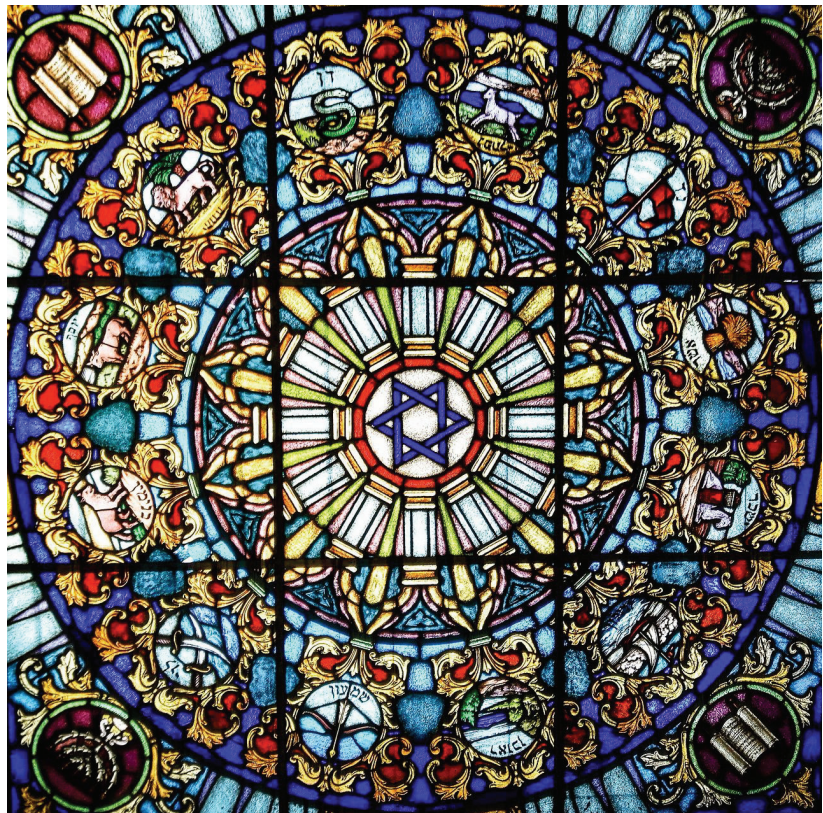


Psychedelics' long trip into mainline Christian and Jewish institutions

While psychedelic substances have been making the rounds of alternative and mystical spiritual groups for several years, they are only just being embraced in liberal Christian and Jewish circles, where a mood of skepticism and caution still surrounds them. In a two-part series on the topic in *Lucid News* (April 20 and May 4), Don Lattin describes how liberal clergy were among the first to experiment with mushrooms, LSD, and other psychedelic drugs for religious and spiritual purposes in the 1960s.

Since then, however, the baton of experimentation had been taken up by alternative and Eastern spiritual movements and practitioners, as well as secular researchers treating such mental disorders as PTSD and depression. Now there is more institutional Christian and Jewish interest in and support for psychedelic use, with the founding of the Jewish group, Shefa, and the Christian psychedelic society, Ligare. Some two-dozen religious professionals inexperienced in psychedelic use have recently participated in a yet-to-be-published study conducted by Johns Hopkins and New York University.



Source: TuendeBede | Pixabay.

Lattin interviewed some of the participants and found a range of reactions to the experience—from a crisis of faith to a mystical episode. One Lutheran pastor said the experience had helped “deconstruct” his faith. “Rather than trying to teach people how their faith should be, I became more open to how they see God and how they see the faith. I’m not telling them what God thinks,” he said.

Others worry that the psychedelic movement may impose its own values on religious faith, even if it carries some benefits for users. The high level of suggestibility that characterizes psychedelic sessions with their “trip guides” may encourage adopting spiritualities that override traditional faith, such as the perennial philosophy that all mystical experiences are at their core the same. In the second article in the series, Lattin notes that the psychedelic revival may find the most receptivity among chaplains, who, especially in healthcare facilities, minister to people of all faiths and try to get people through trauma and other events where they serve more as guides than as teachers or preachers of the faith. These traits put chaplains in a similar role to those who guide people taking psychedelics, especially since many patients at the end of their lives also have mystical experiences. Chaplaincy programs are already offering special study tracks on psychedelic practices, such as at the newly established Center for Contemplative Chaplaincy at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado. In September, the University of California at Berkeley’s new Center for the Science of Psychedelics will launch its first certificate program in “psychedelic facilitation,” designed for advanced religious, spiritual care, and healthcare professionals working in areas including chaplaincy and ministry. Lattin adds that “[t]heologically and politically progressive seminaries such as the Unitarian Universalist’s Starr King School for the Ministry in Oakland have led the way in conversations about chaplaincy and psychedelics.” But again, some are concerned that this is a trend that may be dangerous. “Today, it seems like everyone and their dog are calling themselves entheogenic guides and psychedelic therapists,” said Rabbi Michael Ziegler of Berkeley. “Training programs are popping up everywhere, and most offer no practice experience in leading trips—just clinical theory.”

(*Lucid News*, <https://www.lucid.news/chaplains-become-psychedelic-guides/>)

Evangelical congregations feel the brunt of political divisions after Trump and Covid

The combined effects of the pandemic and the populism driven by the Trump presidency have caused new divisions among evangelicals that have reached down into everyday congregational life, writes Tim Alberta in *The Atlantic* (May 10). While divisions between evangelical leaders and activists were on display for all to see during the Trump administration and the conflicts over Covid public health measures, Alberta argues that local churches and clergy as well as denominations are feeling similar levels of polarization and resulting radicalization. While the article is based on a rift between two local pastors in the Detroit area, it also fleshes out the dynamics behind polarization at the local level in a way that has been sorely missing in survey



Source: *The Nation*, 2017.

research and other media accounts about “white Christian nationalism.” Alberta writes that “a year’s worth of conversations with pastors, denominational leaders, evangelical scholars, and everyday Christians tells a clear story: Substantial numbers of evangelicals are fleeing their churches, and most of them are moving to ones further to the right.” The divisions are less about specific theological or even political issues and more about claims and counterclaims regarding the need for militancy in ministry and the conspiracy theories and outright partisan politics that have come to occupy pulpits and ministries.

Alberta says much of the polarization was intensified during the pandemic, with a shifting of church attendance from congregations that closed and followed public health mandates to those that actively protested such measures and remained open, attracting many evangelicals who were also critical of the lockdowns. Alberta writes that “[m]any right-wing pastors have formed alliances—with campaign consultants, education activists, grassroots groups, even MAGA-in-miniature road shows promoting claims of an assault on American sovereignty—that bring a steady flow of fresh faces into their buildings. From there, the fusion of new Republican orthodoxy with old conservative theology is seamless. This explains why, even during a period of slumping church attendance, the number of white evangelicals has grown:...more and more white Trump supporters began self-identifying as evangelicals during his presidency, whether or not they attended church.” This new populist fervor and its relation to contested information networks (relating to the pandemic and the 2020 election results) faced opposition from more apolitical evangelical clergy and churches, resulting in the standoff that continues today.

Led by such evangelical leaders as former Southern Baptist activist Russell Moore and *Christianity Today* magazine, they target what they see as the politicization and fanaticism within evangelicalism and publicly preach against such tendencies, thereby intensifying the divisions. For their part, the populists view their former churches as compromising and playing it safe by avoiding contested political issues. The concern is that both groups are “sorting out” their differences by leaving and joining new congregations, resulting in more division and

fragmentation. Not everyone who is dissatisfied leaves their congregation, at least at first. They may instead join with other disgruntled members. “It’s a mass estrangement, in which people stop listening to the pastor or stop trusting one another—or both—and the church slowly loses its cohesiveness,” Alberta writes.

(*The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/06/evangelical-church-pastors-political-radicalization/629631/>)

Satanism alive and well but cloven between “theists” and “rationalists”

While Satanism still exists, a gap between “rationalist” and “occultist” or “theistic” groups “largely defines the global Satanist scene,” writes Massimo Introvigne in his newsletter *Bitter Winter* (May 24). Seeing Satan as more of a symbol of power and the priority of the self than a sentient being, rationalists eschew the supernaturalism of the occultist variants. Organized Satanism gained followings in the 1960s, mostly through the publicity surrounding Anton LaVey and his rationalist Church of Satan. There were numerous breakaway groups, but contrary to predictions, LaVey survived the further schisms that emerged. At least 60 percent of world Satanists are still “LaVeyan,” whether they are “members of the Church of Satan (currently led from New York by Peter Gilmore) or otherwise, with a special flourishing in Scandinavia,” Introvigne writes. Among the more recent rationalist groups, one of the most influential is the Order of the Left Hand Path, founded in New Zealand in 1990 by right-wing writer Kerry Bolton. He eventually converted to Christianity, but the group still exists. Italy has one of the more prominent Satanist scenes, the largest group being the rationalist Luciferian Children of Satan, founded by Marco Dimitri (who died last year). In the U.S., Michael Ford became a sensation by starting the first Satanist temple open to the public. Ford’s Satanism appears to be a variation of LaVey’s, but his Church of Adversarial Light, Order of Phosphorus, and Greater Church of Lucifer are also part of “Luciferian witchcraft, a galaxy of small groups that try to keep together Wicca and Satanism claiming that the god of the witches was in fact Lucifer.”

Introvigne writes that an even more visible figure in the U.S. is Lucien Greaves and his Satanic Temple. It has gained notoriety for its public celebrations of Satan and lawsuits demanding religious non-discrimination by allowing Satanic statues (such as Greaves’s famous Baphomet), prayers, and after-school clubs to accompany their Christian counterparts in public spaces. Coming from a LaVeyan background, Greaves’s main thrust is more to eliminate the Christian presence from the public sphere than to promote Satanism. The largest occultist Satanist group, with about 2,000 members, could be the Order of Nine Angels (ONA), founded by “Anton Long,” which is said to be a pseudonym for the British neo-Nazi David William Myatt. Although Myatt says he has rejected Nazism, ONA is openly Satanist and is also a secretive organization, holding terrorism to be a valid tool to usher in a new “Black Aeon” (although it is unclear whether it has committed actual crimes). Another group with a neo-Nazi background is Joy of Satan, founded in the early 2000s, which “offers a unique combination of theistic Satanism,



Source: Engin Akyurt | Pixabay.

Nazism, and UFO conspiracy theories. It regards Satan as a benevolent alien who created the Aryan race, while extraterrestrial villains created the Jews.”

In contrast, a group known as The Satanic Reds, founded in New York in 1997 by Tani Jantsang, was inspired by the mythology of novelist H.P. Lovecraft and “combines Satanism with social reform, using Marxist symbols but in fact proposing something more similar to [the] New Deal’s social realism,” Introvigne writes. A variety of occultist groups with a Satanist orientation are operated by the Chicago esotericist Michael Bertiaux, such as the Neo-Luciferian Church. The church worships Lucifer as “one of several possible representations of the divine” and claims that Luciferian energies are specially mobilized by art, as evidenced in Bertiaux’s own artworks. Although rationalist Satanism holds sway on the Internet, theistic variants have gained a significant online presence. Significant theistic websites are operated by activists such as Venus Satanas and Diane Vera, whose Church of Azazel also organizes rituals and meetings in New York. Introvigne points out that even theistic Satanists celebrate Satan as a “good” character and the liberator of humans. It is only in the milieu of Extreme Metal music where one can encounter an “anti-cosmic” Satanism worshipping Satan as the dark god of death, destruction, and evil.

(*Bitter Winter*, <https://bitterwinter.org/4-contemporary-satanism-rationalist-and-theistic/>)

CURRENT RESEARCH

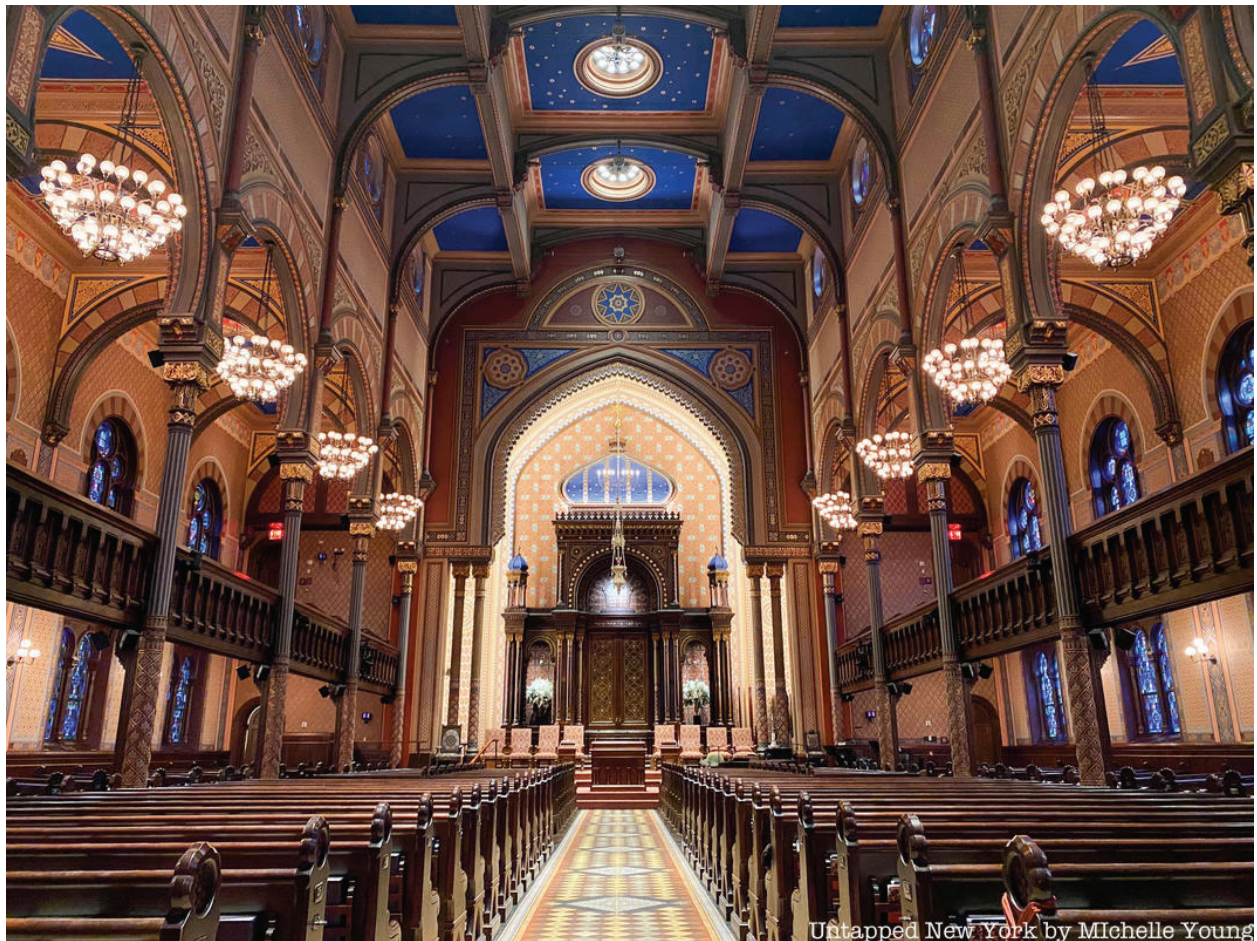
● **Muslims are depicted more negatively in U.S. and Western media than members of other religions, a new study finds.** Writing in the *Conversation* (May 29), political scientists Erik Bleich and A. Maurits van der Veen report that while newspapers tend to publish a balanced proportion of negative depictions of other minority religions, Muslims face negative coverage to a far greater extent. The researchers “used media databases such as LexisNexis, Nexis Uni, ProQuest and Factiva to download 256,963 articles mentioning Muslims or Islam...from 17 national, regional and tabloid newspapers in the United States over the 21-year period from Jan. 1, 1996, to Dec. 31, 2016.” To measure the positivity or negativity of the articles, they were compared “to the tone of a random sample of 48,283 articles about topics drawn from a wide range of newspapers. A negative value on this scale means that a story is negative relative to the average newspaper article.”

This approach provided a baseline for additional comparisons. Bleich and van der Veen collected sets of articles from U.S. newspapers relating to Catholics, Jews and Hindus, and also assembled stories linked to Muslims from newspapers in the UK, Canada and Australia. “Our central finding is that the average article mentioning Muslims or Islam in the United States is more negative than 84 percent of articles in our random sample...Articles that mentioned Muslims were also much more likely to be negative than stories touching on any other group we examined. For Catholics, Jews and Hindus, the proportion of positive and negative articles was close to 50-50. By contrast, 80 percent of all articles related to Muslims were negative.” The researchers found a very similar proportion of negative to positive articles from the UK, Canada, and Australia.



Source: University of Cambridge.

● **Most synagogues are growing or stable, although a sizeable percentage are declining, according to a new survey of American Judaism by Faith Communities Today (FACT).** The 2020 FACT survey revealed that, contrary to dire media reports, some synagogues are experiencing growth: while 40 percent reported decline, 40 percent reported growth, and about 20 percent were holding steady. The researchers suggest, however, that “synagogues likely mirror the larger reality of the church world where 70 percent of people attend the largest 10 percent of congregations. So too, the largest synagogues are attracting more and more members while smaller ones, in difficult markets, report challenges.” The report adds that the observed stability and growth among most synagogues may be due to their having followed the “people they most wish to attract.” Most synagogues report having moved at some point in their history, with only 27 percent remaining in the same location since they were founded. The survey also suggests that synagogues have yet to invest the resources necessary to attract the next generation and have maintained relatively low rates of young Jewish adult engagement (a reality across the board of faith traditions in America as a whole), and that “rabbis are older, male, long tenured and often the sole clergy member in their synagogues.”



Untapped New York by Michelle Young

Source: Chabad.

(The FACT report can be downloaded from: <https://faithcommunitiestoday.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2020-FACT-Survey-of-Reform-and-Conservative-Synagogues.pdf>)

● **“The angry hostility towards religion engineered by the New Atheist movement is over,” though some of this antagonism is still apparent when it comes to science and religion, a new study finds.** The study, conducted by the British Christian think tank Theos, and based on interviews with scientists as well as a YouGov survey of 5,000 UK adults, found a significant decrease in dismissive and hostile attitudes toward religion. When a similar study was conducted at the height of the New Atheist movement, which was led by such scientists as Richard Dawkins, 42 percent of respondents had agreed that “faith is one of the world’s great evils”; today the share agreeing with that statement is down to 20 percent. The survey also found 46 percent agreeing that “all religions have some element of truth in them,” 49 percent that “humans are at heart spiritual beings,” and 64 percent that “there are some things that science will never be able to explain.”

(The Theos report can be downloaded from: <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2022/04/21/science-and-religion-moving-away-from-the-shallow-end>)



Source: Theos.

Church in Northern Macedonia finds recognition in a redrawn Orthodox map

In a rapid succession of events during the month of May, the Orthodox Church in Northern Macedonia, which had been separated from other Orthodox churches for 55 years due to an unresolved conflict with the Serbian Patriarchate, was recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate (EP) of Constantinople and also restored into communion with the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). This culminated a week later in the official recognition of its autocephaly by Serbian Patriarch Porphyry during a visit to the Northern Macedonian capital of Skopje. The break between the churches had occurred in 1967, when the Macedonian Church—which had enjoyed an autonomous status—unilaterally proclaimed its full independence (autocephaly). At that time, both Serbia and Northern Macedonia were parts of what used to be Yugoslavia, and the move toward autocephaly was supported by then-communist authorities in order to weaken the Serbian church. Over the past two decades, there had been several failed attempts at reconciliation. According to a researcher of church autocephaly movements, Andreja Bogdanovski, the SOC's consistent position had been in favor of a restoration of links based on autonomy, followed by discussions about possible autocephaly (*Orthodoxy in Dialogue*, May 13).

Since 2018, impressed by developments in Ukraine, Northern Macedonian authorities undertook concerted efforts with the church to find a solution to a religious issue that was also a topic of



Source: *Republika*.

national significance. Following several rounds of talks, closed-door discussions between both church bodies in early May inspired optimism, although few expected such a rapid recognition of Macedonian autocephaly. What remains unclear at this point is how far the moves were made in coordination between the EP and the SOC. While the Moscow Patriarchate had initially been critical of the announcement by the EP, it welcomed the decision once it was made by the SOC. The acceptance of the Northern Macedonian Church into the communion of Orthodox churches must be seen in the context of the current redrawing of the map of Orthodoxy with the war in Ukraine and consequent loss of influence of the Russian Church. The Munich-based scholar Anargyros Anapliotis suggests that the dramatic tensions around Orthodox churches in Ukraine may have convinced Serbian bishops that a peaceful restoration of relations with a recognition of autocephaly would be better than a complete and conflictual break, thus also preserving the SOC's own interests in Northern Macedonia (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, May 27).

One can still expect some debates regarding the issue of the name to be used by the Church of Northern Macedonia, since the EP had insisted that it should not go by the official name of “Macedonian” but rather use the name of the famous ecclesiastical see of Ohrid. The EP had also laid down restrictive rules concerning parishes of the Macedonian diaspora, but those seem unlikely to be enforced. According to Bogdanovski, the issues surrounding Macedonian autocephaly “will almost certainly ignite a new discussion surrounding the principles and ways for granting autocephaly.” Moreover, he wonders how far the handling of the Macedonian church question might promote the SOC and its patriarch “as the ‘canonical champion’ in the Orthodox world, after years of deep divisions in the Orthodox Church” (*Religion in Praxis*, May 24).

Orthodox churches escape Moscow Patriarchate's long shadow?

The Orthodox landscape in Ukraine continues to shift quickly as the war intensifies, with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) recently announcing it will cut its ties with Moscow. The church had been losing members, clergy, and parishes as well as facing severe legal restrictions, according to a report in *The Pillar* (May 23), a Catholic newsletter. Anatolii Babynskyi reports that even though leaders of the UOC-MP condemned the invasion, the church increasingly faced censure and outright banning in much of Ukraine, although banning activities of the Moscow Patriarchate is difficult since most parishes do not mention it in their registration documents. The alleged break with the Moscow Patriarchate comes as some UOC clergy have been accused of aiding and abetting Russian military and amid a steady exodus of parishes and a shrinking percentage of Ukrainians saying they are affiliated with the Moscow Patriarchate: during February and March, that number fell from 15 to 4 percent, according to the polling firm InfoSapiens.

The May 27 assembly of the UOC-MP decided—apparently with the support of a wide majority of its participants—to express its disagreement with Patriarch Kirill and affirm its independence, while refraining from using the word “autocephaly.” But while presented as a full enforcement of

the autonomous status the church was granted in the early 1990s, there is no real doubt about the meaning of the decisions taken, with statutes being stripped of all references to the church as subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate. At the same time, the UOC leadership refuses to see its decision as a schism. As the church's archpastor, Metropolitan Onuphry will continue to commemorate Patriarch Kirill along with other Orthodox primates—as he already did on the Sunday following the assembly—while continuing to refrain from commemorating Patriarch Bartholomew, due to the latter's decision to grant autocephaly to the rival Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). Parish priests will commemorate their bishops and bishops will commemorate the primate, Metropolitan Onuphry (*Orthodoxie.com*, May 29).

However, three dioceses in eastern Ukraine have not accepted the decisions and the changes, feeling that a self-administered status under the Moscow Patriarchate continues to be the best way to go. They will not implement the decisions made by the May 27 assembly (*Orthodoxie.com*, May 30). Another important decision by the assembly was to start providing pastoral support to the many Ukrainians who have been forced into exile by the war, which means that, starting with Europe, one more Orthodox jurisdiction will soon start ministering to its flock in the diaspora. It remains to be seen if the new situation will lead to a rapprochement or even to a union between the UOC and the OCU. The UOC has stated that it is open to renewed negotiations, but that questions regarding the canonicity of the OCU hierarchy need to be clarified and solved. Moreover, a condition for dialogue would be for the OCU to stop the seizure of churches and the forced transfers of parishes from the UOC” (*Russia Today*, May 27).



Metropolitan Epifaniy (OCU in December 2018 (RFE/RL).

New Age's rebound in China takes a Sinicist turn

New Age concepts, teachings, and practices from the West are increasingly being “psychologized” and used as a way of controlling the population as they are popularized and translated in China, writes Anna Iskra in the journal *Nova Religio* (25:4). What is called the Body-Mind-Spirit (*shen xin ling*) movement has expanded throughout China since the early 2000s, comprising teachings that ostensibly originated in Asia, were Westernized in the New Age movement, and then returned to China, often via Taiwan and Hong Kong. Body-Mind-Spirit practices have shown up in the increasingly prevalent prosperity teachings in the workplace, life coaching, and other forms of “self-realization,” often catering to inward-turning urban dwellers. But these Western-based teachings have been supplemented by China-specific concepts and techniques from Chinese traditional medicine and Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.



Source: Alamy | BBC.

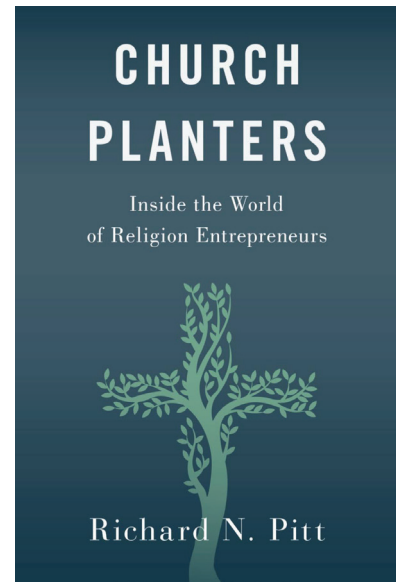
While Body-Mind-Spirit was seen a decade or more ago as enhancing business and capitalism and curing psychological ills and stress, mainland Chinese business and government leaders have more recently criticized its practices and ideas, writes Iskra. There is a concern about fraud and cult-like behavior, especially since *shen xin ling* is at the intersection of religion, education, and business. The fear of being labeled a dangerous cult by the government, as was the case with Falun Gong, has led Body-Mind-Spirit entrepreneurs to engage in “creative translations” of these teachings and practices. For instance, the concept of God has changed into the less offensive (to the government) and more vague idea of “Phenomenon,” while the concept of spiritual energy has been translated into the concept used in describing energy in physics. Iskra writes that from

2018 to 2020, there was a rise in the state's intervention in the Body-Mind-Spirit milieu. There have also been several attempts to crack down on Indian spiritual movements, such as Oneness University, as they have made their way into China. "Facing a growing suspicion of the state toward their teachings and practices, especially in their Indian-derived form, some Chinese New Agers attempt to incorporate them in the discourses of the 'great resurrection of Chinese culture'...that are circulated by the Communist Party of China," Iskra concludes.

(*Nova Religio*, <https://online.ucpress.edu/nr>)

Findings & Footnotes

■ *Church Planters: Inside the World of Religion Entrepreneurs* (Oxford University Press, \$34.95), by Richard N. Pitt, responds to a noticeable gap in research about the practice of establishing new Protestant congregations, which has grown markedly in recent years. As the title of the book implies, Pitt takes a supply-side approach to church planting, looking at the techniques and approaches of entrepreneurial pastors and the factors leading to their founding of such congregations. He finds that church planters often arrive at their ministry through practical concerns rather than a supernatural sense of calling, such as being unable to find a place in established congregations or conflicts with senior pastors. While noting that they overlap in many cases, he distinguishes three approaches to church planting, observing that many planters today are starting client-based ministries that serve tangible rather than strictly spiritual needs, such as by offering health and various kinds of material assistance, while others focus on conversion, and still others seek to create a strong sense of belonging and fellowship.

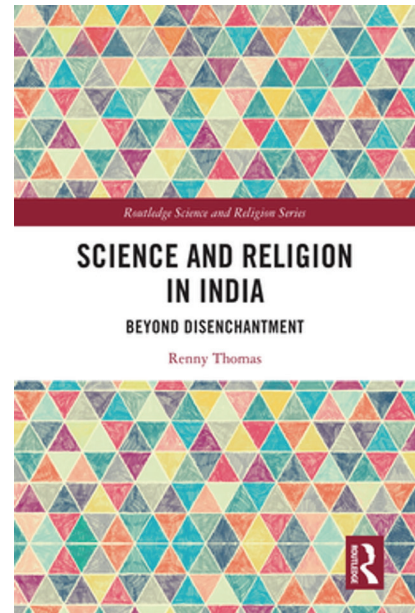


From his interviews with 125 church planters (though not necessarily a representative sample), Pitt finds that a majority of founders (53 percent) are bi-vocational, with high rates of ethnic and racial diversity. In comparing church planters to other kinds of entrepreneurs, the book argues that while the former measure risk and success differently than their secular counterparts, they recognize that attendance and workable budgets often define their effectiveness and share a great deal with other for-profit and non-profit organizations. Like other entrepreneurs, they also engage in competition with other church planters and understand the importance of filling niches and dealing with the realities of bureaucracy and hierarchy.

■ In recent years, there have been several studies and books on the religious and spiritual beliefs of scientists in different parts of the world, but Renny Thomas's new book, *Science and Religion in India: Beyond Disenchantment* (Routledge, \$160; \$44 ebook), is unique for its hands-on ethnographic approach that follows scientists into their laboratories to study their religious lives, or lack of one. Far from a study based on surveys, Thomas spent several years in a prominent lab in India studying the details of both

lived science and lived religion. Also unique is Thomas's inclusion of scientists from other religious traditions besides Hinduism, such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Sikhism. The sociologist first attempts to debunk the Western "grand narrative" of a rift between science and religion by showing how Indian scientists practice various rituals without any sense of conflict with their profession as scientists. Yet the view that Indian scientists are naturally religious is equally challenged. Among those scientists identifying as "atheists," "agnostics," and "materialists," the atheism involved is not similar to that of such scientists as Richard Dawkins, as it is often shaped by the scientists' Indian cultural and caste upbringing, where the anti-religious sentiment that rejects religious observances and rituals does not fit.

In contrast to Western secular and religious scientists, the Indian scientists Thomas interviews tend not to see the need to justify their faith on scientific grounds. "Rather they considered such inquiries superfluous and wholly unnecessary. In order not to feel any sense of conflict, they seem to avoid the question of the rationality of their belief and the need to find proofs for the existence of religion. For them religion cannot be conceptualized from an 'objective point of view' since religion and science occupied different realms. At the same time, they do not separate or posit science and religion in oppositional terms as they think their religious beliefs and practices help them to do better science." Thomas concludes that the equally binary approach of claiming that science and religion complement each other is "used for the purpose of cultural nationalism, which is very much part of all the majoritarian right-wing political regimes. In India, the natural co-existence of science and religion has been used to describe the greatness of Hinduism in accommodating modern science. This not only creates the illusion that Hinduism as a religion is naturally fit to accommodate modern science, but leads to various claims, such as the existence of science in Vedas and ancient Indian scientific wisdom."



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

Peoplehood is a spinoff of the spiritually oriented exercise company SoulCycle, but without the workout. The fledgling company, founded by SoulCycle entrepreneurs Elizabeth Cutler and Julie Rice, conferred with psychologists, spiritual leaders, and scientists during the pandemic and started the first Peoplehood sessions last summer. The theme of connecting with others without the exercise came to Cutler and Rice both from the isolation of the pandemic and the poor state of discourse in America—particularly on social media. The meetings are similar to individual and group therapy sessions but are not led by a professional therapist. Rather, trained guides work with clients on "self-care" and community in sessions that include spiritual techniques and concepts. A typical session will begin with breathing exercises followed by the introduction of a theme for discussion. Participants are instructed to listen actively to



each other without interrupting, using hand signs to show their support for what is said. Then the group splits up into different pairs where they receive prompts on the topic and can speak for three minutes uninterrupted. Then people share their reflections back in the main group, followed by light stretching to soothing music. Author Amanda Montell, who critiqued SoulCycle for its “churchiness,” casts an even more skeptical eye on Peoplehood. “Putting your physical fitness in the hands of spinning instructors feels like less of a risk than putting your spiritual, psychological, and emotional health in the hands of someone trying to build and scale a giant business,” she said. (**Source:** *New York Times*, May 8)