

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

**The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual International Academic Conference on**

### **CHALLENGES FACING RELIGION AND THE CHURCH IN POSTMODERN DIGITAL SOCIETY**

Silver Lake (Srebrno jezero) 5-6 September 2025

organized by

The Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade (Forum for Religious Issues and ISS Center for Sociological and Anthropological Research)

and

the Center for Empirical Research of Religion, Novi Sad

In partnership with the Center for Empirical Research of Religion from Novi Sad, the Forum for Religious Issues and the Department for Sociological and Anthropological Research of the Institute of Social Sciences are hosting the 10th Jubilee International Conference at Silver Lake on September 5 and 6, 2025. The conference is titled: “Challenges Facing Religion and the Church in Postmodern Digital Society”.

Modern societies are, without a doubt, characterized by a scientific worldview and new technologies. The notion of the individual and emphatic individualism are becoming the core values of the postmodern digital culture. In that regard and many others, modern society differs substantially from the traditional model, wherein culture is heavily influenced by religion, with values, cultural norms, and daily life, in general, being closely linked to faith and religious hierarchies.

The widespread use of information and communications technologies in everyday life has radically changed the mode of communication and information spreading in modern society. These technologies have significantly impacted social dynamics and the way we organize communities and form interpersonal relationships, and in doing so, transformed both formal and informal education and the performance of professional tasks. These technologies have also influenced their users’ perception of the societies in which they live, creating new norms and expectations.

The postmodern society has given rise to the use of artificial intelligence, which changes the way society functions by controlling algorithms, automatizing tasks, and handling data. These changes are not limited to economic and technological aspects of society, but they also impact cultural norms and values,

and therefore, culture itself. In such circumstances, traditional values and institutions, such as religion and the Church, are faced with the challenge of maintaining their role in society, since the use of digital technologies has led to the questioning of traditional values and the redefinition of moral authority.

In the postmodern digital society, unlike traditional societies, various religious, ideological, and philosophical content is readily available, which might cause an individual to find him/herself torn between traditional values that have been instilled in them through upbringing on the one hand, and the values of other religious traditions and expressions on the other. This leads not only to the relativization of the faith that they've grown up with, but also to confusion regarding their religious identity.

The challenges this topic poses to the researcher are not limited to the aforementioned factors. Among the intellectuals of the postmodern digital society, doubt is being expressed concerning the ability of science to solve some of the most pressing problems of the modern world, undermining people's faith in progress. Reactions to neoliberalism and modernism in the world in general are leading to some new social and spiritual currents, which are assigning once again an important role to religion and spirituality, not only in the life of an individual but more importantly, in social life. This not only speaks to the vitality of these phenomena, but also indicates the beginning of a desecularization, if not countersecularization of society.

It is thus clear that we have an ambivalent situation at hand: at the same time, there are symptoms of traditional values losing their significance, and also a societal need for their revival, reaffirmation, and even their reestablishment as the fundamental values of social life.

The digital society both opens new possibilities for religions and churches and poses certain risks to them. An awareness of those risks is crucial for religious organizations and their hierarchies, as well as researchers of social phenomena, in order for them to respond to them adequately. The goal of this international conference is to provide the framework for the study of the aforementioned research challenges, with a presupposed interdisciplinary approach. There is a multitude of interesting topics that could be relevant to this conference, of which we are only highlighting some while allowing space for participants to suggest other ideas within their own fields of research.

We propose the following topics for the conference:

- The status of religious communities, the possibilities open to them, and the difficulties they face in modern digital society;
- social norms and values in the postmodern era;
- Digital transformation and theology: the influence of digital technologies (media) on religious doctrine and practice;

- Religion, church, and moral problems in the digital era: ethical challenges in the age of artificial intelligence (the moral problems that the development of new technologies, including AI and bioengineering poses, and the response of religious communities to them);
- Ethics, bioethics, genetic engineering, and religious values;
- Traditional values and religious pluralism in the digital space;
- Church and the virtual community: the digital space as a new form of religious fellowship (the phenomenon of virtual churches, online services, and digital faith communities);
- Technology, (de)secularization and new forms of spirituality: the challenges posed to religious institutions (the impact of technology on the secularization of society, as well as the revival of traditional and alternative forms of spirituality);
- The digital church: religion on social media (the missionary strategies and methods used by religious institutions to spread faith through the Internet and social media);
- Religion and the media: the impact of digital and social media on the perception of faith and church in society (ways in which the digital media inform the public view of religious institutions/organizations);
- Religious liberty within digital culture: the protection of religious freedom in a digital environment (how digitalization impacts the rights and liberties of the religious, especially in oppressive political contexts).

### **International Program Committee of the Conference**

- Mirko Blagojević, Ph.D. Head of FOREL, Principal Research Fellow, ISS, Belgrade, Serbia;
- Sergey Lebedev, Ph.D. Professor at the Institute of Social Sciences and Mass Communications, Faculty of Sociology and Theology of the Belgorod State University, Belgorod, Russia;
- Goran Bašić, Ph.D. Director of the ISS, Principal Research Fellow, ISS, Belgrade, Serbia;
- Zorica Kuburić, Ph. D. Retired Full Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad and head of the Center for Empirical Researches of Religion, Novi Sad; Serbia;
- Zlatko Matić, Ph.D. Associate Professor, Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia;
- Nena Vasojević, Ph.D. Research Associate, head of the Department for Sociological and Anthropological Research, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia;
- Željko Pavić, Ph. D. Full Professor, Faculty of Philosophy, Osijek, Croatia;
- Yuri Stojanov, Ph. D. Professor, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Great Britain;
- Kjell Magnusson, Ph. D. Retired Associate Professor, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden;

- Emil Hilton Saggau, Ph. D. Senior Research Associate, Lund University, Lund, Sweden;
- Ivan Cvitković, Ph. D. Full Professor, Academic, Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Vladimir Bakrač, Ph. D. Associate Professor, Faculty of Philosophy, Nikšić, Montenegro;
- Nuri Tinaz, Ph. D. Full Professor, Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey;
- Ružica Cacanaska, Ph. D. Principal Research Fellow, Institute of Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Macedonia;
- Sergey Trofimov, Ph. D. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Journalism, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia;
- Nonka Bogomilova, Ph. D. Principal Research Fellow, Institute for the Studies of Society and Knowledge, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria;
- Krasimira Marulevska, Ph. D. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Pedagogy, South-West University Neofit Rilski, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria;
- Olga Smolina, Ph. D. Volodimir Dahl East Ukrainian National University, Kyiv, Ukraine;
- Danica Igrutinović, Ph. D. Faculty of Media and Communications, Singidunum University, Belgrade, Serbia.

### **Organizing Committee of the Conference**

- Nataša Jevtić, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade;
- MA Milan Blagojević, ISS, Belgrade;
- MA Milica Janković, ISS, Belgrade;
- MA Ljiljana Čumura, Center for Religious Empirical Research, Novi Sad.

### **Instructions for the Participants**

Deadline for abstract submission: 1 April 2024. The submission should include the title (in English or Russian), author name(s), affiliation(s), email address, and an abstract (in English or Russian) of up to 250 words with 5 keywords to: [office.skupovi@idn.org.rs](mailto:office.skupovi@idn.org.rs) and [blagomil91@gmail.com](mailto:blagomil91@gmail.com);

The participants of the conference will have the opportunity to publish their papers in the scientific journal *Religion and Tolerance*;

**The conference will be held at Vila Dinčić, Srebrno jezero (Silver Lake - Veliko Gradište), and the program will subsequently be available on the website of the Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade. Accommodation for the participants of the conference is free.**

Belgrade, 20. December 2025.

Director of the Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade  
Goran Bašić, Ph.D. Principal Research Fellow

President of the Program Committee of the Conference  
Mirko Blagojevic, Ph.D. Principal Research Fellow  
Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade