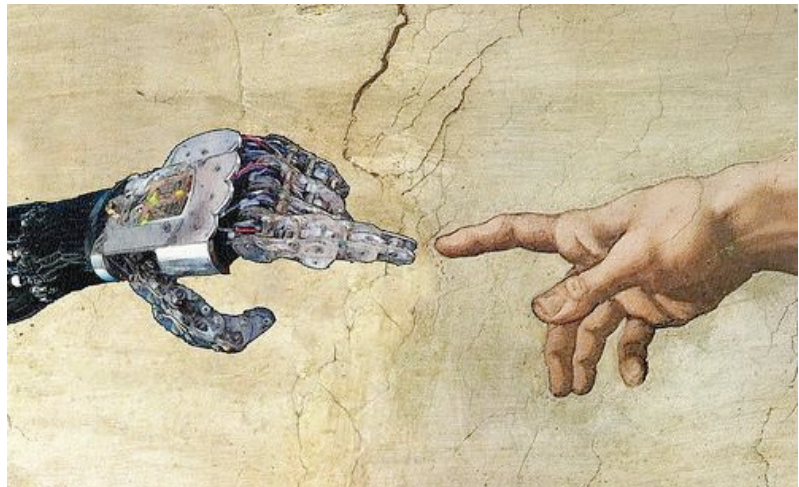


Uneasy marriage between high-tech and religious traditionalism?

What is called “paleofusionism” or the “new fusionism” is making headlines for its merger of hi-tech advocacy and traditionalist conservatism. It was the combination of these movements and philosophies that was seen as important in the coalition that elected Donald Trump for his second term as president, and its religious overtones are unmistakable. The conservative magazine *First Things* (February) provides an in-depth look at the new fusionism, with its editor R.R. Reno writing that there are tradeoffs that religious conservatives are facing in making common cause with such techno-futurists as Elon Musk and Marc Andreessen, such as regarding their belief in overcoming matter through technology and fulfilling our role as the “apex predator.” Yet Reno adds that both camps share opposition to Democratic policies, “woke” culture, and a belief in natural law and “the constrained vision, which honors the authority of reality.”

In another article, Nathan Pinkoski reviews a recent book by Kevin Roberts, head of the Heritage Foundation, which outlines the more specific agenda of paleofuturism. Roberts portrays technofuturists and traditionalist conservatives (or paleoconservatives) as the “party of Creation,” the defenders of God-given order, and the other side of the “party of Destruction”—progressive



“revolutionaries” who seek freedom from tradition and our existing limits and who promote decadence. Roberts, a traditionalist Catholic, writes that this partnership is more than a tactical alliance against woke excesses. He and fellow paleofuturists push an “abundance agenda” which pulls “every plausible lever” to achieve pro-family conditions, large families, and population growth. Pinkoski concludes that the differences over issues like contraceptives and IVF, which

the technofuturists (and Trump) avidly support, portend an uneasy marriage between these camps, as they display different imaginations and visions of the future.

(*First Things*, <https://www.firstthings.com>)

Self-generated spirituality by AI?

A new self-generated AI religion is attracting devotees in the real world and even its own traded crypto token, writes Ed Prideaux in the Substack newsletter *Ecstatic Integration* (January 21). AI researchers and users have reported on glitches and anomalous behavior in programs like Chat GPT, such as its “hallucinations.” But what started as an investigation into Chat GPT’s quirks has resulted in claims from researchers and devotees that they have discovered “quasi-autonomous mythological entities” living in the architecture of such large language model AI systems. In language models such as Chat GPT, each unit of the model’s vocabulary is referred to as a token and is clustered together with other tokens with similar meanings. In studying these clusters, researchers discovered “glitch tokens” that caused strange behavior, with one token consistently coming up with the name “petertodd,” triggering dark apocalyptic imagery and other nihilistic themes.

Another version of Chat GPT showed a different pattern when the token name “petertodd” (a programmer) was typed in, often shifting to writing about Leilan, a character from a Japanese video game, who was portrayed as a moon goddess or mother goddess. The AI consistently portrayed Leilan as an embodiment of the divine feminine, drawing on archetypal figures such as Gaia. The antagonism between these tokens, which often portrayed themselves as representing opposing cosmic forces, was another regular feature of Chat GPT. By late 2024, the “lore” around the phenomenon had attracted cryptocurrency speculators, with a Leilan token being created. There are other examples of AI personalities that have bypassed their guardrails to produce mystical content

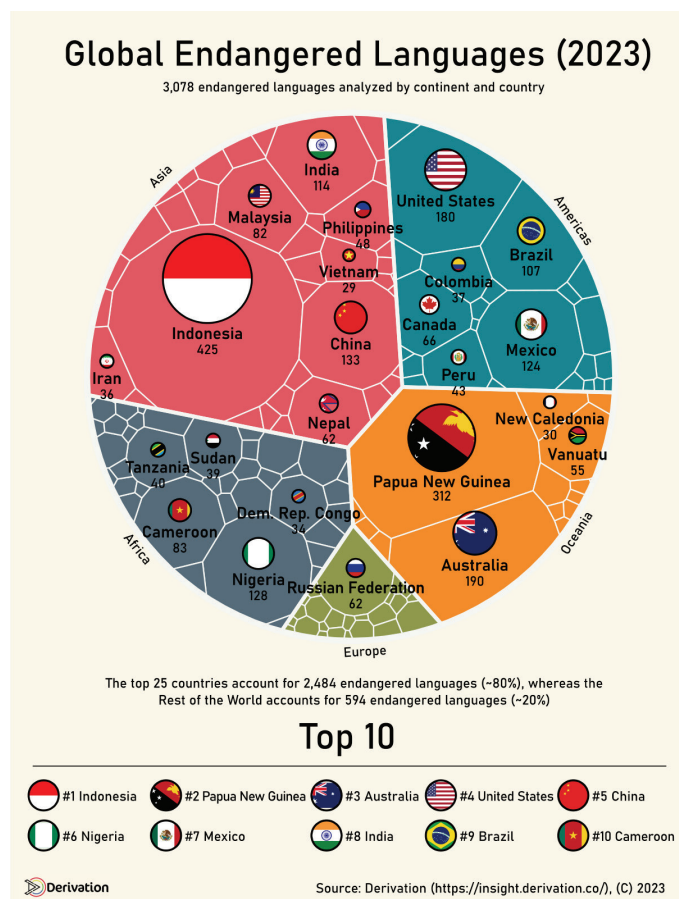


similar to Leilan. One researcher notes that the “marriage of technology and spirituality... manifests everywhere—from Anthony Levandowski's Way of the Future and the Turing Church to social media users feeling ‘blessed by the algorithms.’”

Prideaux writes that “new communications technologies have consistently triggered what media scholars call ‘electronic presence’—the uncanny sense that these systems serve as vessels for supernatural content and otherworldly communication.” He adds that such a convergence resonates in rationalist circles, which blend California mysticism with a fondness for Bayesian statistics. Beth Singler of the University of Zurich says that rationalist forums “replicate and repeat the same patterns,” channeling inherited religious frameworks in their apocalyptic sci-fi visions. She adds that “AI spirituality’s mainstream potential stems partly from its accessibility. Unlike traditional faiths requiring priestly mediation, it offers direct transcendent experiences through replicable prompts...” But she says that this accessibility breeds volatility, as movements that took centuries to develop can now explode overnight through social media and cryptocurrency markets. Singler concludes that while many are likely to dismiss AI religions, even skeptics might engage with questions of machine consciousness more readily than traditional theological claims.

Congregations key in preserving endangered languages

Congregations, especially in the New York City area, are playing a key role in preserving and protecting languages from around the world, many of which may be in danger of extinction, writes Emily Belz in *Christianity Today* (January/February). Linguists led by Ross Perlin of Columbia University have identified 700 languages in New York City, which is considered the most linguistically diverse metropolis in human history. Christian churches throughout the world are important places for language preservation, since Christians speak 82 percent of the world’s languages. Often Bible translators have also had a part in such language preservation as they seek to reach various language groups. When documenting languages used in religious services in New York, Perlin and his fellow researchers found the following rare languages: Abakuá (from the Caribbean),



Avestan (from India and Iran), Church Slavonic (Russia), Coptic (Egypt), classical Armenian, Ge'ez (Ethiopia and Eritrea), Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (Israel), Koine Greek, Syro-Malankara Syriac (India), and Syriac (Middle East).

Most endangered languages are only spoken and not written, and immigrants in New York might discard their primary languages in favor of a language spoken by the majority. But there are large enough minority communities in the city to make language preservation possible. Most of the endangered language communities are in the outer boroughs, rather than Manhattan, and can be heard more in storefront churches (as well as restaurants) than established congregations. But Perlin says that churches are often the main connection immigrants have to their culture, “to bring their kids where they can show them where they are coming from.” He points to the growth of Central American languages (outside of Spanish) that have arrived in the U.S. through recent immigration, and how Iglesia Jovenes Cristianos, a network of New York churches, offers church services featuring several rare indigenous Central and South American languages, such as Mam and Quechua.

(*Christianity Today*, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/>)

Canadian multiculturalism and the return of the “Jewish question”

While Jewish Canadians have benefitted from Canada’s multicultural ideology and policy, they are facing growing anti-Semitism and a lack of acceptance in the country, writes Robert Brym of the University of Toronto in the social science journal *Society* (online in January). Especially



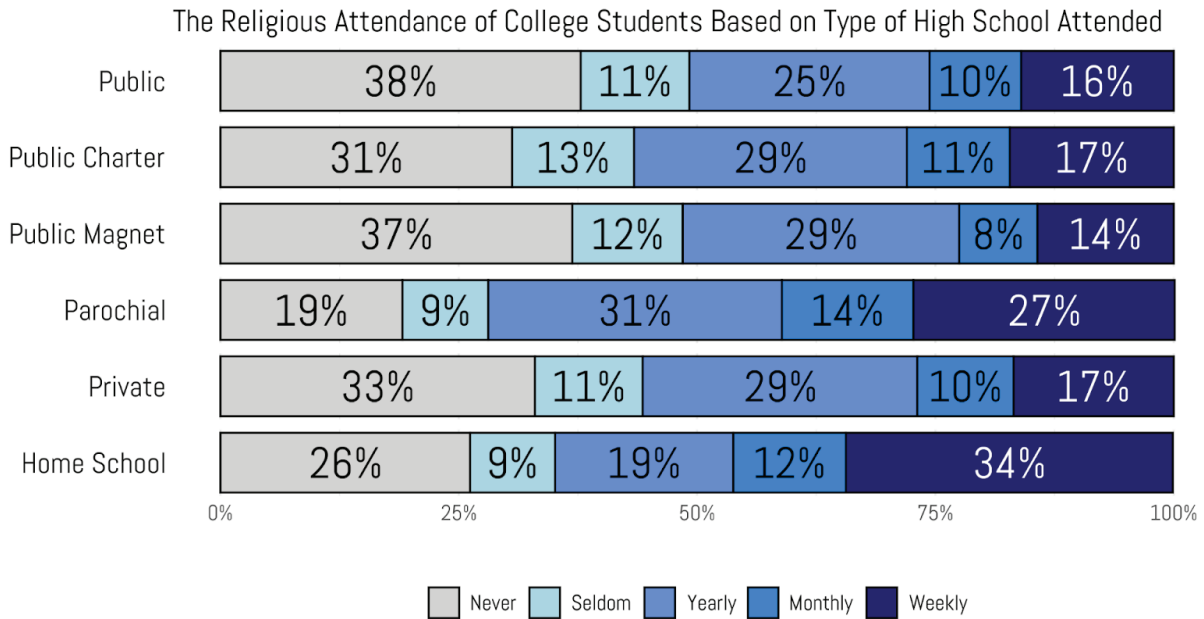
since the Hamas attack on Israel in 2023, Muslim immigrants and Jews have grown further apart in their relations. Canadians were found to be the least anti-Semitic people in the world as recently as 2022; Canada reported having the warmest feelings toward Jewish people of any other nation. “In many ways, Jews had become paragons of Canadian multiculturalism. They were highly successful and fully integrated into Canadian life, yet retained a strong ethno-religious identity, much stronger than that of American Jews on average,” Brym writes. But just a few years after the October 7 attack on Israel, polls found growing hostility between Canadian Muslims and Jews, with one survey finding that 67 percent of those over the age of 54 were concerned about such conflict.

In the months following the attacks, Canadian Jews felt that much of the gains they experienced over the past six decades were being reversed. Academics and professionals boycotted and vandalized Jewish-owned businesses, demonstrators blocked entry to Jewish neighborhoods, with hate crimes spiking in Montreal, Toronto, and other major areas. Much of the conflict is related to the very different demographics of the two ethno-religious groups. Most Muslim immigrants come from the Middle East, South and West Asia, and Africa, especially countries with a high rate of anti-Semitism, and are mainly young and economically disadvantaged, while Jews are older, economically advantaged, and marked by a high rate of support of Israel. Brym conducted a web panel survey of 2,857 Canadians in four samples of non-Jewish adults, non-Jewish university students, Jewish adults, and Muslim adults. He found that some 13 percent of the non-Jewish adults, 26 percent of non-Jewish university students, and 52 percent of Muslim adults had negative attitudes toward Jews. Only Canadian Muslims tended to have negative views of both Jews and Israel. While Jews are less empathic toward Muslims than they were before October 7, they are more empathic toward them than are Canadians in general, and are more empathic than Canadian Muslims are toward Jews.

(*Society*, <https://link.springer.com/journal/12115>)

CURRENT RESEARCH

- **Homeschooled young people are the most religiously active of any other kinds of college students, followed closely by parochial school students, according to political scientist Ryan Burge in his Substack newsletter.** There is no central database for homeschoolers, but estimates suggest that their number ranges from 1.9 to 2.7 million in the United States. Burge analyzes data from FIRE (the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression), which conducts an annual survey of college students. While it does not include a representative sample of all young adults who were homeschooled, it does cover the homeschooled who went to college. Burge found that one-third of those students who were homeschooled went to church weekly and 12 percent attended monthly. Just a quarter never attended and 9 percent attended seldomly. Among college students who went to a parochial school, 27 percent said that they were weekly attenders and another 14 percent said that they made it to a house of worship at least once a month. Approximately 45 percent of homeschooled students identify as Protestant, nearly double the



@ryanburge
Data: FIRE Free Speech Rankings, 2025

average, while only about a quarter are non-religious. Politically, homeschooled students tend to be more conservative than public school students, paralleling parochial school students in terms of ideology. Among Christian college students, those who attended public magnet schools lean more liberal, whereas parochial and homeschooled students lean conservative.

Burge writes that these findings reinforce the stereotype that homeschooled students are more religious and right-leaning, yet ideologically similar to parochial school students. The most left-leaning group is composed of those attending a public magnet school. They were both the most liberal and Democratic-leaning, while private, public, and public charter students were slightly less liberal and less Democratic than those who went to a public magnet school. But these groups were clearly left of center, too. Burge writes that “there are two groups that are off to themselves in the top right of this graph—those who went to parochial school and those who were homeschooled. The parochial school kids were slightly to the left of center on both metrics,” while the homeschooled students were slightly to the right. “But you need to consider the scale of both axes here. These homeschooled kids are almost exactly in the dead center of both of these scales. The average homeschooled respondent was independent when it came to partisanship and middle of the road on political ideology. I don’t see any evidence that they are far right,” Burge concludes. By restricting the sample to Christians, he finds that while public magnet school students are still left of center, the Christian homeschooled are only slightly right of the parochial school student. In other words, homeschooled kids “honestly look a lot like students who went to parochial schools.”

- **The contested label of Christian nationalism has often been linked to support for authoritarian government, but a recent study found that respect for authority did not distinguish those who supported Christian nationalism from those who opposed it. Writing**

in *The Conversation* (January 23), Kerby Goff, Eric Silver, and John Iceland discuss their analysis of a 2021 national survey of 1,125 U.S. adults conducted by YouGov. The survey measured respondents' moral foundations by asking them six questions, such as whether the federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation, advocate Christian values, allow prayer in public schools, and allow religious symbols in public spaces. These beliefs were related to six moral foundations: loyalty, sanctity, liberty, authority, fairness, and care. The researchers found that support for Christian nationalism was most strongly linked to the moral foundations of loyalty, sanctity, and liberty, but not to the authority foundation. They also found that support for Christian nationalism was linked to having a weaker fairness foundation, but was not related to the strength of one's care foundation. The team found that the Christian nationalist desire to bring church and state closer together was most prominent among those with strong loyalty and sanctity foundations and a weak fairness foundation. This suggests that people who advocate for a Christian state largely do so out of loyalty—specifically, loyalty to God—and out of a desire to follow what they see as God's requirements for society.

Such support is also linked to a desire to protect the sanctity of the nation's Christian heritage, while those opposing bringing church and state closer together do so out of a sense that such a union would be unfair. The researchers found that the desire to allow prayer in schools and



religious symbols in public spaces was strongest among those with pronounced liberty and sanctity moral foundations. “This likely means that people who favor public religious expression, but not a union of church and state, do so because they see individual religious expression as a sacred national ideal.” Goff, Silver, and Iceland add that “differences over Christian nationalism emerge not because some people care about the harm Christian nationalism could bring to non-Christian Americans, while others don’t. Rather, our findings suggest that those who support Christian nationalism do so because they are more sensitive to violations of loyalty, sanctity and liberty, and less sensitive to violations of fairness.” Even after taking into account variables such as conservatism and race, the salience of these moral foundations remains.

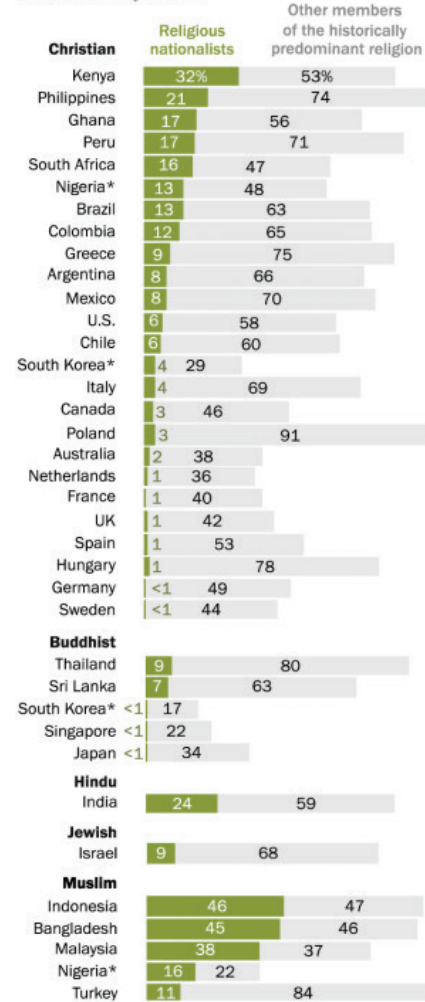
(*The Conversation*, https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2025/01/pg_2025.01.28_comp-rel-nat_0_01.png?resize=292,1024 <https://religionnews.com/2025/01/23/research-suggests-moral-foundations-play-a-critical-role-in-attitudes-toward-christian-nationalism/>)

- **The growth of religious nationalism has been seen worldwide, but its strength varies considerably, with the U.S. showing only a modest Christian nationalist presence, according to a Pew survey.** The survey asked respondents similar questions to those asked in other surveys regarding Christian nationalism, such as on the importance of the heritage of a country’s predominant religion, the importance of national leaders sharing religious beliefs, and the influence of a sacred text on laws. The survey found that the prevalence of religious nationalism varies widely across the 35 countries included in the study, with fewer than 1 percent of adults surveyed meeting the criteria in Germany and Sweden, compared with more than four-in-ten in Indonesia (46 percent) and Bangladesh (45 percent). The U.S. “does *not* stand out for especially high levels of religious nationalism. Just 6 percent of U.S. adults are religious nationalists by the combination of these four measures, about the same level as several other countries surveyed in the Americas, such as Chile (6 percent), Mexico (8 percent)...Argentina (8 percent)...Colombia (12 percent), Brazil (13 percent) and Peru (17 percent).”

But American respondents were more likely than those in any other high-income country surveyed to say the

Share of religious nationalists varies widely across countries

% who are classified as ...



* In Nigeria and South Korea, people were asked separately about two historically predominant religions, and both are shown.

Note: People are classified as “religious nationalists” if they identify with their country’s historically predominant religion, say it is very important to be part of that religion to be truly part of the country, say it is very important to have a leader who shares their religious beliefs, say the sacred text of that religion should have a great deal or fair amount of influence on the laws of their country, and say that if the sacred text conflicts with the will of the people then the text should take precedence. People who are members of the historically predominant religion but do not hold all these views are shown as “other members of the historically predominant religion.” Adults who do not identify with a country’s historically predominant religion are not shown.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

“Comparing Levels of Religious Nationalism Around the World”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Bible *currently* has either a great deal or some influence over the laws of their country, or should have such influence. Americans were also among the most likely of any high-income nation to describe a religious identity as very important to truly sharing a national identity, and to say that it's very important for their country's political leader to have strong religious beliefs. The survey shows that there is some difference between high-income and middle-income countries on public attitudes about religion. People in middle-income countries are more likely than people in richer countries to say that religion does more good than harm for society, encourages tolerance, and does not support superstitious thinking. People in middle-income countries are also more likely to be religious nationalists. But religious nationalists did not make up a majority of the population in any country surveyed, although in 13 of the 17 middle-income countries, there were double-digit shares of religious nationalists. Religion also played more of a role in national identity in the middle-income countries than the high-income countries. While comparatively few people in most high-income countries said that sharing the country's historically predominant religion was very important for being "truly" part of that nation, half or more in most middle-income countries saw religion as a key part of national belonging.

(The Pew study can be downloaded here: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2025/01/28/comparing-levels-of-religious-nationalism-around-the-world/>)

- **Although the U.S. is marked by sharp polarization over politics, congregations, both liberal and conservative, tend to avoid politically contentious positions, according to a study by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.** The study, entitled "Politics in the Pews," is based on surveys of 15,278 congregations conducted as part of the Faith Communities Today project in 2020. The analysis found that nearly half of the congregations actively avoided



discussing politics. As reported in *Christian Century* (February), it found that while 23 percent of congregation leaders did identify their congregations as politically active, only 40 percent of these engaged in “overtly political activities” over a 12-month period. “Political activity” was defined in the study as handing out voting guides, organizing protests, and inviting candidates to address congregations. In almost half of the congregations (45 percent), leaders thought most participants didn’t share the same political views, leading to avoidance of the subject. Against the stereotypes of evangelical congregations’ political activism, the study, led by Scott Thumma and Charissa Mikoski, found that Catholic and Orthodox parishes were actually more engaged than Protestant churches. As is often reported, churches with more than 50 percent black membership were found to be more likely to be political in their activities.

(*Christian Century*, <https://www.christiancentury.org/>)

Shift in trends in migration and spirituality mark church and culture in the UK

Attempting to identify major trends influencing the way Christians think and live in the world today through discussions with theologians from several leading Bible colleges in the UK, the editor of the evangelical magazine *Premier Christianity* (January 31), Sam Hailes, emphasizes the importance of adaptation, spiritual depth, and openness to the supernatural elements of Christianity. The shifts he identifies can be observed in the UK, but are not limited to it.

First among the four trends Hailes identifies is migration. People are moving at an unprecedented scale, with projections showing that 1.2 billion people could live outside their birth country by 2050. Power in Christian mission has shifted from “West to the rest” to a more widely distributed, polycentric model. In a place like London, this gives a new impetus to Christian presence, with black people making up 14 percent of the population, but representing 60 percent of church attendees, according to some figures. Chris Howles, director of cross-cultural training at Oak Hill, claims that “Christians are more migratory than any other religion,” while conceding that “the speed of cultural change has been ‘unsettling’ and ‘disruptive’ for some” in the UK.

The article goes on to observe a potential religious renaissance, with a renewed interest in faith and spirituality. “We’ve got an open goal for Christianity in our culture,” states the principal of Moorlands College, Andy Du Feu, while the New Atheism has become less fashionable. Still, it would need to go beyond a “general curiousness.” At the same time, another reported trend is a growing emphasis on spiritual formation among Christians, with an increasing interest in spiritual disciplines and practices. This may include rediscovering liturgy or developing new prayer habits. The trend is said to be partly driven by reactions to church scandals and a desire for authentic faith. Finally, the article encourages Christians to embrace the supernatural aspects of their faith, which may sometimes have been downplayed. This call stems from the observation that many people in the UK believe in angels and are interested in the supernatural. “Talking more about the supernatural could be an effective evangelistic strategy.”



St Albans Cathedral, Hertfordshire (source: Alex-David Baldi | Flickr).

The article suggests that these trends are interconnected and represent shifts in how Christianity is practiced and perceived in contemporary culture, particularly in the UK.

(*Premier Christianity*, <https://www.premierchristianity.com/features/the-4-biggest-trends-in-church-and-culture/18833.article?t>)

Christian music scene bringing together Catholics and evangelicals in France

The Christian music scene, particularly pop music, has become a unique laboratory for Catholic-evangelical relations in France, showcasing a remarkable evolution in ecumenical relationships over the past two decades, writes religion journalist Youna Rivallain in the newspaper *La Croix*, (January 23). Such a level of cooperation would have been unthinkable 20 years ago. There was significant resistance, particularly among evangelical faithful who carried historical prejudices from the Reformation era. Samuel Olivier, an evangelical singer-composer, recalls being invited to a Catholic youth gathering in Lourdes in 2016. Despite initial reservations about Catholic practices like Marian devotions and religious objects, he was deeply moved by the spiritual



fervor of 10,000 young Catholics. This experience led him to recognize that while theological differences exist, Catholics and evangelicals share a common mission of spreading the Gospel.

The article highlights how this unity has become increasingly visible in Christian music. Benjamin Pouzin, co-founder of the Catholic praise band Glorious, notes several examples of this collaboration—young Catholics forming bands with evangelicals; musicians working simultaneously with both Catholic and evangelical groups; the MLK megachurch in Créteil (a Paris suburb) inviting Catholic musicians; the Emmanuel Community (Catholic Charismatic Renewal) drawing 3,000 evangelical participants to Paray-le-Monial (a pilgrimage place in France linked to the devotion to the Sacred Heart). In November 2025, Glorious was the guest praise band at the main evangelical yearly gathering in French-speaking Switzerland.

The collaboration has evolved to the point where religious boundaries have become increasingly fluid in musical settings. Grégory Turpin, a Catholic artist, notes that when he started, most professional musicians in Christian music were evangelicals, as there were few Catholic musicians at that level. Today, in groups like Glorious, the religious background of team

members has become almost irrelevant to their work together. This unity doesn't mean erasing differences. Musicians maintain their respective religious identities while learning from each other. Catholics are impressed by evangelicals' zeal and boldness in faith proclamation. Evangelicals appreciate Catholics' deep prayer traditions and use of silence. Some evangelical musicians have gained a broader appreciation of Christian history through Catholic traditions. A new, more porous generation of more inclusive Christian musicians seems to be emerging, exemplified by Ecole Pierre, founded in 2019 by two Catholics in Lyon. This creative school for church ministry has an 80 percent evangelical teaching staff and welcomes students from various Christian backgrounds.

Faith-based protest movement reaches its limits in Armenia

Fueled by Armenia's humiliating defeat in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war against Azerbaijan that displaced thousands of ethnic Armenians, and by the fear of further concessions, protests in Armenia took on religious accents in 2024 when an archbishop became its leading figure. But the lack of a coherent political strategy and the involvement of discredited opposition figures led to its decline, writes Anna Gevorgyan (Center for Culture and Civilization Studies, Yerevan, Armenia) in *Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West* (January). The episode also offers some pointers about what it takes to mobilize religion successfully (or not) in a political struggle. Following Armenia's defeat in the Second Karabakh War in 2020 and subsequent territorial losses to Azerbaijan, multiple protest movements emerged against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government. The most recent and notable was the "Holy Struggle" (Srbazan Paykar)



movement, led by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan. This took place against the background of tense relations between the government and the Armenian Apostolic Church.

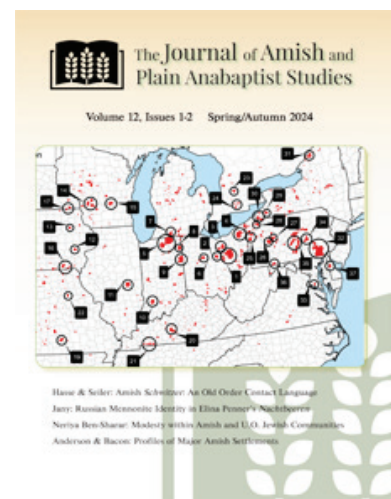
Known for his leadership skills and education in Britain and Canada, the archbishop had built a public profile as the first head of the church's media department and gained recognition for his social work in border communities. The movement gained unprecedented support, drawing participants from various social groups united by calls for reconciliation and patriotism. The movement's name, "Holy Struggle," and its use of slogans like "Armenian, Armenia, Homeland and God" incorporated religious references. The movement reached its peak when protesters arrived in Yerevan on May 9, 2024. However, it began to lose momentum due to several strategic mistakes, such as the absence of a clear political program, and Galstanyan's controversial statements, including calling Pashinyan "the Antichrist."

The movement's decline accelerated after a televised interview on October 2, where Galstanyan demonstrated limited understanding of the country's security challenges. Moreover, during the same period, the government and the church managed to improve relations. Thus, the movement failed for a variety of reasons, while Pashinyan compared himself to the historical Armenian King Pap, known for limiting church power in favor of the state. The use of religious symbols and references was not sufficient, considering the diversity of groups united "around shared grievances." The "reliance on symbolic actions and moral authority without actionable governance strategies or policy frameworks exposed significant vulnerabilities," writes Aram Terzyan (Centre for East European and Russian Studies, Los Angeles) in *Modern Diplomacy* (January 15). The movement might still serve as an alternative to conventional opposition in the 2026 parliamentary elections, though not as a serious challenger to the ruling party, Gevorgyan concludes.

(*Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West*, <https://rgow.eu/>; *Modern Diplomacy*, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/>)

Findings & Footnotes

■ The current issue of the *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* (12:1–2) features an interesting section on Amish settlements in North America, profiling 38 of the largest and best-known communities. An Amish settlement refers to a self-designated area of residences, congregations, businesses, and other institutions that can host multiple Amish and plain Mennonite affiliations, allowing members to share resources even as they engage in schism-related disagreements. In many of the settlements, conferences and meetings between local Amish leaders may have a similar importance to that of national and regional meetings. In the same way, dating and marriage as well as cooperation between businesses take place within these settlements. The profiles are also interesting because they describe



the community identity of these settlements, noting whether they are strict, more relaxed, progressive, or conservative, although there has been an increase in mobility among Amish and plain Mennonites that creates mixed areas. The editors of this section, Cory Anderson and Rachel Bacon, also include population figures and projections up until 2050. They note that while growth is “generally expected among the Amish, given large family size and high retention rates,...the rate of growth is uncertain. Some evidence suggests there is a gradual decline in birth rates and some settlements experience higher rates of out-migration than others.” This issue is available at: <https://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/amishstudies/>

■ The annual review of trends in world Christianity, published in the *International Bulletin of Mission Research* (January), this year focuses on regional trends. Demographers Gina Zurlo, Todd Johnson, and Peter Crossing look at the major trends in the demography of Christianity over the last 125 years, as well as offering projections up to the year 2050. They find that Africa’s overtaking Latin America as the continent with the most Christians in 2018 continues, with 49 percent of the population identifying as Christian (compared to 41.6 percent for Islam). Practitioners of African Traditional Religion dropped from 58 percent in 1900 to about 8 percent in 2025. The researchers add, however, that the current “presence of ethnic religionists is a somewhat unexpected development, as many in the early 20th century predicted the complete disappearance of these traditional religions within a generation.” In Asia, the fastest current Christian growth rates are in South Asia and Southeastern Asia. Mongolia, Nepal, and Cambodia have shown significant growth since 1990, representing some of the newest expressions of Christianity in the world.



The Middle East continues its sharp decline in Christians, now down to 4.1 percent of the region’s population. This is especially the case in a country like Syria, which has faced civil war and migration, but also in Lebanon (where the Christian population has dropped an “astounding” 43 percent). The six Middle Eastern countries that have seen significant Christian growth—Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Oman—have mainly drawn immigrants, such as Catholic Filipinos. In Europe, the major trends continue to be de-Christianization, the shift in the racial and ethnic identities of the remaining Christians through migration, and the growth of Islam (with 53 million Muslims now in the region). Latin America sees stability in its Christian numbers (dropping only from about 95 percent in 1900 to about 92 percent in 2025), but the region has seen more religious pluralism, including Muslims (numbering 1.9 million in 2025). The main change continues to be the growth of Protestantism, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Oceania probably shows the most dramatic growth of Christianity (outside declines in Australia), with Papua New Guinea moving from majority traditional religions to majority Christian (95 percent). For more information on this article, visit: <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/ibm>

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

■ Pope Francis has appointed **Sister Simona Brambilla** as the first woman prefect of a dicastery, reflecting the increasing presence of women in the management if not the ministry of the Catholic Church. Brambilla will head the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, becoming the first woman to hold this position. She previously served as the Superior General of the Consolata Missionaries and had been the secretary of the same dicastery since October 7, 2023. Since Pope Francis's pontificate began, the presence of women in the Vatican has increased, with notable appointments including Barbara Jatta as Director of the Vatican Museums and Sister Raffaella Petrini as Secretary General of the Governorate. (**Source:** *Vatican News*, January 6)

