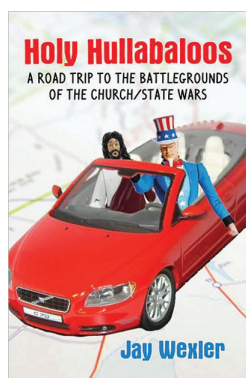


Religious Road Trips

Trite phrases aside, God's presence is not so readily apparent everywhere you look. In fact, the list of seemingly godless areas is quite long considering current affairs in places like the Congo, East Timor, and even certain neighborhoods in Los Angeles, all of which seem to revel in their inhospitality to divine elements of any sort. The following authors use excellent journalistic skills to document spiritual positives in unlikely locales, from Gaza to the East L.A.'s Dolores Mission.



Holy Hullabaloo:
A Road Trip to the Battlegrounds
of the Church / State Wars

Jay Wexler
 Beacon Press
 Softcover \$18.00 (288pp)
 978-0-8070-0044-1

The idea of a religious road trip is as at least as old as pilgrimages to the Holy Land in the Middle Ages. Much like one of those early pilgrims, Wexler, who teaches at

the Boston University School of Law, set off on his own journey to the sites of major conflicts between the church and the state. In a book that is by turns irreverent, obnoxious, arrogant, silly, and probing, Wexler examines a number of issues related to the practice of religion and its fraught relationship with the government with which these practices must co-exist. For example, he chats with an Amish farmer who was fined for keeping his children out of public school in Wisconsin; investigates a case in Hialeah, Florida, where the city passed laws to keep a Santeria church from performing its rites and rituals; and drinks a few beers at a bar that had once been shut down by a neighboring Armenian church. Among other subjects, he explores the exercise of government power by religious institutions, religious discrimination, religious liberty, religious symbols and displays, legislative prayer, school prayer, funding of religious schools, and religious influences on public school curricula. As much as he sometimes dislikes religion's attempts to legislate morality, he recognizes that religion can often be a force for good—as in the Civil Rights movement—and concludes that churches can only provide the critical function of calling the state to account for unjust behavior “if they are substantially separate from the state which they seek to criticize.” Wexler's book joins Timothy Beal's *Roadside Religion* in revealing the power of American religion in contemporary culture. (June) *Henry L. Carrigan, Jr.*

Jacob's Legacy:
A Genetic View of Jewish History

David B. Goldstein
 Yale University Press
 Hardcover \$26.00 (176pp)
 978-0-300-12583-2

Some reporters on the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict have remarked that Jewish violence toward Palestinians is genetic. While Goldstein, professor of molecular genetics at Duke, doesn't make such a strident claim, he does draw on his research to demonstrate that certain contemporary groups of Jews can be linked to certain ancient groups through their genetic imprint. In a book that is part detective story, part scientific experiment, and part religious history, Goldstein valiantly asks, “How much does the continuation of the Jewish people and of Jewish custom owe to a genetic continuity of the Jews and how much to cultural forces operating independently of hereditary connections?” His projects, among others, range over modern-day priests of higher and lower castes, peripatetic Jewish women and men from every continent, and an African tribe claiming descent from the patriarchs. For example, in the search for the genetic descendants of the ancient Israelite priesthood, Goldstein and his colleagues collected DNA samples from several hundred Jewish men to determine whether or not the men carried the “Aaron Y chromosome” that would link them to the Aaronite priesthood of Israel. Indeed, the researchers discovered that a small percentage of their subjects carried this gene and that the genetic link could be traced back three thousand years, or to the time of the priesthood in Solomon's temple. While Goldstein is the first to admit the limitations of basing history and identity on genetics alone, his theories provide fascinating insights into the ways that genetics can be used with archaeology and linguistics to uncover new secrets about ancient Israel. (May) *Henry L. Carrigan, Jr.*

