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Whatever happened to the atheist movement?

While it has been widely noted, often by theologians and other religious leaders, that the "new atheism" has fallen out of favor, no longer drawing the large following that it had in the early 2000s, more academic researchers are now weighing in on this noticeable shift. The new atheism was marked by its emphasis on science and use of celebrities, such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, in making the case for unbelief in the wake of September 11 and the growth of non-affiliation. In the journal *Politics and Religion* (online in May), Steve Kettell (University of Warwick) traces how the movement followed a cycle that social movements often experience, starting with a phase of emergence and coalescence marked by new structural opportunities and the deployment of considerable resources, including an ambiguous "atheist" label that provided the movement with a "big tent" that could include non-theist participants of various political orientations.

Kettell writes that while new atheists' use of the "atheist" label as an "empty signifier" allowed for a wide interpretation and sense of belonging, it also facilitated the eventual fragmentation of the movement. While the new atheists utilized a strategy borrowed from the LGBTQ movement of calling atheists to "come out of the closet," its foray into identity politics also signaled later problems. After 2010, two rival groups of atheists increasingly were at odds, one libertarian and conservative, defending freedom of speech and intellectual debate, and the other more progressive, promoting inclusivity and social justice. Added to the brewing divide were charges that atheist groups did not represent the interests of women and other minorities, highlighted by scandals and accusations against atheist leaders, such as David Silverman of American Atheists, who was fired amidst charges of sexual harassment.

While others have covered these conflicts [including **RW**'s editor, with Christopher Smith], Kettell argues that they mirrored the increased polarization and culture wars in society, especially during the first Trump administration, and resulted in an identity and a movement that was too weak for atheists to rally around. By this time, both the progressives and the libertarian-conservatives were accusing each other of damaging the movement's integrity and selling out to ideologies, either of the "woke" left or the alt-right, and both sides found their closest allies

outside of atheism. These divergent views "exposed clear differences in the core values and the strategic orientation of its members," with Kettell concluding that the atheist movement is fractured "beyond repair."

(*Politics and Religion*, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-religion/article/whatever-happened-to-new-atheism-the-rise-and-fall-of-the-us-atheist-movement/03688167041AC608385038786679F664)

Conservative Christians embracing micro-college alternative

Like other universities facing the contemporary challenges of market pressures and new governmental measures, such as those targeting DEI policies, Christian colleges are being forced to rethink their missions and adopt new models, writes John Seel in Aaron Renn's Substack newsletter (May 20). While elite "institutions often deploy ideological gatekeeping, endowment resources, and legacy prestige to resist meaningful change[,] Christian colleges often think that mere fidelity to past beliefs is all that is needed for success. Such a narrow focus can blind them to the other factors that are limiting needed innovation. Yet despite these obstacles, market pressures and political momentum are shifting the terrain and forcing an academy-wide rethink," Seel writes. He describes new models of education that institutions are developing, grounded in five essential pillars: affordable cost, practical application of the liberal arts, intentional community, apprenticeship and job training, and an emphasis on service to the surrounding community and finding meaning. Many of these alternatives are Christian-based and

conservative-evangelical in makeup and are part of a growing micro-college movement—small institutions (typically under 250 students) offering a single liberal arts degree alongside trade or marketplace apprenticeships.

Student body of Excel College.

Seel cites Hildegard College in California, Gutenberg College in Oregon, St. Andrew's College in California, and Excel College in Black Mountain, North Carolina. Excel combines classical education with real-world apprenticeship. Students work part-time to pay one-third of their tuition, parents contribute another third, and philanthropic partners cover the rest. The service component of Excel could be seen when Hurricane Helene devastated the region and the college became a regional hub of relief. The "holistic" vision of these colleges, often involving classical education, and its relationship to faith could be seen in their mission statements. On its website, Excel says it is seeking to restore the "unity of knowledge through the flow of the biblical narrative," linking theology to biology, anthropology, and the fine arts. St. Andrew's College links ancient learning with more liturgical and historic forms of Christianity, while Gutenberg College portrays itself as "cultivating souls and not consumers," espousing community life and a great books program including Christian texts.

Eastern Orthodoxy—a religion for young men?

Amidst the reports and claims of religious revival in recent months [see last month's RW], the role of young men, especially those returning or converting to Eastern Orthodox churches, stands out. Soon after the pandemic, there were anecdotes and some survey results showing that Eastern Orthodox parishes had more resilience in attendance than other churches, especially in retaining and reaching out to the demographic of young men. In a *BBC News* report (May 24), Lucy Ash notes that while the true increase in the number of converts is hard to gauge, data from the Pew Research Center suggest that Orthodox Christians are now 64 percent male, up from 46 percent in 2007. A smaller study of 773 converts by the Orthodox Church in America appears to confirm this trend, with many respondents saying the pandemic pushed them to seek a new faith. The masculine nature of Orthodoxy has been the main point of attraction for dissatisfied younger men. The loss of traditional gender roles is often cited by attendees. Ash describes one convert, a

software engineer, recounting that he felt empty inside and believing society has been "very harsh" on men, constantly telling them they are in the wrong. He complained about men being criticized for wanting to be the breadwinner and support a stay-at-home wife. "Almost all the converts I meet have opted to home-school their offspring," Ash adds, "partly because they believe women should prioritize their families rather than their careers."

One priest in the traditionalist Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR), another Orthodox body that is drawing many converts, said that Orthodoxy is "not masculine, it is just normal," while "in the West everything has become very feminized." Ash quotes Greek Orthodox critic Elissa Bjeletich Davis, who says the new converts are of the "anti-woke" camp and see their new faith "as a military, rigid, disciplinary, masculine, authoritarian religion." Conservative writer Rod Dreher (himself an Orthodox convert), admitting that he has heard a few reports about some enthusiastic young male converts espousing frankly misogynistic beliefs, thinks that "some priests have to educate a few converts out of un-Christian racial views that they picked up on some online Orthodox forums." Writing in his Substack newsletter *Rod Dreher's Diary* (May 27), he adds that the "new wave of converts scares some of the old-line East Coast Orthodox, who want the church to liberalize…This dynamic reminds me of the way the Traditional Latin Mass movement in the Catholic Church is regarded with fear and suspicion by many Catholic bishops and institutionalists. Nevertheless, it's where the growth and fervor is in Catholicism—and it's coming from the laity. That's what's going on with this revival in American Orthodoxy too." He concludes that "Orthodoxy makes demands on you—especially

demands to overcome and channel your passions…It is also much more physical than most American religion. You feel that you inhabit a body, and the body is to be mortified and sanctified. Men respond to the physicality of Orthodoxy."

(*BBC*, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c30q5l8d4lro)

Evangelicals taking a creedal turn?

More evangelical churches are reciting the Nicene Creed in their worship services, a departure from their "no creeds but the Bible" position of the past, writes Daniel Silliman in *Christianity Today* magazine (May/June). This year marks the 1,700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed, which is considered the first creedal statement of Christianity resulting from the gathering of bishops in the town of Nicaea (now located in modern Turkey). Partly to celebrate the creed's anniversary, evangelicals and many Protestants in general are reconsidering their complex relationship with the ancient confession of faith, having been wary of creedal worship but supportive of its affirmations of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the "catholic" nature of the church. Silliman interviewed a dozen evangelical pastors, authors, and theologians about this trend, and it seems that churches adopting the creed in worship are doing so in a similar way to their increased use of historic liturgy and contemplative practices. Author Matthew Barrett said that he had seen more Baptist churches using the creed. Other respondents said that their congregants felt a greater sense of unity and connection to the church throughout history and the

world when they recited the creed. Others said that identifying with the Nicene Creed gave them a stronger identity and a place to stand in a secular culture, or that it was a source of beauty and transcendence in the church. It was said to be members of Generation Z more than Generation X that appreciated incorporating the creed into worship.

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

Pope Leo XIV as both conservative and revolutionary?

As Pope Leo XIV's papacy begins, there are indications that he intends to carry on the unfinished business of the Francis papacy, from finances to the abuse crisis to the reform of the Roman Curia, according to the *Catholic Herald* (May 27). Elise Ann Allen reports that, early on, the pope gave an official—if nominal—job to conservative Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, who was critical of Pope Francis, indicating "that Leo is trying to some degree to mend fences and deal with painful situations not just in the Church, but in the body of the College of Cardinals." Also revealing is that Pope Leo's "first official meeting—beyond the heads of state who visited for his election and inaugural Mass—was with American Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors...Prior to the conclave and during the general congregations, two issues repeatedly emerged as among the most glaring problems the Church continued to face: The Vatican's financial crisis, and ongoing fallout from the clerical

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abuse crisis." Leo also met with the head of Opus Dei, Spanish Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, likely focusing on the ongoing reform of Opus Dei's statutes, which had been ordered by Francis.

The pope's first curial appointment of Sister Tiziana Merletti as Secretary of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life also signals continuity with Francis on the issue of giving greater responsibility to women in the administration of the church. While Leo initially said he wanted to leave all dicastery heads in their current positions while he gets the lay of the land, his early meetings "are indicative of his own priorities, and those expressed during pre-conclave meetings," Allen concludes. Meanwhile, evangelical Protestants may well be particularly critical of the new papacy, seeing it as challenging in a way that is quite different from that of Francis. Leo is seen less as a Francis holdover than as showing a "mindset liberated from 20th-century geopolitical categories," according to the Europe-based newsletter *Evangelical Focus* (May 15). Italian evangelical theologian Leonardo De Chirico writes that Pope Leo's American identity "serves at least two strategic purposes: First, it may seek to undermine the cultural leadership of Trump-style conservative Christianity, particularly in the battle against 'woke' ideologies, by reasserting the Catholic Church as the guardian of civilization and moral order. Second, it could serve as a magnet for disillusioned American evangelicals—those growing weary of consumeristic religious options—who see in Catholicism a more stable and historic alternative. In the fluid and competitive religious marketplace of the United States, an American pope could attract significant interest and credibility."

Whether or not the cardinals held such a grand design in their voting, De Chirico also agrees that Leo will play a reassuring role to Catholics across the theological spectrum as an Augustinian coming from a more grounded, millennia-old order than the Jesuit-inspired intellectual eclecticism and theological creativity of his predecessor. "This background suggests a pope who is more theologically stable, more predictable, and, in a sense, more 'traditional.' His Augustinian identity may be perceived as an olive branch to conservative Catholics, especially those disillusioned by the Francis era." De Chirico adds that this new pope will "undoubtedly attract interest from the evangelical world. Evangelicals in the Global South may see in him a missionary close to the poor. North American evangelicals may recognize an Augustinian voice who understands the language of tradition. In short, everyone may be tempted to see the pope they want to see."

(*Catholic Herald*, https://thecatholicherald.com/popes-initial-round-of-meetings-indicates-an-effort-to-heal-wounds-in-college-of-cardinals; *Evangelical Focus*, https://evangelicalfocus.com/european-perspectives/31075/the-new-pope-begins-with-the-old-indulgences)

CURRENT RESEARCH

• **Close to 3 in 10 Americans make use of astrology, tarot cards or fortunetellers at least once a year, though only a small fraction rely on these practices to make major life decisions, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center.** About 2 in 10 Americans say

they engage in these occult activities "just for fun," with 1 in 10 agreeing that they participate in them because these practices give them "helpful insights." But only about 1 percent say they rely "a lot" on what they learn from these practices when making major life decisions. Astrology's most faithful devotees are younger women and LGBTQ+ people. About 4 in 10 women from ages 18 to 49 say they believe in astrology, compared with 3 in 10 women who are 50 and older and about 2 in 10 men under age 50. About half of these younger women onsult astrology or a horoscope at least yearly—roughly twice the share among U.S. adults overall.

3 in 10 religiously unaffiliated adults consult astrology or a horoscope at least annually

% who say they consult each of the following ...

	Astrology or a horoscope		Tarot cards		A fortune teller	
	At least once or twice a year	Never	At least once or twice a year	Never	At least once or twice a year	Never
U.S. adults	28%	71%	11%	88%	6%	93%
Religiously affiliated	28	72	10	89	6	93
Christian	27	73	9	91	6	94
Protestant	24	76	7	92	4	96
White evangelical	17	83	4	96	1	99
White, not evang.	28	72	8	92	4	96
Black Protestant	33	67	13	87	9	91
Catholic	32	68	11	89	8	92
White Catholic	27	73	7	93	5	95
Hispanic Catholic	39	61	14	84	11	89
Jewish	26	74	11	89	4	96
Religiously unaffiliated	30	69	14	86	6	93
Atheist	17	83	7	93	2	98
Agnostic	31	69	14	85	3	97
Nothing in particular	35	64	16	83	8	90

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
"30% of Americans Consult Astrology, Tarot Cards or Fortune Tellers"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Pew found about 2 in 10 LGBTQ+ adults saying that when they make major life decisions, they rely at least "a little" on what they've learned from a fortuneteller, tarot cards, astrology or a horoscope—a considerably larger share than any other demographic subgroup. Adults older than 65, those with high incomes and college degrees, and political conservatives are less likely than other adults to believe in astrology and engage with tarot cards and fortunetellers. The proportion of religiously affiliated adults engaging in these practices was very similar to that of the unaffiliated and atheists and agnostics. Of Hispanic Catholics, about 1 in 10 said they rely on insights from these practices at least "a little" for major life decisions, which was more than most of the other religious groups featured in the survey.

(*The Pew study can be downloaded from*: https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/05/21/3-in-10-americans-consult-astrology-tarot-cards-or-fortune-tellers/)

• A study attempting to explain Buddhist violence, which has occurred since the turn of the century, concludes that it is primarily a result of institutional arrangements—specifically, the degree of entanglement between Buddhist institutions and the state—rather than religious doctrines. The study, by Nilay Saiya and Stuti Manchanda (both at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore) and published in *International Security* (Spring), notes that violence has happened in 8 out of the 11 countries where Buddhism is the largest religion. When the state privileges Buddhism over other religions, a mutually reinforcing relationship develops

between temple and state. This alliance emboldens Buddhist actors to use violence to defend or advance their interests, particularly against religious minorities. While Buddhism is typically associated with nonviolence and compassion, scholars are aware that Buddhists have also found ways to justify violence. There is, however, a lack of generalizable, testable theories explaining why Buddhist violence occurs in some contexts but not others. Analyzing data from the 11 countries where Buddhism is the largest religion, and controlling for factors such as economic development and democracy, Saiya and Manchanda find that increased state favoritism of Buddhism is significantly associated with higher levels of Buddhist violence.

Governments co-opt Buddhism for political legitimacy, while Buddhist monks rely on state support to promote Buddhist values and maintain the social order. This creates a mutually reinforcing relationship where Buddhism becomes complicit in state violence and the state enables radical Buddhist actions. When governments favor majority religious traditions while repressing minorities, it can radicalize majority group members, who interpret this support as an endorsement of their extreme views. Paradoxically, it is often politically empowered religious groups rather than marginalized ones that justify attacking minorities, particularly Muslims who have suffered disproportionately from Buddhist nationalism. Buddhism's reputation for nonviolence—a form of "positive Orientalism"—does not immunize it from being weaponized for violence when it is institutionally privileged by the state. According to Saiya and Manchanda, structural factors—especially the institutional relationship between religion and state—are key to understanding when and why religious violence occurs. They see their theory as having broader relevance for other religions, suggesting that state favoritism can foster majoritarian violence in any religious context.

(*International Security*, https://direct.mit.edu/isec)

Greenland's Pentecostal revival overtakes rival faiths

Although known as a Lutheran country, Greenland is seeing a growing Pentecostal movement, and even a new Bahá'í presence, writes Julia Duin in *Religion Unplugged* (May 19). Greenland has captured the geopolitical imagination of the Western world, particularly Americans, but less

is known about the emerging pluralism and growing Pentecostalism of the island nation. Lutheranism first came to Greenland back in the 1700s through Danish colonialism, but in visiting the country today Duin finds its influence to be in a weakened state, with Greenlanders showing a nominal attachment to the church. She notes that her observations conflict with a 2019 World Council of Churches report, which found the denomination's churches to be full, but with a shortage of clergy and trained musicians. However, according to British religious historian Rebecca Jane Morgan, it is INO, a Pentecostal denomination with 14 outreaches around Greenland, that represents the "the single most successful new religious phenomenon" in the country.

In an essay in the online magazine *Medium* (January 19), Morgan writes that the movement's fresh ways of worship and evangelism have propelled its growth and geographic spread across the ice-capped nation. Outstripping such groups as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventism, she argues that Pentecostalism's similarities to the country's shamanism (now largely extinct) may be another contributing factor to its growth. And the longtime Pentecostal partnership with abstinence organizations could be another boost in a nation suffering serious alcoholism and a related high suicide rate. Turning to the Bahá'ís, their growth in Greenland draws on spiritual rather than geopolitical sources for its mission. Should the island convert to that faith, Bahá'í leader Abdu'l-Bahá prophesied: "All the ices of that continent will be melted, and its frigid climate will be changed into a temperate climate…that country and continent will become a divine garden and a lordly orchard."

(*Religion Unplugged*, https://religionunplugged.com/news/trumps-greenland-obsession-overlooks-a-spiritual-iceberg-inside-the-religious-revival-in-the-arctic; *Medium*, https://rebeccajanemorgan.medium.com/how-the-pentecostal-movement-changed-greenland-8ea360103012)

War opening way to new roles for women in Ukraine, including in evangelical churches

The Ukraine war is leading to a fundamental shift in the way Ukrainian churches and society view women's capacity for leadership and service, writes Olga Kondyuk (Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary in Kyiv) in the journal *Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West* (May). While traditional roles for women are still emphasized in some sectors of Ukrainian society, an increasing number of women are being placed in leadership positions, partly due to legal women's quotas, but more and more as an answer to acute needs in wartime. With more than one million people possibly mobilized in the armed forces and dozens of thousands of dead soldiers (figures are not disclosed), women are stepping into roles traditionally held by men. The percentage of women in top executive positions in the private sector has risen to 31 percent. The trend can also be observed in churches, especially evangelical ones, although only a few of them allow women to minister.

However, the war has opened access to some pastoral duties for women in some churches, which may later lead to new discussions about the opening of pastoral roles for women. There are also

three women who serve as military chaplains in the Ukrainian armed forces. Especially strong is the increasing leadership role of women in the social work being conducted by churches for people who have been impacted by the war, including military families, displaced persons, elderly people, and those with disabilities. The number of religious NGOs has increased in recent years, and they have often been launched or are being led by women. The Russian invasion has dramatically changed social dynamics. Kondyuk argues that these changes might signal not just a temporary wartime adaptation, but a lasting shift in how Ukrainian churches and society understand gender roles and view women's capacity for leadership and service.

(*Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West*, https://www.rgow.eu)

Buddhist movement de-globalizing, going local

Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, a large transnational Buddhist movement, has gradually been shifting from a globalized identity and outreach to a more localized one embracing neighborhood involvement since its founder died in 2021. The changes in practice and outreach of the movement (known as Citta) are the subject of a study by Weishan Huang (Hong Kong Shue Yan University) and **RW**'s editor. Founded by Richard Jun Hong Lu, the movement spread rapidly among Chinese overseas communities in the 2010s, numbering up to 10 million worldwide. The movement was centered around Lu, who hosted a popular radio show from Australia and drew domestic and overseas Chinese audiences to his popular talk, "The Art of Applying Comprehensive Metaphysics," and his several books for laypeople. Until 2022, Citta's teachings focused on three principles rooted in Buddhist sutra recitations, the adoption of religious vows, and the practice of life (fish) liberation. Citta followers were taught to practice daily recitation of Buddhist scriptures, such as sutras and mantras, said to bring significant benefits through the miraculous powers of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

There are 108 Guanyin Halls reported worldwide, with branches in Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan, and the U.S (with 17 halls). These halls are run by volunteers, primarily the first generation of immigrants from mainland China residing in the United States. In her research in New York City, Huang found that almost all of the volunteers maintain home altars, where individuals can engage in spiritual activities, such as sutra chanting, making vows, and repentance. But increasingly, the setting of Guanyin Halls serve as small community centers where educational events are held to attract newcomers. New York City's halls are surrounded by the fabric of Chinese enclaves, and serve as spiritual anchors for local communities. A compelling example of this is the connection between different Chinatowns—such as Manhattan's Chinatown and the emerging Chinese communities in Flushing and Brooklyn. As Chinese populations have expanded beyond their original enclaves (older Chinatown), Guanyin Halls have followed, establishing new branches to maintain their presence and support networks.

Under its founder, Guan Yin Citta embraced the forces of globalization, aiming to create a discourse and practices that transcended its original context. The group has gradually shifted to a more localized yet transnational identity, addressing local issues and focusing on the neighborhoods and cities where the Guanyin Halls are situated. While the core rituals have remained the same, Citta may now be filling what can be called "generalist" and "specialist" niches, based on their location but also available resources, historical traditions, and "Buddhology." The organization originally filled a specialist niche under Lu, cultivating special and strict practices for its practitioners. Since Lu's death, Citta has sought to fill the generalist niche as well. This is when religious teachings and practices are offered in a more generic form than found in specialist groups or gatherings, often to appeal to the wider neighborhood and its residents. Filling a generalist niche does not mean abandoning specialized and virtuoso religious disciplines. Rather, Guan Yin Citta may transition between specialist and generalist niches. For example, a community member who starts by attending the organization's lectures and programs on vegetarianism can eventually adopt more specialized practices and teachings.

Pentecostal noise pollution an ecological and social problem in Nigeria

The unchecked proliferation of Pentecostal churches and their noise-generating activities pose environmental, health, and social challenges in Nigeria, writes Favour Uroko (University of Nigeria) in the *Marburg Journal of Religion* (May). Last year, RW (July 2024) had mentioned attempts by authorities in Congo to regulate revival churches due to the disturbances they were creating for local residents in crowded cities. Uroko's article shows how other African countries such as Nigeria are also being affected. While churches have historically driven positive social change in Nigeria, they are now the second-largest contributors to noise pollution after marketplaces. The study focuses on Pentecostal churches, whose revivalist and charismatic worship styles often involve high-decibel activities, both indoors and outdoors, across urban and rural Nigeria, with loudspeakers and amplifiers being used during services, revivals, and night vigils on Fridays, not to mention the generators powering church activities. Churches conduct services at unpredictable times throughout the week. Some buildings host multiple churches,

intensifying the noise problem. The competitive atmosphere among churches leads to a "loudness race" to attract more congregants.

Uroko lists a variety of consequences. Noise means sleep deprivation for children, leading to daytime sleepiness and poor performance at school. Sleep disturbance also involves mental and physical health issues for adults, including increased stress, hypertension, and cardiovascular issues, not to mention social conflicts between churches and neighborhood residents. Wildlife is also impacted, with birds and other animals abandoning their habitats due to persistent noise, leading to a loss of pollination and seed dispersal as animals flee noisy areas. Nigeria is highly religious, with Pentecostal churches offering spiritual solutions to personal and societal problems, thus attracting large followings. Complaints from residents are often dismissed or met with hostility, with complainants accused of opposing "the work of God." Attempts by the government to regulate churches are met with resistance, as churches perceive such moves as attacks on religious freedom. According to Ukoro, in addition to stricter rules about locations where churches would be allowed to open places of worship, the churches themselves could be part of the solution if organizations such as the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria would be willing to serve as anti-noise pollution advocates and sensitize both members and non-members.

(*Marburg Journal of Religion*, https://archiv.ub.uni-marburg.de/ep/0004/index)

Findings & Footnotes

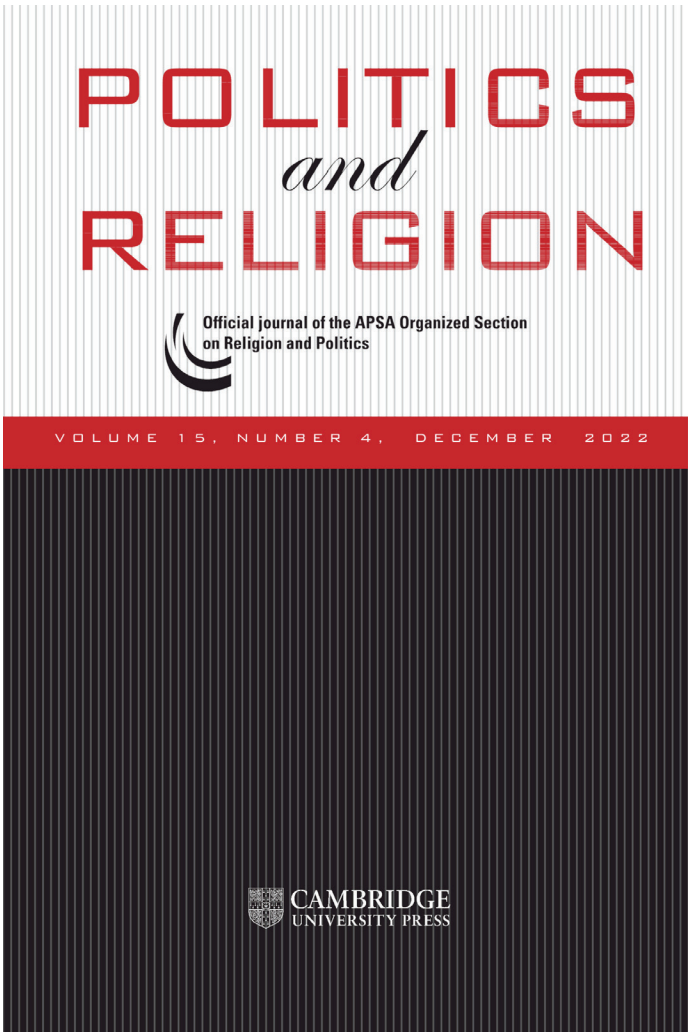
■ Much of the research interest in new religious movements (NRMs) in recent years has focused on second-generation members and former members and the effects of generational change in these groups. T**he current issue of *Nova Religio* (May/June), a journal of new religions, is devoted to the**

second (and third) generation of NRM members, specifically looking at such well-known groups as the Unification Church and Scientology, though the articles also examine wider questions related to generations in NRMs and particularly the study of children in these groups. Donald Westbrook, the editor for this special issue, writes in the introduction that the existence of second-, third-, and even fourth-generation members points to the arbitrariness of NRMs' characterization as "new" religions. Holly Folk's article on the Unification Church finds that the generational divide follows different trajectories that don't line up with the monolithic view of the younger generations as being "traumatized" by their upbringing and involvement. She adds that the "Cult survivor narrative…fits into perceptions of religions as being harmful, which seems to be increasing in societies."

Another article shows how second-generation members and ex-members rather than converts from groups such as the Unification Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Soka Gakkai are more often viewed as a new class of "victims" in Japanese society, raising new religious freedom concerns. Veteran NRM researcher Susan Palmer concludes with a call for more research on children in NRMs, engaging with the ethical questions that such work might raise, so that accurate and unbiased data rather than stereotypes can guide law enforcement and social workers in dealing with this sensitive issue. Palmer acknowledges that child abuse and its protection are a reality in some NRMs and their child-rearing practices (more likely in groups considered "world rejecting,"), but she adds that only the same popular NRMs (as cited above) are focused on while the hundreds of other NRMs remain unstudied. *For more information on this issue, visit: https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/56/journal/764*

■ The debate over **Christian nationalism** continues to unfold, often with the media and academics finding and citing different survey results about the extent and meaning of Americans' belief in a Christian country. In the journal *Politics and Religion* (online in May), Nilay Saiya (Nanyang Technological University in Singapore) takes a more granular approach, making the case that Christian nationalists are not in reality a monolithic group, saying a lot about their prospects. The article is noteworthy since it looks at the group's actual beliefs and theology, while most attempts (by American authors) focus on their partisan political positions. In fact, Christian nationalists are often at odds with each other about

their visions of a Christian America and fall into three categories:



1) Charismatic dominionism is the most important and widespread form of Christian nationalism, calling for Christians to dominate the different spheres of American society, and is associated with the New Apostolic Reformation, which seeks to restore the offices of apostles and prophets to the church. This group is decentralized (making it difficult to estimate its size) and has been the most activist (under such organizations as the ReAwaken America Tour) and supportive of Donald Trump.

2) Calvinist nationalism ranges from the Reconstructionist movement, holding to an American and Old Testament-based theocracy, to modified forms of Reformed nationalism, most fully expressed in the writings of Stephen Wolfe. While seen as an elite form of Christian nationalism, Saiya adds that these currents have found a large online following, through such writers as Douglas Wilson, and media promotion by Tucker Carlson, which may filter down to congregations. Calvinist nationalism may be closest to what critics see as the racial dimension of Christian nationalism, as Wolfe and some others have embraced racialist teachings, such as discouraging interracial marriage.

3) Finally, Catholic integralists hold to the belief that the state should be organized by Catholic teaching to one degree or another. The movement "lacks the popular strength of their Protestant counterparts" and is mainly found among academics, such as Patrick Deneen and Adrian Vermeule, though it has found a following among younger Catholics and can be found in seminaries and parishes.

Saiya concludes that while there is some overlap between these movements, adherents are more likely to conflict with each other over their charismatic, Reformed, and Catholic beliefs, as well as issues of race (with the charismatic dominionists, for instance, with their high rates of Latino participation, being likely to object to the racialist teachings of some Reformed nationalists). *For more information on this article, visit: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-religion*