

## **New research shows digital religion's down- and upsides during pandemic**

Just as there is mounting concern about the effect of smartphones and social media on mental health, the pandemic has raised new questions about the impact of digital religious expressions on emotional and spiritual life. Both religious practitioners and leaders have had mixed views about online religious participation, praising its convenience and far reach while criticizing the medium's lack of depth and authenticity in addressing people's spiritual and emotional needs. Recent research on digital religion reflects the divided thinking on this issue, particularly as it has long been known that religious participation has had stronger effects on wellbeing than have beliefs. A study appearing in the journal *Sociology of Religion* (online in February) seems to be on the side of the skeptics about the shortfalls of digital religion, finding that while in-person religious attendance was associated with better mental and physical health, virtual attendance was not significantly related to either outcome. The study, conducted by researchers Laura Upenieks, Terrence Hill, Gabriel Acevedo, and Harold Koenig, and based on a national probability sample of 1,717 Americans surveyed during 2021, differed from other studies that found some benefit in online religious participation. Upenieks and colleagues found that as people increased their in-person attendance, they experienced lower levels of psychological distress and better self-rated health during the pandemic.

The authors argue that in-person attendance could promote health through the traditional mechanisms of social support and the sense of connection people find in congregational worship. Such worshippers could also "leave religious services feeling a greater sense of emotional energy drawn from active participation in religious rituals," as well as greater feelings of solidarity with fellow members. Meanwhile, a study appearing in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (online in February) found evidence of more positive effects of digital religion and spirituality, even if not matching the effects of in-person religious involvement. Researchers from Southern Methodist and Ariel (Israel) universities focused on the use of religious smartphone apps during the pandemic among quota samples of Americans and Israelis—two populations with high rates of smartphone use. The researchers conducted their own surveys in Israel and the U.S. in late



Source: Department of Religious Studies, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

2020, asking respondents about their smartphone use and other questions to measure spirituality and religion.

Significantly, the researchers, Sidharth Muralidharan, Osnat Roth-Cohen, and Carrie La Ferle, found that smartphone use in itself was not related to experiencing wellbeing during the pandemic. For Americans, they found that religiosity mediated between the use of smartphones and subjective wellbeing, with respondents using the technology to access religious services or connect with fellow believers for prayer and Bible study. For Israeli smartphone users, spirituality (such as feeling the presence of God or experiencing healing) had a more important relationship to wellbeing than did religiosity. The authors write that whereas religiosity is still important in the U.S., in Israel, spirituality is more popular. It may also be that smartphone use is more segmented among different religious groups in Israel, with Orthodox Jews disapproving of the technology for their members. The authors conclude that smartphone “use alone is not sufficient to enhance well-being during a pandemic; instead, smartphone use that satisfied religious or spiritual needs generated favorable outcomes.”

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

## Pandemic moves Jainism to greater social, interfaith involvement

The pandemic has led Jainism to engage in greater community and social involvement, resulting in a renewed connection to India but also helping the religion transcend traditional caste and sect identities, writes Brianne Donaldson in the journal *Nova Religio* (January/February). Jain teachings are non-theistic and emphasize nonviolence toward all living beings. Many Jains saw the pandemic as a way to capitalize on their many members who work in medicine and engage in charitable work as a form of “transcultural social-political belonging,” Donaldson writes. In May 2020, over a quarter of the world’s six million Jains were estimated to have taken part in a global virtual event promoted by the Chief Minister of Gujarat, an Indian state with a large Jain population, and devoted to reciting almost a billion times a mantra thought to offer protection and cure illness. During the pandemic, Jain authorities and laypeople developed a perspective that explained Covid as caused by multiple factors, including self-inflicted karma as well as natural forces beyond a person’s control. Well-known Jain confessional sutras were repurposed for the pandemic and the crisis itself was seen as providing a global “reset” for the movement, allowing it to put its ideas about ecological harmony and greater interfaith cooperation into action.



Main shrine at Siddhachalam Jain center in New Jersey in 2009 (Malaiya, Wikimedia Commons).

Literature from the movement shows Jains collaborated with non-Jain ministries and efforts to address the crisis. Donaldson adds that the pandemic also helped blur sectarian identities and build new intergenerational ties among Jains, as could be seen in collaborative vaccine efforts and international fundraising for India's second Covid surge. Although Jains in India are identified by different castes and sects, Covid has given Jainism a more universal presentation, taking cues from Jains in diasporas, particularly North American Jains who downplay sectarian and caste differences. Donaldson notes that the movement offered many activities online during the pandemic, including the religion's annual forgiveness recitation ritual known as *Pratikramana*, and this will likely continue in some form.

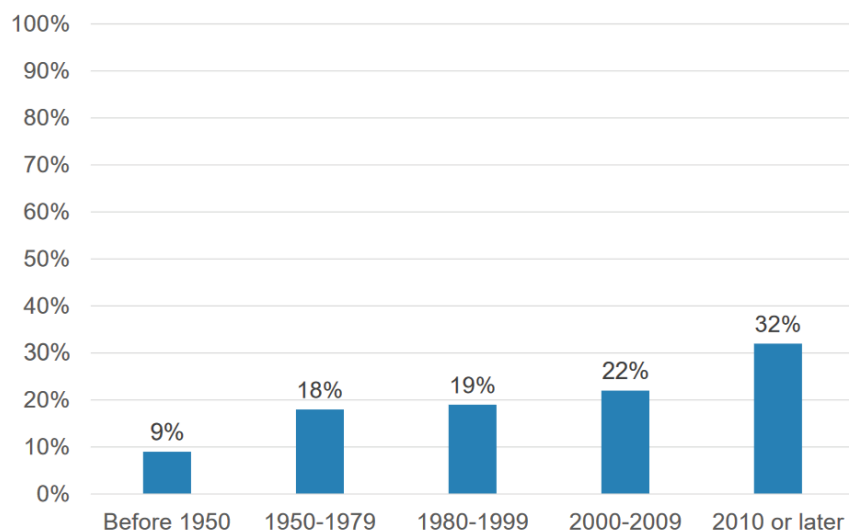
(*Nova Religio*, <https://online.ucpress.edu/nr>)

## CURRENT RESEARCH

● **Latino Protestant growth in the U.S. is being fueled by new congregations that include people who are new to the country, a recent survey finds.** The study, conducted by evangelical research firm Lifeway, found that less than nine percent of Hispanic congregations trace their history to before 1950, with the majority (54 percent) having been established since the turn of the millennium and 32 percent founded since 2010. Half of the churches are located in large metropolitan areas with populations of 100,000 or more. The survey also found that over a third of the congregations (35 percent) consist of members under the age of 30. These members tend to be newcomers to the U.S., with the majority (58 percent) reported to be first-generation Americans who were born outside of the country. This explains why 53 percent of the congregations conduct their services only in Spanish, while 22 percent are bilingual. The study surveyed 692 pastors of Hispanic congregations; only churches that were at least 50 percent Hispanic were included in the survey.

(The study can be downloaded from: <https://research.lifeway.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Hispanic-American-Church-Study-Report.pdf>)

### 54% of participating congregations were established in 2000 or later

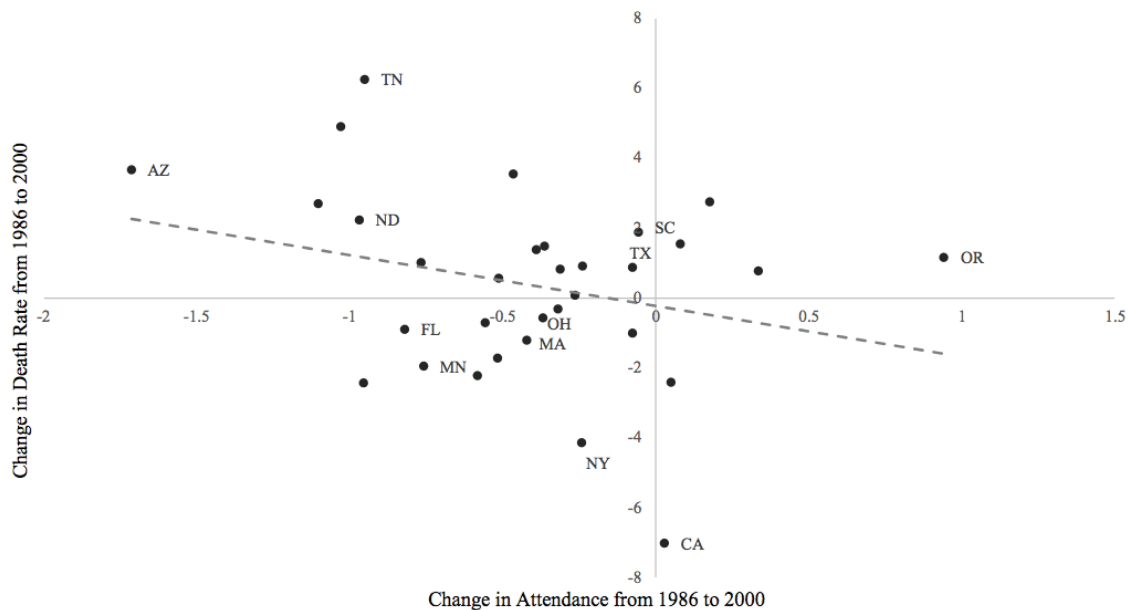


Lifeway research



• **The dramatic increase in the U.S. of “deaths of despair,” those deaths caused by suicides and diseases of substance abuse, may be driven in part by the decline in organized religion over the past two decades.** In a working paper (30840) for the National Bureau of Economic Research, reported on in *The Economist* (February 27), Tyler Giles, Daniel Hungerman, and Tamar Oostrom note how these deaths of despair have a unique character that may be related to religious trends. Over the past two decades, the death rate from drug poisonings in the United States has tripled while the suicide rate has increased by 30 percent, with rates of alcoholic liver disease increasing as well. Especially dramatic has been the high rate of these deaths among middle-aged white Americans—a rate that increased at the turn of the century after decades of decline. This raises the question of why it is largely white Americans who have been so adversely impacted by this trend, even though conditions for non-whites have been far worse and of a longer duration. The researchers show that the rise of these deaths of despair in the U.S. was preceded by a large decline in organized religious participation, and that both trends were driven by white middle-aged Americans. “We know of no other cultural phenomenon involving such large, widespread changes in participation prior to the initial rise in US mortality, nor do we know of any other phenomenon that matches the seemingly idiosyncratic patterns observed for mortality: seen for both men and women, but not in other countries, and in both rural and urban settings, but driven primarily by middle-aged, less educated white individuals. The decline in religiosity matches mortality trends in all these characteristics.”

**Figure 5: State Changes in Attendance and Deaths of Despair, 1986 to 2000**



Looking at state-level data, the researchers find that “religiosity and deaths of despair are negatively correlated; states with high levels of religiosity have suffered less from mortality due to alcohol, suicides, or drug poisonings. This negative relationship also holds when we consider that states that experienced larger decreases in religiosity have had the largest gains in the rate of deaths of despair.” They note that this decline was driven by changes in formal religious participation as opposed to changes in religious belief. Giles, Hungerman, and Oostrom argue that this phenomenon has taken place before in American history and may explain the mechanism for this relationship. Using historical data on the repeal of blue laws (which restricted business activity on Sundays), the researchers find that lifting these laws caused “negative shocks” to religious practice that resulted in similar deaths of despair. Although legalizing alcohol sales on Sundays may explain part of this trend, the largest increase in mortality came from suicides. The authors conclude that reversing this trend will be difficult. “... Even if these trends were reversible, the literature suggests that the primary benefits of religious participation for life satisfaction are difficult to replicate with other forms of social engagement.”

(The paper can be downloaded from: [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w30840/w30840.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w30840/w30840.pdf))

• **A new study finds that megachurches are most likely to flourish in cities that have significant suburban growth, a large evangelical population, a growing immigrant Christian community and, to a lesser extent, cultural pluralism and the presence of mainline Protestants.** Why megachurches grow in certain cities and not others has been a puzzle, underlying the broader question of why megachurches have



Source: Owlocation.

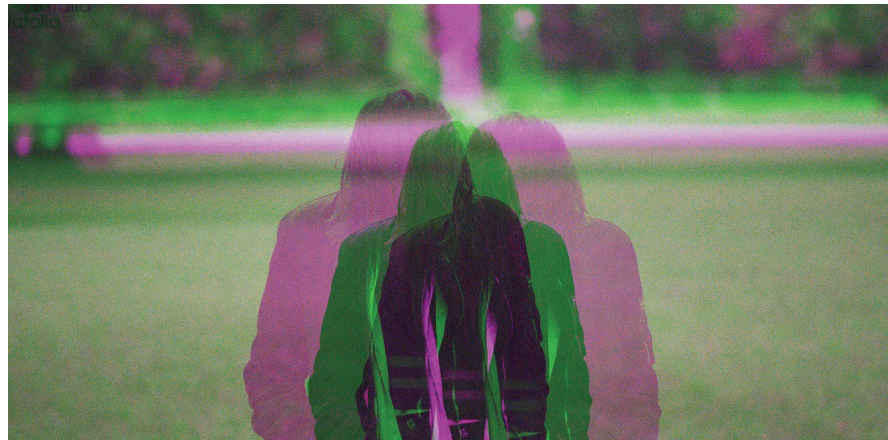
flourished in cities when urbanism has been associated with secularization by social scientists. Sociologist Insa Pruisken (University of Bremen), in a study published in *Sociological Forum* (online in February), analyzed megachurches in 22 metropolitan areas, comparing the urban

characteristics of each, and found that the most important factors for megachurch expansion were population growth between 1980 and 2010 and a higher degree of suburbanization.

Pruiken found that along with these factors, there were four urban paths to megachurch establishment, the most frequent one consisting of having a large presence of evangelicals and Christian fundamentalists (as in Dallas, Atlanta, and Houston), followed by population growth and a large presence of Hispanics (in Miami, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Phoenix). At least in the U.S., Pruiken found that megachurches also grow in cities that are characterized by a high degree of cultural pluralism, Seattle being the main example. In this third path, there is the conjunction of tolerant educated groups and evangelical or mainline Protestant groups, as well as population growth. The fourth and weakest path for the success of megachurches is in areas with a tolerance of homosexuality and mainline Protestants, often consisting of black and mainline Protestant megachurches (such as in Washington, DC, Baltimore, and Minneapolis-St. Paul). But this path is also marked by competitive pressure from secular forces and lower population growth.

(*Sociological Forum*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/15737861>)

- **A new survey that uses improved measures for capturing religious identity has confirmed the multiple religious belonging of many East Asians.** The survey, published in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (online in February) and conducted by Fenggang Yang and Brian McPhail of Purdue

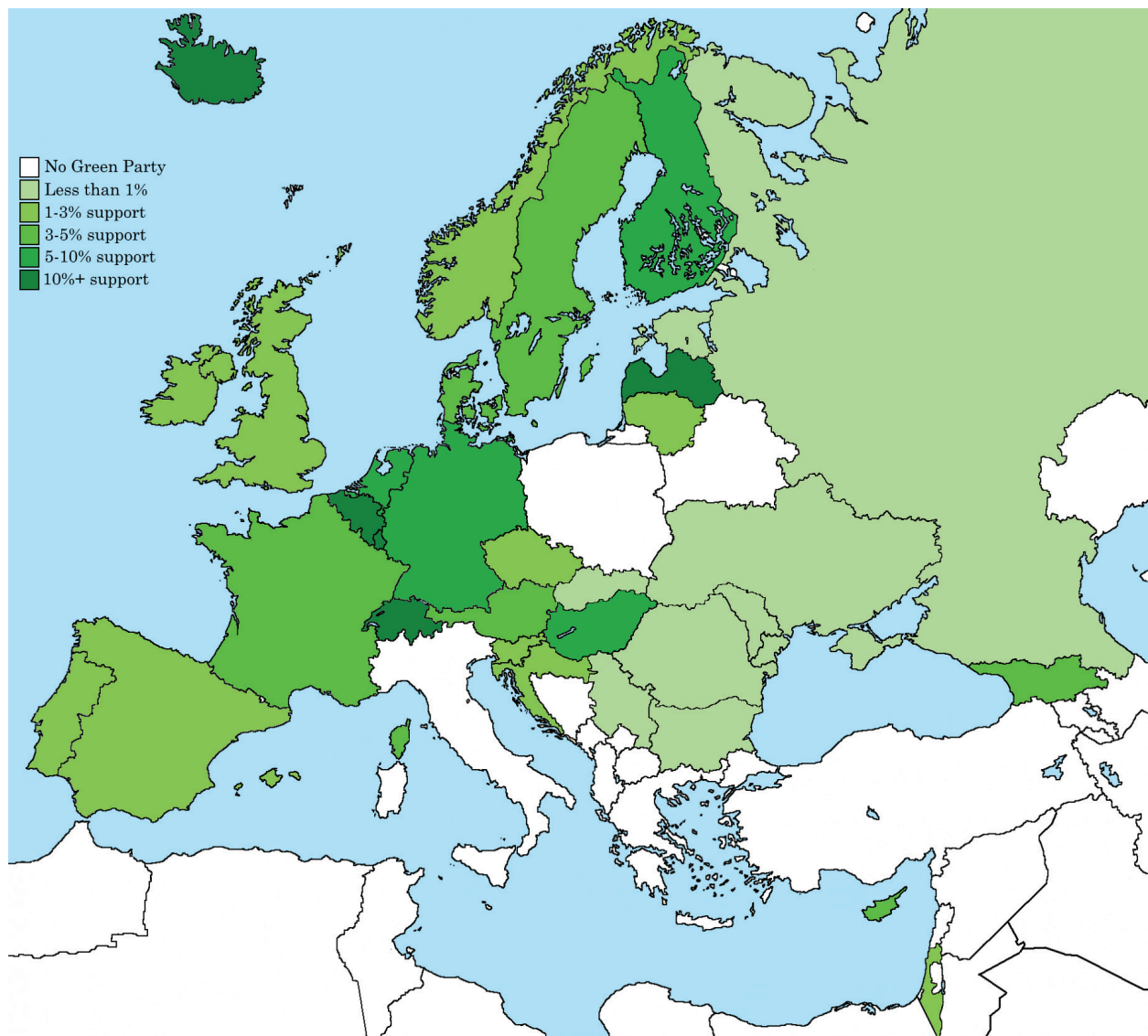


Source: Quakers in Britain.

University among East Asian international students at an American college, was unique for allowing respondents to identify with none, one, or multiple religions. Yang and McPhail found that 75 percent of respondents self-identified with no religion, about 20 percent self-identified with one religion, and only 4.34 percent identified with more than one religion. Yet more than 56 percent believe in one or more religions and almost 47 percent practice one or more religions. Thus among the religiously unaffiliated people, 43 percent believe in one or more religions, and more than 32 percent practice one or more religions. The researchers write that the “confession-based measure of exclusive religious belonging using a single question would have failed to uncover many believers and practitioners who do not belong to any religion. Indeed, the respondents in this sample of international students at an American university tend to be part of

an age group that is less religiously engaged than the general population. If we conduct the survey in East Asian societies, the inclusive religiosity is likely to be more pronounced.”

- **The rise of Green parties in both Western and Eastern Europe has been fueled in part by the changing religious and secular landscape, although this phenomenon has received scant attention next to the growth of populist-right parties.** The Greens have surprised observers in recent years, with good showings at the polls; in the 2019 European Parliament elections, Greens won 10 percent of the vote and 74 seats, an increase of 24. In a study published in *Society* (online in February), Samantha Whitley, Brent Nelsen, and James Guth analyze the latest European Election Study (2019), finding that religiosity “works significantly against Green choices among Catholics, Orthodox, and other Christians. A positive effect of religiosity among



Source: MapPorn / Reddit.



Protestants just misses statistical significance, as does a negative effect of biblical authority across the sample.” The unaffiliated, the unobservant, and non-believers are most congenial to these parties, sharing their support of environmental and gay rights, free speech, and opposition to traditional values. In Eastern Europe, these patterns are similar (although pro-gay rights outshines pro-environmental values as a priority), with both biblical authority and greater religiosity having significant and solid negative impacts on affinities with the Greens. The researchers forecast that “more Green parties may grow in Eastern Europe as organized religion and traditional values decline, raising the demand for parties catering to the progressive voter.”

(*Society*, <https://www.springer.com/journal/12115>)

### **Buddhists compete under “traditional religion” status in Russia’s religious economy**

Even though Buddhism has been recognized as a “traditional religion” in Russia, Buddhist groups are increasingly divided, with an ethnic denomination that is highly loyal to Vladimir Putin appearing to have the brightest future in the country, writes J. Eugene Clay in the *Journal of Church and State* (online in February). As with other religions, Russia’s attempt to regulate Buddhism has encountered ethnic and religious divisions and conflicts, as well as competition. Buddhism in Russia has mainly been the religion of the ethnic Buryats, Kalmyks, and Tuvans, following in the Tibetan line of Buddhism, though non-ethnic converts have started new groups in recent years. After decades of Soviet repression, Russia’s 1997 law on freedom of conscience and religious organizations recognized Buddhism as a traditional religion (along with



Buddhist monks in the Red Square in Moscow (© 2019 Txetxu Rubio / Flickr).

Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Judaism), but that left Buddhist groups and leaders struggling over which organization would represent them to the government and how to define

“traditional.” Clay writes that an early contender for such leadership was the Spiritual Directorate of Buddhists in Russia, headed by Nimazhap Iliukhinov, which remained active for two decades until it was liquidated by the courts in 2020. This group saw itself as more in line with the Dalai Lama’s teachings while seeking to serve many ethnicities and include such groups as Zen Buddhists.

Iliukhinov embraced a more liberal politics than his rival Pandito Khambo Lama Damba Ayusheev, who is a strong supporter of Vladimir Putin, including his invasion of Ukraine last year. Ayusheev heads the largely ethnic Buddhist Traditional Sangha of Russia (BTSR), which receives millions of rubles from state subsidies to support construction and restoration of its monasteries. At least 60 registered Buddhist communities in Russia belong to the BTSR, the largest share of any of the Russian denominations of Buddhism. Ayusheev has gained credibility and charisma among the country’s Buddhists by exhibiting the body of his predecessor, Dashi-Dorzho Itigilov, preserved in the lotus position, in a special palace built for him, attracting many pilgrims. Ayusheev has faced several schisms and upstart groups embracing various Buddhist traditions and more direct links to such international leaders as the Dalai Lama. The second most popular Buddhist group is the Russian Association of the Diamond Way Karma Kagyu Tradition, which is a westernized Tibetan Buddhist movement that has drawn non-ethnic converts. Although attacked as a cult, the Diamond Way movement at first gained many members, but many of its centers have been liquidated by the courts in recent years. Clay concludes that even with the competition, Ayusheev and the BTSR, with its narrower vision of serving ethnic Buddhists, its cultivation of Putin and other politicians, and its leader’s superior organizational abilities (not to mention his harnessing of the “thaumaturgical power of Itigilov’s sacred body”), has emerged as the most successful of Russia’s Buddhist organizations.

(*Journal of Church and State*, <https://academic.oup.com/jcs>)

## **Iran’s repression discrediting Shiite Islam among the population**

In a country where the regime uses religion to ensure its legitimacy, the repression of the protest movements in Iran that began last September, after the death of a 22-year-old student following her arrest by the religious police, has created negative impressions of Islam in the minds of a part of the population, said Cyrus Schayegh, a professor at the Geneva Graduate Institute, in an interview with Raphaël Zbinden of the Catholic news agency *Cath.ch* (February 26). But Schayegh also warned against reducing the issues to the religious dimension. “Various religious, ethnic, political and cultural aspects are intertwined,” he said. He pointed out that ethnic minorities that are opposed to the regime, such as the Kurds and Baluchis, also belong to Sunni Islam. However, the repression does have consequences, not only for the stability of the regime but also the perception of Shia Islam in Iran. This is symbolized in the acts of individual women knocking the turbans off Shiite clerics’ heads in the street.



Source: Georgetown University Global Engagement.

According to Schayegh, as early as the Islamic Republic's establishment in 1979, some mullahs had been concerned about the consequences for religion of being closely associated with the political system. A few representatives of religious circles are now speaking out, "but they are still few in number, and the regime is doing everything it can to silence them." The core of the regime is not ready to reform, while the reformists within the regime are hesitant about what to do. According to reports, atheism and agnosticism are gaining ground among the population. Other Iranians are turning to Sufism. There is also a known interest in alternative spiritualities (New Age). Still others are embracing Christianity, practicing it in secret, although Schayegh pointed out that it is very difficult to estimate their numbers. Overall, Schayegh estimated that 20 to 25 percent of the population is clearly pro-regime, for various reasons. The majority is in the critical camp, but only a minority is willing to speak out publicly or demonstrate, while all the others remain silent and do not want to take risks. The outcome is uncertain, although a point of no return has probably been reached in Iran's evolution.



## Mali's religious leaders aspire to a stronger role for Islam

While Mali is a majority Muslim country that inherited the principle of a secular state from the French colonial period, some religious leaders are going as far as calling for an end to secularism and a transition to an Islamic state, write Boubacar Haidara (French Institute of Political Studies, Bordeaux) and Bokar Sangaré in an analysis published by the online magazine *Afrique XXI* (Feb. 15). At a press conference held by the Confederation of Islamic Associations of Mali in November in the city of Segou, the gathered imams held up a sign proclaiming “No to secularism.” By the 1990s, Mali had seen the emergence of movements supporting religious-based politics. At the same time, newspapers with a Muslim orientation were launched. From that time on, protest movements tried to combine social protests with an Islamic dimension, and Islam remains an effective tool of protest in Mali. The current movement critical of secularism is taking place against the backdrop of authorities’ plan to adopt a new constitution and a controversy last November over a video blaspheming Islam, the producer of which claimed a non-Islamic African identity and trampled on the Koran. Some religious leaders have called for the removal of the reference to secularism in the new constitution.



Imam of the Djingareyber mosque, Timbuktu, Mali. Photo: MINUSMA/Sophie Ravier, 2013. Source: Flickr.



Haidara and Sangaré write that religious leaders’ “mobilization in the name of Islam—which is becoming more and more demanding and direct—seems to reflect a desire to influence the political scene” by holding speeches that resonate with a part of the population that is not convinced by the model of liberal democracy and that is defiant of the power of the political elite. Other Muslim organizations, such as the High Islamic Council of Mali, do not wish to enter into a confrontation with the state and prefer to cooperate with it to ensure the presence of Islam in the political sphere. Due to its capacity to mobilize, the influence of Islam in the political arena is real, but it remains to be seen whether the Islamic character of the Republic of Mali could be written into the future constitution.

(Original article in French: <https://afriquexxi.info/Au-Mali-la-laicite-en-voie-d-extinction>)

## **New Apostolic Church’s embrace of women’s ordination leads to schism in Africa**

Following the New Apostolic Church’s decision to accept the ordination of women, fervent protest movements have emerged in Africa, especially in Congo, where one of the 350 or so apostles, Christophe Kabongo Kantu, has placed himself at the head of a dissident church. Protestant theologian Kai Funkschmidt writes in the *Zeitschrift für Religion und Weltanschauung* (Jan.–Feb.) that the new movement has taken the name Authentic New Apostolic Church and is said to have tens of thousands of followers. Founded in the 19th century and with a membership of more than nine million, three-quarters of which is now in Africa, the New Apostolic Church decided in June 2022 that it was doctrinally right to ordain women to the ministry, stating that



Source: NAC worldwide: the key figures.

“Women can be entrusted with ministerial authority and a ministerial mandate on the basis of gender equivalence and equality before God.” The ordination of women has been possible since January 2023. “I am well aware that this decision marks a significant shift in our tradition,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider acknowledged. Officials say women’s ordinations will only take place where there is a need and where both the community and society accept it. Ordination will be possible to all ministries, including that of apostle.

Opponents question the biblical basis for the practice and suspect that the ordination of women could pave the way for same-sex marriage and the ordination of homosexual ministers. The reactions are similar to those of some of the African faithful in other Christian churches to developments in the West on these issues, although it should be noted that a huge majority of New Apostolic believers in Africa seem to remain faithful to their church. Kabongo is beginning to be referred to by his followers as Chief Apostle and the new group clearly aspires to go global. But Funkschmidt points out that the New Apostolic Church has already experienced other schisms in its history, and he doubts that the group will be able to pose a real challenge to it worldwide and rally a significant percentage of the faithful around the issue of women’s ordination alone.

*(Zeitschrift für Religion und Weltanschauung, <https://www.ezw-berlin.de/publikationen/zeitschrift-fuer-religion-und-weltanschauung/>; article by Kai Funkschmidt online (in German): <https://www.ezw-berlin.de/aktuelles/artikel/nach-einfuehrung-der-frauenordination-schisma-in-der-neuapostolischen-kirche-in-afrika-news/>)*

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

**1)** The United Arab Emirates’ (UAE) inauguration of the **Abrahamic Family House** (AFH) in Abu Dhabi in early February represents the first interfaith worship center in the Middle East. The center includes a church, mosque and synagogue, all within close proximity to each other to encourage religious dialogue and co-existence. The establishment of the Abrahamic Family House has its beginnings in the Human Fraternity Meeting, which the Abu Dhabi-based Muslim Council of Elders organized in 2019, drawing such prominent religious leaders as Pope



Abrahamic Family House on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi (source: Wikimedia Commons).



Francis to discuss interfaith relations. Also influential in the establishment of the AFH are the Abraham Accords, which normalized relations between Israel and the UAE, among other Arab countries including Bahrain, in 2020. The UAE has seen a significant increase in Jewish residents since then. The religious gathering place, covering an area of 82,882 square feet, consists of three identically sized cubic shaped structures. A garden lies at the center of the structure, serving as a public space for the three communities. The Abrahamic Family House will include the first purpose-built synagogue in the Arab world in over a century, differing from others in the Gulf due to its proximity to other worship houses. The UAE is also planning to incorporate other religious expressions, including its first Hindu temple, set to open in February 2024. (Source: *Al-Monitor*, February 21)

**2) The Revelation Spiritual Home (TRSH)** has evolved into a large organization pressing for a return to African indigenous spirituality. The group's founder, Dr. Samuel Radebe, left the South African branch of the Brazil-based Universal Church of the Kingdom of God with several other members who had been drawn to Radebe's healing ministry. In 2009, Radebe and his followers started a group that quickly grew large enough to fill what had been Johannesburg's Great Synagogue. Radebe has since expanded its ministry to 70 branches in South Africa as well as Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Ireland, and, soon, the U.S. New religious movement scholar Massimo Introvigne notes that that TRSH has distanced itself from not only Christianity but religion itself, believing that "African spirituality cannot be reduced to the European notion of religion, and that serious problems were created when religion



Source: The Revelation Spiritual Home.

tried to replace spirituality in Africa,” with colonial powers repressing the traditional spiritual guides of the continent. Healing continues to be the main feature of TRSH’s packed services. Radebe, who goes by the name of Imboni, distinguishes TRSH’s emphasis on African spirituality, which can adapt and change, with African traditions which can forget their spiritual roots and remain static. Radebe advises traditional healers, who occupy a special place in TRSH services, wearing distinct spiritual garments. (Source: *Bitter Winter*, February 14)

**3) Andrew Tate** is a far-right activist who has gained notoriety and a following among Muslim men after he converted to Islam last October. Tate, a British internet personality promoting masculinity and nationalism, made a YouTube appearance that quickly went viral, in which he called Islam the “last true religion on the planet.” Tate is now under investigation by Romanian authorities for allegations of rape and human trafficking in connection with an organized criminal group, though he claims he is innocent. But after his recent detention, more Muslims are scrutinizing the effects of Tate’s influence on younger Muslims. Tate has been associated with the “akh right” community, which is an Islamic form of the alt-right movement. In one interview with an akh right leader, Tate claimed that in cases of sexual assault, a woman should bear “personal responsibility” for a situation in which she “made it so easy for something bad to happen to her,” and that “the only thing that satisfies” women is “becoming a mother.” The episode gained 2.3 million views and was featured on akh right social media.



Andrew Tate in an Interview with James English (source: Wikimedia Commons).

Commentators say Tate is influencing young minds across communities around the world. In the UK, his influence on teenage boys of all backgrounds has prompted concern in schools and debate in Parliament. Last summer, the influencer was banned from Facebook and Instagram for violating its policies on “gender-based hate, any threats of sexual violence, or threats to share non-consensual intimate imagery.” He continued to appear regularly on internet forums hosted by Muslim male influencers known as “akh right bros.” Taken from the Arabic word for “brother,” akh right bros situate themselves in opposition to so-called Western values. (Source: *CNN*, February 16)