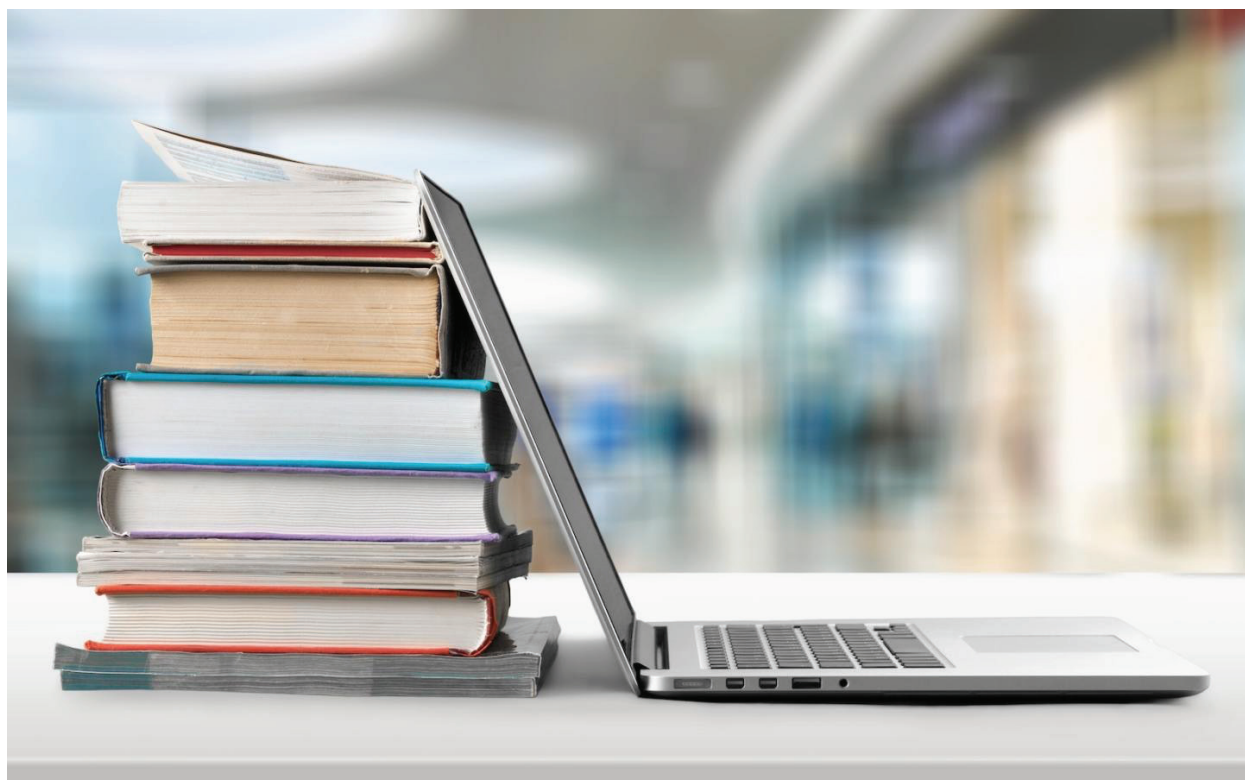


American Judaism's virtual and ad hoc future after the pandemic

American Judaism, long concentrated in large metropolitan regions and organized around major institutions, is giving way to a “new Jewish identity in which the internet now plays the role that urban neighborhoods once did as a hub of communal organizing and religious teaching,” write Joel Kotkin and Edward Heyman in *The Tablet* (February 17). These shifts have been accelerated by the pandemic as it has dispersed those from traditional urban centers to fast-growing regions in the South and West. The urban periphery, as well as primarily suburban, sprawling cities such as Miami, Los Angeles/Long Beach, Houston, Atlanta, and Denver, have seen the fastest Jewish growth. While small-town Judaism has suffered losses in recent decades, that may be changing, as even before the pandemic Orthodox Jews were leaving city centers and relocating to nearby small towns, such as in New York’s Hudson Valley and the Catskills. But these relocations are less important than the networks and online communities emerging to meet the needs of unaffiliated Jews. The emergence of ad hoc or “fluid” religiosity is also feeding the de-institutional trend (as seen in other faiths) and is especially prominent among millennials.

Kotkin and Heyman add that while the assimilationist Reform and Conservative Jewish movements may have been important for first- and second-generation Jewish immigrants, this form of Jewishness is now being criticized for accommodating the demands and pulls of America’s modern commercial culture. The high cost of living a Jewish lifestyle, including Jewish day school, synagogue membership, camp, and Federation-giving, doesn’t resonate with many younger Jews, and these institutions will likely be weaker after the pandemic. While Orthodox Jewish communities such as Chabad continue to flourish, Kotkin and Heyman note that other alternative groups are finding a following, such as independent minyans. These minyans, which have grown to over 60 groups in 36 American cities and 17 in 12 foreign cities, are organized by lay volunteers around worship and charitable activities.

In these groups there is an “unbundling” of the synagogue, with its component parts being carried out by bottom-up associations. One example of this is Atlanta’s Jewish Kids Group, a nondenominational after-school program that offers Jewish education “with a summer camp vibe



Source: My Jewish Learning.

outside the synagogue structure.” Another is a program called “Adventure Judaism,” based in Boulder, Colorado, where the rabbi frees people from their synagogues and video screens to encounter their Judaism as they “climb mountains, go skiing, play the guitar, and sing around a campfire.” Many of these organizations have strong online components that can draw support beyond one locality, especially important since Jewish federations have experienced sharp declines.

(*The Tablet*, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/the-new-american-judaism-kotkin>)

American congregations gaining a new audience amidst the digital divide

Congregations’ adoption of new offering and giving platforms during the pandemic shows how religious institutions are reaching wider followings but also experiencing greater inequality in the digital age, reports Arielle Pardes in *Wired* magazine (February 10). While at the start of 2020 about half of American churches used digital tithing services, Covid-19 greatly accelerated the trend, with one-third of churches that weren’t using a digital tithing platform having signed up for one just a few months into the pandemic. Givelify, a digital tithing service, reports that with its rising numbers of new users the gross amount of donations to churches on its service has remained steady during the pandemic (although there was a slight decrease in the number of



Source: *ShareFaith Magazine*.

donors in recent months). The company also found that one-third of faith-based organizations actually reported an increase in donations, especially ones with more of a digital presence.

In fact, churches with YouTube channels, Instagram pages, and prominent websites saw 533 percent more donations than those without such a presence. Another digital tithing service, Pushpay, says that churches have seen as much as \$500,000 in new giving a year after signing up for the service. “This means that half a million dollars was sitting there latent, but people started giving because they can now do it from their phone,” says Troy Pollock, Pushpay’s chief ambassador. Pardes adds that the company sees its payments platform as an entry-level product that can introduce churches to its other technological solutions. These include features allowing churches to upload sermon notes and prayer cards for members and a “church management system” that keeps data on parishioners and “can help churches to gently nudge their members to be more active, from attending services on Sundays to volunteering and teaching Bible study classes,” Pardes writes.

Such an acceleration in congregations’ use of new technologies could lead to massive changes like those seen in other industries, such as media and retail, as they moved online. In those cases, money, influence, and attention gravitated to a new small pool of “winners,” often at the expense of smaller outfits. “You’re going to have the top 40 preachers that everyone listens to, and the regular everyday preacher is not going to be able to compete,” says William Vanderbloemen, a former pastor and founder of the Vanderbloemen Search Group. He adds, however, that people “will still show up to hear a message from a pastor who knows their specific community on a

micro-contextual level.” Walle Mafolasire, Givelify’s founder, calls this the “Amazon-like way of experiencing faith.” People might still be “practicing with their local parish, but they’re also looking around more at other churches, and in many cases giving money to them too.” About 20 percent of Givelify’s donors have given money to multiple faith-based organizations. Mafolasire thinks that the churches that get ahead will be the ones that can magnify their online presence. “For those churches who saw their giving increase, it was coming from their ability to reach a wider audience.”

(*Wired*, <https://www.wired.com/story/covid-19-digital-divide-giving-american-churches-hell/>)

Racial issues generating new evangelical debate—or a lack of one?

New ideas about race and racism are dividing American evangelicals, adding to conflicts over evangelical support for former President Donald Trump, according to an article in *First Things* magazine (February). The controversy over how extensive racism is in the church and in society has become new artillery in the culture wars, particularly in relation to what is called critical race theory. This is most visible in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), a denomination that has sought to reach out to African Americans in recent years even as it continues to grapple with its past connection to slavery, segregation, and racism. The



Source: EmbraceRace.

controversy came to a head when the presidents of six SBC seminaries issued a statement reaffirming the denomination’s stance on the incompatibility of critical race theory and intersectionality with its values prompting some black clergy and congregations to withdraw from it. Theologian Carl Truman writes that as a whole, the evangelical movement, “strained to the breaking point by the Trump presidency now faces the very real possibility of coming apart over race.”

Himself an opponent of critical race theory, Truman writes that the controversy is not so much over the acknowledgement of past and even present racism in evangelical ranks as over the claim that racism “is of the very essence of white American evangelicalism.” Such proponents of critical race theory as Robert Jones of the Public Religion Research Institute and Jemar Tisby argue that wider church teachings and worship practices are affected by systemic racism and white supremacy. More radical critics have argued that evangelical teachings on gender and sexuality “intersect” with the history of white supremacy in the SBC and other denominations—an argument that is likely to intensify polarization in churches. Truman concludes that having conversations over race and these theories in the evangelical world is now more difficult because such establishment evangelical institutions as *Christianity Today* and the Gospel Coalition have restricted debate and tend to favor those who criticize systemic racism.

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

Snake handling getting less dangerous and more public

Pentecostal and Holiness churches that practice snake handling are rethinking their longtime rejection of medical care and belief that it shows a lack of trust in God’s healing powers, writes Julia Duin in *National Geographic* magazine (February 1). Much of this change in theology has taken place among younger serpent-handling preachers after a number of deaths of leaders in the movement. Ralph Hood, a University of Tennessee scholar studying snake handlers, says that refusing to call 911 is viewed as old fashioned, with some reasoning that while the



Snake handling at the Church of God with Signs Following at Lejunior in Harlan County, Kentucky, 15 September 1946 (NARA). Photo by Russell Lee.

Bible might teach serpent handling, there is no prohibition against seeking help for serious bites. David Kimbrough, author of *Taking Up Serpents: Snake Handlers of Eastern Kentucky*, says theological differences may help explain the various approaches. In Kentucky, snake handlers are trinitarian, conducting baptisms in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and they tend to refuse to visit doctors when bitten by a snake. Further south, however, pastors who

baptize only in the name of Jesus (Oneness Pentecostals) are more likely to call for help in an emergency. Hood adds that with this compromise the power of the snake handling message may have been lost: “What meaning does this high-risk behavior have if you’re allowed to go to a doctor for the outcome?” he asks.

Along with the softer message, the younger snake handling preachers are less strict than their elders. One such preacher, Andrew Hamblin of the Free Pentecostal House of Prayer in Kentucky, is divorced and remarried and welcomes those whom other churches might shun. He has also broken a major taboo by allowing his services to be filmed as part of a reality show, upsetting “many old-time handlers, who felt the program commercialized their beliefs. They preached against the show and have since banned any sort of filming within their churches,” Duin reports. Such critics also claim that many of the media-friendly handlers no longer wait for “God’s anointing”—a bestowal of the Holy Spirit’s presence—before engaging in the practice. Kimbrough says the younger generation needs “to focus more on healing, speaking in tongues, and casting out demons.” Opening church doors to a wider world in the hopes of attracting nonbelievers has been “something of a double-edged sword for many of today’s younger snake-handling preachers,” she adds. One such preacher, saying he had been ridiculed by other Christians, had pulled back from public snake handling. But Duin reports that he had since received a vision to open up his church for “far larger—and better publicized—serpent-handling services. He hoped to begin, he announced on Facebook, as soon as the pandemic was tamed.”

(*National Geographic*, <https://api.nationalgeographic.com/distribution/public/amp/animals/2021/01/snake-handlers-appalachia-changing-practices?>)

CURRENT RESEARCH

● **Pastoral care in churches has gradually shifted from specific religious teachings to a more ecumenical spirituality and from concerns about human nature and morality to an emphasis on personal narratives, according to a study in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (online in February).** John Bernau of Emory University studied more than 4,000 articles from 71 years (1947–2018) of issues of the *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, the oldest and most ecumenical and interfaith (including Jewish religious) journal in the field, with a readership among academics, chaplains, clergy, counselors, and psychologists. He found that, reflecting declining religious authority since the mid-twentieth century, there was a decline in content dealing with the universal basis of human nature, replaced by an individualistic emphasis on personal narrative and experience. “Today, heightened attention to religious pluralism and cultural diversity has narrowed pastoral discussions to focus on individual experience and the construction of personal meaning,” Bernau noted. There was also a decrease in explicit Christian language and shift to quasi-secular spiritual terms, such as “love” “heart,” and “breath.” More unexpectedly, a decline was observed in discussions about the related professions of psychology and psychiatry, which could mean greater independence and boundary maintenance between

these professions and religious professionals. However, Bernau noted that chaplains now regularly address evidence-based approaches to pastoral care.

(*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/14685906>)



Source: The Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, Inc.

● **A new Pew study finds that black Americans attend church and pray more often than the overall U.S. population.** The survey found that 90 percent of black adults are likely to believe in God or a higher power compared with 72 percent of the U.S. general population, and that they are also more likely to report that they attend religious services regularly than is the broader population. In a first of its kind study of African Americans, the survey found 54 percent of Blacks to say they prayed at least a few times a month, compared to 28 percent of the general population. As for religious affiliation, 66 percent of black Americans are Protestant while 6 percent are Catholic and 3 percent identify with other Christian faiths; 3 percent belong to other non-Christian faiths; and 21 percent don't identify with any religion. Of the churches they attend, 60 percent say they attend religious services at places where most or all of the other attendees, as well clergy, are also black. In contrast, 25 percent attend places with multiracial congregations, and 13 percent belong to predominantly white or other race congregations. Three-quarters agree that black churches play "some" role in advancing racial equality, although 33 percent say that black congregations should preserve a more traditional character.

(*The Pew study can be downloaded at:* <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/02/16/faith-among-black-americans/>)

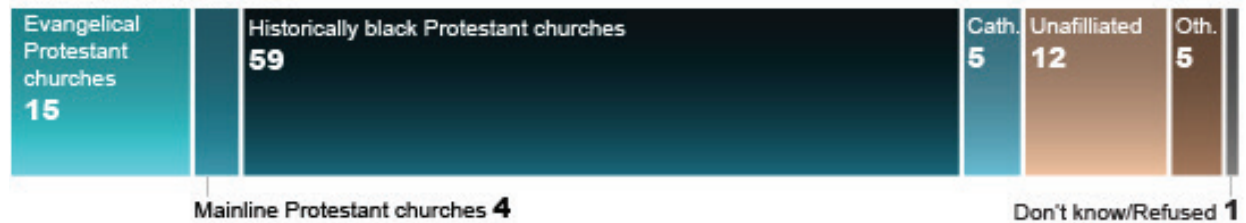
Religious Composition

All numbers shown are percentages.

Total U.S. population



African-Americans



Source: Pew Forum U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, conducted in 2007, released in 2008

Note: Due to rounding, totals in this report may not sum to 100, and nested figures may not sum to the subtotals indicated

• **More than a quarter of white evangelical Protestants hold to QAnon conspiracy theories, according to a recent survey by the American Enterprise Institute (February 1).** The survey reported that 29 percent of Republicans and 27 percent of white evangelicals agree that the widely debunked QAnon conspiracy theory that Donald Trump is secretly battling a cabal of pedophile Democrats is completely or mostly true. About half of white evangelicals express support for the claim that Antifa was responsible for the recent siege at the U.S. Capitol. QAnon has found a following in other faiths, though to a lesser extent: 15 percent of white mainline Protestants, 18 percent of white Catholics, 12 percent of non-Christians, 11 percent of Hispanic Catholics, and 7 percent of Black Protestants say they believe it. The survey also found that large segments of each faith “weren’t sure” whether the theory was true, ranging from 37 percent of non-Christians to 50 percent of Hispanic Catholics”.

(The report can be downloaded at:
[https://](https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/after-the-ballots-are-counted-conspiracies-political-violence-and-american-exceptionalism/)

www.americansurveycenter.org/research/after-the-ballots-are-counted-conspiracies-political-violence-and-american-exceptionalism/)



● **The Protestant/evangelical movement in Mexico grew from 7.5 percent in 2010 to 11.2 percent last year, according to the country's 2020 census.** Contradicting the notion that Mexico has been an exception to the evangelical growth that has challenged Catholic dominance in much of Latin America, the new census figures also suggest that the country is seeing an accelerating drop in people claiming to be Catholic. *Christianity Today* magazine (February 8) reports that it took half a century—from 1950 to 2000—for the proportion of Catholics in Mexico to decrease from 98 percent to 88 percent. But only two decades later, that figure dropped another 10 points to 77.7 percent. As Protestantism has risen in the still majority-Catholic country, so has the proportion of non-affiliated Mexicans. The census shows that the proportion of those with no religion rose from 4.7 percent to 8.1 percent, while an additional 2.5 percent of Mexicans consider themselves believers but don't have a religious affiliation.



Protestants in Rural Mexico. One sees many small newly built churches in Yucatecan villages (© 2012 Melinda Young Stuart, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/melystu/8576957299>).

Yoga in pandemic times: fitness or religion?

A legal case in Switzerland is once again raising the question of the religious nature of yoga and similar practices, especially during a public health crisis. A yoga studio in the Swiss canton of Aarau has refused to shut its doors despite federal sanitary regulations temporarily banning sport and fitness activities, including yoga and dance studios. Yoga teacher David Scherwey considers his work a spiritual activity to which the country's rules allowing religious meetings with adequate distance and an upper limit of 50 participants should apply, according to reports in the Swiss media. While yoga and similar practices have been a matter of dispute in a variety of countries and contexts (e.g., in regard to the permissibility of teaching yoga at public schools), the case also touches on wider issues of the boundaries of religion in a time of individualized spiritual practices, writes Simon Hehli in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (February 5). On the welcome page of his yoga studio's website, Scherwey stresses that his teaching has nothing to do with "sports yoga" and asserts the spiritual dimension of yoga to be central.

Moreover, he states that the physical presence of yoga students is necessary to create a sacred space in which individuals can experience themselves as transcendental beings, something that a livestream class cannot replace. Because of this spiritual dimension, Scherwey claims that his yoga studio should enjoy the same measure of freedom granted to religious meetings despite the



Drmirshak, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons.

pandemic. In a legal brief made available on Scherwey's website, lawyer Patrick Villos agrees that a 2013 decision of the Swiss Federal Court had considered some yoga exercises to be permissible at a kindergarten only to the extent that they were purely physical and not associated with any religious or sacred symbols. Scherwey has insisted precisely that such practices be explicitly and openly spiritual, however. But such an argument has not convinced the local authorities, who argue that the simple claim that a practice is religious does not constitute sufficient grounds for making it a religion. The police have intervened to close the doors of the studio, but Scherwey has announced that he will not give up, and it looks likely that some judges will once again have to deal with the definition of religion and the nature of yoga.

(Website of Yoga Atelier (in German): <http://www.yogaatelier.ch/>)

Pandemic intensifies ultra-Orthodox defections in Israel

The spread and impact of Covid-19 has “shaken the assumptions of some in the insular ultra-Orthodox world, swelling the numbers of those who decide they want out,” writes Isabel Kershner in the *New York Times* (February 17). Organizations that assist ultra-Orthodox Jews in leaving the fold or managing the transition into modern Israeli society have reported a rise in the demand for their services. Although there is no clear estimate on the scale of defections, Naftali



Source: Nick115, Pixabay).

Yawitz, head of the division of the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry that helps fund such organizations, said there has been a “very significant wave” in recent months of both new leavers and ex-ultra-Orthodox seeking help. One such organization, Hillel, which operates an emergency shelter with the ministry and halfway apartments for leavers, has also reported a 50 percent increase in former ultra-Orthodox seeking help in the past year. These defectors continue to leave even when their families cut them off. “This was just what the ultra-Orthodox rabbis had feared and why some were so insistent on keeping their religious education institutions open in violation of lockdown regulations,” adds Kershner. Even before the coronavirus, the number of young adults leaving ultra-Orthodox (or Haredi) communities had reached about 3,000 a year, according to data up to 2018 from the Israel Democracy Institute.

The pandemic has also widened the split between the Israeli mainstream and the ultra-Orthodox, who have been hit hard by the virus and have been criticized for defying antivirus measures. For years, officials and experts have maintained that the rapid growth of the ultra-Orthodox population threatens the economy due to the high number of Haredi men studying Torah full time and subsisting on government welfare. Most Haredi women work in low-grade jobs to support their families. Those concerns have persuaded the government to offer financial incentives to young Haredi adults to forgo full-time study in religious seminaries, enlist for military service (an obligation for most other Israeli 18-year-olds), and take academic or training courses. Under the new policies, those who leave Haredi communities will be eligible for the same benefits.

Indonesia cautiously encourages solidarity with Muslim minorities abroad

While the role of Islam has increased in Indonesia’s foreign policy and efforts have been made to promote the rights of Muslims persecuted abroad, the government has also taken its economic interests, regional relations, and domestic politics into consideration, while its own experiences have made it aware of the complexity of conflicts involving Muslims, writes Ann Marie Murphy in an analysis published by the *Asan Institute for Policy Studies* (December). Those factors have encouraged a low-profile approach. During the years of Suharto’s authoritarian regime (1965–1998), Islam had no place in Indonesian foreign policy. New possibilities opened with the democratic era. While playing the Islamic card was not undisputed, some saw a chance in promoting Indonesia as home to a moderate form of Islam. The Bali bombings in 2002 and the existence of Islamic radicalism in the country made that option less attractive, however, with some political figures expressing concerns that using Islam as a foreign policy card might actually empower Muslim radicals. Moreover, since Indonesia’s Muslims are far from monolithic, the government has been wary of creating domestic tensions. Islam is not absent from Indonesian statements on international relations, but the government actually addresses different audiences in attempting to emphasize that Islam is diverse (including not only Wahhabism) and is compatible with a democratic and tolerant society.

Murphy links the presence of Islam in Indonesia's foreign policy to its interest in having closer relations with Muslim countries (and gaining legitimacy with pious believers at home) as well as its solidarity with Muslim victims of conflicts abroad. Recent incidents of violence against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar put domestic pressure on the Indonesian government. It expressed public concern for the plight of the Rohingya and called on the government of Myanmar to prevent violence, as well as encouraging support for humanitarian organizations



Gunawan Kartapranata, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons.

helping the Rohingya. Yet it also shielded Myanmar from attempts by Muslim countries to activate the International Court of Justice (ICJ), claiming that constructive engagement with Myanmar would better help the cause of the Rohingya. Indeed, Myanmar is a regional partner of Indonesia, as both are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Murphy notes that the fate of Uighur Muslims in China has not triggered the same outrage among Indonesians. This had initially made it easier for the Indonesian government to largely accept China's claims that its repression only targeted separatism and terrorism. Later it became more difficult to ignore the fate of the Uighurs, especially as this was used by hardline Islamic groups for attacking the government in the context of domestic politics. The government had to express solidarity with the Uighurs without irritating China or empowering Islamist opponents.

(The paper can be downloaded from the website of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies: <http://en.asaninst.org/contents/islam-in-indonesian-foreign-policy-the-limits-of-muslim-solidarity-for-the-rohingya-and-uighurs/>)

Monastic education assumes prominent role in Myanmar

Monastic schools are a key mechanism in Myanmar's education system to combat marginalization and aiming to include the poorest in society, as the government has come to recognize their importance in delivering education to segments of the population where the state system might be unable to reach, writes Marie Lall (UCL Institute of Education) in a chapter on



Source: MarlyneArt, Pixabay.

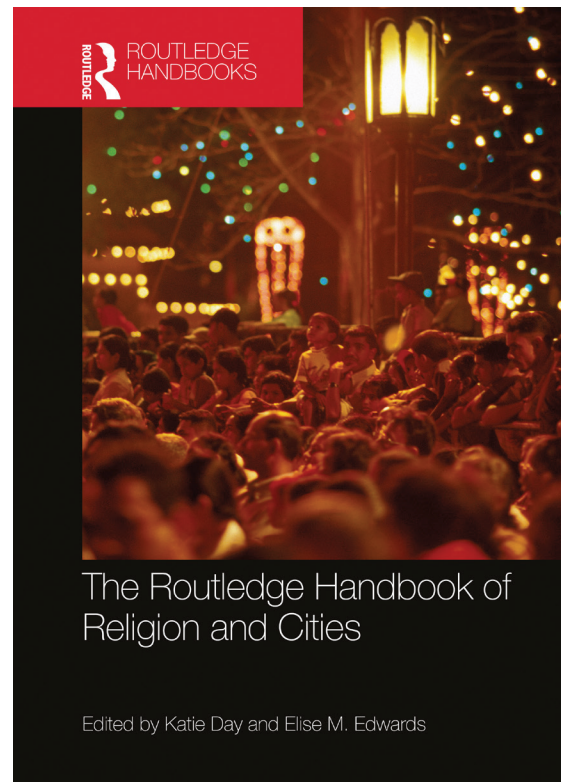
alternative monastic education of her newly published book *Myanmar's Education Reforms: A pathway to social justice?* (UCL Press, University College London, £ 25, open-access PDF available). Monastic schools have been in existence in Myanmar for centuries and have been the main vehicle for inclusion in education by offering schooling to poor children. The introduction of the British modern, secular education system in the colonial days led to a decline of the monastic system. It survived centralized schooling after independence, since the state schools could not reach across the whole country. They officially reopened in 1992, and more monastic schools were encouraged to open, with the use of the curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Education and registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Monastic schools have now become more prominent than ever since independence.

Since 2013-2014, registered monastic schools receive financial support from the state. More than 300,000 students attended registered monastic schools across Myanmar in 2016, with only 12 percent of them being novices, while the other pupils were ordinary boys and girls. There are a small number of middle schools and an even smaller number of high schools. Students tend to consist of children whose parents could not afford state schools. Interestingly, although they represent only three percent of the student population, monastic schools absorb 45 percent of all students with disabilities. There are networks of head nuns and abbots cooperating with each other and discussing issues related to these schools. In 2011, the Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG) was established in order to improve monastic education and offer

administrative training. Despite some reluctance, not least from parents, monastic schools seem also to be open for innovative educational methods. An interesting aspect of monastic schools is their role for maintaining the culture of Buddhist ethnic nationalities such as the Mon, Karen (70 per cent of whom are Buddhist), Shan, and Pa-O. This varies from state to state and, in a majority of cases, the ethnic languages are not used for regular teaching, but rather for culture and language summer schools.

Findings & Footnotes

■ The new book *The Routledge Handbook on Religion and Cities* (Routledge, \$250; e-version, \$47.65), edited by Katie Day and Elise Edwards, presents the state of the art on research about religion in the urban context. In the introduction, Day and Edwards write that while there has been renewed attention to religion and cities, there has been less focus on the specific places and spaces and how they interact with religious institutions at the community level. Through ethnographic research, the contributors cover a wide range of cities and their institutions and their interaction with organized religion and unorganized spirituality. The chapters on the more institutional expressions of urban religion show new trends and areas of research, including the new ministry to refugees in Europe, interfaith social activism, and the ever-present pressures of gentrification, particularly the demands and negotiations over religious properties and buildings as they transition to secular uses. The contributors also shows how non-institutional religion is fleshed out in urban life, including the role of theology among protestors in Hong Kong, religion and violence in urban contexts, and the religious presence in public art.

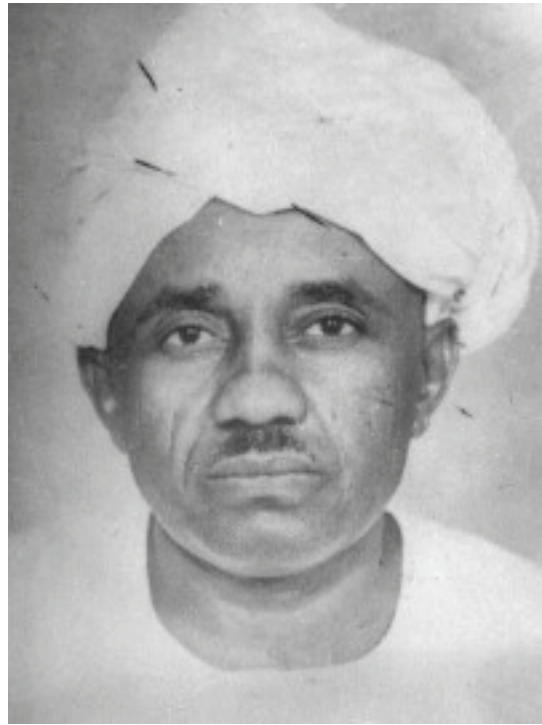


As the book went to press, Covid-19 became a new challenge for religion in cities and for those studying this subject. At its beginning in early 2020, cities were often stigmatized and associated with contagion, and there was a movement of populations away from cities, the editors note. Although most of the chapters don't cover the effect of the virus on their research, the pandemic will likely have long-term effects on urban congregations, and the editors note that there are now methods to study such realities with the creative use of new technologies. **RW's** editor and sociologist Hans Tokke did manage to include a last-minute epilogue on Covid in their chapter on the phenomenon of "super-diversity" (increasing diversity driven by immigration) in a neighborhood in the New York City borough of Queens. We found that much of the way congregations deal with diversity both internally and in their neighborhood

continued in what had become an early epicenter of Covid, as they protected members through shutting down, even while extending their resources to needy residents and health workers. Before (and most likely after) the pandemic, this chapter finds congregations fill various niches in a religious ecology of superdiversity, with some specializing on ministering to specific ethnic groups and others taking a “generalist” role as they seek a wider cultural and geographical following.

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

The Republican Brotherhood, a reformist and esoteric Muslim movement from Sudan, has largely been dispersed to the Gulf States and the U.S., but in the process, it faces new difficulties in sustaining itself. The Republican Brotherhood was founded in 1956 by Mahmoud Mohamed Taha to promote social reform based on divine revelations he claimed to receive. The movement, only numbering in the thousands, faced opposition and persecution in going against Islamist currents in Sudan, especially as it protested against the imposition of sharia law in the country and supported gender equality. Since Taha was executed in 1985, the Republican Brothers have gradually resettled to the Gulf States of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, and the United States. Because no official leader followed Taha, the propagation of Republican Brotherhood teachings has relied on individual initiatives.



Source: <https://www.alfikra.org>

Facing less restrictions than in the Gulf States, the brothers have felt free to promote their teachings in the U.S. (especially though their specialty of street preaching), though they have faced poverty along with other Sudanese immigrants and experience tensions over immigration (many non-Republican Brothers have applied for asylum claiming they are members of the heterodox movement). Although Republican Brothers have refrained from attending mosques since the 1970s, they still regularly gather for prayers and hold recruiting events, usually in college towns, as well as keep connected through social media. Most Republican brothers in the U.S. and in other diasporas still return annually to Sudan, especially as a civilian government has recently been installed and a handful of members have been appointed to high positions in the government. Abdullah Ahmed An-Na'im, a legal scholar at Emory University, is considered an intellectual leader of the movement. (Source: *Religions*, 12: 100)