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Introduction

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Hi everybody, I'm Christopher Brick, here on behalf of the OAH committee on Marketing and Communications.

Welcome back to the Intervals podcast, a public humanities initiative of the Organization of American Historians.

I'm here today as well to welcome our guest speaker today is Susan Breitzer, who is here to contribute

our second of two episodes on the very notorious Influenza Pandemic of 1918.

As Susan points out in her talk, the need to curtail group gatherings for public health reasons—which is something anybody who lived through 2020 can probably relate to—is not something new in American history, not something new to the American experience with infectious disease, nor is the conflict that this has tended to create between public health authorities and religious practitioners and believers, the great majority of whom remain attached to faith communities in the United States who in some way incorporate regular gathering as an important part of spiritual practice. It's that tension that gives focus to Susan's exploration of American religious responses to the Influenza Pandemic of 1918.

Susan lives in North Carolina where she's an educational content writer and an independent scholar specializing in US religious and labor history.

Independent scholars, incidentally, do some of the best history work out there, and there's always room in this organization for more of you, so please do sign up. You are a vital part of the profession, and we honor each of you—and by we there, I mean the Committee and OAH as a whole. And with that I'm going to open it up to Susan Breitzer on American Religion During the Influenza Pandemic of 1918.

Lecture

SUSAN BREITZER: This lecture will be on the topic of American religion during the Spanish influenza and the possibilities of religious cooperation during a pandemic.

Safety measures during a pandemic and the question of religious exemptions is not a new issue in the history of the United States. This podcast will focus on American religious responses to the Spanish Influenza, highlighting the similarities and differences between then and the present crisis.

It will be in the larger context of the social history of the Spanish flu in the United States, with some background of the US between World War I and the 1920s.

It will provide historical perspective to the current situation by looking at how much American churches during this period complied or rebelled.

In addition, this lecture will highlight the role that churches played in trying to help deal with the pandemic, from offering space for the sick to relieve hospital overcrowding, to its members and functionaries serving as volunteer nurses.

This research was inspired by current discussion of how churches and synagogues have coped; in particular, the acceptability of Zoom on the Sabbath versus other alternatives.

There are multiple examples of American religious groups dealing with disease outbreaks throughout

American history, and this reflects how much infectious disease- from smallpox to diphtheria- have been part of American history, especially during the pre-revolutionary period in the Early Republic.

During the early periods, the religious response was likely to be as much theological as practical, with notable exceptions like Cotton Mather's promotion of inoculation against smallpox in the 1700s. Otherwise, it inspired sermons, individual prayers, and fasting.

By the Civil War era, advances in scientific knowledge and secularism, as well as improved management of outbreaks, create a shift away from a signature role for religion in pandemic time.

But the issue became pertinent again during the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918, and here the question responses of the churches was partially theological, but also, increasingly practical, and they brought out the question of religious freedom versus public safety, as well as the role of religion in the public square.

The Spanish influenza has stood out among modern pandemics until now, as the worst in recent times. In a way, it was the first truly global pandemic, thanks compared to comparably modern transportation and increased international interconnection.

It got its name not because it originated in Spain or was worst in Spain, but because Spain- a neutral country in World War I- did not censor news of it as so many other countries did.

Unlike the common flu, this flu was easily transmitted and could hit suddenly and hard, bringing death not long after infection. And unlike with Covid 19, no known effective vaccine was developed while it went on and while some vaccines they tried appeared to work, it may have been a case of better safety measures and cases simply being on the decline.

The Spanish flu first reached the US in March of 1918, in which was the first of three waves between 1918 and 1919, with a possible 4th wave that lasted into 1920. The 2nd wave, which began the fall of 1918, was the deadliest.

The Spanish flu killed more people total than those who died in World War One. Between 50 and 100 million worldwide, with 650,000 to 675,000 in the United States.

The Spanish flu also stood out from other infectious diseases in that it primarily attacked young people in the prime of their lives, mainly in their 20s and 30s, and that may have had to do with a stronger immune response, plus the temptation of the patient to get up before they are fully well, which led to relapses with pneumonia.

The Spanish flu incubated in military camps and was made worse by wartime conditions that include camp overcrowding and health services limited by military needs.

The Spanish flu pandemic was part of what I'm calling "the Long 1920s," a period of change and upheaval that was much more than the better known "Roaring 20s."

World War I, or rather, American participation in it, was a redefining event for America. Functionally, it spelled the end of the Progressive Era, but in a way it carries a lot of progressivism forward; examples include the achievement of women suffrage and, more of moment for this lecture, there is an increased legitimization of public health.

The Spanish flu came to the US during the tail end of World War I as a result of the arrival of the American Expeditionary Force. It may have been a case of soldiers bringing over a mild flu that then mutated in Europe to the deadly form, which the American servicemen then brought back to the US.

When it came to early public responses to the first wave, despite the existence of the United States Public Health Service, there was no coordinated national strategy for dealing with the pandemic, but there were federal advisements to state and local governments on how to respond, as now civic responses varied by state and city.

Timing mattered; those cities who delayed implementing safety measures were hit harder than those who instituted them in immediate response to the threat of an outbreak. But the responses included many now familiar measures, including the closing of public meeting places and the requirement of mask wearing.

One example of successful safety measures found in an ordinance from Cleveland announced, "All places of public congregation, including churches, theaters, moving, picture houses, dance halls, lodge rooms and all other places used for general

meetings, whether public or private, are hereby closed." The ordinance also called for closing public parochial and private schools.

In some instances, churches were given discretion as to whether or not close, and in others churches were allowed to stay open, even when other public gatherings were closed, and in still others, it was the reverse.

Sometimes outdoor services were permitted, though indoor ones remain prohibited, and as in the current pandemic, the restrictions were sometimes relaxed as the first wave of the flu subsided, only to be reimposed with the coming of a second wave.

Some measures were controversial and may have appeared unfair and/or inconsistent, but there is relatively little full rebellion in the terms of holding services as usual, and though until very recently this issue has been understudied, the responses of American churches and religious organizations during the Spanish flu pandemic can provide both perspectives to what we're currently dealing with and guidance for better responses.

I will now focus on the responses of a selection of Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church. Plus, as applicable for comparative purposes, black churches and Jewish synagogues, acknowledging the different focuses for these last two communities during the pandemic, along with similar responses when it came to restrictions on worship.

I will highlight the similarities as well as differences between denominations diverse enough to include the Latter-day Saints, the Reformed Church,

the Assemblies of God, and the Church of Christ in order.

Starting with the Latter-day Saints, better known as the Mormons.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded by Joseph Smith in 1830 with the publication of the Book of Mormon, its main testament. After the new church faced persecution, and Smith was murdered in 1844, Brigham Young took over the leadership of the church and led his followers to the territory that became the state of Utah, which today remains the center of the now international church.

The Mormon Church has displayed a long history of adaptability, including the willingness to give up polygamy, once considered a central part of the religion. This adaptability of the church also include willingness to change practices in response to public health considerations. This included exchanging the common goblet used for communion, which for Mormons meant drinking water rather than wine, to individual drinking cups. Aside from longstanding Christian practice, the use of the common goblet may have partially reflected a time when even public drinking fountains featured a common cup.

The movement towards individual cups as a sanitary measure began decades before the Spanish flu broke out, in response to Progressive Era concerns about sanitation and the rise of the germ theory or the spread of illness.

But the outbreak of the flu in Utah that killed the then-church-President Joseph F. Smith and many

other Utah citizens, gave the church the final impetus to change over. And even then, action was delayed between the death of Smith and the installation of Heber J. Grant as the new head of the church, the latter, thanks to the pandemic related delay of the churches annual meeting.

Notably, Grant, the church's new president was also vice President Board Member of the Utah Public Health Association from 1916 to 1924.

When it came to giving up worship services. The record is more mixed. On the one hand, the church hierarchy ordered the suspension of services from October to December 1918. On the other hand, there was some rebellion, such as in one report from Salt Lake City involving having services outdoors, either in front of the church or as the newspaper report described, marching to some park or recreation grounds.

Looking Next at the Reformed Church. This church, also known as the Christian Reformed Church, began as one of the main- many breakaways from the Catholic Church during the Protestant Reformation, it began in the US as the Dutch Reformed Church and split from the Reformed Church of America in 1857.

This church has been deeply influenced by John Calvin and is essentially Calvinist and origin and outlook. One of their significant beliefs is in the necessity of a civil government for the good of society and prevention of sin. And although this church did not embrace premillennialism, they saw intimations of the tribulations preceding the second coming in the pandemic, along with the War

of the Russian Revolution and American labor unrest.

And these beliefs shaped the responses of both opposition and compliance. In the case of the first, a newspaper report from Grand Rapids, MI acknowledged how hard the pandemic restrictions were on the church's members who had been trained from childhood to regard regular church attendance as natural in their lives as eating breakfast.

The report also pointed to continued opening of schools, which they argued posed the greater danger of transmission than church services.

But the Reformed Church also sought to make a theological interpretation of what they called the Churchill Sunday, necessitated by the pandemic, and it is described in *The Banner*, a church publication.

This interpretation includes the hope that the pandemic could have salutary spiritual effects, including a greater appreciation of value of our church privileges—something only appreciated when lost—as well as the value of fellowship with God's people that could lead to a new devotion to churchgoing. This editorial notably emphasized the importance of respecting the law and governmental authority, even as it concluded with a prayer that the scourge of the flu ends soon.

Looking now at the Assemblies of God. This is the largest subset of the Pentecostal church and was first organized in 1914. It is among the evangelical Protestant denominations, and in its history has conducted many missions, both foreign and domestic, the latter to Native Americans.

During the flu pandemic the AG Church became an example of how what is often considered fundamentalist theology could mesh with concern for public health.

The church canceled revival meetings as soon as it became clear that they were spreaders—one might say super spreaders— of disease.

Likewise, missions were closed and even the publication of their main organ, the Christian Evangel, was suspended. Yet they did not give up their ministerial focus that included prayer for and with the sick, even at personal risk. And most notably, despite a belief in God as a healer, and testimonies of divinely assisted healing, they did not call in their faith to protect them. Therefore, according to one historian of the Pentecostal church, they obeyed all government directives to close churches and encouraged at home worship.

And perhaps the understanding they promoted that at home prayer also count for something made the difference. In fact, in one article in the Christian Evangel pointed out regarding church closures "We're finding it a splendid opportunity to devote additional time to prayer for our missionaries and for the soldier boys."

Finally, looking at the Church of Christ, which is distinct from the United Church of Christ. This church grew out of the 19th century Stone Campbell restoration movement that called for a return to what they believed was the original Apostolic form of Christianity.

Their responses to the pandemic include the cancellation of services and a focus on feeding and

tending to the poor. For example, there's one case of the Russell Street Church in Nashville, TN suspending services and instead opening its doors as temporary hospital space, relieving overcrowding in the city's hospitals.

The churches members also stepped forward, helping the care and feeding of the poor during the pandemic, sometimes at the expense of their lives. And I should mention that feeding the poor was a bigger deal than usual at this time when starvation was a possibility due to the illness and death of breadwinners in many homes.

But most of these churches appear to cooperate with government directives. Reverend M. C. Kurfees of the Campbell St. Church of Christ in Louisville, KY remarked, "It behooves us to cheerfully submit to this order, and to exert all our energies in an earnest and sympathetic effort to cooperate with the benevolent purposes of our government to check this deplorable disease."

Kurfees also encouraged worship to continue at home as he put it following the Apostles.

That said, some did object to what they saw as government interference and tried to negotiate exceptions, and in many cases to compromise with small gatherings in private homes.

One of the best-known responses to the necessity of pandemic related church closing came from J. C. McQuiddy, the editor of the Gospel Advocate.

McQuiddy notably put up no objection to the closing of churches for disease prevention—in contrast to his earlier protest against wartime orders to close

churches to save fuel and coal, while breweries, theaters, etc. were left alone.

As he explained, "I do not understand that the government intends by this proclamation to interfere with Christians worshipping God as the understanding of the New Testament requires them to do."

He called for Christians to continue to break bread—that is to take communion—and to contribute offerings on the first day of the week, as he referred to Sunday.

Even while recognizing the importance of assemblies, McQuiddy proclaimed that if it was a matter of mercy to care for the sick in place of attending services, it was also a matter of mercy not to meet, if doing so would put lives at risk.

McQuiddy therefore urged Christians to comply with public health restrictions cheerfully, and to seek to lead quiet, holy, and unblameable lives.

He also expressed the hope that the absence of services would bring greater appreciation among Christians of what they're missing.

A somewhat different, yet still essentially compliant view was expressed by E. C. Fuqua. Fuqua was a preacher who specialized in tent meetings and was best known for his controversial views on marriage and divorce.

To degree, Fuqua was willing to break ranks with McQuiddy by naming the conflict between obeying God and being subject to what he called the higher powers, by which one can assume he meant secular powers.

Fuqua would describe the governmental responses to the so called Spanish influenza that included the unconditional closing of all churches throughout the state as "the unconditional surrender of the Kingdom of Christ to civil government for the time being, so it would seem."

Interestingly enough, this was not a lead into total opposition to the government measures, though Fuqua did complain that some were using the government order as an excuse to avoid worship altogether. Rather, Fuqua advocated meeting in small groups in people's homes, reminding his readers that "we're allowed under certain restrictions to visiting the homes, and carefully observing these restrictions we feel free to meet a few brethren in a private home and worship according to the New Testament teaching."

Fuqua added "the assembly, thus formed is not unlawful, and the worship render is lawful to God hence, in this we combine loyalty book to both"

No word on whether this practice helps stem the spread of the flu, but it did indicate a certain open mindedness to government regulations even by a clergy who warned of its potentially deleterious effect on religious life.

And now, finally, the Christian Scientists. This sect was founded in 1879 in the US by Mary Baker Eddy in a time of increased secularization.

The Christian Scientists are known for their controversial emphasis on spiritual healing and the uneasy relationship with modern medicine. It should be known that they do accept some form of preventative care, such as dental work, and more of

moment for this lecture, they encourage obedience to public health measures.

During the Spanish flu, the Christian Science Monitor the church's main publication following Christian Science beliefs about the role of fear and disease, preached against what they called "collective fear," but also gave attention to science, especially when it challenged popular assumptions.

One report highlighted the Goat Island experiment, where not one of the subjects, who were purposefully exposed to the flu, caught it, suggesting that the unknown might be the lack of what I shall call a "fear factor" on the part of the volunteers.

Fear or the absence thereof also played into other Christian Science responses to pandemic. In practice, compliance with public health measures appeared to be mixed. There is, for example, a case of one San Francisco church defying public health orders and staying open, only for its leader, Harry P. Hitchcock and others to be arrested.

And in a letter—or in the Journal of the American Medical Association, the writer argued that a church in Boston that stayed open was not defying orders to close, but rather staying open based on a mere request by the city to close. Based on the judgment that church services were deemed necessary to the public morale.

These examples notwithstanding, the Christian scientists of this period were described by one doctor as, "The first to respond to the slightest

suggestion of unsanitary conditions and the first to comply with fundamental health measures."

Christian scientists also played a significant role in caring for the sick, especially in wartime military camps. And while the Christian Scientist emphasis on the role of fear may not have prevented contagion, it did empower Christian Scientists to be a force of help during the pandemic.

And looking broadly at other Protestant denominations, the evidence suggests that most found that they could get used to the Churchless Sabbath.

For example, George R. Stuart, a Methodist revivalist, urged intelligent Christians to trust in science and not try to tempt God to perform a miracle in the preservation of our health. Stuart argued that there was no contradiction between full faith in God and taking common sense public health measures and that any other course is "the fruit of ignorance and false teaching."

Even Billy Sunday, the renowned Presbyterian Evangelist, who's multiday 1918 Providence, RI Crusade met today's definition of a "Super spreader event," complied with a subsequent order by city Alderman to shut down with the declaration, "It is up to us to hope and pray," and there's nothing drastic in the order that was intended to stem the pandemic.

Moving on from Protestant denominations to the Roman Catholic Church. It's important to keep in mind that this was the pre-Vatican two Catholic Church and that most Catholics in America were either recent immigrants or children of immigrants.

Catholics were also not as well accepted as they would become by the late 20th century. They were subject to prejudices based both on their presumed foreignness and their supposed loyalty to the Vatican over the US.

This was especially significant in an age of general anti-foreignism and what was called "100% Americanism," that both fueled anti-immigrant sentiment and continued after the implementation of immigration restriction.

The Ku Klux Klan also targeted Catholics during this period, along with Blacks and Jews. Yet despite these troubles, the church in America would mostly distinguish itself for cooperation in the helping roles of its religious orders.

Interestingly enough, despite the hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church, there appeared to be no uniform policy or pattern among American Catholic institutions during this period. Rather, they may well have been shaped by local governmental response to the pandemic, but the prevailing practice appear to be compliance.

For example, directive of Bishop Regis Canevin of Pittsburgh in October 1918, acknowledged that "It is indeed a great hardship for Catholics to be deprived of the opportunity to assemble for mass and lower divine services." But Canevin also emphasized that when civil authorities, whose duty it is to safeguard public health, deem it necessary to close churches and schools, and take other restrictive measures, the only rule for pastors and people is to cooperate with the civil authorities,

obey the law, and comply with regulations that are enacted for the common good.

And one can't speak about the American Catholic response to the Spanish flu without mentioning Father James Coyle.

Coyle, an Irish born priest, was rector of the cathedral Saint Paul in Birmingham, AL from 1918 until his untimely death in 1921. Sadly, he is best remembered for being murdered by the KKK for having converted the daughter of Methodist minister, who was also a Klansman, to Catholicism and then officiating the wedding of this white woman to a Puerto Rican Catholic man.

In the trial, the murderers were acquitted. But Coyle should also be remembered for his role as a religious leader in Birmingham, during the pandemic, and its advocacy for the closure of churches, even against the argument of possibly Protestant Bible teacher, that the pandemic was God's punishment, necessitating more, not less worship

Coyle made his most eloquent case for following public health regulations in his message for Catholics that, based on its original publication in The Birmingham News, was likely also intended for general audiences in hopes of winning some converts to the Catholic faith.

In it, he first showed empathy for the loss of the mass- pointing to the sufferings of Catholics in Ireland, when it was under British rule, who were sometimes deprived of their masses- and he called for a new appreciation based on the understanding of this loss. He also spoke of the centrality of

the mass to Catholic life and the supreme obligation of attendance- failure to do so is considered a moral sin in Catholic teaching.

From there, Coyle underscored how lightly the decision to cancel public masses was not being taken with a declaration that a legitimate excuse of course, and also the obligation.

Father Coyle's visibility and his willingness to defend the Central Catholic practice while also affirming the necessity of its suspension made more powerful voice among the Birmingham faithful.

That said, there were some rebellions among Catholic clergy. For example, there's one incident in Cincinnati in which Father William Scholl of the Saint Joseph German Catholic Church held mass in defiance of public health orders until the police forced him to stop. But even then, there was a lot of visible disapproval of Scholl's action, including dignitaries at Catholic Church joining the protest against the disregard of an order that was issued to safeguard the health of the community.

Most often descent took place in the form of holding outdoor masses. Many churches advocate for them as an alternative to cancellation of services, but health boards generally pushed back and only approved as the first wave of the flu subsided in November 1918.

There is also an account of churches trying increasing the number of daily masses to spread out attendance.

As with Protestants, Catholic arguments against church closures were often based on unfair application. Why, it was asked, were stores, saloons, markets and the like allowed to remain open while churches were closed?

Also, arguments were not so much about the denial of the public health necessity of church closures, but in favor of the spiritual benefits of worship in times of pandemic.

No less, a major figure in the American Catholic Church than James Cardinal Gibbons, then Archbishop of Baltimore, Baltimore, argued that "It would be a much needed relief to our churchgoing population if they could be allowed to attend brief morning services."

Gibbons also observed that a number of calls upon our physicians are simply the result of nervousness and could be considerably allayed by the reassurance of religion.

Yet Gibbons chose to invoke a dispensation for his flock from the normal requirement of mass attendance during the pandemic.

Beyond the question of services or no, a signature contribution of the Catholic Church was the donation of church spaces as temporary hospital space. For example, there are accounts of the use of ecclesiastical building space and Catholic schools for that purpose in Philadelphia and Brooklyn.

And even more important was the role of the non-cloistered nuns and other Catholic faithful in providing aid.

There are many accounts of orders of religious women and men working long shifts to tend to the sick, sometimes at the risk their own health or sacrifice of their lives. And in helping to relieve overstretched health care personnel, the nuns and other Catholic religious personnel all deserved to be called the heroes of this period. And indeed, they received widespread praise for their work in helping mitigate the strain on the medical system of the day. The sisters were especially involved, practicing this volunteer nursing both in hospitals and in private homes.

In Philadelphia, religious brothers also played a part in the effort that included priests and members of the Saint Vincent DePaul Society, the lateral, a Catholic organization devoted to helping the poor.

Also, the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal organization, played an important role in tending to the sick in multiple military camps, in addition to their better known duties in providing recreational facilities that were open to all servicemen.

And notably, this aid was not limited to the Catholic faithful, but often crossed lines of faith. For example, there is an account in Philadelphia of nuns working in a Jewish hospital supervised by a Doctor Cohen.

I'd like to look next at the situation of Black churches and synagogues, which, as I mentioned, had other considerations.

Since Black churches had to deal with the additional effects of racism and segregation that

included exclusion of their sick for many hospitals, yet segregation may have paradoxically slowed the spread of the virus within Black communities, though it did not prevent scapegoating of Black Americans as vectors.

And from the evidence I have, responses among black churches were pretty similar to their those of their white counterparts, closing as needed, encouraging at home worship, and providing service to the needy in their communities.

A notable voice from the from the Black Christian community was that of Reverend Francis J. Grimké, who is the half brother of the abolitionist Sarah Angelina Grimké and the son of a slave and her master.

Grimké supported the closing and also sought to preach homiletical messages about the pandemic. In a sermon delivered November 3rd, 1918, Grimké addressed the hardships of church closings thus, "It seems to me in a matter like this it is always wise to submit to such restrictions for the time being." Adding that the status of churches as places of religious gatherings as opposed to, say, pool halls, would not in the least affect the health questions involved.

Grimké also suggested that, "While the epidemic raged God has been trying in a very conspicuous and vigorous way to beat a little sense into the white man head." Asking that when it came to pandemic disease or any other natural disaster for that matter, "Of what avail is the color of a man's skin or his race identity."

A notable exception to this cooperation among black churches is recounted from Indianapolis with the arrest of 10 Apostolic Christians who when taken to the police station, began speaking in tongues, making it challenging, to say the least, for the police to gather information.

When it came to Jewish communities, most historical accounts I've located thus far have more of a communal focus than synagogue or religious.

Still, the institutional patterns appear to be simple, see similar, as with churches synagogues. Service workers were counseled, and people were encouraged to hold at a home service at the hour where when the public services are usually conducted.

And this is similar to one of the current Orthodox Jewish practices as Zoom is forbidden ship on the Sabbath in the Orthodox interpretation of Jewish law.

In part of the hope of promoting at home services that would bring religious practice back into the Jewish Home, where, according to this Dayton, OH account, it had largely disappeared.

And there are also similar accounts of rebellion when it came to worship, not much different from those of Christian churches. For example, a case in Cleveland of a synagogue rebelling by holding outdoor services.

And while most accounts deal with the predominantly German Reformed Jewish communities, whose concerns appeared similar to those of the churches, I did find one account of the effect of pandemic on

Orthodox practice among the newest Jewish immigrants of this period.

This was the case of a New York based dean in the Court of Jewish Law Ruling in favor of Leniencies when it came to mourning practices of Shiva, that traditionally confined mourners to their homes for the first seven days after a barrel.

In it, the rabbis declared; "he who lives in their rooms or such a one who must have fresh air may go around outside for a few hours on account of health."

This reflected the traditional Jewish emphasis on saving life as well as the recognition of the social realities with which this religious court was dealing.

So, beyond individual examples, I'd like to look at why these organizations rebelled and how they did so. Some argued for regulation rather than closure, similar to that that applied to wartime industries because intelligence stringent regulation can prevent absolutely the crowding of church edifices and can eliminate or reduced to a minimum the danger of germ distribution through such assemblages.

Common theme is the protest of lumping churches together with movie theaters, pool halls, Taverns etc. Or worse yet, keeping these open when while churches were closed, an argument that has become cogent again with a recent Supreme Court case.

When, when the religious liberty argument was invoked, and it was sometimes, the emphasis was more likely to be a plea to impose church closure

only as a last resort, rather than to oppose it altogether.

For example, one editorial writer from Washington, DC argued, "except in cases of absolute demonstrate, unavoidable necessity, public worship in the churches shall not be prohibited by the civil authorities because this involves a certain infringement that affected the free exercise of religious liberty."

Interestingly, the writer noted; "The authorities know that through national and civil loyalty their prohibitive order will be obeyed." And precisely for that reason he added, "They should be reluctant to prevent men and women from doing that which their consciences and in the belief of some of them God command, compels them to do."

Also, Milton J. Waldron, the pastor of the Shiloh Baptist Church, worried that DC officials were carelessly interfering with the freedom of worship and making an appeal like current ones about houses of worship as essential services, Walden argued that the Christian Church is not a luxury but necessity to the life in perpetuity of any nation.

Also, there are plenty of arguments that the decision that closed churches was being made purely on a material basis with no consideration for the spiritual benefits of worship during a pandemic.

Beyond the binary of open as usual or closed, there are also a number of alternatives promoted. And in the days before zoom and live stream these alternatives to regular in person services included services printed in the newspaper for home worship.

These printed services could include sermons, service outlines, and scriptural readings, and there's a good example in The Indianapolis Star.

In another example, the months evening Press of Muncie, IN advertised, about one such service. The sermons are worthy of attention of every reader of this paper, while the musical numbers and selection of Scripture are most appropriate at this time. And it was hoped that a rise in home worship would be a possible salutary effect of the pandemic.

Open air services were promoted and practiced along with small in-home services, possibly in the name of some form of compromise, recognizing the science but also appreciating the irreplaceable value of in person services.

And more than a century before Zoom or live stream existed, there is a case of a church in Muncie, IN arranging with a local telephone company to create call in services.

The local newspaper report; "The Reverend Fe Smith will deliver a short sermon and make a few announcements over the telephone wires as congregants will be listening to every word of his talk" the writer added, "It is a legal way to get around the closing order and perhaps for figuring today's online services.

The sermon will be heard distinctly by those who call, and the service will see more of a reality when the organist plays a few selections. Finally, shorter services and good ventilation.

Or also promotes options with multiple calls for both of safety measures.

So, looking at some common takeaways, I am seeing a high degree of cooperation regardless of denomination, with relatively little difference between what we call "mainline denominations" and what are considered "fundamentalist" ones, and this is possibly reflective of a time when lines between denominations were more likely to be drawn doctrinally, and even what we think of today as liberal churches were characterized by deep religiosity.

There was relatively little full rebellion in the form of holy services as usual. In most cases it was a matter of grumbling, but complying, and complaints were mostly unaccounted when it seemed like churches were being treated unfairly, forced to shut down, while places of amusement were allowed to stay open. And rebellion—active Rebellion—took place mainly in the form of holding services outdoors.

While a few chose to go to jail rather than give up regular worship, they see mainly newsworthy as a minority, and restiveness came only later as cases declined with the first wave bringing new arguments for reopening churches in one instance, on the basis that the purpose of church assemblages are such as to entitle them to be the very last to be absolutely forbidden by public authorities.

Also, opposition to church closure was based far less on considerations of religious freedom. Rather, there was more emphasis on the spiritual benefits of worship during the crisis. And this is possibly reflective of time of greater religiosity than nonetheless managed to include a recognition of the limitations of what God could do.

In other words, no contradiction between perfect faith and adhering to public health guidelines, which was not to say that there was an argument in favor of relying on faith alone and against public health measures, but fortunately there is plenty of counter argument within religious communities, and for the most part there is a strong affirmation of the necessity of following the rules, and this was as churches often paid the price literally from the loss of tithes and offerings, though some found other ways to collect them.

And in addition, churches and their members and religious functionaries tried to help mitigate the pandemic, whether through providing space for the sick or serving as volunteer nurses.

In conclusion, these examples show the possibilities for churches across the spectrum to incorporate the public good into their religious mission rather than regarding it as impinging on religious freedom.

They also show the role of religious organizations in contributing to the public good, even across lines of faith. There can certainly be ways that that can be enacted today.

And these examples additionally displayed the adaptability of churches and other religious organizations towards strengthening home observance and theologically bridging the seeming divide between depending on God and acting in the human world and regarding of the limitations of these models for today one thing that might bridge the modern divide more challenging in a less religious world would be a greater recognition of the

potential for the role of faith as spiritual sustenance during a pandemic.

And for religious organizations to find active ways to be a force for good. The comparative compliance of this earlier period could be attributed to greater social cohesion, which was true to a degree, along with wartime patriotism that already encouraged self-sacrifice. But given that this pandemic was just part of the early upheaval of what, again, I've called "the Long 1920s," the responses of American churches and religious institutions appears all the more impressive.

These stories therefore need to be remembered not only for the sake of better managing the current pandemic, but also for the future of organized religion in America. Thank you.

Q + A

[segue from lecture]

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: So, before we move on to the Q&A, I just want to mention to everybody that if you were in any way confused by the difference between the Assemblies of God and the Church of Christ, or the Presbyterians, or the difference between Orthodox or reform sects of Judaism. Susan did us a favor of preparing a very lovely chart that's going to live on the landing page that OAH is setting up where other documentary resources associated with this season of the podcast can live.

These are teaching aids, things you can bring into the classroom with you, or things you can just use to follow up on your own casual curiosity.

Kariann Yokota was with me for the Q&A on this one. Please enjoy.

[beginning of group conversation]

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Susan Breitzer welcome to the podcast.

SUSAN BREITZER: Thank you.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: It's great to have you here and I wanted to start 'cause I confess I'm really, really not well read at all, I'm completely sort of a tabular rasa—blank slate—in this area that you're working in. When you call church history, there's one other talk in this series that's very given by religious studies professor grounded in the practicum and the questions that that people active in the religious studies space are asking.

This comes from a church history perspective, but you do have this concept of religious cooperation, so I wanted to ask you about those two things in particular; like what is it about church history? How does this field work? What's special about it and this concept of religious cooperation— I wonder if you could just sort of embroider that for us a little bit more? Because I think you meant it, the way you were describing it is... cooperation with public health authorities, I think, as opposed to interdisciplinary— When I first read the title for

your talk, I thought you meant you were going to be going into like a like a, uh, cooperation. Across these sectarian lines and so if you could unpack those two issues, first, I think that would be helpful. Those are those are beginning to answer that the initial two questions I had.

SUSAN BREITZER: OK, well I will start by saying upfront that, I am somewhat of an outsider to church history per say, although I do have some background in religious history and the history of institutions.

And I became interested in this actually through my work in Jewish studies and involvement in Jewish life and reading about how churches currently have or haven't cooperated when it comes to COVID regulations. And I thought that this would be a very interesting point of comparison.

And I will say as I got into this research, the one thing that really surprised me was that it was not really an all or nothing proposition of either full services or completely shutting down that the churches by and large were searching for some sort of compromise, such as all outdoor services.

And also, even when there was objection to the regulation, there was a pattern of cooperating anyway. Another scholar described it as "contested compliance." And I found that very interesting.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Contested compliance, yeah, that is interesting. That's interesting, 'cause it's usually very descriptive of what we've- We had this kind of ongoing discussion in our public discourse, and in the grassroots, bottom-up kind of reaction that we saw two different social

institutions, of course, churches are really important ones. And it wasn't until I listened to your talk I realize how what kinds of influential actors faith communities and these institutions end up becoming as part of the public health response because, on the one hand they fortify people spiritually, emotionally, internally, but they also most of these faith communities tend to gather- to congregate- right congregations come together and therefore introduce this additional vector for transmission.

So there's this like inherent tension and that was present-obviously- in the last year we've have, but also 102 years ago or so in the 1918 pandemic.

SUSAN BREITZER: Yeah, well, that's a thing about the tension between the two points that I found particularly of use for this discussion, was that there was a somewhat different argumentation when it came to why churches should be kept open. It was not so much a case of religious liberty, per say, as the role of religion as a spiritual as spiritual sustenance during the pandemic.

In fact, there were some arguments that aren't too dissimilar to current ones about religion being considered an essential service. The question though was how to do it safely.

And in the days before Zoom and live stream there were... different ideas clearly, but one that particularly stood out was promoting at home worship. And encouraging believers to understand that that counted for something of praying at home on your own.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Thank you for that and I look. I want to go from. I want to bring Kariann into this too in a second 'cause I know she has questions moving patiently. If there's one more issue I wanted to touch upon- or ask about.

When I think about this period in particular the end of World War One going into the 1920s. That tends to be this moment that historians frame, in the classroom- and you know I think it still surfaces in a lot of literature as this moment where the relationship between science and religious folkways or religious practice are becoming more fraught and we tend to distill that right for purposes of you know, pedagogical reasons and such into the scopes trial, right? Usually that's that that's what comes up.

That's how this gets presented, because it's it encapsulates so well those fault lines that that are arising and the truth claims of each context seem to sometimes really do contradict one another quite directly, but on some level, it feels like in your talk 102 years ago they were contradicting each other less directly then, many were claiming in 2020, which I think you know is something like. I want to, you know, a lot of times people think history is like linear progression from one point to the next. It's just this like unfolding story of human advancement, progress, et cetera and one of the things I took from your talk is, you know, we should question that kind of presentation.

SUSAN BREITZER: Yes, I would say so. And I think that was the biggest surprise. And in that even in the religious denominations that we would think of as fundamentalist, and hence most likely to oppose

science, there was very much some compliance, even if reluctant and theologically promoting and understanding that one should not rely on divine Providence that was possible and necessary to be both a firm believer and to take necessary safety precautions.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: OK yeah, thank you and all invite Kariann to come in and see what she had seen her. She's been waiting patiently, listening to me and now I want to listen to her a little bit.

KARIANN YOKOTA: Well, thanks Chris. It's really good to be here and to be able to ask you some more questions. Susan, for those of us who listened to your lecture, I think you did a good job of bringing in so many different groups, and my first question would be if you could just give us a kind of schematic map of the groups that you cover in your lecture and maybe talk about how you chose to talk about the groups that you did? What kinds of decision making processes did you go through?

Because obviously I mean you, you talk about so many, which is great, but you can't talk about every denomination, so why and how did you make the decisions to include the groups that you did?

SUSAN BREITZER: Well, part of it was simply practical. Being able to access this resource is when it's not possible to go to the library. And in the research I was able to do, including with this some pandemic database that has microfilmed newspaper articles from the era. A lot of particular denominations kept coming up, most notably the Reformed Church and the Assemblies of God, and also Christian scientists plus some- I had

come up with one of the rare, at the moment, scholarly articles about religious responses to the Spanish flu pandemic that was about the Mormon willingness to change over from a common cup for communion to separate cups.

And I ended up finding out just kinds of common thread. That's so many of these denominations spotlighted that were just seemed so very traditional, were in fact very willing to consider public safety and even make it a matter of religious principle that this is what a good Christian did; caring for one's neighbor.

And beyond Protestant denominations, there was plenty to write about the Catholic Church, both the clergy's willingness to suspend the otherwise required masses for safety, and the very big role the churches organizations played in helping care for the sick.

KARIANN YOKOTA: I am glad that you brought up the example of the change in practice with the Communion Cup and the individual cups.

As somebody who's interested in using material culture in historical research- especially, it's some interesting work by religious scholars on that front- were these changes continued as part of the church practices after the immediate pandemic was subsided?

And is that a problem with some churches? You know in terms of what their beliefs- so I guess the larger question would be how do the churches that you study and that you talk about square the circle on public health issues and then trying to bring

that into their particular religious beliefs and practices?

SUSAN BREITZER: Well, a lot of it just had to do with from the responses to the emergencies. At the moment I have less information at the moment about subsequent adaptations, but I will say that about the Mormons, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, in particular, they have a long history of adaptability.

Some of the most famous examples including polygamy. And much more recently, the change in allowing non-whites into leadership.

But this particular church has been very good at both adapting when deemed necessary and making it seem like a normal outgrowth of prophecy rather than a radical change.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: If I could pick up on that, I just yeah, I had the exact same question so thank you for asking that, Kariann, I was like writing down notes as like the impact that these institutions had on the 1918 pandemic versus the impact that it had on them, right?

'Cause there's so much disruption that occurs. Susan, you're right. I mean, you call attention at some point to the memory hole that existed about this for a long time, really up until the present there was a- I think it was like a Ken Burns documentary that came out five or six years ago-ish that that revisited this story and really placed it in- Tried to reinstate it as a a decent during the war- I mean, as important as the war experience was- But putting back into kind of public memory of

that moment, how in some ways the United States was much more disrupted by the 1918 pandemic.

I mean, I grew up my entire life hearing about how my great-grandmother, you know, perished in the second wave that came back.

So, I had the same question and you had talked about the Roman Catholic Church at one point in your talk too. So, I wanted to ask about that because I appreciate you calling attention to the difference between the sort of pre-second Vatican Council Roman Catholic Church versus the post second.

So, this is a very different Roman Catholic Church in this moment, one that's much more *suspect* in the eyes of Protestant America. One that's much more exclusivist in its understanding of itself, right? As one church, one holy Catholic Apostolic Church. There's the Latin mass still in place. There's much less like humanism.

So, these were just a few years out. I mean, this is the moment where the Ku Klux Klan is beginning to rise to the prominence that it later obtains, I mean, in part, in good part as a virulently anti-Catholic organization.

Does any of that factor into the experiences that you encountered in doing this work?

SUSAN BREITZER: Well, I did want to give that some attention that it was important to note that one of the most prominent Catholic voices for following safety measures was Father Coyle, who was an Irish born priest, and shortly afterwards was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan for having converted the daughter

of a Methodist minister and Klansman and then marrying this white woman to a non-white Puerto Rican Catholic.

So he was definitely speaking as an outsider. So that made in in some ways even more significant that he was willing even to push back against Protestants who said "we should be praying more, not less."

And the other piece of the history of the Catholic response to the Spanish flu in America was how they how they went all out for helping the sick and feeding the poor. And feeding the poor was no small deal at the time when breadwinners could get sick and people could starve because of that. And while traditionally in so many faiths, nursing and other forms of care as part of proselytization in this instance, it in a way became ecumenical.

They cared for people regardless of religion, and there was even one case of nuns working at a Jewish hospital under the direction of a Jewish doctor.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: And I, Oh yeah, Kariann, Go ahead.

KARIANN YOKOTA: No, I was just going to follow up on that discussion of the Catholic Church and their role in helping and provide for essential care, both medical and also just the day-to-day needs of food. And I was wondering if you could talk.

A little bit more about maybe more even in general, of religious institutions stepping in and providing social services that in other countries, perhaps other countries who were being hit by the same pandemic, that in America there's this history of,

you know, not having state support, but expecting individual charities often organized around religious institutions, providing care. And whether you can say a little bit more about that history?

SUSAN BREITZER: Well, that has been a big part of from the Progressive Era response to societies problems of the faith-based institutions. Plus, there was the Catholic church's long history of providing social services in various forms, though traditionally it would have limited to the faithful just as among Jews, Jewish institutions served entire communities and provided welfare services that in other countries might have been seen as the responsibility of the government.

Another way that during the pandemic this increased was the donation of church and institutional space for hospital space with massive illness and hospitals being overcrowded.

And that was considered some of their most valuable contributions, along with the volunteer nursing.

KARIANN YOKOTA: Well, if I can just one more follow up; so you mentioned, and it's well known, that in the United States at this time Roman Catholics were looked upon with suspicion because of the fear that they were controlled by the church right? Or the the Pope in Rome but did you find any evidence, or do you know whether international religious organizations were trying to organize their churches across the globe at their response to the pandemic, either the Spanish flu or the current COVID pandemic that we're facing now.

Do you know of anything where, like the church, would say here's what we have to do globally? Did you find any evidence of that?

SUSAN BREITZER: Well, curiously, I have not really come up with any evidence of a coordinated response.

Back then, different bishops said different things, mostly fortunately in favor of suspending masses, but there did not appear to be a global response.

And as for the current pandemic, I really have not come up with much to distinguish the church except now, most recently, the issue of the vaccine.

On the one hand a Bishop in New Orleans opposing the use of a certain vaccine based on its derivation from fetal tissue, on the other hand, the current Pope from encouraging his flock to get vaccinated.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: I'm thinking too about- I want to hear a little bit about the sources that you're drawing on to create this work, or to build it. Because you mentioned that a lot of the research that you did to put this together occurred in this pandemic movement. So all the archives are shut down, all the in person research facilities are shut down.

Were you using just databases, and newspapers and things like that?

SUSAN BREITZER: Mainly databases and newspapers, what scholarly sources I could find for background, and I did have to rely to a degree on recent secondary sources and locate primary sources through them. And fortunately, there were plenty

that that were cited and I was able to locate at least some of them.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: I mean, you mentioned LDS Church and they've done so much intense historical digitization work of not just genealogical records, but all kinds of things. That they've made available via ancestry, which is a really incredibly powerful research tool. I mean, you know I have an institutional subscription for it that my students use to locate information about the people who show up in the documents that they're working on- primary sources- and it is remarkable how much *stuff* is in there and just like you know, getting to it, growing bigger and bigger and bigger every day.

Is that the kind of- I mean, are you able to get much of a sense of the personal lives of these congregants through those mostly, you know, records of the church or the congregation itself?

SUSAN BREITZER: mostly it's been church and official records and the other piece of that I should mention is that even among the records I had available to me, and other scholars have said this too, there has been relatively little written about the churches in the pandemic.

And that a lot to do with from the pandemic competing for public attention with World War One.

So, it does take some digging as far as finding more personal accounts. Although in the in the case of one of the churches I looked at there were many accounts of prayer or the bedsides of the sick and of miraculous healing; the last, even while

affirming that people should still adhere to safety measures and not rely on miracles.

But yeah, I mean that is one that is somewhat more challenging.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: So that's interesting 'cause that gets to this fault line between like scientific truth and religious truth, and a moment where there's much less authoritative sense of how viruses like influenza are communicated and transmitted from one person or group to another.

Is there yeah, I'm thinking about the bigger literature that that you're building upon. Do you think? I mean, I had this mentor early in my career who really felt strongly- he just passed away, sadly, not too long ago. What an incredibly brilliant person!

KARIANN YOKOTA: What was his name, Chris?

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Leo Rebuffo. He was here at GW for like 30 years. He was one of the very first- it's become very fashionable, in the last 15 years or so, to study American conservatism in the history of the American right. That wasn't so fashionable before that you know. And Leo was one of the earliest people to kind of study this and really state the claim- and he had and he had great article titles.

I think he had a piece in the Journal of American History. At one point, it's like "Why are Americans so conservatives? And why do so few historians know anything about it.", you know? I mean, he was very blunt.

One of the central arguments of his entire career as a historian- and a very distinguished historian- was that historians don't pay enough attention to religious history into the history of faith communities, and in the last few minutes that we have, I just wanted to get your reaction to that if you could.

I mean do historians pay enough attention? Let's assume for a second that Leo was right when he was making that argument; Have we gotten better? I mean, do historians pay enough attention to this realm of life and this realm of the past?

SUSAN BREITZER: Well, I would say yes *and* no. I have multiple colleagues who have published about-

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: You're a definite maybe.

Laughs

SUSAN BREITZER: Yeah, well- *laughs* I'd say yes *but* no.

KARIANN YOKOTA: Like most academics, actually.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: It's like, well, it's really both...

SUSAN BREITZER: Yeah, I mean from the political side, I'd say definitely yes. I have colleagues who I personally know to be very liberal publishing great work about political conservatism. But when it comes to the religious, I'm really not seeing enough, basically, outside those who are part of those faiths.

There was a great podcast I referred to about the response of the assemblies of God to the Spanish flu pandemic. But relatively little, comparatively,

that would have been written by someone from outside the church. So I think there needs to be just a lot more willing to look at that from the outside and maybe bring that a little more into the scholarly mainstream.

KARIANN YOKOTA: Can I can I follow up on something I was wondering about, Chris? I was going to ask, Susan, you know, as we're listening to these different podcast lectures and trying to draw some themes or things that go across, you know, from the past to the present moment that we're living through right now. One thing that stood out for me in your lecture was the idea of transparency of reporting.

Right? and due to wartime censorship in World War One, and there was an underreporting, or suppressed reporting, of the casualties of the pandemic.

And, so, I know from teaching this in my history classes that and that's why it was called the Spanish flu, right? Because they were not involved in the war, so they were the ones reporting. So, I'd love to hear what you think about the the idea of when a pandemic happens, the idea of reporting and transparency and journalism and how that is going to impair the way the public is being able to try to fight these tragedies. Because we don't know what's going on. So can you tell us a little bit more about that aspect of this topic? The idea of wartime censorship at for the Spanish influenza?

SUSAN BREITZER: Well, it was partly a result of censorship, as long as the flu is primarily a European thing, but also- and I think I alluded to this- the idea of the flu as the invisible enemy.

It was not so much conscious censorship as the idea that this just was not as interesting, as pressing, even though it really was. This was not a war with all the carnage and so forth that that would attract and hold people's attention.

It was scary, but in a different way and therefore was not really given the attention that it deserved because of the competing attention to the war.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: If I could just pick up on that. Actually, for a second based on what you were saying.

Was it rhetoric of war? I mean because this is arising in this immediate aftermath of the Great War. And our, in our 2021 moment, in living memory of most Americans, we've gotten very acclimated and accustomed to hearing policy interventions, especially on the scope of what the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has required. Characterized as a form of war, so we have war on drugs, war on crime, war on poverty.

Was that language- that Marshall kind of language- Was it framed that way in 1918?

SUSAN BREITZER: I'd say it was to degree.

I mean, again, there was competition with the actual war, but there was the same sort of spirit emphasized in fighting it, and I think it had the biggest aspect in terms of encouraging social cohesion and following the rules for safety. Just as people were strongly encouraged to follow the rules for the war effort.

And those two in a way became tied together.

KARIANN YOKOTA: Yeah, I wonder if the American Society, or the public was more apt to follow mandates from the government regarding the pandemic at this time because they were already in "wartime mode" and in terms of listening to you know what to do for the war effort, etc. Did you see that, this kind of a greater willingness to follow directives?

SUSAN BREITZER: I see it to a degree, and certainly in terms of the responses of the churches. There were even instances of making distinctions between opposing wartime restrictions on the churches to save fuel, but accepting restrictions in terms of public health with the pandemic.

And while that was ultimately going to break up, to a degree, by the 1920s, I think it definitely held for the duration of the war. And just another thing I wanted to mention is kind of the flip side was some there seemed to be a greater acceptance of the central place of religion in America than I think there is nowadays.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Yeah, I think that this was something that I had in mind too. Listening to talk is this is a moment- I mean, I think there's still quite a bit of residue about this today.

I remember Barack Obama's 2008 inauguration speech- so it would have been 2009. I remember being struck 'cause he went off this whole list about sort of inclusion across sectarian lines as everyone sort of being part of the American family, characterizing the US policy in that particular language. But he specifically included nonbelievers in that list of things, which I remember being struck by it at the time because it was a step past

the way that we had been used to hearing American presidents in particular- American leadership- cast the United States. In not just, you know, in faith specific terms, or theistic terms, right- as a God fearing or God loving, God worshipping people- but sort of unofficially like a kind of white, Christian, Protestant polity. Unofficially that way. And it would seem to me, given that synergy between national identity and religious identity of many of the people that you are talking about, in this talk..

I'm just thinking. I mean I'm all for that. I'd be curious to hear your reaction to this. You know, building off Kariann's question about willingness to comply with directive, right, and willingness to submit or follow the lead of public health authorities and national governance.

Do you see any of those multiple kind of identities, overlapping and reinforcing one another?

SUSAN BREITZER: Yeah, I would say so and I was thinking in terms of the whole idea of American civic or civil religion that for much of history has been a little different from white Protestantism. And now we're facing a new and very necessary challenge of a more inclusive civic identity that nonetheless includes a sense of common peoplehood and solidarity with one another

And I would say when it comes to religious compliance, I am also considering the possibility that it is the loss, at least to a degree, of this white Protestant preeminence that has been behind

some of the rebellion that you really didn't see a century ago.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: That's a great point. Thank you for that.

KARIANN YOKOTA: Well, yeah, and going back to what you know you're saying, Chris, about these multiple identities. I was really interested in your your discussion of the African American churches and how African Americans were, like with so many other things, people of color blamed for problems like the pandemic and seen as vectors for the disease.

So wondering in what ways did race play a part in the experience, or you know how did the African American churches respond to these racist charges and blaming and scapegoating of their people?

SUSAN BREITZER: Well, I'm still working on researching this and I would like to find out a lot more, but there was definitely among African American communities- and I think similar to among Jews- the responses may have been more communal than religious and that was the development of the Runham medical course and some Blacks were frequently shut out of white hospital and faced a lot of medical discrimination- that has not ceased totally now.

So, I think one big thing was building up institutions in order to take care of one's own community. But the other that really caught my eye, and I would like to look more that, was the theological alarm responses among Black pastors.

One of my sources was the sermons of Reverend Francis J. Grimke, who was the half-brother of

Sarah and Angelina Grimke. And among the two main points he emphasized was one that I found just really interesting, kind of almost as a response to why churches should be treated differently, as opposed to, say, pool halls.

He said that just because some religious activity is going on in there doesn't mean that it's any less dangerous than a pool hall.

And more pointedly, when it came to the issue of race and disease, he pointed out that the disease itself, not necessarily the responses, made no discrimination according to race, and encouraged the white man- white person- to strongly rethink their ideas about superiority in light of that.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Yeah, you just introduced so many topics that feels like you've left the audience with kind of guidance about things that need more work, things that need more research- which is always a great place to wrap- and yet as you're talking there are more questions I have.

And, so, if you'll indulge me in one more moment. I'm just curious; one of the things you said, you know, religious institutions are different from pool halls, right? And that that is, I think, undeniable. But also, there's a very big difference in kind right between those two communal settings and they played a very different kind of role in the lives of most people.

And this is something that came up. I mean, we had several oral arguments in the Supreme Court just in the last year about this issue, and that point was made- was really embraced by several of the Justices.

If you listened to those arguments that said, you know particularly the ones who were a little bit more kind of hidebound to textualism and to that approach to judicial interpretation.

Uh, this well there's no you know free exercise to go to the pool hall provision in the 1st Amendment.

But there is a free exercise provision about religion and so therefore the state really has much less power to intervene- to introduce *restrictions*- and over the course of this pandemic, we saw a shift in the ideological orientation of the court because of Justice, Ginsburg's death and actually resulted in a decision being overturned.

Is that the case at the time too? I mean, back in the '18 experience, that religious institutions are making the same kind of arguments about special exception, special provision, that this is a fundamentally necessary part of everyday life that even something as dire as a disease epidemic isn't powerful enough to override?

SUSAN BREITZER: Yes, I would say so and it was in response to different kinds of restrictions because then, as much as now, there was no unified national response.

It really dependent on state and locality, and in some states the churches were less restricted when it came to whether to shut down or not, and in some cases the churches were more restricted. And in that case, the latter, there was definitely protest.

Though again, the language had less to do with religious freedom, per say, or free exercise, then

the idea of religion as an essential service and the importance of religion during this time.

And it was relatively rarely an argument to simply keep the churches open. In fact, there was one source who said that they should focus on regulating church functioning rather than simply prohibiting it and close it only as a last resort.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Thank you. I guess the takeaway I took from listening to those oral arguments was just that, a lot of the justices were really feel like religions different. It just is.

You know, and that that sentiment seems very much present in in the talk you gave.

SUSAN BREITZER: Yes, I would say that that has continued in this case, although I think it is been somewhat different in terms of how religion is viewed by most of American Society.

And why this Supreme Court decision has been very controversial.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Well— Kariann do you have any more questions for Susan or..?

KARIANN YOKOTA: Well, I have a lot.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: You do?

KARIANN YOKOTA: Yeah! I mean, this has been really interesting, and I look forward to— it sounds like you're going to be following up on this topic and continuing. And once the pandemic over— once it ends and we can go back to our archival research, do you plan on publishing this as a book project, or what's your future plans for this work?

SUSAN BREITZER: Well, I would very much like if possible to make this a book project since some in some ways I've barely scratched the surface of this.

I think there is a lot to be discovered and I think there is going to be a lot of interest in the years as we move past the pandemic- hopefully soon- and I've long believed in history is a guide to how we should think of current issues, and I think this is one thing that, if I can, I'd very much like to contribute to.

KARIANN YOKOTA: Well, then we'll look forward to reading it.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Alright, Susan Breitzer I want to thank you for the wonderful talk you left us with, and the all the all the questions you leave me wanting to ask and use to inform my own research. Susan Breitzer, thank you.

SUSAN BREITZER: Thank you.

Conclusion

And that's a wrap. Please join us again next time when Gerard Fitzgerald will lecture on origins of Aerobiology and airborne disease research. How cool does that sound!

I'll catch you then.