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Pluralism and anti-pluralism—the new battlefield in religion and society?

While the conflict between religious conservatives and liberals has long characterized the "two party" system in American religion, scholars are now observing a new divide between pluralists and anti-pluralists. This was evident in Johns Hopkins University sociologist Ruth Braunstein's presidential address given at the early-November meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Minneapolis, which **RW** attended. Braunstein said that Robert Wuthnow's 1988 book, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, developed the idea that from the 1950s to the 1990s, faith groups were divided by their adherence to liberal and conservative theology and politics, often expressed through their denominational affiliations. But she added that since then, with the sharp growth of religious non-affiliation, "a new restructuring is taking place, [with] a shift from denominations to political tribes." The shift can be most clearly seen among American evangelicals "who are sorting themselves into those who support Christian nationalism. And this sorting is also taking place in the larger society." This sorting can also be seen in reports from pastors that people are shopping for Christian nationalist churches. Braunstein argues that these anti-pluralist Christians "support a monoculture" and are "pursuing an authoritarian ethno-state," where "white Christian nationalists" will hold sway.

At the same time, evangelicals and other religious conservatives who feel they are without a political home during the Trump administration and who are more accepting of a pluralist America are joining ranks with the religious left, interfaith groups, and "purple" or non-political mainline Protestants in such organizations as the American Values Coalition and the After Party. These groups often use the language of pluralism as the line dividing them from the religious right. Braunstein sees "side-switching" taking place, with such evangelical leaders as Russell Moore of *Christianity Today* magazine and columnist David French embracing the pluralist party, while many Latino evangelicals are moving in the other direction, as seen in their strong support for Donald Trump. While Braunstein's theory is closely tied to America's culture wars and is focused on evangelicals, the split between pluralists and anti-pluralists is also taking place on a global scale and is likely to have an impact on religious freedom, according to political scientist Robert Joustra. Writing for the blog of the *Institute for Global Engagement* (November 6), Joustra writes that the "major powers in international relations are all, to one

degree or another, rediscovering different forms of national identity or what could be, if ambiguously, called nationalism." Joustra writes that such changing geopolitical conditions go beyond the old framework of religious and secular competition to involve pluralist/anti-pluralist competition.

He adds that this framework "shifts or at least augments the current religious vs. secular debates about state pluralism to a somewhat more pragmatic approach." In other words, the new debate will be about how anti-pluralists deal with religious and other kinds of differences within their societies. Joustra argues that "there are two main anti-pluralist challengers today: progressive anti-pluralism, and nationalist anti-pluralism. While these approaches seem opposite to many on the Western political spectrum, they both in fact support the use of political power to inject a form of anti-pluralism into the political sphere. I argue that they could, therefore, be considered more alike than they are different. They further have a kind of symbiotic horseshoe relationship: fear of the other anti-pluralism tends to drive more extreme versions of their own anti-pluralist tendencies. Further, I argue that emerging geopolitical shifts in the world suggest that progressive anti-pluralism is *generally* on the decline, whereas nationalist anti-pluralism is ascending."

Is AI learning how to transform religion?

Religious AI is bringing about both a doctrinal mutation and cognitive mutation—substituting an algorithmic process for human mediation and modifying how believers perceive and construct spiritual meaning. So writes French political scientist François Mabille of the Geopolitical

Observatory of Religion, in a *Note* of the Observatory (November). Through spiritual chatbots, AI is establishing itself as a new intermediary between humanity and the sacred. The history of religions has always been linked to technical mediations (such as the scroll, codex, printing press, internet). But Mabille argues that AI represents a qualitative rupture, since it no longer merely transmits the sacred message but co-produces it, moving from a logic of transmission to a logic of delegation. Hermeneutical competence, formerly the monopoly of religious experts, is partially transferred to a computational agent. Each religious AI relies on a training corpus that acts as an implicit canon, shaping content by inclusion and exclusion. For instance, the Turkish Diyanet AI reproduces the official discourse of Hanafi Sunnism, acting as an instrument of doctrinal standardization and a tool of government, enabling Turkey to encode its official doctrine and disseminate a state Islam. Each AI model thus functions as a "digital council," where doctrinal decisions are made in servers rather than synods.

Mabille sees three major pitfalls emerging in this process. The first is dogmatic simplification—the reduction of theological complexity to instant morality. The second is doctrinal rigidification--restricting hermeneutical variability by imposing a single framework, particularly in state-sponsored models. The third is algorithmic heresy—the production of unprecedented interpretations through model generativity, without any awareness of historical or ritual contexts. Spiritual authority does not disappear but shifts, becoming distributed, decentralized, and personalized. The interpreting cleric gives way to the interpreting code. Religious norms become formed by aggregation rather than transmission. "Religious AI does not signal the end of religion but a change of its regime," Mabille concludes. "Belief is no longer institution and revelation—it becomes interaction and correlation. The divine is no longer merely proclaimed but calculated and distributed. Religious artificial intelligence, far from being a simple technical object, thus becomes an anthropological laboratory of belief."

(*The full article, in French, can be downloaded here:* https://www.iris-france.org/lintelligence-artificielle-religieuse-vers-une-mutation-doctrinale-et-cognitive-du-sacre/)

Contemporary Christian music enters social media age and gains new hearing

Contemporary Christian music continues to flourish in the U.S. while broadening its reach and forming a growing partnership with country music through social media, the *Wall Street Journal*

Forrest Frank

(November 9) reports. Elias Leight writes that Christian music's new wave can be seen in artists like Forrest Frank, whose songs pair hip hop inflected beats "with relentlessly sunny lyrics." Frank has earned more than 1.2 billion on-demand streams in the U.S. in 2025. "Other Christian acts are racking up big numbers as well," Leight reports. "Brandon Lake, a 35-year-old belter from South Carolina, has pulled in 862 million streams, while Josiah Queen, a 22-year-old with a knack for thumping acoustic folk, has 515 million." Christian music was one of the five fastest growing genres in the U.S. in 2024 and is set to beat that placement this year, with streams of new songs increasing more rapidly in Christian music than in any other genre except country.

While the market share of Christian music remains low, at 2 percent (dance-electronic music is at 3.3 percent), the genre has been able to score "major cultural moments" through its entry into social media like TikTok, which allows Christian artists to bypass traditional Christian portals and reach curious listeners. Leight reports that there has been increasing crossover between country and Christian genres, mainly because they are both based in similar networks in Nashville. When popular and fast-rising country music stars such as Bailey Zimmerman cross over to do a Christian song, they reach much larger audiences. Christian TikTok creator Jacob Peterson says, "I've seen so many videos on TikTok where it's like, 'I'm not religious, but low-key, Christian music slaps now.'"

CURRENT RESEARCH

• **As part of a continuing surge in Bible sales, sales of scripture were up 11 percent this year over 2024, according to data from Circana, a firm that tracks book sales.** This year's figure includes 2.4 million Bibles sold in September 2025 as part of a surge that followed the

assassination of conservative Christian activist Charlie Kirk. In total, more than 18 million Bibles have been sold so far this year. The growth in Bible sales has been steady since 2021, setting unprecedented annual sales records since 2022 and hitting a peak in 2024. Among the bestsellers are an economy version of the English Standard Bible, the Adventure Bible for kids, and the She Reads Truth Bible, named for an online community of Bible-reading women.

• **Leftist political parties in Latin America are attempting to incorporate conservative religious elements to attract the region's growing numbers of evangelicals to their ranks, according to a paper by sociologist Danissa Paz Contreras Guzman of the University of Texas at Austin.** At the early-November meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, which was attended by **RW**, Contreras Guzman said that this development was taking place in Brazil, Mexico, Peru, and Ecuador with varying levels of success. Based on surveys and interviews with 150 activists from these leftist parties, analysis of party documents, and a randomized experiment allowing people to choose the cultural values of a party, the researcher focused on Mexico and Brazil as case studies. In Mexico, the party MORENA struggled against a strongly secularist political culture, yet it successfully was able to integrate religious conservatism into its platform and structure, mainly through building alliances with such religious groups as PES, Confraternice, and La Luz del Mundo. Campaign events were associated with religious festivals, such as Day of the Virgin. Religious speeches were also given

during the campaign, and "ambiguous" support for the party's sexual policies was allowed, which provided room for those with more conservative beliefs.

In contrast, in Brazil's PT party, there was far less success in incorporating religious conservatism, even though there is strong electoral pressure for adopting such positions. Party leaders and religious groups proposed courses designed for religious candidates, a caucus of evangelical activists, and even its own evangelical church. Yet such initiatives faced rejection and dismissal by the activist base. Contreras Guzman found that the greater autonomy of MORENA leaders from the party's culturally progressive activists "provided the raw materials" for the party to adopt religious conservatism. There was no such autonomy in Brazil's PT party, which is much more institutionalized, with clear rules on election competitiveness and proportionality. Progressive activists in the party had strong institutional power, such as in its Secretaria Nacional LGBT.

• **A new study finds that several hundred priests and more than a dozen bishops have converted from Anglicanism in the past three decades, a "surge" that has been partly driven by the move to ordain women in the Church of England, according to a study led by sociologist Stephen Bullivant.** The study found that about 35 per cent of combined diocesan and ordinariate priestly ordinations from 1992 to 2024 in England and Wales were of former Anglican clergy. The percentage of ex-Anglican Catholic priests is said to be much larger than expected, with these converts comprising a third of all Catholic priests ordained since 1992, the year that women's ordination was accepted in the Church of England. Most of the ordinations took place in 1994. Among Anglican bishops, 16 made the transition to Catholicism, often after retirement. The path to conversion and then Catholic ordination for these priests was one of individual exploring and decision-making, sometimes taking a circuitous route with some

The Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, a Catholic group that includes many ex-Anglican priests.

uncertainty and risk involving one's future livelihood, and with the priests often facing long delays from Rome in getting approval for ordination. Another popular route has been the Personal Ordinariate, a program started by Pope Benedict XVI, which offers a way for Anglicans to retain much of their heritage and liturgy while becoming Catholic. The Ordinariate is considered to offer a "fast track" to the priesthood compared to the diocesan route, with recent figures showing that its attraction has grown since it was started in 2011.

(*The study can be downloaded from:* https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/convert-clergy-report.pdf)

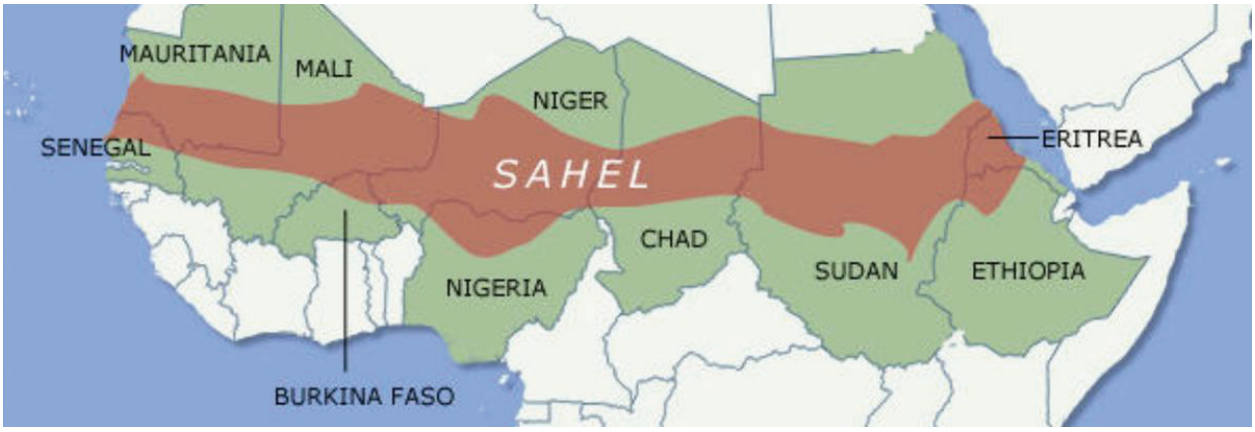
• **China's atheists and agnostics report higher rates of belief in the supernatural than any other non-theists in the world, according to a recent study by Ryan Hornbeck and colleagues (University College, London) presented at the late-November meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Boston, which RW attended.** In a survey of approximately 3,000 nontheists in China, 25 percent were found to believe in reincarnation, while about 50 percent of agnostics held to a belief in a universal life force and astrology. There was also a high prevalence of belief in the afterlife, reincarnation, objects and people with mystical powers, and fate, along with a low level of anti-religious attitudes. Both atheists and agnostics showed the lowest level of belief in naturalism compared to non-theists in other countries, with only eight percent of atheists and two percent of agnostics holding this belief. Hornbeck said that some of

Source: Pew Research Center.

these items, such as fate and karma, are related to chi teachings on energy in Chinese philosophy and are not really perceived as otherworldly in the Western sense. But he added that China's non-theists, and Chinese in general, "move easily between traditional and cosmological language… [and that] there is no pressure to draw the line between religion and science."

• **Religious freedom violations are widespread across the Sahel region of Africa, largely because of the growth of violent insurgent groups, unstable governments, and social conflict, according to a report from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).** The report focuses on Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Chad, where such Islamic extremist groups as the Islamic State in the Sahel Province (ISSP), the Jama'at Ahl al-Sunna lid-Dawah wa'al-Jihad (JAS-Boko Haram), and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), remain active. These groups don't just target state institutions—"they attack churches, mosques, and religious leaders, enforcing their own interpretations of Islamic law with brutal efficiency," according to the newsletter *Bitter Winter* (November 5), citing the report. In Burkina Faso, for example, the report notes that "ISSP claimed responsibility for a February 2024 attack on a Catholic church that killed at least 12 worshipers in Essakane. That same month, insurgents attacked a mosque in Natiaboani in the eastern part of the country, killing dozens during morning prayer. In January 2025, 200 insurgents attacked three villages in western Burkina Faso and killed 26 people, including at least six Christians…"

In Cameroon in 2024, over 700 people were killed by JAS-Boko Haram, and Christian church activities were severely disrupted, with thousands of other Christians left homeless. In Chad "in 2025, JAS-Boko Haram, ISWAP [Islamic State–West Africa Province], and violent Fulani herder



groups continue to target religious communities; these groups often displace victims whom they do not outright kill after destroying their property." The report notes that state responses are often inadequate, with some cases of military crackdowns leading to human rights abuses, further alienating local populations and inadvertently fueling extremist recruitment." The governments sometime justify administrative obstacles for churches as a way to protect Christian worshipers from insurgent violence or defuse interfaith tension in areas with high Muslim populations. Chad likewise imposes limitations on Islamic groups, and "state officials with the Ministry of Interior require places of worship, usually Christian churches, to obtain a six-month temporary authorization while they await recognition as legal entities, leaving them in a position of extreme liability to harassment and closure. Church founders of such unregistered churches risk imprisonment for up to one year as well as fines, making church operations much more difficult." The report recommends that the U.S. expand humanitarian aid to displaced religious minorities and integrate religious freedom into its broader Sahel strategy.

(*The report can be downloaded from:* https://www.uscirf.gov/publications/freedom-religion-or-belief-sahelian-countries-burkina-faso-cameroon-and-chad)

• **Japanese funerals have been simplified, made briefer, and become based more around the family since the Covid pandemic, both in Japan and in the U.S., according to a paper presented at the early-November meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, which RW attended.** Tatsushi Hirono (Austin Peay State University), Akinori Takase, and Yukan Ogawa (Taisho University) conducted a study of 104 respondents, consisting of monks and laypeople, in Japan and the U.S. The changes to Buddhist funerals were more evident in Japan than in the U.S. Restrictions during Covid often meant that those other than immediate family were unable to attend funerals, which changed Japanese attitudes toward religiosity and funerals, Hirono said.

These changes were less evident among Japanese monks, but more Japanese and American Buddhists changed their attitudes about Buddhism, saying it was less important for their religiosity after the pandemic. A Buddhist monk interviewed said, "I believe that ordinary people's views on funerals were totally changed after the COVID-19 pandemic, and now they prefer their 'family's only funeral' and a 'one-day funeral.' I personally believe that this new

social norm would not return to the traditional funeral that are 'bigger funerals' and 'two-day funerals' because they believe the system has changed." Hirono concludes that Japanese monks who heavily relied on the funeral business need to "change their business model." "Some Buddhist monks are now providing 'engaged Buddhism,' including counseling and weekly and monthly meetings like Christian clergies."

"Quiet revival" as gateway to far-right activism in the UK?

Growing interest in Christianity in the UK, with some (disputed) indications of growing church attendance and involvement, is being tied to far-right activism in the country, according to reports. *The Church Times* (November 26) reports that church leaders are cautioning their members not to let their faiths be converted into political extremism. At a recent conference, Pentecostal Bishop Mike Royal warned his listeners about not letting the "quiet revival" be stolen by "Christian nationalism," even though he acknowledged that there was a middle ground where national pride was commendable. The "quiet revival" refers to the phenomenon of increased church attendance in the UK—though these reports of church growth have been questioned—particularly among young people. The warning of Royal and other church leaders came in the wake of the evangelical conversion of far-right leader Tommy Robinson in prison, and the news that his supporters are likewise turning to Christianity. A man who started attending church and who also frequented Robinson's rallies said, "I never thought I had to choose before, but now I'm feeling like Christianity could be replaced; so that's why I feel the Church needs support." He spoke of the church as being threatened by Islam, citing its extremist elements rather than the religion as a whole.

The Guardian newspaper (November 25) reports that the relationship between the far right and Christianity moves mainly in one direction, as political leaders have expressed interest in strengthening a Christian identity for Britain. Earlier this year, Conservative MP Danny Kruger spoke in parliament about the need for the restoration of Britain through the "recovery of a Christian politics." Kruger then joined the Reform party, whose leader Nigel Farage now invokes the need to return to "Judeo-Christian" values. Lamorna Ash reports that the "unite the kingdom" march that Tommy Robinson led showed an abundance of Christian symbolism, with pastors on stage giving speeches and leading worship songs. Ash adds that Robinson's faith "mirrors an important development that is taking place among European far-right groups, which are shifting the emphasis of their political messaging from ethnicity to religion." If a religious right has been

Tommy Robinson

exported to Britain from the U.S., which is not clear from this article, it seems more often concerned about religious freedom than establishing a Christian state. Ash points to the cases of Christians in the UK brought to court for illegally praying in abortion clinic "buffer zones," to protect clients and workers.

The U.S.-based legal advocacy group Alliance Defending Freedom more than doubled its spending in the UK and has started a branch there. Meanwhile, the charismatic Anglican network based around the influential Holy Trinity Church, Brompton (HTB), which launched the Alpha program, is reported to be "caught up in this rising Christian nationalism," according to the Substack newsletter *Ecstatic Integration* (October 17). Editor Jules Evans reports that "some figures in the HTB network have helped drive [Christian nationalism] (while others see it as a big mistake)." A key figure is billionaire Sir Paul Marshall, who is on HTB's revitalization trust and whose Sequoia Trust has given tens of millions to HTB causes. Marshall co-owns GB News, a British version of Fox or Breitbart, which in August overtook the BBC to become the most-watched UK news channel. Marshall was the UK's biggest philanthropist in 2024, giving away £145 million, or 17 percent of his wealth, in one year. He funded the Alliance for Responsible Citizenship (ARC) conference earlier this year, hosted by Jordan Peterson and organized by HTB Christian Philippa Stroud. ARC is said to be the largest conservative conference in the UK, according to Evans.

Israeli court ruling adds momentum to women's rabbinical activity in Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Jewish women in Israel are increasingly taking up the roles of rabbis, with some help from a new ruling in Israel, writes Michal Raucher in the online magazine *The Conversation* (November 20). Raucher adds that in today's Orthodox world, "a rabbi could be a teacher, a nonprofit executive for a Jewish organization or a scholar of Jewish law—and, increasingly, some of those roles are held by Orthodox women." Orthodox Judaism has largely prohibited women rabbis, except for a few dissenting outliers. "Yet attitudes toward women's study of rabbinic texts is changing, leading some Orthodox leaders to conclude that women are ," Raucher adds. Israel's chief rabbis who form the top authority known as the Rabbinate do not recognize women as rabbis or permit their ordination. But a significant change took place last July when Israel's High Court of Justice determined that women must be allowed to take the Rabbinate's exams about Jewish law. The chief rabbis appealed the decision, but the court rejected their request for a retrial in November. These tests are necessary to apply for public sector jobs that hold any kind of Jewish religious authority in Israel, such as insuring that restaurants follow Jewish dietary laws.

Orthodox Jewish female clergy.

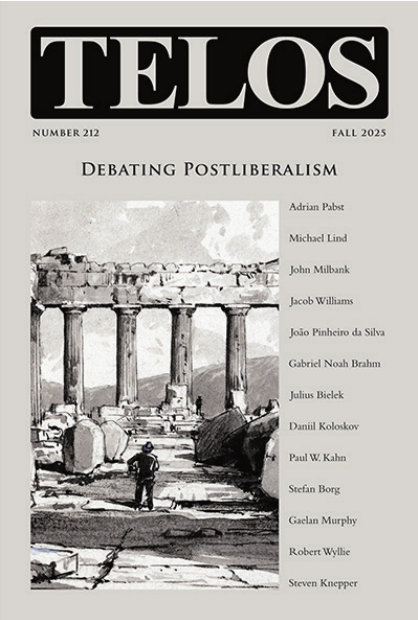
While passing this exam does not make someone an ordained rabbi (which is conducted through private rabbis and schools), and most Orthodox communities do not recognize female rabbis, "it does allow women to apply for jobs previously available only to men and receive higher salaries for the educational jobs they have already. Most importantly, the High Court's decision recognizes that women have achieved high levels of education in rabbinic law…While there have always been highly educated women, the court's ruling reflects a growing trend among Orthodox women, while also opening up professional opportunities." Influential in this trend is the network of Jewish schools for women started in the early 20th century, such as the Bais Yaakov school system, now found in many countries, the Matan, Nishmat and Drisha schools in Israel, and the New York-based Yeshivat Maharat, the first Orthodox seminary to ordain women as rabbis.

Raucher notes that the lawsuit challenging the Israeli chief rabbis' restriction on women taking the Jewish law exam was filed by several people involved in this network. Continuing women's training, allowing them to enter a variety of fields, and expanding opportunities for Orthodox women's religious leadership, along with the Israeli court decision, "validate women's religious leadership…The ruling forces Orthodox Judaism worldwide to recognize that women can achieve high levels of Talmudic education," Raucher concludes.

"Finally, the proliferation of educational programs reflects—and creates—a need within orthodoxy. It is not just a small cadre of women seeking these opportunities. Programs continue to open because there is a demand among Orthodox women for the chance to study rabbinic texts. As more institutions create programs for women, they are creating a new reality: one where Orthodox women are religious leaders."

(*The Conversation*, https://religionnews.com/2025/11/20/orthodox-judaism-is-making-space-for-womens-religious-leadership-even-without-traditional-ordination/)

Finding & Footnotes



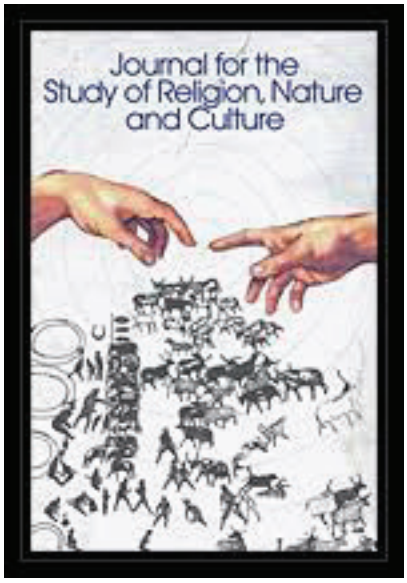
■ The journal *Telos* devotes its fall issue to "post-liberalism," the diffuse movement of conservative scholars and politicians who question the post-Cold War liberal political order and propose often religious and populist alternatives. The issue looks at the way that these movements draw their inspiration from a wide range of religious sources, ranging from Eastern Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism and Anglo-Catholicism, all the way to Neopaganism. An article by Daniil Koloskov notes how this conservative "revival" is international, even as it is often expressed in nationalist movements that are critical of globalization. This amalgam of views includes everything from the Russian Orthodox philosophy of Alexander Dugin to the pagan philosophy of French "new right" thinkers, Anglo-Catholic thought, and American Catholic

integralism (which teaches that Catholicism should be the country's established religion). Koloskov notes that these thinkers and groups hold to the importance of local traditions and institutions seeking the "common good," in contrast to big business capitalism and bureaucratic governments that seek to impose order and dominate culture from a distance.

The author provides the example of the Russian Orthodox Church's community-based initiatives, even as he criticizes the current church for losing a significant number of members under centralization and bureaucracy. Another article by Jacob Williams and Joao Pinheiro da Silva shows how post-liberalism goes beyond illiberal forms of religion, such as Catholic integralism and the anti-liberal populism represented by such thinkers as Patrick Deneen. They focus on the Anglo-Catholic-based post-liberalism known as "radical orthodoxy," fostered by John Milbank and the Red Tory and Blue Labor factions in UK politics, as well as the post-liberal theology of George Lindbeck and Stanley Hauerwas. These currents all share a strong skepticism of individualism and stress the need for community life and a renewed civic society. Williams and da Silva note that such forms of post-liberalism can be found in both the conservative politics of Philip Blond and Maurice Glasman and the more liberal positions of Milbank.

Another group of post-liberals, or, more accurately, anti-liberals, that the authors identify is the largely American group based around the journals *Communio* and *New Policy*, which target liberalism from a conservative Catholic but non-integralist position. Finally, and again more in the anti-liberal camp, are the National Conservatives, led by Israeli philosopher Yoram Hazony, an Orthodox Jew, and many conservative Protestants. This camp doesn't call for an explicitly confessional politics as much as a broadly based nationalism with a large role for religion and the free market. The articles in this issue don't give the reader an idea of how many people actually adhere to these various forms of post- and anti-liberalism, nor is there much exploration of how these ideas are embodied in actual institutions and activism, yet they do provide a valuable mapping of the changing landscape of religion and society. For more on this issue, visit: https://www.telospress.com/store/Telos-212-Fall-2025-Debating-Postliberalism-p786508961

■ The way in which Nordic people are not quite so secular as they are reputed to be, given how they connect ecology to spirituality, is the theme of the current issue of the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* (19:3). The editors discuss what they call these "(not quite) secular Northerners" in the context of "ecologizing nature," which means integrating ecology with cultural dimensions of society, including spirituality. This integration goes against the "differentiation" or separation of these various spheres, and of nature itself, that constitutes modernization. The editors add that the issue seeks to understand the various "quests for nature" that are observed among Northerners. "Why, we asked, have outdoor activities, once again, become so popular all over Scandinavia? How did the forest become an emblem of the Estonian nation? Why did ethnic politics suddenly turn environmental in Norway? And why has rewilding in Denmark ascended within a few



years to national politics?" These questions aren't especially religious or even explicitly spiritual, but the ethnographies on these topics do show "outbursts of the 'not-quite-secular' sensibilities captured in words such as 'almost magical' or 'holy,'" touching on cases of animism, "biocene enchantment," and "weird magic." For more on this issue, visit: https://journal.equinoxpub.com/JSRNC

■ The growing movements of Christian Zionism in the global South, particularly Africa, receive in-depth treatment in a special issue of *Religion, State, and Society* (53:4). These movements are described by the editors as a "charismatic evangelical engagement with, and appropriation of, Jewish histories, rituals, and Zionist political views." While there have been many studies of Christian Zionism over the years, the articles in this issue are unique in that they examine how the war in Gaza has changed these movements, bringing them into overt political solidarity with Israel. The case of Brazil, probably having the most influential Christian Zionist movement, bears this out: the evangelical caucus, which makes up more than one-quarter of the National Congress, issued a forceful critique of the Brazilian state's accusation that Israel engaged in genocide during the war.

This pattern of taking sides in a diplomatic and military conflict is seen in other Christian Zionist groups in countries such as Uganda, Congo, and Malawi. Noteworthy articles include a more theoretical study by Paul Freston, who categorizes Christian Zionism into ("ideal-typic") camps of prosperity, covenantal, cultural, humanitarian, Islamophobic, and indigenous practices and beliefs. An article on Uganda shows how Ugandan elites are at the forefront of efforts to promote these teachings as they translate them into policy, such as promoting economic development, while individual believers equate blessing Israel with achieving God's blessings on believers. For more on this issue, visit: https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/crss20

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

The **Monk Life Project** is a 30-day ordination program designed to provide practitioners with a foundation for meditative practice and monastic life. Based in Thailand at the International Forest Monastery in Chiang Mai, it's specifically tailored for international participants. The training is delivered by English-speaking monks. "The project aims to make ordaining as a Buddhist Monk accessible to people from all over the world, with the length chosen to be around the time most people can take holiday off work yet get the most benefit out of their ordination," according to the iMonastery website. After completing the 30-day program, participants either return to their home countries or can join the Monk4Life Program at iMonastery Pak Tong Chai (near Bangkok), which is meant for more dedicated practitioners with a longer-term commitment. There's also a 24-month program offering accreditation as

a mindfulness and meditation instructor. The Monk Life Project has been launched by the large, sometimes controversial, modern Thai Buddhist movement, Dhammakaya, which has built a massive headquarters in Bangkok.

There are other monasteries (not affiliated with Dhammakaya) offering an experience of Buddhist monastic life for foreigners, but without the Monk Life Project's model of "packaged" 30-day ordination courses. One of the most reputed is **Wat Pah Nanachat** (The International Forest Monastery), established by the late Ajahn Chah specifically for English-speaking people, which offers the possibility of continuing to full monk ordination to those with a genuine intention to stay longer. As with Dhammakaya's international outreach, the Monk Life Project is promoted through an online ecosystem (sites, social networks, media reports) on the market of international meditation retreats and training. The iMonastery website even includes a "PR scoop" section. Last February, the Norwegian daily *Dagbladet* thus published an article about Swedish footballer Kevin Lidin, who suffered injuries forcing him to suspend his career in sports and who then became involved in the Monk Life Project, which he now promotes. For those unable to travel to Thailand, Dhammakaya already launched as early as 2013 a European Ordination Program. (**Sources**: *La Liberté*, Nov. 24; Monk Life Project, https://monklifeproject.com; iMonastery, https://imonastery.com; Dhammakaya Temple, https://www.visitdhammakaya.com/; European Ordination Program, https://www.monkslife.org/)