



VOICE OF REASON

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Religious Hostilities Soar Worldwide

Violence and discrimination against minority religious groups by governments and majority religions reached a six-year high in 2012, according to a new study by the Pew Research Center. Social hostilities based on religion increased in every region of the world, except North and South America.

The worst occurrences were found in the Middle East and North Africa. Tom Heneghan, Religion Editor for Pew, noted, "Social hostility such as attacks on minority faiths or pressure to conform to certain norms was strong in one-third of the 198 countries and territories surveyed in 2012, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. Religion-related terrorism and sectarian violence occurred in one-fifth of those countries in that year, while states imposed legal limits on worship, preaching or religious wear in almost 30% of them."

There was an increase in hostility against Christians, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Baha'is and atheists, while there was little change in hostility against Hindus and Buddhists.

The highest social hostility concerning religion was found in Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Somalia and Israel. "Tensions in Israel arise from the Palestinian issue, disagreements between secular and religious Jews and the growth of ultra-Orthodox sects that live apart from the majority," Pew reported. The countries that had the most government-imposed restrictions on religion are: Egypt, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. (North Korea is so isolated that no data were available.)

Christianity faced official and social hostility in 110 of the 198 nations surveyed, while Muslims were harassed in 109 countries and Jews in 71 nations.

Major nations with large populations were not exempt from religious hostility. "Among the world's 25 most populous countries, Egypt, Indonesia, Russia, Pakistan and Burma (Myanmar) had the most restrictions on religion in 2012, when both government restrictions and social hostilities are taken into account. As in the previous year, Pakistan had the highest level of social hostilities involving religion, and Egypt

had the highest level of government restrictions on religion. Social hostilities related to religion in Burma (Myanmar) rose to the 'very high' level for the first time in the study."

Nearly half of the world's countries (47%) were sites of "abuse of religious minorities." Pew reported, "In some countries, violence toward religious minorities intensified from the levels reported in previous years. In Buddhist-majority Sri Lanka, for example, monks attacked Muslim and Christian places of worship, including reportedly attacking a mosque in the town of Dambulla in April 2012 and forcibly occupying a Seventh-day Adventist church in the town of Deniyaya and converting it into a Buddhist temple in August 2012."

Harassment of women over religious dress occurred in nearly a third of countries, while mob violence related to religion was found in a quarter of countries, both sharp increases over the previous year and five years ago. Religion-related terrorist violence occurred in a fifth of countries, including the United States. Sectarian violence was reported in nearly a fifth of countries and increased significantly in Syria, Iraq

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Judge Halts North Carolina Vouchers

Wake County Superior Court Judge Robert Hobgood halted the state's new voucher program on February 21. The judge suspended the program and found that a suit filed by voucher opponents was likely to succeed on its merits. The constitutional challenge will determine whether the "public purpose" clause of the state constitution would allow the legislature to collect and appropriate tax money for purposes that benefit private interests.

North Carolina's new voucher program provides \$4,200 per student in its first year to use at "state recognized private schools." It will siphon \$10 million from public schools in the first year. North Carolina Policy Watch, which opposes vouchers, noted, "North Carolina law requires nothing in the way of academic standards, curricula or accountability measures for its non-public schools." The group warned that home schooling may also qualify for grants. "The school voucher program is intended for use at private schools only. But thanks to weak laws and a lack of capacity to ensure compliance, anyone who opens a school in their home may be able to get public money – and face little in the way of accountability."

Public school supporters challenged the program's constitutionality. The suit was filed by the North Carolina School Boards Association, whose president, Shearra Miller, told *Education Week* on February 5, "By diverting funding from the public schools, vouchers have the potential to significantly damage individual school systems, particu-

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Religious Hostilities Soar, *continued from page 1*

and Burma (Myanmar). "Very high" levels of social hostility were recorded in Syria, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand and Burma.

Governments used force against religious groups in 48% of countries, and public preaching by religious groups was restricted by governments in 38% of countries. Tunisia and Mauritania were singled out for particularly poor records in this regard. About two dozen countries had "very high government restrictions" on religion. The worst were found in Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Morocco, Iraq and Kazakhstan.

Only a handful of countries had decreases in religion-related hostilities: Cambodia, Cyprus, Romania, Serbia, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, and Timor-Leste.

The Pew report concluded, "Overall, across the six years of this study, religious groups were harassed in a total of 185 countries at one time or another. Members of the world's two largest religious groups –

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Christians and Muslims, who together comprise more than half of the global population – were harassed in the largest number of countries, 151 and 135, respectively. Jews, who comprise less than 1% of the world's population, experienced harassment in a total of 95 countries, while members of other world faiths were harassed in a total of 77 countries." ■

North Carolina Vouchers, *continued from page 1*

larly in smaller districts. The voucher program does not ensure that private schools that receive public funding will adhere to our constitution's promise that students will have the opportunity to receive a sound basic education and will not face discrimination."

One very significant factor in the eventual outcome is undoubtedly the nature and character of the private schools that will dominate the program. A new study prepared by the Children's Law Clinic at Duke University Law School, as reported by Professor Jane R. Wettach, finds that "most of the schools available to voucher recipients are very small, unaccredited religious schools with uncertified teachers, nonstandard curricula and no public accountability." A quarter of the private schools have enrollment of fewer than 20 students, and 90% of the schools that charge less than \$4,200 in yearly tuition are religious schools. Most (70%) of these schools have no accreditation from any independent agency, and most (70%) do not employ certified teachers. About three fourths do not follow North Carolina curriculum standards.

Another serious flaw is 70% of private schools are racially segregated. About 30% are more than 90% white. Wettach added, "Although nonpublic schools must administer annual testing and make the results known to the parents, they are not required to make their test results public."

Many, if not most, of the schools are religiously discriminatory. The *Charlotte News Observer* reported that "Raleigh Christian Academy, a

part of Beacon Baptist Church, requires parents and students to sign a contract saying they are in 100% agreement with its doctrinal positions. 'We are not a church school for those in cults, i.e. Mormons, Jehovah Witness, Christian Science, Unification Church, Zen Buddhism, Unitarianism, and United Pentecostal,' the school application says."

The two schools with the highest number of applications for the voucher program are the Greensboro Islamic Academy and the Victory Christian Center School in Charlotte, a fundamentalist Protestant school. Another Islamic school in Raleigh was the third highest in applicants. Furthermore, the Greensboro Islamic Academy has no programs for children with emotional, behavioral or severe learning disabilities.

Charlotte News Observer reporter Lynn Bonner noted, "Special Deputy Attorney General Lauren Clemmons, who is defending the state in the lawsuits, said it's unlikely that parents who object to a school's religious doctrine would seek to send their children there." That is the crux of the problem, since funding such schools from the public treasury would clearly require some taxpayers to pay for schools that would not admit their children.

Professor Wettach summed up the problem: "Providing a free public education to the children of this state undoubtedly meets the 'public purpose' requirement of our constitution. But providing a taxpayer-funded subsidy to a group of children whose parents would prefer to send them to religious schools does not." ■

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Senior Editor: Edd Doerr
Editor: Albert J. Menendez
Production Editor: Teri Grimwood

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Christian Right Aims at Congress

Any thought that the Christian Right is diminishing in its capacity to influence the political direction of the country is illusory. At least five religious extremists are seeking Republican nominations for Senate and House seats (There will be more!)

In Georgia, Rep. Paul Broun is seeking to replace Republican Sen. Saxby Chambliss, who is retiring. Braun, a staunch Baptist, told a church audience that “evolution, embryology, and the Big Bang Theory are lies straight from the pit of Hell.” He has called climate change a “hoax” and tried to get Congress to proclaim 2010 “The Year of the Bible.”

Kentucky businessman Matt Bevin, who says his policies are “built on a bedrock of strong Christian values,” is the Tea Party-endorsed challenger to Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell. Bevin, who is leading McConnell in some polls, says that abortion “has killed 55 million babies under the guise of choice.”

In Mississippi, state senator Chris McDaniel, a Tea Party favorite, is challenging Sen. Thad Cochran in the Republican primary. McDaniel, who represents the neo-Confederate wing of the GOP, has delivered speeches to the Sons of Confederate Veterans. He has also chided Hollywood for not having more Muslim villains in films.

In South Carolina, state senator Lee Bright is challenging veteran

Sen. Lindsey Graham in the GOP primary. Bright, a member of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Board of Visitors, has sponsored bills in the state legislature that would ban all abortions. He has threatened secession (this is, after all, South Carolina), promised to abolish the IRS, called the income tax something “designed by Nazi Germany,” and wants to exempt states from federal gun laws.

In the House, Pam Barlow has challenged Rep. Mac Thornberry, the Republican member for the tenth district of Texas. The veterinarian and retired U.S. Army officer calls herself an “unashamed Republican Tea Party Christian conservative.” (Another Christian Rightist, Rep. Steve Stockman of Texas, is challenging Sen. John Cornyn in the March 4 Republican primary. But his off-the-wall antics have proved to be an embarrassment even to social conservatives.)

C.J. Werleman, writing on *AlterNet.org*, warned, “The Christian Right is not only an existential threat to the future of the Republican Party, it’s also an existential threat to our secular democracy, for it wishes to transform America into a tyrannical theocracy governed by biblical law.” He added that “The Christian Right can now raise enough cash to compete and win in Republican primaries against Chamber of Commerce-sponsored establishment candidates.” ■

Religious School Data Show Changes

There were 4,360,456 students enrolled in faith-based schools during the 2009-2010 school year, according to a new study, “Religious Schools in America,” produced by the American Center for School Choice, an advocacy group founded in 2008 that favors tax aid to religious schools.

There were about 2.3 million students in Catholic schools and two million in Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and “other” religious schools. (More recent data from 2012-2013 show Catholic school enrollment has declined to two million.)

The report identified more than 20 religious groups that maintain private schools. Second to Catholic schools, with about 700,000 students, are those affiliated with “unspecified” or nondenominational Protestant Christian churches. There were also 289,582 students in Baptist schools, 221,178 in Jewish schools, 179,525 in schools run by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and 119,746 students in Episcopal schools. Together, these five groups constituted 1.5 million students.

A little over 500,000 students attended schools run by other groups, including the Assembly of God, Presbyterians, Methodists, Seventh-day Adventists, Quakers and Mennonites. There were 32,646 students in Islamic academies, which increased by 30% since the 2001-2002 school year. Jewish schools registered a 10% increase over the decade.

Most of the non-Catholic schools recorded growth between 2001 and 2010, though Baptist, Calvinist, Pentecostal and Mennonite schools showed declines.

While claiming that “Catholic schools have seen their growth hampered by financial constraints where no access to public support programs exists,” the report’s authors ignore changing parental preferences in education among Catholic parents and other factors cited by educational researchers over the past few decades. The authors also claim that greater “competition” exists in religious schools, but these groups do not

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Number of Students Attending Faith-Based Schools, 2009-10

<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Number</i>
Roman Catholic	2,314,397
Christian (unspecified)	697,358
Baptist	289,582
Jewish	221,178
Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod	179,525
Episcopal	119,746
Seventh-day Adventist	64,720
Assembly of God	57,520
Presbyterian	55,449
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran	36,988
Methodist	35,933
Islamic	32,646
Other	26,729
Calvinist (Reformed)	26,691
Evangelical Lutheran	23,383
Friends	22,205
Mennonite	20,384
Pentecostal	16,924
Church of God	13,744
Brethren	9,091
Other Lutheran	6,596
Greek Orthodox	4,768

Support for Evolution Holds Steady

About 60% of Americans believe that “humans and other living things have evolved over time,” while 33% believe that “humans and other living things have existed in their present form since the beginning of time.” These findings from a 2013 Pew Research Center poll are about the same as in 2009, when Pew Research last asked the question.

Support for evolution includes two categories. About a third of all adults believe evolution resulted from a “natural process” while one fourth believe a “supreme being guided the evolutionary process.” Support for the latter, called “theistic” evolution by many analysts, is highest among white mainline Protestants and white Catholics.

Religious affiliation remains the main dividing point in belief about evolution. Interestingly, white mainline Protestants (78%) express even stronger belief in evolution than do the religiously unaffiliated (76%). Solid majorities of white Catholics (68%) and a smaller majority of Hispanic Catholics (53%) endorse evolution. Only 44% of black Protestants and 27% of white evangelical Protestants are supportive of evolution. (There were not enough Jews or members of other religions to constitute a good sample in this survey of 1,983 adults.)

Political divisions were also sharply different. Democrats (67%) and Independents (65%) were supportive, while only 43% of Republicans indicated belief in evolution. What’s more, Democratic support was up three points and Republican support dropped 11 points, increasing the partisan gap from 10 points in 2009 to 24 points in 2013.

Pew researchers considered the partisan tilt highly significant. “Differences in the racial and ethnic composition of Democrats and Republicans or differences in their levels of religious commitment do not wholly explain partisan differences in beliefs about evolution. Indeed, the partisan differences remain even when taking these other character-

istics into account.”

David A. Graham, senior associate editor of *The Atlantic* speculated, “It’s not surprising that Republicans are less likely to believe in evolution than Democrats are; while the numbers vary from survey to survey, there has been a consistent gap. Republicans are also less likely to believe that the earth’s climate is warming, or, if they accept that it is, to believe that the change is caused by human activity.” This may be a result of differing attitudes toward science and religion or the relatively higher importance of religious traditionalism cited by Republicans. Graham adds, “One possibility is that respondents who identified as Republican and believed in evolution in 2009 are no longer identifying as Republicans. Fewer scientists, for example, are reportedly identifying with the GOP.”

Support for evolution was highest (68%) among the young (ages 18-29) and lowest among those ages 65 and older (49%). College graduates (72%) were much more likely to endorse evolution than those with a high school education or less (51%). Men were 10% more likely to believe in evolution than women (65% compared to 55%).

Another survey showed similar results. A Harris Poll released in December found belief in evolution went up 5% since 2005, from 42% to 47% in 2013. About 29% said they disbelieved in evolution and 25% were uncertain. A slim majority of Democrats (52%) and Independents (51%) endorsed evolution, far more than the 36% of Republicans who did so.

Creationism fared less well, with 36% believing in it, 31% opposed and 33% unsure. About half of Republicans (49%) endorsed creationism compared to 30% of Democrats and 34% of Independents. ■

Americans Reject “War on Christmas”

The usual charges that there is some kind of a coordinated attempt to destroy Christmas or to prevent Americans from celebrating a cherished holiday seems to have received little support. Fox Television and the American Family Association issued their annual criticism, aimed mainly at businesses that advertised “holiday” rather than “Christmas” sales. Sarah Palin, the GOP’s 2008 vice presidential nominee, published a book, *Good Tidings and Great Joy*, claiming that “angry atheists armed with lawyers” were trying to erase Christmas from the American consciousness.

But a comprehensive Pew Research poll released December 18 found that 92% of Americans celebrate Christmas, including 87% of the religiously unaffiliated. A majority (51%) say they celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday, while 32% see it as a cultural holiday, and 9% regard it as a hybrid. A majority (54%) planned to attend religious services on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Church attendance was highest (60%) among those age 65 and older and lowest (46%) among those ages 18-29. This compares to 36% who attend in an average week.

The religious emphasis has declined somewhat, since 66% of the oldest adults view Christmas as primarily a religious holiday compared to 39% of the youngest. Also, 69% of adults say they attended Christmas worship services earlier in their lives.

There were some interesting differences in attitudes towards Christmas. Women were 11% more likely than men to see Christmas as a religious holiday, and whites were more so than blacks or Hispanics. (Hispanics were the most likely to see Christmas as a cultural festival.)

While evangelical Protestants historically opposed the celebration of Christmas, they are today the most likely (82%) to celebrate Christmas as a religious event, compared to 66% of white Catholics, 60% of black Protestants, 56% of white mainline Protestants and 51% of Hispanic Catholics. (On the other hand, Hispanics are the most likely ethnic group to attend Christmas services.) White Catholics are the most likely religious group or subgroup to attend religious services (82%), edging out white evangelicals (71%). (For historical background see *The December Wars* by Albert J. Menendez, published in 1993 by Prometheus Books.)

Finally, the majority of those polled say they are not opposed to the generic “Happy Holidays” greeting, another complaint made by religious conservatives: 46% say it doesn’t matter, 42% prefer “Merry Christmas” and 12% prefer “Happy Holidays.” Michael Lipka of the Pew Research Center noted political differences. “In either case, there is a significant split between Republicans and Democrats on the question; Republicans strongly prefer the Christmas greeting. For example, when ‘it doesn’t matter’ is included as an option, 63% of Republicans or those who lean Republican say they prefer ‘Merry Christmas,’ while 5% choose ‘Season’s Greetings’ or ‘Happy Holidays’ and 32% say it doesn’t matter. Among Democrats or those who lean Democratic, 28% prefer ‘Merry Christmas,’ 17% opt for the less religious terms and 55% say it doesn’t matter.”

It is unlikely that changing opinions toward holiday observances will halt the “war on Christmas” complaints. Texas became the first state to pass a “Merry Christmas Law” this summer. It went into effect this

holiday season. AP reporter Will Weissert explained that the law “removes legal risks from exchanging holiday greetings in classrooms. It also protects symbols such as Christmas trees, menorahs or nativity scenes, as long as more than one religion is represented and a secular symbol such as a snowman is displayed.” Its sponsor, Houston Republican Dwayne Bohac said similar bills have been filed in state legislatures in Alabama, Indiana, Mississippi, New Jersey and Oklahoma.

Indiana’s Senate passed a bill to allow Christmas celebrations in schools. The unanimous vote on February 3 would allow public schools to decorate with Nativity scenes or menorahs if they are paired with secular symbols or with symbols from other religions. The controversy is likely to return next December. ■

Religious School Data, *continued from page 3*

really compete for students outside of their denomination or religious orientation.

The creation of faith-based schools is seen as an admirable strategy to defend religious faith. “The intention in none of these cases was to reject participation in American society, but rather to ensure that this participation would have strong roots in a particular religious tradition and could resist those aspects of American culture seen by parents as toxic.”

The report includes some interesting data not readily available from other sources. For one thing, 75% of non-sectarian private schools, 72% of non-Catholic schools, but only 20% of Catholic schools “do not participate in federal education programs.” As to race and ethnicity, about 71% of religious school students are white, 12% Hispanic, 9% black and 6% Asian, with a small number of “multiple races.” Compared to public schools, these schools have far more white students and fewer black and Hispanic ones. ■

A Proclamation for Religious Freedom Day, January 16, 2014

“Today, America embraces people of all faiths and of no faith. We are Christians and Jews, Muslims and Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs, atheists and agnostics. Our religious diversity enriches our cultural fabric and reminds us that what binds us as one is not the tenets of our faiths, the colors of our skin, or the origins of our names. What makes us American is our adherence to shared ideals – freedom, equality, justice, and our right as a people to set our own course.

“America proudly stands with people of every nation who seek to think, believe, and practice their faiths as they choose. In the years to come, my Administration will remain committed to promoting religious freedom, both at home and across the globe. We urge every country to recognize religious freedom as both a universal right and a key to a stable, prosperous, and peaceful future.

“As we observe this day, let us celebrate America’s legacy of religious liberty, embrace diversity in our own communities, and resolve once more to advance religious freedom in our time.”

--President Barack Obama



Church and State in the Courts

In a decision that could have far-reaching consequences, a federal court ruled on November 22 that an Internal Revenue Service exemption allowing clergy to shield some of their income from federal taxes is unconstitutional. U.S. District Court Judge Barbara Crabb held that the exemption, called the clergy housing allowance, “provides a benefit to religious persons and no one else, even though doing so is not necessary to alleviate a special burden on religious exercise.” Crabb, of the District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin, added, “The significance of the benefit simply underscores the problem with the law, which is that it violates the well-established principle under the First Amendment that absent the most unusual circumstances, one’s religion ought not affect one’s legal rights or duties or benefits.”

The housing allowance will affect at least 44,000 clergy and is worth \$700 million per year, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation’s Estimates of Federal Tax Expenditure. Religion News Service said the loss could “reduce the take-home pay of some pastors by up to 10%.”

Christianity Today reported that “84% of senior pastors get a housing allowance of \$20,000-\$38,000 per year.” Religious organizations were highly critical of the ruling, from the conservative Family Research Council to the liberal Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Crabb stayed the ruling’s effect, however, until appeals are resolved. The case, *Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc. v. Lewis* is expected to be appealed to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.



Abortion laws still face court rulings. The U.S. Supreme Court on January 13 let stand a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit that struck down Arizona’s ban on abortion after 20 weeks. The appellate court said such bans violate the standards set by the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. A Texas law with a similar ban, however, remains in effect until the appeals court covering that state makes its determination. The U.S. Supreme Court is also considering a Massachusetts 35-foot buffer law that bans abortion protests outside clinics, though this case is considered more of a free speech case.

A federal judge ruled on January 17 that a North Carolina law requiring women who seek abortions to have an ultrasound is a violation of free-speech rights. (That law required medical providers to describe the fetal image to patients.)



Ohio’s Supreme Court upheld the firing of a public school teacher who refused to remove religious materials from his classroom after re-
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Church and State in the Courts, *cont. from page 5*

peated orders to do so. The teacher, John Freshwater, taught eighth grade science in Mount Vernon from 1994 until his dismissal on January 11, 2011. He filled his classroom with fundamentalist religious material and supported creationism. Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor wrote for the majority that "Freshwater's willful disobedience of... direct orders demonstrates blatant insubordination. That insubordination is established by clear and convincing evidence, and the record fully supports the board's decision to terminate him on these grounds."

The court ruled, however, that the Mount Vernon School Board violated Freshwater's First Amendment rights by ordering him to remove his personal Bible from his desk. This apparently ends the long-standing dispute. The case is *Freshwater v. Mt. Vernon City School District Board of Education*.



A woman who claimed that her 2010 miscarriage resulted from application of Catholic bishops' health care directives filed suit against the American bishops on November 29 in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. Tamesha Means claimed that Mercy Health, a Catholic hospital in Muskegon, failed to inform her of options relating to a problem pregnancy. Supported by the ACLU, Means charges that the "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services," applied in all Catholic hospitals, resulted in negligent care. *The New York Times* endorsed her case editorially.



Oklahoma is living up to its reputation as one of the nation's most "religious" states. The Republican-controlled legislature authorized a privately-funded Ten Commandments monument in 2009, and it was placed on the north side of the state capitol grounds in November, 2012. The Oklahoma chapter of ACLU filed a lawsuit in August 2013 seeking its removal. The ACLU charged that the monument violates a provision of the state constitution which forbids using public funds or property to support religion "directly or indirectly."

On December 2 a new twist occurred when the Satanic Temple launched a campaign to donate a monument of the devil that would be "in good taste and public-friendly." Conservative legislators were not amused. AP's Sean Murphy reported, "The Oklahoma Legislature has taken other steps that many believe blur the line that divides church and state. The House speaker said he wants to build a chapel inside the Capitol to celebrate Oklahoma's 'Judeo-Christian heritage.' Several lawmakers have said they want to allow nativity scenes and other religious-themed symbols in public schools."

Back Issues of *Voice of Reason*

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ARL, PO Box 6656, Silver Spring, MD 20916

George R. Kaplan

George Kaplan, a distinguished educator and diplomat who served on the Board of Directors for Americans for Religious Liberty from 2002 to 2005, died on February 14. Kaplan, a native of Cambridge, Massachusetts, served in the U.S. Army during World War II and helped write the history of U.S. military occupation of Germany. Later, he was an intelligence analyst for the State Department.

For several decades, Kaplan was an independent consultant in the field of education and wrote books and article on education policy.

George was a great friend of public education and religious liberty and a loyal supporter of ARL. His counsel, wisdom and friendship will be missed.

—Al Menendez and Edd Doerr



Public funds may be used for the restoration of a historic church on Martha's Vineyard. Massachusetts superior court Judge Richard T. Moses ruled in November that an "injunction [against using \$32,000 in public funds] would not be in the public interest."

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) helps Massachusetts communities preserve various historic sites. CPA granted \$32,000 for restoration of stained glass windows at Trinity United Methodist Church in the town of Oak Bluffs. Ten local residents and taxpayers challenged the grant, saying it violated the state and federal constitutions. The church, which holds worship services weekly, traces its heritage to the Nineteenth Century Campground Association, and is on the National Register of Historic Places. "The Massachusetts Historical Commission has funded at least 12 rehabilitation and restoration projects of historic churches since 2002," reported the *Vineyard Gazette* on November 25.



Just when you thought court cases about crosses or other religious symbols on public property were a thing of the past, along comes a federal court ruling in California. A federal judge ruled on December 12 that the Mount Soledad Cross in San Diego, the fate of which has been in numerous courtrooms for more than 25 years, must be removed from federal land within 90 days. An appeal, however, could stay the order.

The 29-foot cross atop Mount Soledad near San Diego has been challenged in various courts for a quarter century. Supporters have claimed that it is a veteran's memorial. The location of the cross and its ownership have been the main subjects of the controversy, as well as symbolism. In 1989 Philip K. Paulson, a Vietnam War veteran and an atheist, challenged the cross as an example of government favoritism toward Christianity. After much legal wrangling, and contradictory court rulings, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled in 2011 that the cross violated the First Amendment. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the decision and sent it back to a trial court. Supporters of the cross are expected to appeal the most recent decision. ■



The Voucher Watch

• Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC) introduced a school voucher proposal (S.1909) on January 28. It would provide “start-up funds to states” to expand “school choice programs” and would create a “pilot school choice program for students living on military bases.” The “Choice Act” would strengthen and expand the District of Columbia voucher program. Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) introduced a similar bill (S.1968), which consolidates existing funding and allows states to create their own school voucher programs.

Their proposals would redirect the \$24 billion in federal funds that target students in poverty or with disabilities and would create block grants to the states. Each student would receive about \$2,100 and funds could be used for private and religious schools – the intended beneficiaries.

The pilot program for students at military bases would provide each student \$8,000 per year for elementary schools and \$12,000 for high schools. Its initial cost would be \$10 million annually. The House companion bill (H.R. 4000) was introduced by Rep. Luke Messer (R-IN) who chairs the Congressional “School Choice” Caucus.

There is clear political motivation in the “school choice” movement. *Washington Post* reporter Lyndsey Layton observed, “As midterm elections approach, Republicans are emphasizing an issue they think will be popular with voters.” Republicans hope low-income and minority voters will be attracted to these measures, despite repeated polls and referendum elections showing overwhelming opposition. Sens. Scott and Alexander unveiled their proposals before a friendly audience at the conservative American Enterprise Institute.

Democrats and supporters of public schools announced their immediate opposition to the Scott-Alexander schemes. Tom Harkin (D-IA), chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, said, “Any voucher programs that dilute resources to public schools, like that proposed by Sens. Alexander and Scott, would be a step in the wrong direction.”

Critics cite fragmentation of educational resources and programs and lack of accountability. Thomas J. Gentzel, executive director of the National School Boards Association, warned, “School choice is a well-funded and politically powerful movement seeking to privatize much of American education. . . . But our goal is that public schools be schools of choice. We need to invest and support public schools, not divert money and attention from them to what amounts, in many cases, to experiments.”

The American Federation of School Administrators warned on January 30, “Both of these pieces of legislation would strip public schools, especially those serving low-income communities and students with disabilities, of precious federal funding, and then would not hold those private schools receiving the funding to the same standards. Despite the false claims of voucher proponents, they simply do not provide equal access to high quality education or set high standards and accountability. Moreover, repeated studies show they are ineffective, lack accountability to taxpayers and strip students of rights otherwise provided in public school.”

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said that vouchers and tax credits “actually hurt the rest of the kids by destabilizing the public schools that the rest of the children go to in an already austere and under-resourced situation that we find in many of our high-need communities.”

National Education Association director of government relations Mary Kusler called the bills “a misguided proposal” which “ignores the

underfunding of grants to support low-income students.”

Both teacher groups objected to proposals that states which create the new voucher programs would be exempt from some existing teacher and school quality requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act.

• Alaska voters may have to decide whether to amend the state constitution to allow school vouchers if Senate Joint Resolution 9 is approved by the legislature. The voucher proposal is supported by the state’s Republican Gov. Sean Parnell. But one prominent Republican is opposed: U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, who told the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, “I have always had great anxiety with the thought that we’d take public money, state money, and send it to private schools.”

Murkowski said government should focus on making the public school system as effective as possible. Sending resources to the private sector could ensure that “mediocre schools” become inevitable in the public system.

A proposed constitutional amendment requires approval by 14 of 20 senators and 27 of 40 representatives before it can be paced on the ballot. The voucher amendment (Senate Joint Resolution 9 and House Joint Resolution 1) is facing increasing scrutiny. At least four Republican senators have expressed doubts at public hearings about the proposal’s effect on public schools. Also complicating the matter is Senate Bill 100, which would allow public funds to be used by correspondence school students to receive instruction from private religious schools.

Several conservative groups, including Alaska Family Action and the Alaska Policy Forum have offended legislators by their aggressive tactics. The *Anchorage Daily News* reported February 12 that “the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, a nonprofit that promotes private and religious education through vouchers, is already spending money on Alaska lobbyists.” The Alaska Public Office Commission, a watchdog agency, said the group had already paid \$30,000 this year for pro-voucher lobbying.

Ron Fuhrer, president of the National Education Association’s Alaska branch, called vouchers “a poor use of public resources.” Writing in the *Juneau Empire* January 26, he added, “The tale of vouchers has been told repeatedly and the moral of the story is that they result in some children being harmed and taxpayers being taken to the cleaners.” Fuhrer spoke from personal experience. “Within the last month, I have had the opportunity to attend several meetings where public education was a topic. At these meetings, a number of people spoke up about how much they love their children’s public schools. They were not interested in vouchers or tuition tax credits. Rather, they were concerned about adequate funding to maintain programs, retain teachers and support staff, and ensure that their children did not lose opportunities that were available to students in previous years.”

Alaska voters rejected a similar proposal in 1976.

• Louisiana’s voucher program does not properly evaluate the performance of schools that participate in the program, concluded a state legislative audit in December. The state education department also underpaid or overpaid 41% of the voucher schools during the 2012-2013 school year. There are 126 voucher schools and 6,769 students in the statewide voucher program.

Katie Ash detailed these problems in *Education Week*, December 16: “Under Louisiana’s law, private schools participating in the voucher

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The Voucher Watch, *continued from page 7*

program must have an A or B rating, but there is no standardized evaluation process to determine if these schools meet the criteria, the audit found. In addition, there is no formalized criteria to determine if participating schools have the academic or physical capacity to serve the number of voucher students they accept." Another flaw is "that the Louisiana Department of Education has not yet defined how to determine when a participating school should be removed from the program for poor academic performance."

Louisiana's voucher program faces legal challenges. "A recent ruling from a federal judge found that the federal government has the right to oversee the program's implications on desegregation efforts there, but should not hamper the implementation of the program either," wrote Ash. Further court orders are likely during the coming months.

- The pro-voucher Friedman Foundation issued a study in January, "School Choice Signals," in an apparent attempt to downplay recent opinion polls showing a decline in support for vouchers. Author Dick Carpenter is a professor at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and a "director of strategic research" for the far-right Institute for Justice.

Carpenter sees vouchers and tax credits as "reforms" that "expand school choice" despite considerable data to the contrary. Carpenter's own analysis of survey data admits that most Americans favor smaller class sizes, increased technology, and accountability rather than vouchers and tax credits as ways to improve the nation's schools. He grudgingly admits, "The fact that respondents preferred structural status-quo ideas after rating public schools in the U.S. somewhere between 'poor' and 'fair' means choice supporters still have much work to do to overcome an ideology favorable to the types of schools the vast majority of Americans attend and to which they send their children."

Carpenter's assertion that most Americans rate schools as fair or poor ignores the finding that most Americans rate their own children's school and those in their local community much more favorably.

Carpenter cites two Friedman Foundation surveys showing higher support for vouchers than the highly respected Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa polls (no surprise there!). He admits that support grew after "further definition," i.e., adding pro-voucher explanations to the survey question.

ARL president Edd Doerr called the Friedman study "misleading, manipulative and deceptive" since it ignored the nature and character of faith-based private schools and omitted any reference to the 27

statewide referendum elections that saw vouchers or tax credits defeated by voters.

- The Walton Family Foundation announced on December 17 that it will contribute \$6 million to the Alliance for School Choice in order to double the number of students receiving vouchers to attend private schools. About 300,000 students in 18 states and the District of Columbia attend private, mostly faith-based, schools under various voucher and tax-credit programs. The Waltons hope to expand that number to 600,000 by 2017.

- Indiana's rapidly expanding voucher program, which received \$81 million for the 2013-2014 school year, may be going to schools that teach creationism and "intelligent design."

The Indiana Department of Education announced data showing that 19,809 students attend voucher-supported schools, up dramatically from 3,911 students when the program began in 2011-2012. The number of voucher schools has increased from 241 to 313.

The Fort Wayne *Journal-Gazette* reported February 10, "Five area Christian schools that confirmed students are taught creationism or intelligent design, or included curriculum information on their websites stating that they do not teach evolution, received a combined \$3.9 million in state-funded vouchers."

Central Christian School in Fort Wayne, which received \$328,000 in state-funded vouchers, uses A Beka and Purposeful Design, Christian fundamentalist textbooks for science and math classes. (See *Visions of Reality: What Fundamentalist Schools Teach* by Albert J. Menendez, published by Prometheus Books in 1993.)

Suzanne Eckes, who teaches education law and policy at Indiana University, observed, "If we allow private schools to receive taxpayer money and still use these religious texts, are we then also changing the rules of the game?... We can't teach [creationism] in a science class at a public school or a charter school, but now we're giving money to voucher schools who are doing that?"

Associated Press reported that this situation could lead to a legal challenge. "Laws and court rulings limit what the state's public and charter schools can teach in science classes based on separation of church and state challenges. But the curricula of private schools that enroll voucher students haven't reached the courtroom."

The Fort Wayne area has seen an example of "creative bookkeeping" on the part of one voucher school. St. Jude Church indicated that the impending influx of tax dollars will be used for repairing the church steeple, redecorating the sanctuary, and repairing an aging air conditioning system. In a letter to parishioners, Rev. Jake Runyon urged more people to apply for the vouchers in order to "ease the financial burden on the parish."

A local attorney, Mark GiaQuinta, a member of the public school board and a graduate of Catholic schools, was outraged. "I am, nonetheless, dismayed and disappointed at this acknowledgement that the common school fund has become part of a shell game to support religious activities. It is my hope that community leaders will speak out forcefully to legislators and bring this sorry chapter of constitutional contempt to an end."

- Oklahoma and Tennessee have seen movement on voucher proposals during the winter legislative session. In Oklahoma, Republicans are pushing for an "education savings account" program that would pay private school tuition for designated students, similar to a program currently in place in Arizona.

Republican state senators in Tennessee are trying again to construct a voucher program. Republican Gov. Bill Haslam supports a very limited proposal that would apparently apply only in Memphis and Nashville. ■

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Updates

Governor Vetoes Prayer Bill

A bill designed to allow sectarian prayer in Virginia public schools, despite a 1962 U.S. Supreme Court ruling banning such practices, was vetoed February 20 by Democratic Gov. Terry McAuliffe. His veto action was explained by a spokesman, Brian Coy: "While the governor respects the right to exercise religious freedom enshrined in the Constitution, he is concerned about the bill's constitutionality and possible unintended consequences." The Republican-sponsored bill attempted to add the right to pray publicly and to engage in other religious activities as part of the state code, bypassing the state constitution.

Prayers before the Virginia House of Delegates, the state's lower legislative body, have also become contentious in recent years. Many legislators have requested more inclusive prayers that respect the growing diversity of the legislature and the state's population. House clerk Paul Nardo sent a letter to House leaders in January asking that "out of consideration to the persons of different faiths who will be present, prayers are respectfully requested to be ecumenical in nature." Still, 31 of the 32 invited clergy this session are Christians, and at least one gave a revival-style sermon.

Texas Approves Textbooks Covering Evolution

A major victory for science education came in the unlikely place of Texas in late November as the State Board of Education adopted new high school textbooks that include full coverage of evolution. Board members approved 18 biology texts that will be used for eight years in Texas high schools beginning in fall 2014. An attempt by religious conservatives to delay the process was repelled. While the creationist Discovery Institute blasted the decision, Josh Rosenau of the National Center for Science Education applauded the move: "The state will give students the foundation for the exemplary education they need to succeed in the 21st century." The Texas Freedom Network's Kathy Miller added, "It's hard to overstate the importance of today's vote, which is a huge win for science education and public school students in Texas." A special panel of expert reviewers, including two biologists and an anthropologist, reviewed the biology textbook and rejected claims that it contained factual errors.

Judge Censures Colorado School District

Colorado's Douglas County school district, dominated by voucher supporters, violated state campaign laws by financing a sympathetic report on their educational "reform" efforts. Administrative Law Judge Hollyce Farrell issued the Christmas Eve ruling that using \$15,000 in public funds to prepare and disseminate a report praising the district's educational policy changes violated the state's Fair Campaign Practices Act. (Another \$15,000 was provided by a district foundation, whose funding is not considered public.) The report was prepared and written primarily by Frederick M. Hess of the American Enterprise Institute, a right-wing think tank.

Judge Farrell concluded, "It was clear as discussed in the findings of fact, that the Hess Report was not a third-party unbiased study. To the contrary, the report was an endorsement of the reform agenda and explained the advantage of having a unified board to fuel that agenda. ... The

Hess Report was purchased with public money to influence the outcome of the board election."

Colorado voters soundly rejected vouchers by 67% - 33% in 1992 and by 60% - 40% in 1998.

Public-Funded Schools Teach Creationism

At least ten states and the District of Columbia allow creationism to be taught in schools funded by taxpayer money, according to *Slate.com*. Researcher Chris Kirk noted that state law permits creationist instruction in public schools in Louisiana and Tennessee. In a number of other states (Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Utah and Wisconsin), schools that participate in tax credit or voucher programs teach creationism. The Slate report found that 291 schools in these states teach creationism while participating in state-funded programs.

In addition, a charter program called Responsive Education Solutions receives \$82 million in taxpayer money each year in Texas. These schools "adopt a curriculum that seriously misrepresents the science of evolution," writes Kirk. Two of these charter schools that use creationist curricula are located in Arkansas.

Are Private Schools Overrated?

Some new studies indicate that public schools are doing better than private, charter or religious schools in several key areas. Two education professors at the University of Illinois, Christopher and Sarah Lubienski, said that "Public school students are outscoring their demographic counterparts in private schools... at a level that is comparable to a few weeks to several months." This was particularly true in mathematics. The higher test scores traditionally associated with private schools were factors of selectivity. Christopher Lubienski told *The Boston Globe*, "We know that private school students tend to score higher than students in public schools. But we also know that these are different populations, and they have different selection criteria. So we looked at the demographics of the different students in these nationally representative data sets, and we found those demographics more than explain the student achievement patterns." The Lubienskis also found that charter schools "were performing at a level lower than public schools." (See Edd Doerr review on page 14.)

Indiana researcher Steve Hinnefeld found that "public schools, overall, are performing better than charter schools or the private schools - most of them religious schools - that are getting state vouchers." He based this conclusion on a study of the "Indiana Growth Model," a statistical tool that measures students' test-score gains compared to those of students with similar academic histories. The 2012-2013 growth scores for the state's elementary schools found public schools outperformed private and charter schools.

A third study by Michigan State University professor of economics Todd Elder concluded that Catholic schools are not superior to public schools. "Across many outcomes, both academic and behavioral, we don't find anything that seems to point to a real benefit of Catholic schools over public schools." Though the socioeconomic status of students in Catholic schools should have produced a better outcome at the end of eighth grade, it did not, according to Elder's studies of math and reading scores from national standardized tests. Elder's study appeared in the *Journal of Urban Economics*.

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Religious Restrictions Loosened by Pentagon

U.S. Armed Service members may display their religious beliefs outwardly as long as the practices do not interfere with military discipline, order, or readiness. The Defense Department announced these changes on January 22. The “expression of sincerely held beliefs” may not be used as the basis for “adverse personal action,” according to the new regulations. The changes were praised by Muslim American groups but were criticized by the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund for not going far enough. The Sikhs praised the new rules for making some improvement but were concerned that the waiver policy will be decided on an individual basis. The Pentagon said its new policy “places a high value on the rights of members of the military services to observe the tenets of their respective religions.” A Pentagon press release said that the changes will “reduce instances and perception of discrimination.”

Science Teachers Oppose Creationist Bill

Virginia science teachers have expressed opposition to a bill in the Virginia General Assembly that would encourage classroom teachers to challenge evolution and global warming. The bill, sponsored by a Republican member from the Shenandoah Valley, says teachers should help students look at “scientific strengths and weaknesses of existing scientific theories,” which is clearly aimed at evolution. Such bills, backed by the Discovery Institute, which promotes “Intelligent Design,” have been adopted in three states. The Virginia Association of Science Teachers said teachers already have the freedom to teach about scientific debates based on scientific evidence. The group’s past president, Juanita Jo Matkins, observed, “The word ‘opinion’ and ‘belief’ are both used in this bill. If opinions and beliefs are to be used in classrooms, it undermines what science is.”

Abortion Politics

The Republican-dominated U.S. House of Representatives passed the so-called “No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act,” in January, even though its approval is irrelevant because the 1976 Hyde Amendment already bans most federal financing of abortion. Furthermore, the bill has no chance of passing the Senate. The new bill denies tax credits to small businesses that offer health insurance policies that include abortion coverage. *The New York Times* noted in a critical editorial on January 27, “The measure’s treatment of tax benefits as the equivalent of public spending for abortion seems especially strange in a landscape where people are permitted to deduct donations to religious institutions despite the constitutional ban on government support of religion.” The paper added that the action was “political theater of the absurd, staged to stoke up enthusiasm among the party’s core supporters.”

This rallying of the base can be seen in Colorado, which may face a third constitutional amendment on “personhood,” after two overwhelming rejections. In Oregon a measure outlawing the use of state funds for abortion may make it to the ballot in the fall.

Republican leaders are showing no let-up in their pursuit of anti-choice voters. The annual “March for Life,” protesting the *Roe v. Wade* decision, drew appearances from Republican Party chairman Reince Priebus and House majority leader Eric Cantor.

All of this is occurring just as the Guttmacher Institute’s 2011 survey on abortion incidence and availability found that the number of

abortions and the rate of abortion have reached the lowest level in 40 years. The research group attributed this decline to a greater use of effective birth control. (The report is “Abortion Incidence and Service Availability in the United States, 2011”).

Oklahoma Marriage Program: \$70 Million Failure

For the last dozen years, Oklahoma’s state government has spent \$70 million on a program to reduce divorce rates and make marriage attractive. This favorite policy of religious conservatives has failed.

Oklahoma’s divorce rate in 2012, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, is the third highest in the nation, behind Nevada and Maine. The “currently divorced” figure is 13.5% of adults, about two and a half percentage points higher than the nation. The Oklahoma rate has increased two percentage points since 2000, despite the passage of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. (This figure does not include those who were previously divorced and remarried.)

What’s more, most of the funds came from the state’s pool of federal welfare grants. Critics say the money should have been used to alleviate poverty. During this same period of time, poverty rates increased in Oklahoma from 13% to 17%. A quarter of Oklahoma households are headed by a female single parent, up four points since 2000. About 10% of Oklahoma adults cohabit in unmarried households, an increase of 3% since 2000. The number of all Oklahomans who are married has declined from 53.5% in 2000 to 48.5% in 2012.

These data made *Tulsa World* reporter Clifton Adcock wonder on December 2: “The trends have helped fuel questions among some leaders about whether the Oklahoma Marriage initiative and similar programs in other states are effective in a broad sense, and whether taxpayers should be funding such marriage-improvement programs.”

Abortion Rates Vary Widely

A study of international abortion trends from 1995 to 2003 found wide variations in geography but little differences between rich and poor countries. A major finding was that abortion is just as common in countries where it is illegal (and generally unsafe) as it is in countries where it is legal.

Abortion accounts for 13% of maternal mortality worldwide. About 70,000 women die annually from unsafe abortions and five million suffer permanent or temporary injury. Beth Fredrick of the International Women’s Health Coalition told AP, “The legal status of abortion has never dissuaded women and couples, who, for whatever reason, seek to end pregnancy... The continuing high incidence of unsafe abortion in developing countries represents a public health crisis and a human rights atrocity.”

“Developed” nations, which include Europe, Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States, had a higher abortion rate (50 per 100 live births) than “developing” nations (29 per 100). The vast majority of abortions in developed countries were legal and safe, while the overwhelming majority in the developing world were unsafe and illegal.

The highest abortion incidence worldwide came in Eastern Europe, where abortions actually outnumbered births. Other above average rates were found in eastern and southeastern Asia, the Caribbean, South America and southern Europe. Average rates were found in North America and northern Europe. Lower rates were common throughout Africa, Central America, south central Asia, western Asia, Oceania and western Europe. The study was prepared by the World Health Organization and the U.S.-based Guttmacher Institute, and published in *The Lancet*, a British medical journal.

Europe Divided Over Gay Rights

Eastern and Western Europe differ sharply over the issues of gay rights and same-sex marriage, according to recent opinion polls. The issue was highlighted by a December 1 referendum in Croatia, where 66% of voters approved a constitutional amendment defining marriage as “a union of man and woman.” But legal support for gay marriage is rising in Western Europe.

A French Institute of Public Opinion poll found strong majorities in favor of marriage and adoption rights for same-sex couples all over Western Europe, particularly in the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Spain.

Opposition is greatest in Russia, where 85% are opposed to same-sex marriage and 75% oppose any legal recognition of gay rights. Russia's new anti-gay “propaganda” law is fueling controversy, which spilled over into the Winter Olympics held in Sochi, Russia.

Michael Lipoka, editor at the Pew Research Center, noted on December 12: “Recent developments in Croatia and Scotland highlight a stark divide between Eastern and Western Europe on the topic of same-sex marriage. While several nations in Western Europe have made it legal for gay and lesbian couples to wed with broad public support, other countries across the continent are overwhelmingly opposed to such laws.”

Polls show support for gay rights in Western Europe ranging from 59% in Portugal to 92% in the Netherlands. In Eastern Europe only the Czech Republic gave majority support, (65%) for tolerance, in a European Social Survey poll. Greece was split evenly, while all other Eastern European nations were opposed. Opposition was highest in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania.

Republican States Scored

A Carnegie Mellon University study found that employers in Republican strongholds seem less likely to interview candidates for jobs if those candidates are or appear to be Muslim. Pew Research Center senior researcher Neha Sahgal reported on November 26, “In the 10 states with the highest proportion of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney voters in the 2012 election, 17% of Christian applicants received interview calls, compared with 2% of the Muslim job candidates. There were no differences in call backs received by the Christian and Muslim candidates in the 10 states with the lowest proportion of Romney voters.” (No other religions were included in the study.)

Romney strongholds include Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Oklahoma, Arkansas and West Virginia, among others. They are among the least religiously diverse states in the nation.

Conservative Churches Declining

A new study of denominational data gathered annually by the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* shows the boom in conservative Protestant church membership has stopped and may even be declining. The “conservative Protestants” lost at least 300,000 members between 2000 and 2010, according to the study prepared by Daved Roozen, director of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research. Young people are declining to maintain membership, he wrote in *The Christian Century* (December 3, 2013). “Studies suggest that the decreasing religious participation of each new generation of young adults is affecting virtually all religious groups.” He added, “The greatest decline in the period was among evangelical and black Protestants.”

What Roozen calls “oldline Protestants,” roughly akin to moderates and liberal Protestants, continue their decline. “For oldline Protestants,

the *Yearbook* data confirm a moderating rate of decline during the last 20 years of the 20th century, but show that decline reaccelerated at the turn of the century and that this stream of faith is currently losing members at a greater rate than ever before.”

Official Catholic data showed some decline, but this is because many nominal Catholics do not choose to register at local parishes (and rarely attend services).

Roozen also argued, “The dramatic decline in organized religion is unmistakable. The biggest decline among any age group within these families is among older evangelicals.” Since evangelicals form the major pool of Religious Right recruits, this decline may affect the long-term fortunes of this movement.

Promoting Catholic Schools

The Maryland Catholic Conference has expanded its efforts to extract more funding from the overwhelmingly Democratic state legislature. The church lobby is promoting the “Maryland Education Credit” bill, which would give businesses a tax credit if they donate tuition money for private and religious schools. Similar proposals have failed in the past. The state provides \$9.5 million to private schools through the Nonpublic Student Textbook Program and the Nonpublic Aging Schools Program, which upgrades infrastructure. The Conference went all out this year, declaring February 17 “Catholic Lobby Night” and March 4 “Nonpublic Schools Advocacy Day” in attempting to pressure legislators to increase aid to faith-based schools.

Republicans Love Clergy

The annual “Honesty and Ethics” poll by Gallup found that 63% of Republicans say the clergy have “high honesty and ethical standards,” while only 40% of Democrats and 42% of Independents agree. This 23-point gap may be due in part to higher church-going tendencies among registered Republicans. Jeffrey M. Jones of the Gallup Poll wrote that “Republicans’ tendency to be more religious is a key factor in their more positive ratings of clergy.” Republicans also gave police officers, military officers, pharmacists, doctors and business executives higher honesty ratings than Democrats, who preferred reporters, judges, lobbyists, nurses and teachers. Independents gave the highest favorable ratings to lawyers and advertising executives.

Obama Emphasizes Religious Freedom

President Barack Obama said that promoting religious freedom is a key tenet of U.S. foreign policy. Obama told an audience at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., “History shows that nations that uphold the rights of their people, including the freedom of religion, are ultimately more just and more peaceful and more successful. Nations that do not uphold these rights sow the bitter seeds of instability and violence and extremism. So freedom of religion matters to our national security.”

Continuing in that vein, the president chastised China, Iran and North Korea for repressing religious liberty. He reiterated that advancing religious freedom, especially for minority faiths, is a “regular part of our diplomacy,” noting his government’s efforts in Burma, Egypt, Syria, Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan and Pakistan.

The president praised Pope Francis for his expressed concerns about economic inequality and his criticisms of “trickle down” economics, views that coincide with Obama’s.

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Arizona Governor Kills Discrimination Bill

With the eyes of the nation upon her, Arizona Gov. Jan. Brewer, a generally conservative Republican, vetoed a bill that would have allowed discrimination under the guise of religious liberty. Arizona's Republican-dominated legislature passed a bill crafted by a Religious Right group, the Center for Arizona Policy. The law would have expanded the definition of religious free exercise, allowing individuals or businesses to define whether their actions are motivated by "sincerely held" religious belief. While aimed at gays and lesbians, it could have allowed religious, racial or ethnic discrimination.

The state's business and corporate communities, including the Chamber of Commerce, denounced the bill and warned that it would create a climate of fear and hostility that would make Arizona an unfavorable place for business and tourism.

Newspapers across the country urged a veto. The hometown *Arizona Republic* in Phoenix warned editorially that the bill "elevates the religious beliefs of some above the civil rights of others," adding that "using religion as an excuse to codify discrimination is wrong." Both of Arizona's Republican U.S. Senators urged a veto.

The governor's February 26 veto said the bill's "broadly worded content could result in unintended and negative consequences" and "has the potential to create more problems than it purports to solve and could divide Arizona in ways we cannot even imagine, and no one would ever want."

Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne Jr. praised the governor's decision as "a victory for religious liberty" and added, "Conscience should not be used as a battering ram to undermine any adjustment in the law that some group doesn't like. Using conscience exemptions to facilitate backdoor resistance to social change takes something precious and turns it into a cheap political tactic."

International Updates

Brussels: Eight of the 47 countries that are members of the United Nations Human Rights Council have persecuted religious minorities in their own countries in 2013. This shocking example of hypocrisy was made public in a December 30 report from the nonprofit group, Human Rights Without Frontiers International. The eight countries cited are: China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and South Korea.

"Human Rights Without Frontiers is alarmed by the evolution of the UN Human Rights Council, which accepts as members an increasing number of countries perpetrating egregious violations of human rights and, in particular, of religious freedom," the group said in a statement.

The UN Council is supposed to "uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights," according to the 2006 resolution creating the body.

Geneva: In a highly unusual setting, the Vatican was forced to defend its record on clerical sexual abuse of children before a U.N. committee on January 16. The eight-hour interrogation took place at

the offices of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. This was the first time the Vatican had been forced to defend or explain its record since signing an international treaty in 1990. AP reporters John Heilprin and Nicole Winfield wrote: "The Vatican was compelled to appear before the committee as a signatory to the U.N. Convention for the Rights of the Child, which among other things calls for governments to take all adequate measures to protect children from harm and ensure their interests are placed above all else."

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Vatican's U.N. ambassador in Geneva, told the committee, "Priests are not functionaries of the Vatican. Priests are citizens of their own states, and they fall under the jurisdiction of their own country." Critics responded that church officials and bureaucrats in many countries obstructed efforts to bring justice to victims.

The U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a critical indictment of the Vatican's handling of these cases on February 5. The report concluded, "The Committee is gravely concerned that the Holy See has not acknowledged the extent of the crimes committed, has not taken the necessary measures to address cases of child sexual abuse and to protect children, and has adopted policies and practices which have led to the continuation of the abuse by and the impunity of the perpetrators."

Catholic policies on homosexuality, abortion and gender equality also came under fire in the committee's report, provoking an angry rejection from Archbishop Tomasi.

One Vatican spokesman, Thomas Rosica, said, "This report makes a presumption that the church is a monolith with a headquarters like some global corporation that is dictating to the branch offices," suggesting that local dioceses are somewhat independent of the Vatican. In reality, all bishops are selected by the Vatican.

The committee report, which had no legal enforcement mechanism, urged the Vatican to adopt reforms and report back to the panel by 2017.

Kathmandu: While historically Hindu, Nepal became an officially secular nation in 2006, and made Christmas a national holiday in 2011. Many fundamentalist Hindus still object to the changes. A Protestant church was torched on December 23, and homes of four Christian converts were burned in the village of Kichet. "Nepali government spokesman and Information Minister Madhav Poudel downplayed the incident, dismissing claims that it was caused by an organized group," reported *AsiaNews*.

Kuala Lumpur: The dispute over whether non-Muslims can use the word "Allah" to refer to "God" still brings conflict in Malaysia. An October court ruling that reserved the Arabic word only for Muslims is blamed for a January 2 incident in Selangor in which Islamic authorities seized 321 Bibles from a Christian group. The Bible Society of Malaysia is now under investigation. Reuters correspondent Niluksi Koswanage reported, "The raid is a marked escalation from the occasional seizure at border checkpoints of Bibles imported from Indonesia. It was the first time Islamic authorities have entered premises belonging to a Christian organization to carry out a raid."

London: The United Kingdom granted asylum in January to an Afghan atheist who feared persecution if he returned to his homeland. It is believed to be the first time a lack of religious belief was considered a basis for asylum. Owen Bowcott, legal affairs correspondent for *The Guardian* newspaper, noted the significance of this action. "The Home Office's decision to accept denial of the existence of God as grounds for protection could set a significant precedent in asylum and immigration cases. The application was granted before the hearing stage at an immigration tribunal." Bowen added, "The status of atheism under the 1951 refugee convention is not consistently applied by countries around the world. Australia has accepted atheism as grounds for asylum for those fleeing religious persecution in Afghanistan. But the U.S. courts have dismissed claims, ruling that atheists do not have defined beliefs

Moving?

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for purposes of American asylum regulations.”

Madrid: Spain's proposed restrictions on abortion have unleashed a backlash of protest. On December 20 the ruling Popular Party introduced a draft law that makes the procedure more difficult to obtain. Reuters explained, “The draft law allows abortion only in the case of rape or if the pregnancy poses a serious physical or mental health risk to the mother. It eliminates the option of abortion on request in the case of malformation of the fetus.” The former Socialist government in 2010 allowed abortion up to 14 weeks, or 22 weeks in cases of severe abnormalities. Throughout January, opposition to the limitations grew. Prochoice activists demonstrated in Madrid and outside the Spanish embassy in Paris. Criticisms were openly expressed by French cabinet ministers and by members of the European Parliament. At this writing, a final parliamentary decision has not been made.

Mogadishu: Christmas was officially banned in Somalia when the Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs announced (on Christmas Eve, no less) that no Christmas celebrations would be allowed in the mostly Muslim country. Sheikh Ali Dhere issued his directive at a press conference. “We alert fellow Muslims in Somalia that some festivities to mark Christian Days will take place around the world in this week. It is prohibited to celebrate those days in this country.” He added that all security and law enforcement agencies had been instructed to enforce the ruling. Copies were sent to all hotels and other public meeting places. Somalia has come under the sway of fundamentalist Islam.

Montreal: Opposition continues to mount against Quebec's proposed secularism charter. A proposal that doctors, teachers, office workers and daycare staff be exempt from the provision banning religious garb, but not judges or police, was widely panned. The Jewish General Hospital and the 64,000-student University of Quebec at Montreal announced they would not abide by the proposal. So did the English Montreal School Board and the University of Sherbrook. The proposal is not popular among liberal or secular voters. The *National Post* commented on December 5, “Polls show that the secularism charter is most popular among Quebecers who know the least about other cul-

tures.” The paper added editorially that the “stubborn insistence on foisting it on Quebec society is poisoning the province's political culture, and casting her cherished separatist cause in further disrepute.”

Moscow: Recent legislation restricting gay rights, including a ban on the adoption of Russian children by same-sex couples in countries that recognize gay marriage, is a product of “a growing conservative movement in Russia spearheaded by the Orthodox Church and sympathetic lawmakers,” according to Adam Federman in *The Nation*, January 27. Federman added, “Its goals are not only to criminalize homosexuality, but to limit access to abortion and reproductive healthcare and to aggressively promote the ‘traditional family’ through state subsidies and other benefits.”

President Vladimir Putin is a strong supporter of these moves and has argued that “Russian autonomy is threatened by pro-gay and women's rights groups in the West.” Federman adds that Putin “urged Russians to embrace the conservative values of the Orthodox Church and other traditional religions.”

Federman stressed that American evangelicals are influencing Russia's drift to the right. “The church's close ties with American evangelicals reflect a shift in policy. For much of the post-Soviet period, the Russian Orthodox Church held evangelical denominations at arm's length, fearing that they would compete for influence within Russia. But as the church has consolidated its power, it has come to view the evangelical community as a partner.”

Vatican City: Monsignor Nunzio Scarano, a former accountant at the Vatican financial office, was arrested on January 21 for money laundering. Police in Salerno said Scarano had transferred millions of euros of fictitious donations from offshore companies through his accounts at the Vatican Bank. He is already on trial for attempting to smuggle euros from Switzerland to Italy. The Vatican fired him and has cooperated with Italian authorities in the prosecution and investigation. Pope Francis has made reform of the bank a top priority, and some observers think he may abolish it altogether, given his less than stellar enthusiasm for capitalism. ■

Books and Culture



The Religious Roots of the First Amendment: Dissenting Protestants and the Separation of Church and State, by Nicholas P. Miller. Oxford University Press, 2012, 242 pp., \$35.00.

Church-state separation, to hear the bumptious pontificators of today's Religious Right tell the story, is an alien graft on the US constitution by enemies of traditional religion. Those in touch with reality, however, point to Jefferson and Madison and the other constitutional founders, the Virginia developments of the 1780s involving Jefferson and Madison in the defeat of Patrick Henry's religious assessment bill, and the debates over the writing of the Constitution and Bill of Rights, areas well explored by numerous historians and legal experts, many of whose books have been reviewed in this journal.

But the story of America's adoption of the principle of separation of church and state is actually rather complicated. We can thank Nicholas Miller, a historian at theologically conservative Andrews University in Michigan, for very ably clarifying matters. Miller readily acknowledges the importance of the work of Jefferson and Madison, but shows that these Enlightenment thinkers had the good fortune to benefit from centuries of the stop/start, zigzag evolution of dissenting Protestant thinking about religious liberty and the importance of the rights of conscience and individual judgment.

Miller starts with Luther's Reformation thinking on the primacy of

conscience and individual judgment on religious matters, moves on to analyze the work of John Locke and John Milton, William Penn's influence on the development of Pennsylvania, Roger Williams' pioneering in Rhode Island, William Livingston's efforts in New York to block Anglican control of King's college, Baptists Elisha Williams and Isaac Backus in New England, and finally the crowning achievements of John Witherspoon and James Madison. Miller writes that Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists, cited repeatedly by the Supreme Court, while important, is not as clear and far-reaching as Madison's 1786 “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments,” which represented the thinking not only of Madison himself but the accumulated wisdom of generations of dissenting Protestants. Madison's document led to Virginia's passage of Jefferson's religious liberty statute and subsequent passage of the First Amendment. Miller says that the “Memorial and Remonstrance” is “arguably the most important statement on the reasons for disestablishment in American history”, and “draws distinctly on the idea of the right of private judgment, both in its religious and Enlightenment forms.”

While Miller does not get into the church-state problems roiling American waters today, such as diverting public funds to religious private schools through vouchers or some similar mechanism, he does say

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this in the Epilogue: “As far as funding religious entities and churches, the dissenting Protestant tradition is quite clear that such support steps over the proper bounds of church and state. This was true in any of Penn’s mid-Atlantic colonies, Roger Williams’s Rhode Island, and Madison’s and the Baptists’ Virginia.”

Miller’s book nicely complements the 2012 Oxford University Press book by T. Jeremy Gunn and John Witte, *No Establishment of Religion: America’s Original Contribution to Religious Liberty*, that I reviewed in the last issue of this journal. Both books merit the highest praise.

—Edd Doerr

The Public School Advantage: Why Public Schools Outperform Private Schools by Christopher A. Lubienski and Sarah Theule Lubienski. University of Chicago Press, 2013, 276 pp., softcover \$18.00.

For half a century now we have seen unrelenting attacks on our American public schools, coupled with endless drives to privatize education, mainly through the diversion of public funds to private schools by means of all sorts of voucher and tax-code voucher (tax credit) schemes. The two main forces driving this privatization movement (now that vouchers as a gimmick to avoid public school racial desegregation has faded into history) are conservative religious groups and supposedly “secular” market theorists like Milton Friedman, John Chubb and Terry Moe, the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, Students First (led by pseudo-reformer Michelle Rhee), and the Walton (Walmart) Family Foundation.

Christopher and Sarah Lubienski, both professors of education at the University of Illinois, allow the voucherizers and marketizers ample opportunity to push their worn thesis that private schools are better than public schools, a view that has influenced public opinion to a degree. This is seen in the annual Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa polls of public opinion on education issues over the past four decades. When these polls ask respondents to give a letter grade to public schools nationally, the grades are rather low. When asked about the schools in their community, the grades are rather higher. But when asked to grade the public school attended by their oldest child, the A and B grades are up around 80%. What this seems to mean is that many people have bought into the myth that our public schools are largely failing, all but the one they are most familiar with, the one serving their own child.

After giving Friedman, Chubb/Moe, *et. al.*, more than enough time to expound their thesis, the authors lower the boom. With statistical analysis of mountains of data from the huge data bases of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and High School and Beyond (HSB) they show that the seeming superiority of private schools is due to the demographics of their student bodies, which on average serve higher socio-economic status kids. The analysis is based on math scores, the ones least likely to be influenced by family and social background and most likely to reflect what goes on in schools.

The data sets for these analyses are broken down into six categories: public (not including charter schools), Catholic schools, Lutheran schools, conservative Christian schools, other private schools, and charters. The authors note that Catholic school enrollment is shrinking, while conservative Christian (i.e., Protestant) schools are not only growing but are by all measures the worst schools. The nature of faith-based schools has been amply explored in my 2000 book *Catholic Schools: The Facts* (Humanist Press), Albert Menendez’ 1993 book *Visions of Reality: What Fundamentalist Schools Teach* (Prometheus Books), and elsewhere.

The authors also make the point that public (non-charter) schools are the most likely to have the best trained teachers and the most advanced methods for teaching. And all this despite the shrinking funding of public schools.

The authors make their case without any mention of the sectarian indoctrinational nature of the vast majority of private schools or of the half century of 27 referendum elections on diverting public funds to private schools in which voters from California to Massachusetts and from Florida to Alaska opposed such misuse of public funds by a two to one margin.

This book is a must read for all who are concerned about the future of education in America.

—Edd Doerr

Countdown: Our Last Best Hope for a Future on Earth? by Alan Weisman. Little, Brown and Company, 2013, 528 pp., \$28.00

Alan Weisman’s astonishingly comprehensive and wide-ranging book not only brings us up-to-date on the complex intricacies of population growth – he visited 21 countries on five continents in writing it – but it also links it to a broad survey of what this growth in numbers is doing to the environment that sustains human and all other life. Bluntly put, while our numbers are increasing we are seeing what is happening to our world: climate change and global warming, rising sea levels, resource depletion, topsoil erosion, waste accumulation, deforestation, desertification, fresh water shortages, food crop disturbances, draughts, biodiversity shrinkage, overcrowding, increased pollution, and a rise in sociopolitical disorganization and violence. Increasing numbers of people on a planet that is being abused is a formula for disaster. Population will be reined in, either humanely and intelligently by us or harshly and murderously by nature.

Weisman makes all this eminently comprehensible. He leaves no stone unturned. He writes: “Except for volcanic eruptions, every emergency on Earth is now related to or aggravated by the presence of more people than conditions can bear.”

Weisman does not spare the religious leaders who have stood in the way of allowing sensible solutions to the overpopulation problem. He also notes that without over 40 million abortions per year, most in areas where they are illegal and unsafe, world population today would exceed 9 billion. Clearly, allowing women to control their fertility is essential to working our way through these problems. He also shows that equalizing educational opportunity for women is not only key to reducing family size but also to freeing women from the patriarchalism and misogyny that have bedeviled us for untold eons.

Countdown is not only a great read, but it is one of the most important books of this time. (Incidentally, some of the material discussed by the author appeared in *Voice of Reason* in our Spring 1992 and Summer 1994 issues.)

—Edd Doerr

The Global Vatican: An Inside Look at the Catholic Church, World Politics, and the Extraordinary Relationship between the United States and the Holy See, by Francis Rooney. A Sheed & Ward Book, Rowman & Littlefield, 2013, 291 pp., \$27.95.

Vatican diplomacy, especially as it relates to the United States, is an intriguing subject, and the author, who was George W. Bush’s ambassador to the Holy See from 2005-2008, mixes both history and memoir in this engaging and well-written book.

Happily, the author knows the difference between “the Vatican City State, the physical place,” and the “Holy See, the governing body of the Catholic Church which enters into diplomatic treaties and exerts influence in world affairs.” He adds, “The distinction has important implications.” But the terms Vatican and Holy See are almost interchangeable in common usage.

Rooney’s history of Vatican diplomacy is both colorful and factual. He notes, “America had intermittently employed consuls to the pope since 1797. These men worked essentially as freelance business agents, overseeing minor American trade with the papal states.” (The “papal

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states” was a civil government in central Italy and included such cities as Rome and Florence.) Congress ended the formal relationship in 1867, and that situation remained for the next century, except for limited contacts under Roosevelt and Truman. The formal initiation of diplomatic relations by Reagan in 1984 began a new chapter in U.S.-Vatican relations.

Rooney’s account of his days as ambassador is riveting and anecdote-filled. He makes it clear that “No president since Ronald Reagan had so truly appreciated, nor been so aligned with the values of the Holy See as President [George W.] Bush.” Bush made six visits to the Vatican as president, more than any other chief executive. This sympathy was further exemplified by Bush’s Executive Order 13427, issued on March 7, 2007, which “granted diplomatic privileges and immunities to the Holy See’s observer mission to the United Nations.” Rooney continues, “Rights conferred by the Executive Order were important symbolic measures to preserve and protect the special position that the Holy See occupied at the United Nations,” and because of this presidential action, “The United States publicly acknowledged Holy See diplomacy to be important.” (There were tensions, however, between the U.S. and the Holy See over the conduct of the war in Iraq.)

In a concluding observation, Rooney argues that President Obama’s “administration seems to exhibit little more than a perfunctory interest in the Holy See’s diplomatic role in the world.” Those who have doubts about the wisdom of U.S.-Vatican relations would no doubt prefer the Obama approach. The author acknowledges but generally dismisses those who oppose U.S. diplomatic relations with the Holy See and the Holy See’s preferential status at the U.N. Included, of course, are Catholics for Choice and ARL.

Rooney skirts the question of whether it is appropriate for the U.S. to maintain diplomatic relations with a religious entity, and he argues that “U.S. foreign policy has much to gain from our relationship to the Holy See.” Many would disagree, including John F. Kennedy, who, in a 1958 letter and a 1960 speech, argued that the U.S. has nothing to gain from such an endeavor. (Suffice it to say that Kennedy’s election “was a mixed blessing for the Vatican,” Rooney observes wryly.)

The author also avoids the question of whether or why all U.S. ambassadors to the Holy See for three decades have been Catholic, which the Jesuit weekly magazine *America* warned against in 1984. He notes that “many non-Catholic and non-Christian ambassadors from other countries serve at the Vatican with distinction,” and adds that “being Catholic is not necessarily a prerequisite for capable representation of the United States at the Holy See.”

But he suggests that a thorough knowledge of Catholicism and its

role in politics and history is a valuable asset because “at the end of the day, the Holy See is the home of a religion.” This is precisely the crux of the problem to critics of the post. There also remains that tricky Article VI of the Constitution, which bans “religious tests for public office.”

The Global Vatican is a useful and informative volume, and the extensive bibliography shows the author has read widely and deeply (including Leo Pfeffer’s classic 1965 book, *Church, State & Freedom*).

--Al Menendez

The Knights of Columbus: Crusaders for Discrimination. Catholics for Choice (1436 U St NW, Suite 301, Washington, D.C., 2009), 2013, 30 pp., \$15.00.

With 1.8 million members the Knights of Columbus is the largest Catholic men’s fraternal organization in the U.S., founded in 1882 as a service organization to help widows and poor families. As it grew it had a strong social justice component. In more recent times, however, it moved to pushing a conservative political agenda. In the 1950s the K of C pushed for addition of “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance. Still more recently it surged into political opposition to reproductive choice (contraception and abortion rights) and same-sex marriage, pouring vast financial and personnel resources into political campaigns, totaling over \$40 million between 2004 and 2012.

As this study highlights, “As an organization that devotes a great deal of attention to women’s reproductive issues, the Knights do not allow women as members.” Nor does the K of C seem to be overly bothered by clergy sexual abuse of minors. The report quotes Rev. Tom Doyle, canon lawyer and a leading advocate for abuse victims: “The Knights of Columbus have totally missed the boat. They have supported priests and bishops in their moral bankruptcy and in their destruction of the bodies and souls of the victims of abuse. They have said and done nothing to support the victims.”

This study, with its 286 endnotes, is part of Catholics for Choice’s “investigative series on those who oppose women’s rights and reproductive health.” I recommend it highly.

—Edd Doerr

Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future, by Robert Wuthnow. Princeton University Press, 2013, 498 pp., \$35.00.

Based on interviews and a wide range of data, this book focuses its attention on the one-tenth of Americans, some thirty million people in all, who live in “small, out-of-the-way places.” These isolated communities are increasingly seen as conservative in politics and religion. Emission

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nent sociologist Robert Wuthnow concedes that this is generally true. "Although it is the case that religious participation is somewhat higher in small towns than in larger communities, the differences are relatively small."

Political issues, rooted in religion, are common. "The specific moral issues of concern that residents of small towns most frequently mention are abortion, homosexuality, and schooling issues, such as teaching the Ten Commandments and the biblical creation story alongside evolution." But these attitudes are not monolithic. "Residents of small towns may be more conservative on average than people living in larger communities, but they are by no means overwhelmingly conservative."

Religious change has affected small-town life. "The proportion of residents in small towns that belonged to mainline Protestant denominations fell from 38% in the 1970s to 20% since the start of the twenty-first century. During the same period, the proportion of small town residents holding membership in evangelical denominations increased from 29% to 34% (Catholics held steady at approximately 20%, as did members of historically black denominations at 8%)."

At the same time, "small towns are well integrated into the national culture," and, "these small communities reflect the nation's larger economic and demographic trends, and participate in the same environment of media and entertainment."

--Al Menendez

Can We Save the Catholic Church? By Hans Küng. William Collins, an imprint of Harper Collins, 2013, 350 pp., \$16.99 paper.

Hans Küng, the doyen of liberal Catholic reformism, reiterates his endorsement of a democratic, scaled-down Catholicism, while denouncing what he calls the "Roman System." Küng has been making the same arguments for over a half century, since *The Council, Reform, and Reunion* appeared in 1961.

Küng calls for democracy, support for human and civil rights, the sovereignty of the people in a representative democracy, separation of powers, equality before the law, and free election of office-holders - all within the church's governing structure. "The short-sighted Roman Strategy of opposing the modern world relied on internal consolidation and outward isolation."

The author was hopeful that the Second Vatican Council, which he attended 50 years ago, would bring about substantial change. But these hopes were dashed, especially by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Küng is optimistic that Pope Francis will move the church in the right direction.

Küng, a noted theologian, says the church needs to "eliminate all forms of repression, restructure church finance, remodel canon law, allow priests and bishops to marry, open up all church offices to women and include clergy and lay people in the election of bishops." The church should recognize and respect other religions and those who are not affiliated with any.

He says little about church-state relations, world population, or abortion, which will disappoint many readers. There is also a good deal of material about obscure happenings in Swiss and German dioceses, which will be of little interest to readers elsewhere. Some judicious editing would have improved the final product.

As to economics, he calls for a church "which concerns itself above all with those who are poor, weak and marginalized; a Church which does not pile up wealth and capital but instead actively fights poverty."

Liberal Catholics will applaud these sentiments, as will progressives everywhere. But the clock is ticking. "The time is past when pope and bishops could rely on the obedience of the faithful."

--Al Menendez

More Desired Than Our Own Salvation: The Roots of Christian Zionism, by Robert O. Smith. Oxford University Press, 2013, 304 pp., \$29.95.

"Christian Zionism", not to be confused with Jewish Zionism, is a mainly American Protestant evangelical/fundamentalist movement typified today by San Antonio mega-church TV preacher John Hagee, known for his anti-Catholic and anti-Islamic views. Author Robert Smith, co-moderator of the Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Forum of the World Council of Churches, traces the development of this movement from its post-Reformation Anglo-American roots to its emphasis on an "American exceptionalism" based on "biblical" interpretations.

Among Smith's conclusions: "One gets the impression from Hagee's writings that the State of Israel is less important for the benefits that it brings to Jews (security and communal continuity, for instance) than to the verification the nation-state provides for his Judeo-centric faith." And: "As Judeo-centric English Protestants manufactured apocalyptic roles for Jews banished from their society, contemporary Christian Zionism is concerned less with flesh-and-blood Jews than with preserving its own Christian theological hope. Concern for the system outweighs concern for persons, whether they are Israeli Jews, Arab citizens of Israel, Palestinian Muslims, Palestinian Christians, or Iranians on whom Hagee has called for a preemptive nuclear strike."

--Edd Doerr