Third World Conference for Religious Dialogue and Cooperation

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

→ RELIGION AND THE CONTEMPORARY PHASE OF GLOBALIZATION: POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES

RELIGION AND THE CONTEMPORARY PHASE OF GLOBALIZATION: POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES: BOOK OF ABSTRACTS
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PHILOSOPHIA HUNGARICA AS A PATTERN OF GLOBAL THINKING

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Abstract: The idea of "Hungarian Philosophy" is not really talked about in modern scholarship. However, there are important traditions in Central Europe that can be referred to as *philosophia hungarica.* This means philosophies, theologies, and theories connected to the culture of the Kingdom of Hungary throughout the centuries. Many authors in this area wrote in Latin and other languages of the region, such as German, Croatian, Serbian, Slovakian, or Romanian. This characteristic of philosophia hungarica is not different from the traditions of other cultures, such as the Polish, Croatian, or French. However, a key feature of Hungarian philosophy is its strong theistic commitment. This might be surprising to those who know only one Hungarian philosopher, the Marxist Georg Lukács. But even Lukács's Marxism has aspects related to the transcendent. Other Marxists, like Zoltai and Heller, even became religious as they got older. Beyond these figures, the dominant themes in Hungarian philosophy include theism, intuitionism, and an openness to different perspectives. In my talk, I will briefly discuss two examples to illustrate this: Béla von Brandenstein (1901–1989) and László Gondos-Grünhut (1903–1962). Their work can still serve as a pattern of a globally oriented and tolerant kind of thinking.

Keywords: Hungarian Philosophy, Globalism, Tolerance, Openness.

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BE FRUITFUL, AND MULTIPLY: THE IRONY OF GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

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Abstract: *Religious dialogue and interfaith cooperation have increasingly emerged as essential labors for fostering peace, mutual understanding, and collaboration across increasingly pluralistic societies, especially where global crises invite a shared response. These efforts foster peace, break down silos, deepen mutual understanding, and build bridges. Yet such openness comes with a paradoxical risk: In seeking common ground, we risk eroding the very fingerprints that give traditions their unique identity, theological integrity, and distinctive other-ness. When differences are downplayed to avoid offense, when doctrinal commitments are softened for the sake of consensus or understanding, when sacred rituals are reimagined to mean all things for all people, or when distinctive and complex beliefs are reframed in universalist language, we risk replacing deep particularity with a kind of well-intentioned, insipid sameness that mocks the fecundity of the image of God. This paper argues that authentic dialogue and cooperation must preserve the irreducibility of each faith's central ideas, beliefs, and practices. Dialogue should not require dilution. Instead, it must be grounded in the willingness to boldly engage the other-as-Other without surrendering the self-as-Self. Only then can religious individuals and communities work together without becoming lost in the process.*

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THE PRACTICE AND VISION OF CONSCIENCE CULTURE: A GLOBAL CIVILIZATIONAL OPPORTUNITY THROUGH MULTILATERAL COLLABORATION

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Abstract: In the rapidly advancing era of globalization, value conflicts, cultural homogenization, religious antagonism, and social injustice have become pressing global issues threatening global peace and coexistence. In response to this global moral crisis, the culture of conscience is emerging as a vital mechanism to guide humanity out of turmoil and toward a new era of global civilization. Drawing from the Chinese philosophical concept of Ti-Yong (體用), this paper presents "conscience" as the core essence (ti) of culture and morality, while its practical expression (yong) is realized through moral intuition (良知, liangzhi) and moral capability (良能, liangneng), guiding both individual action and collective decision-making; embodying the harmony between moral awareness and righteous action. As a universal value transcending borders and ideologies, conscience culture not only offers inner moral guidance but also serves as a driving force behind ethical practices, international cooperation, and institutional design. Through education, cultural exchange, multilateral collaboration, and civic engagement, conscience culture becomes a vital force for promoting peace and sustainable development. By examining Tai Ji Men's Movement of an Era of Conscience as a representative case, this paper illustrates how conscience transforms cultural clashes and religious tensions brought by globalization into opportunities for dialogue and mutual understanding, fostering cross-cultural consensus and ultimately leading to a new era of conscience-driven global civilization. At this pivotal moment of moral choice, conscience culture is not merely a response to current crises, but a guiding path toward global peace, justice, and the restoration of human dignity.
Keywords: Conscience Culture, Ti-Yong Philosophy, Moral Intuition, Global Civilization.

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THE CHURCH ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE WITH CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL STRUCTURES OF THE WORLD

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Abstract: In the era of globalization, the Church faces the challenge of adapting its evangelization mission to new, dynamic realities. Globalization is recognized as a "sign of the times," which requires deep reflection and new pastoral strategies from the Church, as pointed out by Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical "Caritas in veritate." - Evangelization of cultural spheres: Contemporary global culture often deviates from evangelical values, thus the Church must work towards its purification and guidance according to Christian principles. Media play a crucial role in this mission, shaping opinions and moral attitudes. Both John Paul II and Benedict XVI emphasized the significance of media as tools of truth and evangelization, calling for their use in promoting ethics and morality in a global context. - Intercultural dialogue: In the face of relativism, the Church must engage in dialogue that respects cultural diversity, seeking common ethical values to build a civilization based on love and peace. This dialogue should be based on mutual respect and avoid futile disputes, focusing on what unites different cultures. - Interreligious dialogue: The Church seeks to address religious syncretism through dialogue that looks for the "seeds of the Word" in other traditions to promote peace and understanding while maintaining its own Christian identity. In the context of migration and global human movement, this dialogue is essential for building community among religions. - Globalization as a "sign of the times": The article highlights that globalization, while morally neutral, is dependent on human actions. The Church should steer it towards the common good, supporting democracy, local cultures, the dignity of the human person, unity with respect for human rights, and responsibility for media. The priorities of the Church in the face of globalization include developing new forms of pastoral care, involving the laity in Church life, providing charitable assistance as a response to consumerism and indifference, and promoting moral values within families and society. The article concludes that the Church must be active and adaptable to counteract relativism, secularization, and to promote a civilization of love, peace, and evangelical values in an ever-changing world.

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THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PARTY VMRO DPMNE TOWARDS ITS MEMBERS OF THE MUSLIM FAITH

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Abstract: Macedonia is living the fourth decade of its independence, building a new political system, different from the previous one. The new political system rests on democratic values, in an age of neoliberal pluralism. The new political system builds a mosaic of multi-ethnicity and multi-confessionalism. Political parties are the key factor within the political system, in which citizens organize and articulate their political participation. It is easier for the Macedonian left, represented by the political party SDSM, to accommodate the new situation as former communists and atheists and to nurture contemporary multiconfessionalism. The challenge is for the right, represented by the VMRO DPMNE political party, which from its establishment to the last Congress of 2021, its first ideological determinant was Christian democracy. Given that Macedonia is a multiethnic and multiconfessional environment, the parties are striving for their representativeness. Election analysis shows that the right is present in environments with Muslim faith. Further in the composition of the parliamentary caucus or mayors, the establishment of citizens with Muslim faith in the VMRO DPMNE party may be observed. It can be assumed that the Christian Democrats have Muslim members. A real sociological challenge is to investigate the attitude of this party towards its members of the Muslim faith, how it approaches and mobilizes them. As well as analyzing Muslim members' attachment to the party, what their motives for membership are, how they are organized within the party, what common beliefs or values they share. An examination of this interrelation may provide the answer, why this party after 30 years of its existence and profiling as a Christian democratic party, at the last Congress in 2021, adopted a doctrine in which it profiled itself as a people's party.

Keywords: VMRO DPMNE, Christian democracy, Islam, multiconfessionalism.

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KUNG'S GLOBAL ETHICS
- ON RELIGIOUS MORALITY AND UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY AND DIALOGUE -

Donev Dejan[1]

Abstract: *Connection, i.e. the practical acting and application of dialogue and responsibility, represents a radically new consciousness that profoundly changes the ways in which we understand the most comprehensive approach to life. This opens the doors to an era of global dialogue and universal responsibility (in which religious morality plays a large active part) as a global two-way communication principle of understanding life, not reducing it to a global religion, but taking it from it. It is about ethics that should direct us towards the conscious acceptance of a common set of ethical principles. The world-renowned ethicist and theologian Hans Kung speaks of such an ethics, of a global ethics that is not the result of developing a specific theoretical question, but rather the need to provide answers to real problems and which has as its goal the achievement of peace between people, but through the establishment of a common ethics based on humanism, and dialogue is its basic method.*

Keywords: *Kung, global ethics, dialogue, religious morality, responsibility.*

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GLOBALIZATION AND GLOCALIZATION: THE CHALLENGES OF RELIGION

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Abstract: *In this paper, we analyze the explanatory power and practical relevance of two issues that are of the utmost importance for a more adequate understanding of contemporary societies. The first is question of the globalization, which refers to both the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson, 1992, p. 8). The second, is the question of the glocalization which is developed in sociology by Robertson, as a result of globalization, constructed glocalization based on the relationship between the global and the local. According to Robertson, who, together with Habib Hak Kondker, Victor Rudometoff, is the most eloquent representative of the ideas of globalization and glocalization in modern sociology. We will also discuss these two issues and their relationship with religion, especially the question of the characteristics of glocal religions.*

Keywords: *globalization, glocalization, religion, glocal religions.*

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FROM ANCIENT TOLERANCE TO CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS: INTERRELIGIOUS AND INTERETHNIC RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON GLOBAL SECURITY, WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE BALKANS

Duev Ratko[1]
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Stanojkovska Trajkovska Natasha[3]

Abstract: *This study explores the complex phenomenon of interreligious and interethnic (in)tolerance in a global context, with a specific focus on the Balkan region. Employing an interdisciplinary methodological approach that combines historical, religious studies and social sciences analysis. The study analyzes the historical roots of tolerance and intolerance, from ancient civilizations to contemporary conflicts. The research focuses on how religious and ethnic identities are constructed and manipulated; how this influences intergroup relations and how it contributes to or threatens global peace and security. The study identifies the key factors that influence the emergence and escalation of conflicts, as well as potential strategies for overcoming them, including education, intercultural dialogue, and the promotion of shared ethical values. Particular attention is paid to the Balkan context, where historical, cultural, and political factors create a unique environment for the manifestation of tolerance and intolerance.*

Keywords: *interreligious tolerance, interethnic tolerance, global security, history, Balkan region.*

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BULGARIAN NEW AGEISM AND CIVIC-RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY

Yana Fileva[1]

Abstract: The politicization of theology and religion, on one hand, and the "theologization" of politics, on the other, are fundamental characteristics of the relationship between religion and globalization. Globalization enhances, at least in the short term, religion, and religiosity. In this way, globally oriented religions are integrated into the global political discourse on the world order as a competing ideology, whose authority significantly surpasses that of the political and economic system. Globalization raises questions about the new forms, functions, and roles of religious ideologies in the global space. A global religion example is New Age, while a new form example is civil religion. This paper would try to answer the question of whether Bulgarian New Age could shape a civil-religious ideology, whose messages, symbols, and rituals could support the moral integration of (part of) Bulgarian society. Especially in the perspective of Peter Berger, according to whom historically, in Orthodox societies, churches have never functioned as voluntary associations based on the conscious choice of believers, unlike Protestant ones. The analysis indicates that the Bulgarian New Ageism activates followers towards beneficial for society activities. The messages express the historical memory for right and wrong, that is, the reproduction of sacred traditions regardless of specific confessions. They are associated with a revivalist spiritual movement, a consequence of social crisis, uniting people under an ideological banner and missionary vision. They call for moral integration in society, including agnostics and atheists.

Keywords: Bulgarian New Ageism, civil religion.

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A LITERATURE REVIEW: RESEARCH FINDING ON RELATION BETWEEN RELIGION AND NEW SOCIAL MEDIA

Gegoska Ivana[1]

Abstract: Religion, like other traditional organizations, has not remained immune to the influence of the new era contained in everything that digitalization and knowledge society bring. This paper presents a review of research approaches and resulting findings regarding the impact of new social media (NSM) on religion as a collective system. The intention is to discuss research concepts and findings that serve to understand the relationship between technology, new social media, religion, and intercultural communication in an already polarized world. The findings are aimed at monitoring the dynamics of changes in religious content under the influence of NSM; the influence of NSM on online social media with religious content; the impact of new social media on online social media with religious content in mixed cultural environments and the impact of NSM on shaping perceptions of other religions in mixed cultural environments.

Keywords: new social media, religion, knowledge society.

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THE MIGRANT IN THE MIRROR: DUTCH STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS YOUNG ASYLUM STATUS HOLDERS IN AMSTERDAM

Maite Hes[1]

Abstract: *This research explores attitudes towards the inclusion of young asylum status holders among Dutch students at the StudentLifeCoach Refugees (SLC-R) project in Amsterdam. Building on a literature review of (de)coloniality, decolonial peacebuilding and its deeply entrenched connections to the contemporary migration debate in the Netherlands, a case study of the SLC-R project provides practical tangibility to the research. The interview analysis is supported by decolonial peacebuilding theory, which serves as a tool to uncover structures of coloniality that underlie contemporary approaches to migration studies, particularly in the context of the Dutch colonial history. The participants' stories are explored through a qualitative mixed methods design, combining participant observation with semi-structured interviews combined with drawing. This methodology incorporates a non-verbal element of storytelling into the understanding of the students' attitudes, which is a methodological choice based on the importance of alternative ways of knowledge production. The aim of this relatively new approach to interviews is to challenge the existing and dominant discourses that surround migration studies which oftentimes reinforce the problematic hierarchies between the 'local' and the 'newcomer'. In this challenge, the variety of cultures and faiths participating in the program are included through an intercultural lens, which asks the researcher and the reader to continually question their own beliefs and perceived relation to 'other' realities.*

Keywords: *migration studies, decoloniality, decolonial peacebuilding, intercultural.*

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REVISITING SPATIAL TURN IN RELIGION:
THE EXAMPLE OF MENTAL MAPPING OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CRISES

Reet Hiiemäe [1]

Abstract: Environmental health crises compel communities to rethink not only their physical surroundings but also the internal maps by which they orient themselves in times of uncertainty. This paper explores the importance of spatial thinking and religiously informed mental maps in shaping responses to environmental health crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the Fukushima nuclear disaster or the memorialization following Hurricane Katrina. During the Covid-19 lockdowns, individuals affiliated with diverse religious traditions reconfigured their spatial trajectories – they shifted from conventional sacred buildings to alternative sites (e.g., sacred sites in nature, parks, or even digital spaces) to maintain community bonds and personal solace. Similarly, in various European contexts, responses to Hurricane Katrina or Fukushima nuclear catastrophe resonated far beyond their immediate locale, leading to specific religious behavior (e.g., gatherings for joint prayers or the erection of religious memorials). These acts of spatial re-signification transformed landscapes into canvases of religion-bound memory and meaning, inviting both intra- and interfaith engagement. Through a qualitative analysis of case studies and spatial behavior observations from Estonia and beyond, this paper argues that religious mental maps are dynamic and adaptable, serving as reciprocal tools for both practical crisis management and the initiation of broader religious cooperation. The spatial shifts witnessed during and after such crises reveal how sacred space is respondent to emergent realities. Thus, it deserves closer attention why in cases where mental maps of individuals and groups with various worldviews usually don't overlap, such crisis processes can sometimes trigger communities to negotiate common ground and foster intercultural and interreligious understanding, and how respective knowledge could be used in future crisis communication.

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DISCONTINUATION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: A CHALLENGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract: *Religious Education was part of the school curriculum in the past in South Africa, with democracy came human rights, right of speech and freedom of religious therefore Religious Education was slowly discounted from the curriculum. Despite its benefits, religious education in primary schools faces various challenges and controversies. One of the main concerns relates to the potential for indoctrination or bias in teaching religious content. Act 94 of 1996 legitimates the inherited rights for all South African citizens to freedom of conscience, opinion, religion, belief, and thought, together with freedom from unfair discrimination regarding any aspect in public education institutions, including religious education, but not on the basis of religion and not included in the National Curriculum. Children do not have the opportunity to study their religions in an organised manner. This paper aims to examine the importance of religious education in primary schools. religious education is not required in The National Curriculum, but this can still be modified. The constitution of SA according to 3 Section 15(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa guarantees religious independence. Numerous religions are represented in South Africa's ethnic and regional diversity. In societies that have many cultures and faith just as South Africa, Religious education is an argumentative school subject in democratic settings. This paper will further discuss the discontinuation of religious education the primary school Curriculum is a challenge*

Keywords: Religious, Education, Primary school, Learners, Curriculum.

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GLOBALIZATION AND THE END OF CHRISTIANITY

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Abstract: *This paper explores globalization as both the ideal means for achieving Christianity's ultimate mission and the means for its ultimate demise. No other religion has benefited more from globalization than Christianity. Advances in modern communication—now amplified by the limitless potential of artificial intelligence—have enhanced the quality, reach, and influence of Christianity, extending its message to the most distant, hostile, and remote populations. The unprecedented ease of travel and the rise of diaspora communities have created greater opportunities for face-to-face evangelization, both locally and internationally. In this sense, globalization serves as a powerful medium for fulfilling the Great Commission, which is Christianity's great end. At the same time, globalization appears to be accelerating the decline of modern Christianity—marked by its evangelical mission, triumphalism, religious superiority, and unique privileged space of power and influence in all areas of personal and public life where Christianity is the dominant religion. However, Christian populations—especially in the West—are shrinking. After experiencing explosive growth through the missionary movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, which were closely tied with Western imperialism, Christianity in the West is now witnessing a downward trend in both numbers and cultural influence. Beyond demographic challenges, globalization itself is contributing to this shift. Unlike imperialism, which facilitated a unidirectional spread of Christianity, globalization fosters a dynamic exchange of religions and worldviews, allowing the "gaze" to be returned. The interconnected world that globalization seeks to create poses an existential challenge to modern Christianity. Some factions will resist these changes, but the majority will have to reinterpret Christianity within a globalized context. Ultimately, this marks the end of modern imperial Christianity, perhaps for the better.*

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DEEP INSIDE OF A PARALLEL UNIVERSE: RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN MEDIA DISCOURSE SURROUNDING THE STUDENT MOVEMENT IN SERBIA

Igrutinović Danica[1]

Abstract: *Following the fall of the concrete canopy at the newly reconstructed train station in Novi Sad, which killed 16 people, Serbia has been experiencing the greatest student movement Europe has seen since at least 1968. Students of all ideological and political persuasions have come together to demand justice, honesty, and integrity from what is increasingly seen as a criminally and lethally corrupt government. This phenomenon has not gone unnoticed by dignitaries and other commentators within the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as those responding to them, and this paper will strive to offer a critical discourse analysis of such media commentary. Of particular interest will be the discourse surrounding the question of ties between the church and the state and attempts to divide and conquer by accentuating any religious and ideological differences that could be found between groups of students. Additionally, religious elements noticeable in the protests themselves – both explicit and implicit – will be listed and analyzed. For instance, the fact that many students carry icons and crosses on their long walks to their destinations, has been noted by many, theologians included, and likened to pilgrimages of sorts. Other religious and ritualistic elements of the student protests will also be explored and analyzed.*

Keywords: *media discourse analysis, student movement, religion, politics.*

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THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN OR THE KINGDOM ON EARTH – RELIGION AND THE PROCESS OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract: This paper explores the phenomena arising from the complex interplay and multifaceted relationships between religion and the process of globalization. This descriptive study examines the mutual impact and relational dynamics between religion and globalization, analyzing the accompanying societal challenges: syncretism, homogenization, fundamentalism, marginalization, totalitarianism versus the genuine freedom of being, the spiritual aspiration toward Truth, and the authentic values that foster mutual human recognition of diversity, love, and cooperation. In doing so, the study offers insight into the position of religion within the process of globalization and how contemporary global trends influence the collective value system, shape traditional practices, form identity, and contribute to the emergence of current social anomalies and religious doctrines.

Keywords: religion, globalization, totalitarianism, values, religious doctrines.

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WHO IS AFRAID OF QIGONG? ANTI-CULTISM AND THE REPRESSION OF CHI-BASED GROUP

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Abstract: *The persecution of Falun Gong and Zhonggong in the People's Republic of China highlights the conflictual relationship between the Beijing regime and Qigong. While initially both Falun Gong and Zhonggong were not only tolerated, but promoted by the Communist Party, when they became too successfully and asserted their independence from the regime, they were persecuted. Free rein was given to a critique of Qigong based on Marxist notions of science. When associated with religion or spirituality, Qigong was prohibited, and its practitioners were labeled as members of "cults" or xie jiao, an old Chinese legal category designating "groups promoting heterodox teachings." Although "cults" is a wrong translation of xie jiao, the categories of the international anti-cult movement were mobilized to repress Qigong-based religious movements. Qigong presented as a mere set of physical exercises was tolerated but strictly regulated through the Chinese Health Qigong Association, established in 2000. Public gatherings were limited, only state-certified instructors could teach Qigong, and what practices were authorized was determined by the state through the Association. The same anti-cult criticism of Chi-based spiritual groups and practices, such as Falun Gong and Reiki, is present in the West, including in the United States and France, often not without a Chinese influence. In Taiwan, the Tai Ji Men was created in 1996 as part of political hostility to Qigong-based and other groups not supporting the party then in power and, for different reasons, has continued to this day.*

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SACRED EROTICISM AND SEXUAL ABUSE: SOCIAL AND LEGAL ISSUES

Introvigne Massimo[1]

Abstract: *The paper proposes a discussion of sacred eroticism—sometimes called by outsiders "sexual magic," a term most practitioners reject—, a feature of a number of different contemporary new religious movements. Why is this paradoxical approach to religion and enlightenment embraced by several thousand practitioners throughout the world? Are these groups more at risk than others of manipulation and sexual abuse? The paper first explores the Tantric roots of sacred eroticism and related controversies in India and beyond. It mentions the real risk of sexual abuse in (neo-)Tantric movements teaching sexual eroticism, offering some examples, including Agama Yoga in Thailand. It then discusses the risks involved in considering all sacred eroticism rituals as forms of sexual abuse, and the problems of the corresponding legal cases, comparing the cases of MISA, the Guru Jára Path, and the Loup Blanc group.*

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THE RELIGIOUS ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: AN ANALYSIS OF LYNN WHITE'S CRITIQUE OF WESTERN CHRISTIANITY

Kelam Ivica[1]

Abstract: Lynn White's 1967 article, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," is a seminal work that explores the connections between Western religious thought, particularly Christianity, and the ecological degradation seen in modern times. White argues that the worldview promoted by Christianity, especially its interpretation of human dominion over nature, has profoundly influenced Western attitudes toward the environment, contributing to the ecological crisis. In the article, White argues that the Western Christian tradition, with its profoundly anthropocentric attitude toward the environment, shapes humanity's view and use of natural resources. In this presentation, we will analyze White's critique of Christian theology and its role in contributing to ecological devastation throughout history, particularly in the context of the scientific and technological revolution. We will explore White's suggestions for reexamining the religious and philosophical foundations of a new and more ethical relationship to the environment, including his proposal that inspiration be drawn from the ecological teachings of St. Francis of Assisi. In this presentation, we will reflect on White's theses in the context of today's debates on religion, philosophy, and ecological ethics in light of increasing climate change and the profound ecological crisis in which humanity finds itself.

Keywords: Lynn White, ecological crisis, philosophy, religion, St. Francis of Assisi.

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WAR OR PEACE?
CAN RELIGIONS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Gerard Kester[1]

Abstract: *Military budgets are being doubled or tripled, turning the world into fortresses, with the realistic danger of wars that will be more devastating than ever. The world has not been able to build effective international political institutions (sadly including the United Nations Security Council) to ensure peace. Countless are also the initiatives, declarations, demonstrations and activities, however, these have not been able to turn the scales. What role can religions play in finding the way to peace? The essence of religions is to celebrate the creation of our world, not its destruction: can they make the difference? Constructive intercultural relations are one of the crucial conditions on the road to peace. Religions are a core element of cultures, yet they appear to focus on their own beliefs and dogma's rather than on building bridges, and are plagued by internal problems of adherence and resources. Meanwhile, "the sickening nexus between religion and identity is increasingly poisoning human society" (Amin Maalouf 2024:350): citizens vote more and more for political parties that make an appeal to exclusive religious/cultural identity. That is how military wars and religious/cultural 'wars' risk to roll into one. Only a Grand Coalition for Peace can save the world from the threat of its apocalyptic destruction. A strong and unconditional effort of politicians, governments, the media, science and art, is urgent. Religions can play a crucial role. In today's culturally polarized society religions can promote values that bind and unite to become the motor of flourishing intercultural relations – instead of remaining themselves an important cause of polarization. Among the many initiatives that can be launched, religions can, for instance, cooperate to end mono-religious education systems which now implant prejudice, partisan feelings, sometimes hatred vis-à-vis other religions and cultures. In coalition with other social and political forces, religions can make a difference, ultimately perhaps the difference.*

Keywords: *religion, peace making, intercultural.*

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AUSTRALIAN REALISM AND ETHNOCULTURAL INTEGRATEDNESS IN A PLURALISTIC AGE

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Abstract: *This paper examines the philosophical tradition of Australian Realism, a philosophical school of the 20th century, with particular attention to its relevance for understanding ethnocultural integratedness in the context of immigration, conflict and cultural displacement. Beginning with John Anderson's realist alternative to Cartesian dualism and British empiricism, the paper explores how his concept of "situation" — a conjunction of space and time enabling the recognition of reality — offers a framework for apprehending factualism and pluralism without conflict. Building on Anderson's emphasis on intellectual freedom, his protege David Armstrong further grounded realism in independence of the physical world from perception, leading to a participatory realism rooted in immediacy. This resonates with contemporary Australian discourse, particularly with the writings of Australian Indigenous thinkers, as well as scholars such as John Chryssavgis and Duncan Reid. This work draws attention to traditions such as "yarning", "sand talk" and fire management practice, with embodied and non-fragmented approaches to knowledge. The paper suggests that Australian Realism — far from being an exclusively philosophical school — opens up interdisciplinary pathways and dialogue for reconciling identities with more grounded understanding. This affords not only an epistemological, but also an anthropological route to an ethnocultural integratedness, which is especially relevant to pluralistic societies.*

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THE POSITION OF JEWS IN THE SERBIA OF PRINCE MILOS –
AN EXAMPLE OF PROGRESSIVE POLITICAL PRACTICE IN THE PROTECTION OF MINORITY RIGHTS

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Abstract: The paper explores the position of Jews in Serbia during the reign of Prince Miloš Obrenović (1815–1839; 1858–1860), emphasizing it as a noteworthy example of progressive political practice in the early 19th century with regard to minority rights. At a time when much of Europe exhibited widespread institutional and social discrimination against Jewish populations, Serbia under Prince Miloš demonstrated a relatively tolerant and pragmatic approach. Despite occasional societal prejudice, Prince Miloš pursued policies that allowed Jews to engage in trade, settle in urban centers, and participate in the economic life of the emerging Serbian principality. His administration resisted pressure mostly coming from economy-interested groups seeking to impose restrictions on Jewish residents, arguing instead for their utility to the state's economic development and for adherence to principles of civil equality. Through legal measures, personal interventions, and a calculated political strategy, Prince Miloš laid the groundwork for a form of minority protection that, while limited and paternalistic by modern standards, marked a significant departure from the repressive norms of the period. The paper positions Prince Miloš's policies within the broader context of nineteenth-century Serbian minority treatment, highlighting Serbia's unique trajectory as a semi-autonomous principality navigating between Ottoman influence and emerging national sovereignty.

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SELECTED COMMON ERRORS COMMITTED BY SOUTH AFRICAN PASTORS IN ENGLISH COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: This paper examines certain negative trends identified in language usage by pastors in South Africa. It is, therefore, intended to identify these errors, determine their causes, classify and analyse them. The occurrence of these errors impairs attempts by pastors to communicate effectively in the target language. It is in this regard that error analysis plays a crucial role as it has positive implications for both pastors and their congregations. For pastors, error analysis highlights the grammatical features that adversely affect their efforts to convey messages clearly. On the other hand, congregants benefit from this analysis, as it helps pastors identify and address communication issues. In this paper, the researcher used quantitative research design. An extract with commonly-made errors was administered to 20 pastors to assess their proficiency in the target language. The sentences in the extract contained errors caused by carelessness, overgeneralisation, ignorance of rule restrictions, incorrect application of rules, false concepts hypothesized and fossilisation. The findings revealed that the majority of the pastors were competent in aspects relating to overgeneralisation, fossilisation, and carelessness errors. However, the majority were incompetent with regard to ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and false concepts hypothesized. In light of this, it is recommended that church leaders devote more time to assisting pastors in eliminating the tendencies that lead to these errors.

Keywords: language usage, error analysis, English communication, congregations.

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THE WAR`S IMPACT ON RELIGION IN UKRAINE: A CHALLENGE TO GLOBALIZATION TRENDS

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Abstract: *The influence of globalization on Ukraine's religious sphere before the full-scale invasion of 2022 was significant, manifesting in the development of religious pluralism, the digitalization of religious practices, and gradual secularization. However, the war led to radical transformations, including the politicization of religion, the rupture with Russian Orthodoxy, and the increased role of the Church as a marker of national identity. According to a 2024 survey by the Razumkov Center, a majority of respondents expressed that churches and religious organizations should be involved in shaping the national idea, the post-war model of Ukraine, and the development of state policy strategies. This article examines how the geopolitical catastrophe has triggered a profound transformation in Ukraine's religious landscape. On one hand, it has accelerated global trends, such as the increased cooperation between Ukrainian religious organizations and European communities. On the other hand, it has prompted a sharp shift toward local and national orientations, reflected in growing trust in local religious organizations, the expanded involvement of religious institutions in social and political spheres, and a significant rise in support for the idea of a national church. In 2024, support for a nationally oriented Church reached 52% of respondents, according to the Razumkov Center—an unprecedentedly high figure. The Ukrainian case vividly illustrates how global trends may lose their relevance and cease to function in the context of war, calling into question the assumption that globalization can influence the religious sphere under any circumstances.*

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RELIGION AS A CAUSE OF CONFLICT AND A PROMOTER OF PEACE

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Abstract: The present study emphasizes that religion throughout time has been one of the important sources of war, hatred, bloody conflicts, idolatry, although it contains the ethical code of human behavior. The fundamental laws of behavior and solidarity, human rights, the right to property, the suppression of ego and greed, the limitation of excesses are all contained in Christian teaching. For this reason, the Bible becomes a reference book for Christians and their teaching, and the characters mentioned are models of conduct, courage and wisdom. The question that arises would be: is religion a cause of war? Many researchers have answered this question in the affirmative. There are wars that have religion as a cause. How is the conflict between Israel and Gaza. The sectarian war in the Middle East caused by a 1400-year disagreement. The Crimean War, considered one of the last religious wars on the continent, was an armed conflict that lasted three years from 1853 to 1856 between the Russian Empire on one side and an alliance of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the Second French Empire, the Kingdom of Sardinia and the Ottoman Empire on the other. This war was an attempt to stop the expansion of Russia in the Black Sea area, the press and public opinion played a significant role, tragically affected by this conflict being the civilian population exposed to ethnic cleansing and abuse such as rape. This war highlighted the gap between the Catholic and Protestant, secularized West and the Orthodox East with its forms of manifestation, which the Catholic and Protestant, secularized West and the Orthodox East with its forms of manifestation that Westerners considered barbaric, seeing them as degrading superstitions of some peoples or as they expressed it "hypocritical ceremonies worse than the lowest fetishisms on the banks of some African river". This cultural foundation will influence Western policy in the dispute over the Holy Places and will ultimately lead, together with other factors, to the Crimean War. The war ultimately led to the founding of the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. In conclusion, all three monotheistic religions have similar models of entity development and specific

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predisposition regardless of the place occupied by violence in the value system of each religion. The predisposition to conflict comes, according to some authors, from the fact that: -all religions have leaders considered visionaries who founded religious communities; -these religions have the ethos of a people, a sense of sacred history that sometimes transcends borders; -each of these religions was formed in opposition to the others on a conflictual background. Moses led his people by imposing Yahweh as a deity against the Egyptian deities;, Jesus was crucified by the forces of the Roman Empire with the support of the conservative religious leaders of Jerusalem, his title of "King of the Jews" putting him in a state of conflict with Caesar's authority, secular and religious. Muhammad and his disciples used all religious and political resources to bring all the "pagans" and their political structures under the obedience of Allah. In the formation of the core identity of each of the three monotheistic religions, conflictual contexts with controversies for each religious group intersected, submission and confession of faith are foundations for the idea of sacrifice and suffering (Exile/Holocaust – for Jews; persecutions/crucifixions – for Christians, Little Jihad/Great Jihad – for Muslims). The faith of each religion is based on loyalty regardless of the political structures under which they live. This loyalty is used and highlighted in the political field in the formation of a religious state, an Islamic republic, a Jewish Israel, a Christian America, a Slavic-Orthodox Eurasian union, etc.

The study aims to highlight the opinion of the population regarding these violent forms of manifestation, the war and its effects.

INNER PEACE AS A STARTING POINT: QIGONG, MARTIAL ARTS, AND NUTRITION AS CULTURAL RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION

Li Aurora [1]

Abstract: In today's rapidly globalizing world, humanity enjoys unprecedented interconnection, yet also faces growing cultural and value-based tensions. True peace is not merely the establishment of systems or treaties—it must begin in the human heart. Prayer and the practice of Qigong can be seen as spiritual nourishment, allowing individuals to engage in self-reflection, restore their inner balance, and awaken compassion and hope, which in turn become the foundation for peaceful action. The essence of martial arts lies in the concept of "stopping conflict through strength." Training in martial arts is not for aggression, but for cultivating discipline, self-restraint, and compassion. It teaches us to remain calm in the face of conflict and choose peaceful responses. Cultivating virtue through martial arts and using strength to prevent violence offers a wise path for navigating a world of diverse values. As a nutritionist and graduate student specializing in clinical and health-promoting nutrition, I believe that health is not merely the absence of illness, but the balance of body, mind, and spirit. Nutritional care extends beyond physical health management; it reflects respect for life and a commitment to social equity. In this light, food becomes not just sustenance, but a shared language of humanity. Through cross-cultural nutritional education and exchange, I have seen how food can become a bridge for mutual understanding, tolerance, and trust. From the quiet reflection of prayer to the moral and physical cultivation of martial arts and Qigong, to the healing care of nutrition, we are walking a path of daily practice—a path that begins in the heart and connects the world. This journey not only illuminates individual lives but also offers inspiration and strength for intercultural and interfaith understanding and harmony across the globe.

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GENERATION Z'S CULTURAL AWAKENING IN THE AI ERA: QIGONG, CONSCIENCE, AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

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Abstract: *The rapid rise of artificial intelligence has fostered unprecedented global connectivity while simultaneously deepening existential questions of human identity, belonging, and peace—core concerns situated at the intersection of religion and spirituality in the era of accelerating globalization. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, technology alone cannot fulfill humanity's higher-order aspirations for love, belonging, and self-actualization. UNESCO has similarly underscored the importance of intercultural dialogue as a vital tool for advancing peace and mutual understanding, urging conscience-based communication across cultural and religious boundaries. This study adopts a qualitative methodology to examine the value tensions faced by Generation Z youth as they navigate the dual influence of AI-driven technological transformation and spiritual practices. Drawing upon personal experiences in the Tai Ji Men Qigong tradition and over a decade of international cultural volunteerism as a case study, this research explores how conscience culture and interfaith dialogue may counteract digital alienation and foster inner balance. As Sherry Turkle illustrates in her book Alone Together and TED Talk "Connected, but Alone?", technology has created the illusion of connection while often deepening isolation—a paradox that acutely reflects the psychological landscape of Generation Z. Confronted with AI-related challenges such as bias, ethical uncertainty, and rising mental health pressures, today's youth are uniquely positioned to become bridges between technology and spirituality.*

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RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION OF HISTORICAL REMAINS OF CHURCHES IN BETWEEN TWO RELIGIONS
THE CASE OF THE MONASTERY OF THE SEVENE CHURCHES IN CAUCASUS

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Abstract: The paper aims to consider the challenge given by the conservation of ruined religious buildings that were consecrated to a specific religion in a determined period in a Country that is based on a different religion. One of the questions that is important in the phase of the restoration of a ruined building, in the specific case of the medieval period, is to define its use in order to understand the right strategy of conservation. Considering a ruined temple, even if it is conserved in the ruined state, the main intention is, also. to transfer to the future its significance. When the ruins are located in an area that nowadays is devoted to a different religion, what it is important is to find a solution useful to preserve the first meaning in respect of the official religion of the Country, which is Islam. In this paper, the object considered is the Monastery of the Seven Churches, one of the oldest Christian monasteries located in the Albania Caucasian, near the village of Ləkit Kötüklü in the Qakh Region of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The state of conservation of the ruins gives a great opportunity to study a strategic research in order to understand their religion and, also, historical meaning, in a very rich cultural area in the Caucasian mountain, along the Silk Road and nearby the geopolitical boundaries with Georgia and Russian Federation.

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INCULTURATION AND GLOBALIZATION: THE MODEL OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH BETWEEN FIDELITY TO THE GOSPEL AND DIALOG WITH CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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Abstract: This paper explores the role of the Catholic Church in addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the contemporary phase of globalization. It focuses on the concept of inculturation and examines how the Church navigates the tension between staying faithful to its doctrinal teachings and engaging with diverse cultural contexts. As globalization leads to greater interconnectedness, it also presents new ethical, social, and cultural dilemmas that require a thoughtful response from religious communities. The Church's approach to these challenges is rooted in the idea of bringing the Gospel into dialogue with the world, fostering mutual understanding without compromising the core message of Christianity. The paper highlights key papal teachings, particularly documents like Evangelii Gaudium, Laudato Si', and Fratelli Tutti, which emphasize the importance of social justice, environmental stewardship, and human dignity in the context of globalization. These encyclicals provide a framework for understanding how the Church can contribute to global issues such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation while also promoting a vision of global solidarity. The paper will also discuss the theological implications of this engagement, specifically how the Church addresses the complexities of religious pluralism and cultural diversity. Ultimately, the paper seeks to provide a theological reflection on how the Church can offer a meaningful response to globalization, balancing its commitment to the Gospel with a deep understanding of contemporary cultural dynamics. By exploring the intersection of faith, culture, and globalization, the research aims to present a vision of a Church that is both rooted in tradition and responsive to the needs of the globalized world.

Keywords: Inculturation; Globalization; Catholic Church; Theological Discernment; Fundamental Theology.

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SACRED EROTICISM IN THEORY AND IN PRACTICE

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Abstract: *Sacred eroticism is at the center of several misunderstandings. The author, who is both the deputy director of a human rights NGO and a member of a group whose teachings include sacred eroticism, discusses what is the reality of sacred eroticism as she perceives it as opposed to sensational media representations. She presents contemporary sacred eroticism as a path, normally based on modern interpretations of ancient Tantric teachings, that regards the erotic encounter, within a sacred and ritualized context, not as an obstacle but as a way to spiritual enlightenment and progress. While abuses are always possible, thousands of practitioners report that they derive positive experiences from their participation in sacred eroticism groups.*

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NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN BULGARIA AND GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract: The paper describes the positioning of religious communities and new religious movements (MRMs) in Bulgaria with regard to globalization. The diversity ranges from traditional religious communities, new dimensions of Orthodox Christianity and Islam in the country, Evangelical churches, and new religious movements. The perceived overlaps between religious, ethnic, and national identity in historical context are being challenged by the mainly global appeals of new religious movements. The diversity among movements is described in different dimensions such as health and wealth, business and finances, generations and changes. The different stages of transition from communism are marked by the presence of different types of NRMs: The beginning of the 1990s – the period of rejecting the communist past – is marked by the appearance of "world-rejecting" NRMs, which tend toward a decline through the years 1990 – 2007. At the middle of the 1990s – the most difficult years of transition in economic terms – there was a steady growth of "world-accommodating" groups such as neo-Pentecostals. The other type – the "world-affirming" is still not very popular in terms of membership, but they tend to appear in the public sphere after Bulgaria became a member of the European Union. New religious movement claiming authority in older establishments are described in their relation to globalization.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS SERVICE – CHAPLAINSHIP IN PRISONS FOR THE PENEOLOGICAL-CRIMINALIST AND SECURITY SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract: What does the concept of "religious service - chaplaincy" mean and what is its significance? Is it popular and is it necessary in our country? Is there a place for it in institutions where tension and stress are part of the work process, where a systematic procedure of resocialization is implemented through the measure of imprisonment? In institutions such as the army, police, prisons, hospitals, fire departments... This paper aims to indicate and justify the need for such a service in the above-mentioned institutions, through case studies and the experience of countries where it has already been introduced. In the RNM, this topic is very imperceptibly and insufficiently discussed in public. The activities related to its scope are mainly reduced to individual demands and needs, but there is no systemic presence and regulation. So far, the topic has been ignored: on the one hand, there is no expert and scientific analysis of the need for such an activity, and, on the other hand, the political factor is not ready and is hesitant to include religion with its possibilities in the public discourse, even if it is strictly legally defined, probably discouraged by the inconsistency in the decisions of the Constitutional Court, in which an undeveloped position is observed on whether the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia is structured according to the principle of liberal secularism or is still socialist. In fact, this issue is closed immediately, being assessed as an unconventional and unpopular activity for our country. Religious service, specifically in prisons, is performed at the level of spiritual assistance, which implies both direct contact, in the form of conversations and counseling, and church practices and rituals, intertwined with an obvious contribution to both religious and ethnic diversity, especially in suppressing tensions, rivalries, internal deviant and criminal activities, disruption of order and peace, etc. Religious officers – chaplains, with their activities, strictly controlled by regulations and provisions, show emphasized care, attention and acceptance, which are essential for every prisoner. So, support and trust are of vital importance. Their survival there, both on a psychological and physical level, but also achieving the necessary level of resocialization as a good building for a new life, taking into account the

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processes of integration and adaptation, are not easy tasks for prisoners. And the chaplain is a spiritualist, psychologist, social worker, educator, priest and what not, just to reach those who need help. Inevitably, when working with the prisoner, the chaplain also comes into contact with members of his family and circle of friends.

THE HOLY FOOLS OF SANKT PETERSBURG

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Abstract: *Holy foolery has a deeply rooted tradition all over Russia ever since the mediaeval times, Nicholas Salos of Pskov, Prokopius and John of Ustyug, Isidore of Rostov, Blessed Vasily and Maxim of Moskow being just few of them. For those not acquainted with the phenomenon, the holy foolery may seem rather distressing since those who acted as such had voluntarily given up all their earthly belongings and properties, all comforts of this world just to endure every possible humiliation, outrages and insults for the love of God. Sankt Petersburg met two of these wonderful examples of virtue, humbleness and humility, just one century away from one another: Saint Xenia and Matronushka the Barefooot.*

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THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS ON THE POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND GOVERNANCE PRACTICES OF MUSLIMS IN NORTH MACEDONIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Muarem Enis[1]

Abstract: *This research investigates the influence of Islamic teachings on the political attitudes and governance-related practices of Muslims in North Macedonia. Focusing on the intersection of religion and politics, the study examines how Islamic principles shape perspectives on democracy, participation in elections, voting behavior, and engagement in political life. Using survey data collected from Muslim communities, the research explores the extent to which religious beliefs inform decisions to participate in or abstain from political processes, as well as perceptions of governance within the framework of Islamic values. By narrowing its focus to the sociological institution of politics and governance, this study provides valuable insights into the role of religion in shaping political behavior and attitudes in a diverse and multi-religious society.*

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RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF THOHOYANDOU, SOUTH AFRICA 2015-2025

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Abstract: *The current period of globalisation has radically altered religious practices in Thohoyandou, South Africa, resulting in intricate intersections of traditional beliefs and modern religious expressions. This study investigates how religious institutions and practitioners in Thohoyandou balance preserving local spiritual history and embracing global religious influences. The study addresses three major issues: the impact of digital transformation on traditional religious practices, the challenge of maintaining cultural authenticity in an increasingly globalised religious landscape, and the institutional changes required to balance local and global religious demands. This study uses systematic desktop research techniques to analyse academic literature, religious institutional documents, social media content, and news items from 2015 to 2025. The research objectives are to: (1) investigate the impact of globalisation on religious practices in Thohoyandou; (2) analyse the challenges and opportunities that arise from the intersection of traditional and global religious expressions; and (3) assess how religious institutions balance local identity and global influences. The comprehensive literature review focusses on three major themes: digital change of religious activities, cultural hybridity in religious expression, and institutional adaptation to globalisation. The expected goals include creating a theoretical framework for understanding religious transformation in Thohoyandou's setting, finding patterns of religious adaptation to globalisation, and making recommendations for religious organisations navigating local and global influences. This study adds to a better understanding of how local religious groups respond to and are shaped by global factors while retaining their unique cultural character.*

Keywords: *Religious globalization; Cultural hybridity; Digital religion; Indigenous spirituality.*

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WOMEN'S RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: NEGOTIATING TRADITIONAL BARRIERS AND DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract: This literary inquiry analyses power and gender relations, exploring the evolution of women's religious leadership within the framework of liberal feminist philosophy. Additionally, it examines how globalisation and digital technologies are altering power dynamics within religious institutions. This study analyses the relevance of liberal ideals such as individual rights, equality, and autonomy to women's discourse in religion, as well as the empowering effects of digital age technology on women. This research examines how women assert religious authority within patriarchal frameworks through several channels. The study will examine the scholarly literature, holy scriptures, and digital religious materials for systematic analysis. The study intends to examine the influence of liberal feminist ideology on women's religious participation in globalised contexts and to explore how digital platforms facilitate the democratisation of religious authority. The evaluation also manifests women's individual rights and autonomy inside religious leadership positions. The findings suggest that liberalism and technology enable women to both conceptually and practically challenge the conventional religious hierarchy and establish alternative forms of spiritual authority. The research suggests that liberal ideology and technological progress may facilitate women's estrangement from conventional religious authority, while simultaneously creating alternative forms of spiritual authority.

Keywords: Liberal Feminism; Religious Authority; Digital Empowerment; Gender Equality; Religious Leadership.

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POSTCOLONIAL WORSHIP IN THE MARKETPLACE: THE ECONOMIC DYNAMICS OF RURAL NEO-PENTECOSTAL RELIGIOSITY IN GLOBAL SYSTEMS

Muthivhi Edward Mashudu[1]

Abstract: *The interplay of Neo-Pentecostal impressions of religion with neoliberal marketplace principles has become prevalent, leading to an intricate synthesis of economic ideologies and worship. Embedded in this context, contemporary African rural congregations are no longer loci for sacred expression but quasi-economic marketplaces where spiritual capital is transacted through commercial means. The study locates these economic liturgies within the lived realities of Ṱhohoyandou congregants who continue to negotiate economic precarity and systematic inequalities. This study probes rural Neo-Pentecostal pastoral expressions, global capitalistic pressures and the attendant implications on Ṱhohoyandou's marketplace. It calls for a theological reflection on monetised practices that disrupt traditional spiritual ethics and underpin the residual effects of colonial economic structures, where African rural societies remain deprived. Moreover, there is a need to engage the interlocking dynamics and proffer decolonised pastoral approaches that advance economic equity. A postcolonial worship appraisal offers an opportunity to reinterpret consumerist inclinations impressed by global systems, which at the same time may present symbolic liberation in the face of socioeconomic relegation. Although a pragmatic response to the past, the study contends through a Practical Theological prism, that the commodification of religiosity should be offset by a praxis that underscores justice, transformation and wellbeing. Drawing upon critical economic scrutiny and a qualitative methodological approach; existing literature, theological texts and ecclesial discourses are leveraged to provide a contextual understanding of rural religious practice in South Africa.*

Keywords: *Global, Marketplace, Neo-Pentecostal, Postcolonial, Religiosity.*

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ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND THE BREAKDOWN OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AS AN AFTEREFFECT OF DEFILEMENT OF THE HUMAN INTERIOR

Nesimi Qani[1]
Kadriu Ibish [2]
Lutfiji Besime[3]

Abstract: In this article, will be analyzed the defect of the crisis in general and the spiritual crisis in particular. Today, the world needs more than ever, for an elevation and advancement of spirituality, for a non-abuse of the sacred, so that we do not have pollution of the environment and pollution of interpersonal relationships. Man, as always, is between two decisions, to decide to sacrifice himself for the good, or to think only about the realization of his own desires, that is, to sacrifice the other to realize his desires. Therefore, the reflection of man towards the environment is an unfolding of what he has inside him.When the Qur'an defines man, it shows that he is essentially the main cause of problems, disorders, perversions, crises, etc.. This is understood from the terms with which man is defined in the Qur'an: haluan (Man was created not calm, unbearable), dhaluman jahula' (... he is unjust, barbaric) etc.. The ecological crisis and the lack of interpersonal relationships, which above all, is an after-effect of the defilement of the soul, also shows the general condition of humanity and the planet, for regarding the extreme threat to the natural human environment, including air, land, water and plant and animal species.

Keywords: Environmental pollution, crisis of faith, defilement of the spirit, ecological crisis.

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FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN UKRAINE: CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES (1991–2024)

Paliukh Andrii[1]

Abstract: *Since gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine has enshrined freedom of conscience and religion as one of its fundamental constitutional rights. Article 35 of the Constitution of Ukraine guarantees every individual's right to freely profess any religion or none at all, affirms the separation of church and state, and mandates the secular nature of public education. The 1991 Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" laid the legal foundation for state–church relations. This paper explores the legal mechanisms ensuring religious freedom in Ukraine and examines the major challenges that emerged during 2014–2024. These include legal disputes over the registration of religious communities, interconfessional tensions, the restriction of religious freedom in temporarily occupied territories, and the proliferation of religious disinformation and propaganda. Special attention is given to the activities of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) and the situation surrounding the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (in unity with the Moscow Patriarchate, UOC-MP), which has come under public and legal scrutiny due ties with the aggressor state, its ambiguous legal status, and the complex process of parish transfers from UOC-MP to the OCU. These transitions are often accompanied by legal obstacles such as delays in re-registration, resistance from the UOC-MP, and protracted court proceedings. Although the Supreme Court of Ukraine has affirmed the legality of such transitions, religious communities frequently face bureaucratic and administrative impediments, highlighting the urgent need for legislative and procedural reforms to uphold religious freedom in practice.*

Keywords*: freedom of religion, Constitution of Ukraine, Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), religious security, legal regulation.*

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PREDICTORS OF RELIGIOUS (IN)TOLERANCE IN CROATIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract: *In this paper, based on the selected indicators, we set to identify and explain the predictors of religious (in)tolerance in Croatia. In doing so, scarce resources theory, social identity (community) theory, and educational (modernization) theory are applied in the Croatian social context and tested. Special attention is paid to the role of religiosity as a predictor of (in)tolerance and the explanation of this connection in the Croatian religious and sociopolitical context. Trust in people of other religions and the willingness to accept a person of the Muslim religion as a neighbor are taken as criterion variables in the models, and the European Value Study is used as a data source. Roughly speaking, the results obtained confirm the scarce resources theory and the educational theory, while the social identity theory is not confirmed, especially when it comes to personal religiosity. The results are discussed in the context of specific value changes occurring in Croatian society, as well as the specific socio-cultural role of religion in Croatian society.*

Keywords: *religious (in)tolerance, Croatia, European Value Study, social identity, modernization.*

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WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT, WHAT MAKES US THE SAME?

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Abstract: This paper addresses the application of social comparison as described by Social Psychology to the strife seen between various religious groups. Originally proposed by Leon Festinger (1954), social comparison theory posits that individuals assess their status and opportunities by making comparisons between themselves and others. These comparisons fall into several categories which render the individual feeling better or worse about themselves. Such comparisons impact self-esteem and identity. The group members vie for positions in a hierarchy, always assuring that there is someone or some group lower than themselves. This is easily seen in naturally occurring social groups such as adolescent school groups. Globally, social comparisons create in-group and out-group categories that perpetuate stereotypes, fuel prejudice and stoke hostility between religious and racial groups. Escalation and misinformation magnify this divide. The negative effects of social comparison theory may be mitigated in several ways. One is training in de-escalation techniques. Another is education and communication about the "other-group". Finally, much evidence exists that disparate groups unite to tackle a common problem in the face of an external threat. Both the development of division between groups as well as the solutions to unite them will be addressed.

Keywords: Social Comparison, stereotypes, group conflict.

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RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract: *Identity is a crucial factor in individual and social life. A crisis of identity and meaning can inflict significant harm on an individual's well-being and social interactions. Among the various forms of identity, religious identity is of paramount importance. Globalization can exert both positive and negative influences on religious identity in diverse societies. The nature of this impact depends on the depth of an individual's understanding of their religious identity, which is rooted in self-knowledge. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of self-knowledge, as exemplified by the saying: "Whoever knows himself knows God." The Qur'an, the central religious text of Islam, identifies the infusion of the divine spirit as the origin of human existence, thus providing a fundamental definition of human understanding. Within this framework, human beings are not merely transient entities in this world, whose existence concludes with death. Rather, life on Earth constitutes a vital and decisive phase of their eternal journey. When individuals attain a true understanding of their place in the universe, they can effectively navigate the forces of globalization, shaping them according to their own will and utilizing them to achieve life's higher purpose. In this way, individuals can master the world around them while simultaneously surrendering themselves to the will of God. This spiritual alignment fosters inner peace and a sense of personal fulfillment. Therefore, in the context of globalization, it is essential for religious societies to prioritize self-awareness in relation to God. This process should be nurtured from early childhood within families and educational institutions.*

Keywords: *Globalization, human, religious identity.*

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THE SITUATION OF RELIGIONS FOLLOWERS AT THE ERA OF APPEARANCE OF THE SAVIOR, BASED ON SHIA MUSLIMS' VIEWPOINTS

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Maftooni Negin[3]

Abstract: One of the significant issues met in Mahdism is the nature of interaction of Imam al-Mahdi, the savior of the world, with followers of other religions at the era of his appearance. Based on Hadiths, various perspectives are oriented regarding this issue. There is a radical opinion indicating that all of people have to believe in Islam at that epoch. But there are also some more moderate viewpoints in this field. Here we have conducted a comparative study of the Quran and the Hadiths in this subject. There are some verses in Quran that draw the picture of the world during its ending stage, including existence of believers of various religions living together. Also, it is mentioned in Quran that there is no compulsion in picking a religion. Finally, the results of this comparative study show that the most probable interaction between Imam al-Mahdi and the followers of other religions will be living together in a peaceful manner.

Keywords: religions followers, era of reappearance, the savior.

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RELIGION AND THE ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY OF THE STATE: THE CASE OF RUSSIA

Składanowski Marcin[1]

Abstract: *This paper examines the instrumentalisation of religion in Russia's security policy, demonstrating how religious narratives, particularly those derived from Russian Orthodoxy, are deployed to construct ontological security. The Russian state does not necessarily value religion as an intrinsic good but strategically utilises it to reinforce national identity, legitimise territorial claims, and shape geopolitical aspirations. Two key religiously rooted concepts underpin Russia's security discourse. First, the notion of Russian cultural superiority is employed to distinguish Russia from the West, portraying it as the guardian of traditional values against liberalism and progressivism. This belief is reinforced through state-controlled propaganda, censorship, and efforts to maintain cultural and linguistic hegemony in post-Soviet states. Second, the religious justification for Russia's imperial narrative serves as a foundation for historical revisionism, particularly in the context of its war against Ukraine. The state promotes the idea of 'Holy Rus'—a continuous civilisational unity anchored in Orthodoxy—to deny Ukraine's independent identity and sovereignty. The Russian Orthodox Church has increasingly aligned itself with state objectives, evolving from a historically subservient institution to an integrated component of national security. The Church actively supports Russian military aggression and endorses state narratives, suppressing internal dissent and marginalising theological elements that challenge state authority. This phenomenon does not indicate a religious revival but rather an extreme form of secularisation, wherein religion is stripped of its doctrinal autonomy and repurposed as an instrument of state control. The ROC's role in Russian politics and security policy underscores the extent to which religious institutions can be co-opted to serve strategic interests, raising critical questions about the nature of secularisation in contemporary Russia. Ultimately, the integration of religious discourse into state ideology highlights the manipulation of faith for political ends, reinforcing authoritarian governance and expansionist ambitions.*

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REIKI AND QIGONG: IN SEARCH OF A UNIVERSAL ENERGY

Šorytė Rosita[1]

Abstract: Reiki is a technique based on the traditional Eastern Asian teaching that a universal energy, "Ki," flows through the universe. With the help of a practitioner trained by an experienced master, this energy can be mobilized to restore imbalances and achieve physical, mental, and spiritual benefits. The Japanese word "Ki" is the equivalent of the Chinese "Qi," now more often transliterated as "Ch'i." It corresponds to one of the two Chinese characters forming the word "Qigong." In Taoism, Ch'i is the original substance of the universe. At the level of the macrocosm, the universe, the Ch'i guarantees the harmony of Yin and Yang. At the level of the human microcosm, Ch'i is the life-force that is crucial for our physical and psychological well-being. Practices promoting the good circulation of Ch'i are as old as Taoism. They include breathing techniques and physical exercises, but they were never presented as separate from self-cultivation and a good moral life. The paper focuses on Reiki, a technique born in Japan but today much more popular in the West than in its home country, and compares it to Qigong as practiced by Tai Ji Men.

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SENSATIONALIZED MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF SACRED EROTICISM GROUPS

Šorytė Rosita [1]

Abstract: *Putting together religion, sex, and scandals makes for eminently sellable media stories. The paper argues that such sensationalized representations of religious movements teaching sacred eroticism, sometimes fueled by prosecutors whose aim is securing convictions of their leaders in court cases, do not contribute to an understanding of their actual doctrines and practices and may promote discrimination of their members. Certainly, it is part of the media's role to denounce abuses and identify perpetrators. However, the issues are often presented without any understanding of sacred eroticism teachings, and Tantric and neo-Tantric teachings are misleadingly presented as just pretexts for "having fun" with sexuality or justifying the male leaders predatory attitudes towards female followers. While real abuses certainly occur, media hype risks obscuring and misinterpreting complicated issues. The paper examines the case of media campaigns against groups teaching sacred eroticism, highlighting the biases at work.*

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RELIGIOUS INTEGRALISM AND CIVILIZATIONS: GLOBALIZING CULTURES THROUGH RELIGION

Stanković Vladan[1]
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Abstract: *The topic of the co-authored paper for this year's Conference is: religious integralism and the globalization of cultures. The subject of the research is focused on: the relationship between religious integralism and the globalization of cultures, or rather: the contribution of religious civilizations to the processes of globalization. The problematic question is: How and to what extent does religious integralism contribute to the globalization of national cultures and how do religious civilizations influence global political processes in the world? The research is not limited in time or space. The goal of the research is to express to what extent the globalization of national societies on a religious basis contributes to globalization, and to what extent it depreciates the unification of humanity without denying the basic postulates: interreligious tolerance, interfaith cooperation and understanding of cultures in the world. The methods that will be used in the research are: observational method, cross-cultural method, comparative approach, content analysis... Scientific contribution: to understanding the importance of the social background of religious integralism, researching the globalization of local and national cultures, deepening cognitive insights on the relationship: religion → culture → globalization. Social significance in the advancement of scientific disciplines: sociology of religion, civilization studies and cultural studies.*

Keywords: *religious integralism, civilizations, culture, globalization, interreligious cooperation.*

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CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY AND SECULAR TOLERATION:
A POLITICO-THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF POPULAR REPRESENTATIONS OF KOREAN CHINESE (JOSEONJOK) MIGRANT WORKERS

Taeha An[1]
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Abstract: This paper develops a politico-theological analysis of race, class, and transnational mobilities in contemporary South Korea and imagines a possible contribution of theological reasoning to secular politics. It first examines the transition in Korean perception of Korean Chinese migrant workers—from Dongpo (Korean compatriots in China) to Joseonjok (Ethnic Koreans in China)—by highlighting popular media representations throughout the 2000s and 2010s. The paper contends that this transition, along with increased prejudice and hostility, emerged from an emphasis on the "Chinese" identity of Korean Chinese migrants, portraying them negatively as violent, brutal, and immoral. It further explores the socioeconomic realities of class and labor dynamics that are often obscured by the racial dimension of prejudice and hatred. The paper argues that the prevalent employment of Korean Chinese migrant workers in manual labor reinforces the hierarchical racial differentiation between "real" Koreans and Korean Chinese workers. In response to this cultural and socio-economic reality, the paper seeks a way in which theological reasoning can contribute to secular politics by offering a framework for imagining shared life and renewed social relationships. Drawing on Luke Bretherton, and navigating between Christian hospitality and secular toleration, it contends that a Christian theological imagination of the "tent"—in lieu of "temple" or "house"—offers a way to envision a shared space beyond secular toleration, which is constrained by loyalty and national security. Christian hospitality, in the contemporary South Korean cultural and socioeconomic context, illuminates the marginalized situation of Korean Chinese migrant workers and helps us move beyond the secular conception of toleration that merely seeks to preserve the existing way of life for both the tolerant and the tolerated.

Keywords: hospitality, toleration, political theology, race, class, immigration, Korean Chinese.

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HORIZONS OF EXPECTATION AND RELIGIOUS INTERACTION IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY OTTOMAN MACEDONIA: A GADAMERIAN PERSPECTIVE

Tasevski Martin[1]

Abstract: This paper dives into how different religious groups got along in Ottoman Macedonia during the first half of the 19th century. Our main goal is to figure out how people's long-held beliefs and their hopes for the future shaped relationships between Orthodox Christians and Muslims, and also the tensions that popped up among Christian groups themselves (like Greeks and Slavs). We're looking at this through the ideas of Hans-Georg Gadamer, especially his concept of "fusion of horizons"—which helps us see how past experiences and present understandings blend together. We're also bringing in Reinhart Koselleck's idea of a "horizon of expectation" to show how future dreams actually influenced how these communities interacted day-to-day. The study starts by explaining Gadamer's way of thinking about understanding, where conversations mix old and new viewpoints. Then, it explores the historical setting, describing the millet system that allowed for different religions to coexist, how people lived side-by-side, and even shared holy places. We also look at the growing friction between the powerful Greek Orthodox Church and the rising Slavic Orthodox communities. We'll dig into specific historical moments – like Muslims and Christians together honoring the Orthodox Monastery of Saint Naum, and the mid-19th-century Tanzimat reforms that promised everyone equal rights – using this particular way of looking at things. Our main point is that these religious interactions weren't fixed; they were more like ongoing conversations, full of both understanding and misunderstanding, all driven by each community's unique past and their hopes for what was to come. Ultimately, using Gadamer's perspective helps us get a richer, more detailed understanding of inter-religious relations in 19th-century Ottoman Macedonia, moving past simple stories to see the complex ways different views were handled and sometimes even brought together.

Keywords: Gadamer; Ottoman Macedonia; Hermeneutics; Interfaith Relations; Horizon of Expectation.

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RESEARCH BY THE MACEDONIAN COMMISSION FOR RELATIONS WITH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS ON THE ATTITUDES OF YOUTH TOWARD RELIGION, ETHICS, AND EVERYDAY CHALLENGES

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Abstract: As part of its legal responsibilities and strategic priorities for 2025, the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Groups conducted a public opinion survey among young people in the Republic of North Macedonia. The aim of the research was to explore young people's perspectives toward religion, ethical values, and how they cope with personal and social challenges. Total of 193 respondents from five educational institutions participated in the survey: Faculty of Philosophy "University of St. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje, Orthodox Theological Faculty "St. Clement of Ohrid", the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, and two secondary theological schools – the Macedonian Orthodox Theological School "St. Clement of Ohrid" and the Islamic Secondary School "Madrasa Isa Beg." Research was based on an anonymous questionnaire structured into four thematic sections. Results showed that religion, spirituality, and ethics remain deeply rooted in the consciousness of young people—not only as religious beliefs, but also as practical tools for dealing with everyday challenges. Majority of young people recognize the need for a greater presence of ethics and religion in education. At the same time, serious psycho-social challenges were identified—stress, anxiety, and motivational crises—which require a coordinated response from the educational system, the family and religious communities. In this context, the solution lies in nurturing respect and love as fundamental moral principles in society, where values are unmeasurable by any merit-based system. This research provides a solid foundation for initiating policies that will integrate moral and spiritual dimensions into the educational process. Introducing ethics and religion as mandatory or elective-mandatory subjects represents a key step in building a responsible, psychologically healthy and resilient young generation.

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AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AND RELIGIOUS INCLUSION

Trajkovski Vladimir[1]

Abstract: Background: Autism spectrum disorder and religion intersect in complex and multifaceted ways, reflecting the diversity of experiences among autistic individuals and the variety of religious traditions worldwide. While religious communities can provide meaning, structure, and a sense of belonging, autistic individuals may also face barriers related to communication, sensory sensitivities, and social interaction in these settings. Objectives: This abstract aims to explore the dual role religion can play in the lives of autistic individuals—offering both spiritual enrichment and potential exclusion. It highlights key areas of challenge and opportunity for greater inclusion in religious life. Methods: This analysis draws upon existing interdisciplinary research and literature from the fields of disability studies, theology and psychology, combined with qualitative insights from the lived experiences of autistic individuals. Results: Findings indicate that many autistic individuals engage deeply with spiritual beliefs, often appreciating the structure and clarity found in religious rituals, teachings, or moral frameworks. However, obstacles such as metaphorical language, abstract theological concepts, and communal worship practices can limit full participation. Attitudes within religious communities also significantly influence inclusion or exclusion. Conclusion: Faith leaders and educators play a critical role in fostering religious inclusion through culturally sensitive, neurodiversity-informed approaches. Further research and practical initiatives are needed to create accessible, welcoming religious environments that honor both spiritual traditions and the rights of autistic individuals. Promoting religious inclusion contributes to broader societal goals of acceptance, dignity, and belonging for all.

Keywords: autism spectrum disorder, neurodiversity, religious inclusion.

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THE SACRED AND THE BODILY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE ON SEXUALITY AND RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Vasev Stefan[1]

Abstract: This paper explores the complex relationship between sexuality and religion, focusing on how religious discourses shape perceptions of sexuality, as well as the forms of resistance and reconfiguration that occur within religious communities and individual beliefs. Through an interdisciplinary approach that includes sociology, gender studies, and theology, the paper analyzes religious norms in relation to sexual identities, sexual behavior, and corporeality. Additionally, it examines the role of religious institutions in articulating moral norms that influence societal attitudes and intimate practices. The aim of this research is to show that religion does not act in a one-dimensional way – it can serve as a mechanism of control, but also as a space for reinterpretation, critique, and potential transformation in the understanding of sexuality.

Keywords: sexuality; corporeality; theology; gender; moral.

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UKRAINIAN CHURCHES IN THE ONLINE SPACE: LEGAL ASPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Volik Nadiia [1]

Abstract: *The paper explores the phenomenon of the digital presence of Ukrainian churches during the period from 2014 to 2025, with particular attention to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), and Protestant communities. Following the Revolution of Dignity, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and amid the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war, religious organizations in Ukraine actively entered the online space, utilizing social media, streaming platforms, mobile applications, and other digital tools to communicate with believers. This digital transition has reshaped how religious services are delivered, and it has provided a means for maintaining spiritual support during times of crisis. The paper also analyzes the legal aspects of this digital presence, including the regulation of religious content on the Internet, compliance with data protection legislation, copyright issues, and the protection of freedom of conscience in the digital environment. It further examines the challenges of combating fake resources and disinformation in the religious sphere, which have become significant concerns in contemporary Ukrainian society. Special attention is given to the innovative initiatives of the UGCC, OCU, and Protestant churches, which have emerged as models of effective religious communication in times of war. The paper also addresses the legal adaptation of religious organizations to emerging digital technologies within legal systems, focusing on issues related to religious rights and freedoms in the digital era.*

Keywords*: Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Protestant churches, digital presence, legal regulation, online religion.*

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