

Performance by Ka'et Ensemble: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpm5Ifh1gWEWith>)

Islamic State's center of gravity shifts to Yemen?

Yemen is likely to emerge as a center of operations for the Islamic State (IS) once the movement loses its strongholds in Iraq and Syria, especially since the nation plays a significant role in IS's end-times teachings, reports the *Terrorism Monitor* (December 15). The newsletter, published by the Jamestown Foundation, reports that the Yemeni affiliate of the IS (IS-Y) is steadily growing in strength, building a strong presence in Sunni areas, while the rest of the terrorist group loses territory, and the group's affiliate in Lebanon is close to losing its stronghold in the city of Sirte. The collapse of the Yemeni government has presented the IS-Y with the opportunity to brand itself the savior of the Sunnis at the same time that al-Qaida's leadership in Yemen is increasingly divided.

Yasir Yosef Kuoti writes, "Yemen has great significance to IS apocalyptic worldview. According to some readings of Islamic theology common to both Shia and many Sunni schools of thought, a leading figure by the name of al-Yamani will appear at the end of time to aid the movement of al-Mahdi al-Muntazar in ridding the earth of evil and along with the Messiah...create a universal government compatible with the moral values of Islam.... Al-Yamani is to lead the movement in Saudi Arabia." Yemen is strategically important for the IS because its proximity to Saudi Arabia could serve as a base "for spreading disorder across the border to the Kingdom."

(*Terrorism Monitor*, <https://jamestown.org/programs/tm/>)



Growing multi-ethnic makeup of Pentecostal megachurches in Southeast Asia

Benefitting from the expansion of charismatic Christianity across Southeast Asia since the 1980s, Pentecostal megachurches have also appeared in urban centers of various countries in the area, according to ethnographic studies gathered in an edited volume to be published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), based in Singapore. Excerpts have been published in the *Newsletter of the International Institute for Asian Studies* (Autumn). The majority of Pentecostals in urban centers such as Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Jakarta, or Manila are ethnic Chinese, although Chinese only make a minority of the population of those countries. Thus, churches may also serve networking and identity purposes, writes Terence Chong (ISEAS). There are notable exceptions, though, including multiethnic congregations as well as churches based on other identities.

At the largest Assembly of God church in Malaysia, besides ethnic Indian members who had joined the Chinese there are now transnational workers too (Filipinos, Nigerians, Cambodians, and Dutch), reports Jeaney Yip (University of Sydney). One of the biggest megachurches in the Philippines, Jesus is Lord, maintains a Filipino identity while sharing features with counterparts elsewhere, writes Jayeel Serrano Cornelio (Ateneo de Manila University). Use of the Filipino language is prevalent, the church produces its own songs, its leadership “is very Filipino,” and it sees itself as a prophetic movement shaping the future of the Filipino nation, which includes political ambitions as well. While megachurches are associated with middle class, there are also those going beyond this social segment and attracting poorer people. In the Philippines, the Jesus is Lord movement caters to the working class Filipino.

There may be 6 million Pentecostals in Indonesia according to research conducted by En-Chieh Chao (National Sun Yat-Sen University, Taiwan). Indonesia’s second-largest city, Surabaya, where there were attacks against churches in 1996 and 1998, has seen the growth of larger congregations gathering in protected malls or commercial buildings “for collective healing and sense of security.” Beyond religious programming,



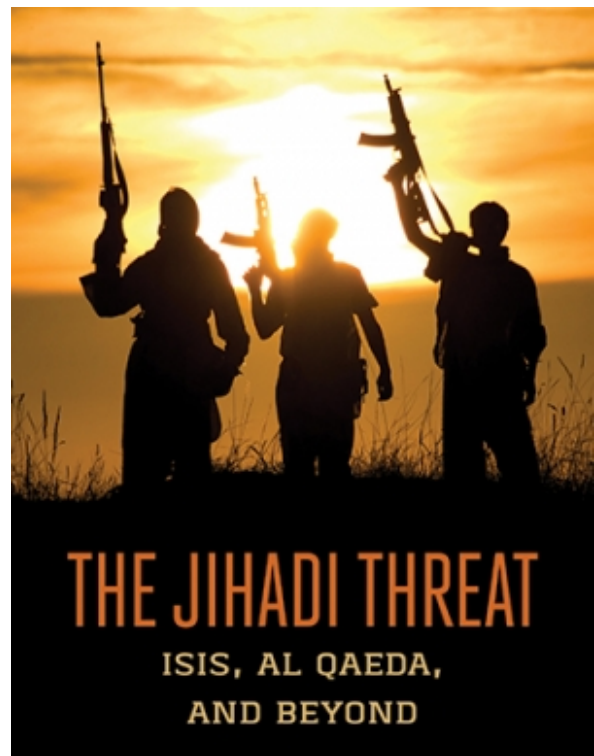
Pentecostals in Surabaya also conduct self-help and other practical workshops, but they are not alone, since Muslims do the same. The atmosphere, however, is much more joyful at Christian events.

Chang observes, “Asian Pentecostalism has both transnationalising and indigenising characteristics,” drawing from abroad while also being able to craft contextual theologies. Yip warns against the tendency to homogenize Pentecostal churches; while recognizable as a global faith, Asian Pentecostalism is also “specific to locality with clear indigenous characteristics.”

(IIAS - <http://iias.asia>; ISEAS - <https://www.iseas.edu.sg>)

Findings & Footnotes

■ The U.S. Institute of Peace has issued a new report entitled *The Jihadi Threat* that suggests a proliferation of jihadi groups beyond their current shapes and numbers as well as the revival of al-Qaida. The 48-page report finds that both the Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaida have had far-reaching influence on disenfranchised Sunni groups in the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, and Caucasus. While some invoke the global jihadi rhetoric of the IS and al-Qaida, other groups are more nationalist or nation-first jihadis, such as Jabhat Fateh and Ahrar al-Sham of Iraq and Syria. Many of these country-first groups have fluid relationships with global jihadi groups and may shift their allegiances for strategic and financial reasons. The report’s contrast of al-Qaida and the IS is particularly noteworthy, finding that the former has been able to revive by gaining support among local jihadi and Salafist groups, unlike the IS, which has been losing territory, even though it is not likely to be the last such group to try such a recipe for achieving a global caliphate. To download the report, visit <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/The-Jihadi-Threat-ISIS-Al-Qaeda-and-Beyond.pdf>



■ The new book *The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman* (Oxford University Press, \$35), by Anabel Inge, deftly explores the phenomenon of women converting to strict Islamic groups in Great Britain. The author’s in-depth treatment of how modern women adapt rigorous Islamic

practices that are essentially apolitical moves the reader off the well-trod path of Islamic women, head covering, and extremism. Through formal interviews with 36 Salafi women, Inge finds a unique pattern of what she calls "delayed conversion," wherein these women embrace Islam after a long period of uncertainty, experimentation, and experience of generally poor relations with adherents—which goes against the theory that affective bonds draw people to unconventional religions. Salafism provides these women with rules and the sense of certainty, especially in the area of dating and marriage. Although stressing returning to the pure source of the Quran, these women followed the guidance of teachers in small groups called circles of knowledge that fostered a spirit of sisterhood. Yet Inge finds that these women—mainly of black Caribbean and Somali backgrounds—found sharp intergroup tensions within their circles and only after joining learn that Salafi teaching does not value their occupational and educational ambitions, leading some to fall away. Reports of sexual abuse by some male leaders have also surfaced. Inge concludes that Salafism may be unstable, especially as the second generation are just coming of age and may not maintain the intensity of their parents, but there are enough new converts to sustain the movement.



On/File: A Continuing Record of People, Groups, Movements, and Events Shaping Religion

While Neopaganism has been present in Israel for the past two decades, it was only recently that an indigenous movement has emerged known as **Canaanite Reconstructionism**, which seeks to revive ancient, pre-Jewish religion. Most Neopagan practitioners in Israel—who only number in the low hundreds—have drawn on Western sources, such as Celtic and Wiccan deities and practices. But Canaanite deities, such as Ba'al, are beginning to take center stage at Israeli Pagan community festivals, and there is an effort to infuse Wiccan ritual sources and structures with references to both local seasonal changes and elements from texts in ancient Ugaritic. Such attempts to revive pre-Judaic religious rituals and identity face accusations from both secular and Orthodox Israelis of celebrating idolatry and being unpatriotic toward Israel's founding myth (*Nova Religio*, November).

