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values, identities, and politics



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RELIGION AND CAPITALISM IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY:
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RELIGION AND CAPITALISM IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY: VALUES, IDENTITIES, AND POLITICS

(ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL
SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE)

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



Silver Lake, Veliko Gradište, 4–5 September 2026

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS*

FORUM FOR RELIGIOUS ISSUES
OF THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
**RELIGION AND CAPITALISM IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY:
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(Silver Lake, Veliko Gradište, Serbia)

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The Forum for Religious Issues and the Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade in co-organization with the Center for Empirical Research of Religion, Novi Sad.

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**THEORETICAL AND
METHODOLOGICAL
FRAMEWORKS
FOR STUDYING THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
RELIGION AND CAPITALISM**

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**RELIGION AND THE “SPIRIT” OF CAPITALISM
(MAX WEBER)**

The paper analyzes the theoretical approach to religion of the famous German sociologist Max Weber, within the framework of the more concrete task of his creative work: the role of religion related to the genesis of capitalism. According to this theoretical approach religion appears as the moral component influencing the “worldly” behaviour of individuals as members of a particular status group. The article examines in a critical light the frequent overemphasizing in literature of the role Weber assigned to religion in the context of the birth of the capitalist spirit. Max Weber defines the influence of religion not as fundamental element, but as involved in interaction with other social phenomena – economics, leadership, work ethics, and psychology. The analysis is based on the famous Weber’s works “Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”, “Sociology of Religion” and others, devoted to the values of Western civilization. The interaction between material factors and interests, and spiritual ideas and incentives characterizes the essence of Weber’s approach to the analysis of the birth and specific features of capitalism and the particularities of Western Civilization. This approach is a challenge to the Marxian interpretation of religion as merely a reflection and product of economic relations in society. The contemporary theoretical and social projections of the Weber’s method related to the topic of capitalism and religion is emphasized.

Keywords: Weber, religion, Western Civilization, capitalist spirit, values

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КОНЦЕПТ «ОТНОШЕНИЕ К РЕЛИГИИ» КАК МЕТОДОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ИНСТРУМЕНТ СОЦИОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО АНАЛИЗА

В современной социологии религии назрела необходимость в обобщающем концепте, позволяющем описывать не только случаи религиозности и нерелигиозности, но и довольно большое многообразие установок, которые не вписываются в эту дихотомию. Нарастание такого разнообразия представляется симптомом кризиса религиозного института, характерного для современного этапа развития капиталистических (позднеמודерных) обществ.

Таким концептом может стать понятие «отношение к религии». Соответствующее явление представляется сложным и включает в себя, в соответствии с концепцией социального факта Э. Дюркгейма, как объективную позицию человека (группы), измеряемую вовлечённостью в институциональные связи, так и субъективную диспозицию, измеряемую присутствием религиозной составляющей в сознании и психологии данного субъекта.

Отношение к религии описывается через комплекс признаков, которые могут быть классифицированы по двум основаниям: а) социоструктурные и рефлексивные; б) объективные и субъективные. Социоструктурные, «видимые» признаки относятся исключительно к категории объективных: таковы устойчивые формы отношений человека / группы со священным сверхъестественным Началом (религиозные Таинства и обряды), с единоверцами (религиозная община, приход), с закреплёнными в традициях культурными формами практик поведения и сознания (образ жизни и мышления). Критерием их наличия является институциональный (внешний и внутренний) контроль.

Рефлексивные признаки отношения к религии варьируются в широком диапазоне: от объективных, также обусловленных

институционализацией, до предельно субъективных, определяемых произвольным выбором.

Классификация отношения к религии, исходя из предшествующих рассуждений, должна исходить из:

- а) соотношения его социоструктурных и рефлексивных компонентов; доминирование социоструктурных компонентов характерно для традиционной религиозной идентичности, тогда как доминирование рефлексивных компонентов характерно для современной, рефлексивной религиозной (или альтернативной ей) идентичности;
- б) меры объективности / субъективности рефлексивных компонентов;
- в) конкретной «карты» содержания социоструктурных и рефлексивных компонентов отношения к религии в их контекстуальном соотнесении.

В соответствии с первым основанием, все варианты современного отношения человека к религии могут быть поделены на три укрупнённые группы, или типа: преимущественно «структурные», когда его позиционирование и активность в отношении религии определяется отношениями включённости в групповые структуры и практики (например, ритуальные); преимущественно рефлексивные, когда они определяются, напротив, внутренней установкой; смешанные, когда внешний и внутренний факторы находятся в состоянии паритета.

В соответствии со вторым основанием, могут быть выделены следующие типы отношения к религии: 1) преимущественно спонтанные, когда «центр тяжести» в его формировании и поддержании отношения к религии смещается в сферу индивидуального выбора идентичности; 2) преимущественно «традиционные», когда приоритетный характер в его формировании и поддержании имеют институциональные структуры и механизмы контроля; 3) смешанные, когда индивидуальная либо групповая саморефлексия и традиции отношения находятся в состоянии паритета.

В соответствии с третьим основанием, типологизация существующих вариантов отношения к религии представляется

возможной только на эмпирической базе, как индуктивное построение «конструируемых типов».

Указанные основания, или принципы, могут стать основными осями координат для дальнейшего методологического и эмпирико-аналитического изучения феномена отношения к религии.

Ключевые слова: отношение к религии, классификация признаков отношения к религии, социоструктурные компоненты, рефлексивные компоненты, современный кризис института религии.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOTERIOLOGICAL NARRATIVES

Contemporary discussions about artificial intelligence are not limited only to the sphere of technical innovation, but extend into broader civilizational, ethical, anthropological, cultural, social, philosophical, and economic questions. Narratives surrounding AI include themes such as overcoming human limitations, reducing suffering, and even addressing deep social problems. Although usually presented in secular and technological terms, these narratives reproduce concepts that have historically been associated with the ideas of salvation and final transformation. The analysis starts from this point of view and examines how discourse within the AI industry can be understood as a form of secularized soteriological imagination, and how it operates within the context of neoliberal capitalism. The human need for meaning, hope, and some form of transcendence appears to be reshaped through new symbolic and technological frameworks. In this context, the notion of “capitalism after man” points to a shift in which the human being gradually loses its position as the central ethical reference point, becoming increasingly integrated into the systems of optimization, automation, and control. The AI industry does not simply produce powerful new tools, but also constructs compelling narratives about the future. These narratives help legitimize growing concentrations of economic and symbolic power, while at the same time shaping expectations about the future. The promise of liberation through technology thus becomes intertwined with new forms of dependence. This approach is interpretive and critically oriented, drawing on insights from the sociology of belief systems, critiques of capitalism, and theories of ideology and legitimation. The aim is not to compare artificial intelligence with traditional religions,

but to show how contemporary technological discourse mobilizes familiar constructs of expectation in ways that help stabilize and normalize existing economic arrangements. This analysis opens up space for rethinking the place of the human being in an increasingly automated and data-driven world.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Soteriology, Neoliberal Capitalism, Ideology, Automation

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**ДВЕ РЕАКЦИИ СОВРЕМЕННОГО
СЕКУЛЯРНОГО ЗАПАДНОЕВРОПЕЙСКОГО
ОБЩЕСТВА НА РЕЛИГИЮ**

Рассматривая восприятие религии современным капиталистическим обществом (западноевропейским по всей культурной принадлежности) мы должны обратить внимание на сложную систему социальных взаимодействий в этой области, включающую все социальные сферы. Неудивительно, что сложность этого феномена дала нам своль разнообразных теорий как систему протестантской этики в работах Макса Вебера и поиск социальной солидарности, увязанной с местом религии в обществе в трудах Эмиля Дюркгейма.

Предлагаю выделить две контрастные реакции современного западноевропейского общества на феномен религии, основываясь на разных требованиях к религиозному потреблению.

Первая «буржуазная» – рассматривающая религиозную принадлежность индивида как маркер политкорректности, исключая, однако, сообщества, считающиеся культурно несовместимыми с доминирующей культурой.

Показательно, что представители образованного класса, обращающиеся в нетрадиционные для западноевропейской культуры религии, такие как, например, буддизм, индуизм, дзен, и даже «учение кабалы» (видимо, оторванное от иудаизма) считаются вполне благопристойными гражданами, хотя и *enfant-terrible* своей эпохи. Это их духовной путь. На то они и интеллигенция или интеллектуалы, чтобы творчески подходить к жизни.

Религиозное потребление в этом случае будет выражено в выполнении предписаний своей религии, лучше мажоритарной. Но даже тут, это участие будет сведено к довольно светски понимаемым образам: освящение кулича, вместо осознания Пасхального таинства, купание в ледяной проруби, для «смытия

всех грехов», вместо понимания тайны крещения и т.д. Зажигание свечи (громницы) на Сретение, выставление вербовых или березовых веточек (даже не всегда освященных в церкви) в соответствующие недели, поздравление друзей с религиозным праздником оказываются оторваны от религиозного учения и смысла. Так некоторые из таких обрядов оказываются подмененными в сознании: большая часть отмечающих Медовый и Яблочный спас в августе, не будут способны назвать Праздники христианского церковного календаря, к которым оказались приурочены сельскохозяйственные, по своей сути языческие обряды. Однако такой подход можно считать благожелательно настроенным к собственно религии, и чаще всего индивиды идентифицируют себя с верующими, полагают, что они соответствуют некому «среднему».

Однако, наряду с таким «приручением» религии к социальному порядку, можно наблюдать второй тип – агрессивную реакцию «безбожника», связанную с другим видом потребления.

Регулярный ритм религиозной жизни, церковный календарь, правила поста и взаимопомощи в священный месяц Рамадан, другие предписания религий, требующих от верующего смирения, ограничения своих желаний, организующие социальную жизнь, встречают агрессивную, не находят понимания в обществе потребления. Осознание себя «неправильным», из-за того, что человек не выполняет предписанные религией нормы. Так, например, Ю.Ю.Синелина прекрасно исследовала и проанализировала в 1990-е и последующие годы конфликт интеллигенции, осваивающей ценности свободного (капиталистического) общества, желающей при этом считать себя православной, но выясняющей, что в Церкви нет вседозволенности, не приемлемы определенные модели поведения.

Это может и вызывает агрессивное неприятие религиозного образа жизни, выливающееся часто в требования ограничения места религии в жизни общества под видом защиты свободы совести, светскости и демократии.

Ключевые слова: религиозное потребление, религия, капитализм, секулярность.

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EUCCHARIST AND THE LIMITS OF EXCHANGE: RETHINKING GIFT BEYOND CAPITALIST RATIONALITY

This paper explores the relationship between the Eucharist and contemporary economic paradigms through the lens of the gift theory. Drawing on the insights of regarding the social function of the gift, as well as 's deconstruction of the "pure gift," the paper argues that even systems of gift exchange often remain embedded in logics of reciprocity and implicit exchange. In contrast, the Eucharist is analyzed as a radical form of gift that escapes the economy of equivalence: it is not grounded in merit, return, or calculation, but in unmerited giving and communion. In this sense, the Eucharistic act constitutes both a theological and anthropological challenge to capitalist rationality, which is structured around value, interest, and exchange. The paper further examines the implications of this tension in contemporary practices, including humanitarian aid and the digital economy, raising the question of whether a truly non-instrumental gift is possible within a capitalist framework. In conclusion, it is argued that the Eucharist does not offer an alternative economic system in a technical sense, but rather exposes the limits of market logic and opens space for rethinking relations, value, and community.

Keywords: Eucharist, gift, gift economy, capitalism, exchange, theological economy, communion, grace

**RELIGION, CONSUMER
CULTURE, AND
COMMODIFICATION:
BETWEEN ADAPTATION
AND RESISTANCE**

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SHABBAT SANCTITY REVISITED: A PLACE IN TIME BEYOND CONSUMERISM

Shabbat occupies a central place in Jewish religious and traditional life as a weekly institution of sacred time devoted to rest. In Jewish religious thought, the quality of holiness (heb. kedushah) is defined primarily through the act of separation: that which is holy is set apart from ordinary time and activity. In this way Shabbat marks a clear boundary within a regular weekly working rhythm, dedicating approximately twenty-five hours from the sunset to the nightfall on the following day to a withdrawal from everyday labor, production, and economic exchange. This temporal separation is articulated in the Torah through a commandment to rest on Shabbat which extends beyond the individual and encompasses the entire social environment: family, household workers, guests within the city borders and even household working animals (Shemot/Exodus 20:10). Within this framework, Shabbat establishes a radical egalitarian moment in which all members of the community are equally responsible and equally obliged to set aside time so everybody could rest and pause.

Writing about the significance of Shabbat in theological and social realm, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel described Shabbat as a “palace in time” (Heschel, 1951), defining it as radically different from the materiality that can be built, bought, accumulated, or consumed through financial capital. In this sense, Shabbat can be understood as an alternative or even contrast to the economic logic of “time is money” that structures much of secular social life in capitalist societies. Similar ideas can be traced in Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo’s analysis, which views halakha as one of the major driving forces behind innovative, courageous, and even rebellious responses to repressive or demanding aspects of daily reality (Cardozo 2017). In contemporary societies, however, Shabbat is frequently perceived as incompatible with modern lifestyles. For many people, strict religious observance appears outdated, impractical, or unnecessarily restrictive within the world organized

around constant productivity, consumption, and digital connectivity, but is it really so?

This paper revisits the concept of Shabbat, understanding it as a counterbalance to consumerist culture. It argues that the Shabbat observance can be interpreted as a form of resistance to continuous rhythms of production that are characteristic for contemporary consumer-oriented societies. By suspending labour, economic exchange, and digital activity, Shabbat – even if just temporarily – introduces an alternative model of living within the time structured around rest, community, and spirituality. From this perspective, Shabbat may be explored not only as a religious commandment, but also as a longstanding cultural mechanism for social and individual well-being that offers rest from consumerism and communicational acceleration, demonstrating its relevance in contemporary times.

Keywords: Shabbat, holiness, temporality, consumerism, resistance, wellbeing

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BETWEEN THE SACRED AND THE MARKET: UMRAH IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM

The paper analyzes Umrah as an act of worship and a social phenomenon in the context of contemporary capitalism, with a particular focus on the relationship between spirituality and commercialization. Although in Islamic teaching, Umrah represents a voluntary form of pilgrimage aimed at spiritual purification and drawing closer to God, in recent decades a transformation has become evident, as it increasingly assumes a pronounced market and consumer dimension. The flexibility regarding the time of its performance, combined with the development of the tourism sector and global consumer culture, has contributed to the growth of organized Umrah programs and its positioning within the broader framework of religious tourism.

Starting from a sociological approach to religion, the paper does not engage in a normative evaluation of the correctness or incorrectness of particular practices, but instead seeks to analyze how a religious ritual intertwines with the logic of the market, luxury, and consumption. Special attention is given to the tension between religious values such as modesty, moderation, and sincerity in worship, and the values of consumer society that promote materialism, status, and conspicuous consumption. In this context, the concepts of need and luxury are examined, as well as the transformation of their meanings in contemporary society.

The empirical part of the study is based on a content analysis of promotional materials from online travel agencies organizing Umrah. Categories such as accommodation, VIP offers, discounts, excursions, meals, and additional services were examined in order to identify dominant discourses and patterns in the representation of this act of worship. The findings indicate that Umrah is increasingly constructed as an experience that combines religious devotion with consumer preferences, thereby opening space for

re-examining the relationship between the sacred and the market in contemporary societies.

Keywords: Umrah, commercialization of religion, consumer culture, religious tourism, luxury and necessity

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RELIGION, CONSUMER CULTURE AND PUBLIC DELIBERATION: CIVIL SOCIETY BETWEEN COMMODIFICATION AND DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE

Contemporary societies are increasingly shaped by the expansion of consumer culture and market logics that permeate almost every sphere of social life, including religion. Within the context of global capitalism, religious institutions, symbols and practices are frequently subjected to the processes of commodification, branding and market adaptation. At the same time, religion continues to function as a source of moral orientation, identity formation and collective meaning. This ambivalent position raises an important question: to what extent can religion preserve its ethical and communal role when confronted with the pressures of consumer culture and market rationality?

This paper examines the relationship between religion, consumer culture and civil society from the perspective of deliberative democratic theory. Particular attention is devoted to the role of civil society as a mediating sphere between the state, the market and religious communities. The analysis draws on theoretical insights from deliberative democracy and civil society studies, especially the works of Jürgen Habermas, John Dryzek and other scholars who emphasize the importance of public discourse, civic participation and pluralism in contemporary democracies. The paper argues that the commodification of religion does not necessarily lead only to the erosion of religious meaning; it may also produce new forms of adaptation and social engagement. Religious organizations increasingly adopt communication strategies, digital platforms and elements of consumer culture in order to remain visible and socially relevant. However, such adaptation simultaneously generates tensions between spiritual authenticity and market-oriented practices. Within this context, civil society becomes a crucial arena in which these tensions are publicly articulated and negotiated. Special attention is given to the dynamics of public deliberation

in plural societies, where diverse religious and secular worldviews coexist. The study explores how civic initiatives, non-governmental organizations, digital activism and public debate contribute to shaping discussions about religion, ethics and social values in contemporary societies. While consumer culture may transform religious expression into symbolic goods, civil society can provide spaces where religion functions not merely as a marketable identity, but as a participant in democratic dialogue. The paper concludes that the relationship between religion and capitalism cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between domination and resistance. Instead, it unfolds through complex interactions involving adaptation, negotiation and critique. The future role of religion in the public sphere will largely depend on the capacity of civil society to maintain open deliberative spaces where ethical reflection, pluralism and civic participation can counterbalance the reductive logic of commodification.

Keywords: Religion, consumer culture, commodification, civil society, public deliberation

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**THE RELIGIOUS IN THE CULTURE OF
CONSUMPTION AND COMMERCIALIZATION**

Modern society is increasingly defined by the logic of consumption, within which goods, services and symbols acquire the status of tools of self-expression and identity construction. In this culture, market narratives extend not only to the economic sphere, but also to the space of culture, education, communication and spirituality. Religion, which was traditionally considered as a sphere of transcendent meaning and value orientation, also finds itself under the influence of commercialization processes. As a result, an ambivalent situation arises in which, on the one hand, religious institutions adapt to market conditions, while on the other, they try to maintain their autonomy and critical potential in relation to consumer culture. In the context of postmodern society, religion increasingly functions in conditions of religious pluralism and the “market of worldviews” (P. Berger). The individual acts as a consumer who chooses spiritual practices according to his own needs, emotions or life strategies. This contributes to the emergence of the phenomena of individualized spirituality, “faith constructors”, the popularization of meditations, coaching practices, spiritual trainings, religious tourism and symbolic products. In such a situation, religious experience can lose its ontological depth and turn into an element of lifestyle or psychological comfort.

Religious experience not only lies at the heart of tradition, manifesting itself in typified schemes of religious practices, but also contradicts the formalization of religions, due to which it turns out to be a factor in the transformation of the basic structures of religious everyday life. The world around offers a variety of situations, but the “habits” that have formed allow the actor to act and foresee the need for a certain action in the future.

Religious experience relativizes everyday life. Being in constant co-existence in two areas of ultimate meanings most often exhausts the subject; first of all, this is connected with the dangers of religious experience, as well as with its intensity and level. The need to

secure the experience requires the formation of habitual religious practices that allow it to be controlled. The habit of performing a religious action in itself reduces the intensity of religious experience that accompanies the corresponding action; at the same time, the transition to the sphere of hierarchically other levels ceases to seem so dangerous to the subject.

The transformation of religious actions under the pressure of commercialization is also manifested in the mediatization of religion. Online services, branded religious products, paid spiritual courses or marketing strategies of religious organizations demonstrate the desire to adapt to new communication and economic conditions. On the one hand, this expands access to religious resources and makes them closer to modern human; on the other hand, there is a risk of reducing religion to the format of a service, where spirituality is evaluated according to the criteria of efficiency, convenience or emotional appeal.

At the same time, religion not only adapts to the culture of consumption, but also acts as a form of resistance to it. Many religious traditions criticize consumerism as a form of idolatry that replaces spiritual values with material ones. In Christian social thought, Buddhist ethics or the Islamic tradition, moderation, solidarity, responsibility and the priority of the spiritual over the material are emphasized. In this sense, religion retains the potential for an alternative vision of human life, oriented towards reason, collectivity and transcendence, rather than towards endless consumption.

The symbolic function of religion as a space that stands in opposition to market logic is particularly important. Religious rituals, holidays and practices form an experience of selflessness, gift and community that contradicts the utilitarian rationality of consumer culture. In a post-secular society, this allows religion to play the role of a moral corrector, reminding of the limits of economic rationalization and the need for humanistic guidelines.

Thus, the interaction of religion with consumer culture is dual in nature. Adaptation to market conditions ensures the survival and social relevance of religious institutions, but at the same time creates the risk of losing the authenticity and depth of religious experience. Resistance to commercialization, in turn, allows us to preserve the critical and transformative potential of religion. It is

in the tension between adaptation and resistance that the modern configuration of religiosity is formed, reflecting the broader contradictions of postmodern culture.

Keywords: configuration of religiosity, consumer culture, commercialization, postsecularism, spirituality

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TRANSFORMATION OF ETHNO-CONFESSIONAL INTERACTIONS AMONG VARIOUS RELIGIOUS GROUPS OF MOSCOW STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF MARKET CAPITALIZATION

High levels of interethnic tension in the Moscow metropolis have persisted for decades. In the context of market capitalization, which Russia has entered in recent decades, ethno-confessional processes are acquiring a new dynamic: market competition, unregulated labor migration, and social stratification are becoming significant factors in the exacerbation of interethnic contradictions. Religion is increasingly acting not only as an institution for preserving traditional values, but also as a resource for group mobilization, enabling young people to adapt to the challenges of the market economy and compensate for the shortcomings of the state's national policy.

The development of ethno-confessional conflicts depends on a combination of political, socio-economic, and socio-cultural transformations, among which mass unregulated migration (driven by the demands of the capitalist labor market) and the propaganda ambivalence of media networks occupy a prominent place. Our research focuses on the development of ethno-confessional interaction against the backdrop of changing national policies in the era of a market economy, in which the growth of intolerant attitudes becomes a side effect of capitalist competition for status, national identity, and access to resources.

Research conducted by the Institute of Demographic Studies of the Federal Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences (2020–2024) examined the perceptions of religious students in Moscow regarding ethno-confessional interaction. The motives behind the growth of religious groups and the conversion to denominations are based on the belief that traditional religions are the guardians of national, spiritual, moral, and cultural values. Young

people seek protection from these religions against the infringement of their national rights, the loss of national identity, and the destruction of their cultural mentality—risks that are particularly acute in the context of capitalist turbulence and the ineffectiveness of the state's national policy.

To determine the level of “ethno-confessional tolerance culture”, typological groups were created: “consistent believers” (those who formed their identity before facing the challenges of capitalism) and “newly converted believers” (those who turned to religious faith in response to current socioeconomic changes). The formation of beliefs about national infringement, associated with fierce competition in the labor market and the changing socio-cultural environment for the sake of economic expediency, correlates with the growth of intolerant ethno-confessional interactions. This trend is clearly evident in the group of “newly converted believers”. A verbal orientation toward active conflictual actions is more characteristic of this group, which is perhaps experiencing a more acute period of adaptation and the search for national identity in the face of the capitalist challenge. Meanwhile, the group of convinced “consistent believers”, having a more solid ideological and social foundation, demonstrates less “conflictual charge” and is more tolerant of other nationalities. In interfaith relations, both groups of believers are largely neutral and tolerant.

Including the capitalist context allows us to interpret these processes not only as a consequence of institutional shortcomings in national policy, but also as a response to economic instability, competition for resources, and identity strategies in which religion, to some extent, becomes an organizational resource for adaptation to market realities.

Keywords: youth, religious groups, ethno-confessional interactions, market capitalization

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**MARKETING RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL
CONTENT IN NORTH MACEDONIA**

In contemporary capitalist contexts, marketing has become a key mechanism through which visibility, recognition, and engagement are produced and sustained. This paper examines how religious and spiritual content is marketed in digital environments, with particular emphasis on social media in North Macedonia. While religious communities have traditionally relied on the established forms of transmission, such as sermons, written texts, and communal gatherings, to sustain their presence and influence, the expansion of digital platforms has introduced new conditions in which visibility and audience reach are increasingly shaped by marketing-oriented practices. In this context, the paper does not approach marketing as a narrowly defined economic tool, but as a broader organizing principle that structures how content is presented, framed, and made visible to audiences. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram provide an environment in which religious actors, both institutional and individual, adapt their presence to formats that prioritize clarity, immediacy, and emotional resonance. At the same time, forms of individualized and loosely structured spiritual content emerge alongside more traditional religious expressions, often adopting similar modes of presentation.

The empirical analysis is based on a qualitative research design, including content analysis of selected social media profiles and pages in North Macedonia. Using purposive sampling, the study examines variations in content type (religious, spiritual, hybrid) and focuses on key dimensions of marketing-oriented presentation, including message framing, visual structuring, and forms of audience engagement. Rather than evaluating these practices in

instrumental terms, the analysis explores how marketing shapes the conditions under which religious content becomes visible and socially relevant. The findings indicate a growing convergence in the ways religious and spiritual content is presented, characterized by simplified messaging, increased reliance on visual elements, and the use of emotionally resonant narratives. These patterns suggest that social media environments encourage the adoption of standardized marketing-oriented formats, while simultaneously enabling the coexistence of institutional religious communication and individualized forms of spiritual expression.

The paper contributes to a better understanding of how marketing operates as a structuring principle in the contemporary digital presence of religion. By analyzing the marketing of religious and spiritual content on social media in North Macedonia, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how marketing structures the visibility and public presence of religion in digital environments.

Keywords: marketing, digital religion, social media, religious content, spiritual content

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THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH BETWEEN CULTURAL HERITAGE AND INVESTOR URBANISM: THE CASE OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SERBIA

Investor urbanism implies the investment of private capital in the construction and expansion of the city, and the experience in Serbia points to the fact that public spaces are practically privatized and used for residential and commercial, primarily consumer facilities, while the existing infrastructure of the city is only burdened even more without the investor's obligation to invest in it. Economic growth is regarded as a public good, although it does not necessarily imply social development; more often, it entails the devastation of public spaces, the prioritization of capital over citizens, and ultimately the commercialization or repurposing of cultural, material, and architectural heritage in attractive urban locations.

The National Library of Serbia, which houses more than five million items, including valuable medieval manuscripts, is located on the Sveti Sava plateau. Together with the Church of Saint Sava, it forms an urban, spatial, cultural, and historical unit of Belgrade and is a protected cultural asset. Today, the structural stability of the building, as well as the repository that preserves the most significant national body of books, is under threat, as trees in the protected park zone were cut down without consulting experts to initiate the construction of the underground "Skerlićeva" garage without the necessary construction analyses and documentation.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the public narrative and examine the position and stance of the Serbian Orthodox Church regarding the endangerment of the area where the largest Orthodox temple—the Church of Saint Sava—and the National Library are located, considering that the Serbian Orthodox Church is a co-investor, i.e., it is financing the construction of the public garage being built by the private company Concord West. On the other hand, employees of the National Library of Serbia, cultural heritage experts,

and the broader cultural public have appealed to institutions to enforce the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage, halt the construction, and ensure the protection of the National Library from potential damage—both to the building itself and to the cultural heritage preserved in its repository—as well as to provide safe access to the entrance, which has not functioned properly since the works began in 2024.

Keywords: Serbian Orthodox Church, National Library of Serbia, investor urbanism, cultural heritage

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**OCCULTISM, POPULAR CULTURE, AND PROFIT:
A JANUS-FACED PERSPECTIVE ON THE
ANTI-CULT MORAL PANIC OF THE 1980S**

This presentation addresses the relationship between contemporary occultism, popular culture, and profit, focusing primarily on the 1980s — a decade marked by the peak expansion of occult-themed pop-culture content, as well as the escalation of the anti-cult movement and anti-cult moral panic. By analysing the prevalence of various aspects of alternative spirituality within 1980s popular culture, attention is directed towards the presence of such spiritual content in music, feature films, animated films, RPGs, video games, and toys.

Regarding the interaction between the significant presence of occult elements within the 1980s pop-culture milieu on one hand, and the stigmatisation and social condemnation to which such tendencies and their actors were exposed on the other, several explanations can be offered. The first and most apparent suggests that the expansion of occult aesthetic elements within popular entertainment led to public anxiety, subsequently resulting in the expansion of the anti-cult movement and the emergence of a moral panic. Conversely, one must also note the reverse process: a tendency wherein, due to the “forbidden fruit” effect, the very emergence of the moral panic in question served as an additional stimulus for the rising popularity of the denounced occult content. Finally, it is necessary to observe the economic side of the issue, namely the interplay between popularity and profit, understood as one of the decisive factors dictating trends within mass and popular culture in general. Viewed thus, the profit that occult-inspired pop culture generated for the entertainment industry can be seen as an exceptionally significant incentive for the further expansion of occult pop-culture content. According to this reasoning, the seemingly paradoxical situation in which an enormous surge in the popularity of such stigmatised content appeared alongside

rising social concern regarding the infiltration of the occult into the cultural domain is, in fact, not at all illogical. To clarify, this apparent paradox corresponds to some of the fundamental laws of the capitalist market economy, including the basic law of supply and demand, as well as the principle of profit maximisation. In this sense, despite the controversies they sparked and the strong public resistance they faced, occult elements within popular culture proved to be an excellent product and a resource for commercial exploitation. Furthermore, in accordance with the logic of capital and the capitalist market, virtually all other interests were subordinated to the interest of increasing profit, including various legal and ethical dilemmas that stood in the path of exploiting occultly aestheticized pop-culture products.

All of this leads to a conclusion regarding the Janus-faced perspective of the anti-cult moral panic that swept through Western civilisation during the 1980s. Namely, although the proponents of the anti-cult moral panic could reasonably have expected their efforts to result in the elimination or at least the suppression of occult content from the sphere of popular culture, the development of events showed that the aforementioned moral panic had a largely counterproductive effect, serving precisely as an additional generator for the rise of the occult's popularity in mass culture and life in general. Moreover, if the focus is placed exclusively on the domain of popular culture, it is observed that the entertainment industry — in line with its general drive towards increasing gain and acquiring profit regardless of ethical and other barriers — directly utilised the wave of anti-cult propaganda to achieve economic benefit, while itself actively contributing to the rise in popularity of occult-based pop-culture content, which was understood at the time as a highly commercially viable product.

Keywords: occultism, popular culture, profit, moral panic, anti-cult movement

**RELIGION, ECONOMY,
AND CONCEPTS OF
SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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SOCIAL JUSTICE BETWEEN THE MARKET AND HUMAN DIGNITY

Contemporary capitalism shapes social relations through the logic of market productivity, competitiveness, and individual responsibility, which particularly affects social groups that do not fit into the dominant economic models of “efficiency” and “self-sufficiency.” Among them, persons with disabilities occupy a specific position, as their social status is often determined at the intersection of economic inequality, symbolic marginalization, and insufficient institutional protection. In this context, the question of social justice transcends the framework of formal equality and opens the need for a deeper analysis of the relationship between capitalism, religion, and social responsibility.

This paper is based on the assumption that the capitalist system, especially in its neoliberal form, tends to measure human value through work capacity, market profitability, and consumer potential. Such a logic often leads to the exclusion of persons with disabilities, who continue to face barriers in education, employment, access to public services, and full social participation. At the same time, contemporary discourses on social justice emphasize the redistribution of resources, recognition of diversity, and the removal of structural barriers that produce inequality.

The paper examines whether religious and ethical traditions can serve as a corrective to dominant market rationality. Special attention is given to the concepts of dignity, solidarity, compassion, equality, and care for the vulnerable, which are present in various religious teachings and may contribute to the critique of social relations based exclusively on profit. The aim is not to idealize religion, but to explore its potential, in dialogue with contemporary theories of social justice, to offer a value framework for more inclusive social policies.

Methodologically, the paper relies on a theoretical-critical analysis of relevant literature in the fields of sociology of religion, disability studies, and the critique of neoliberalism. The focus is on how the concept of social justice can be redefined so that persons with disabilities are not perceived as a “burden on the system,” but as equal holders of rights, dignity, and social contribution. In conclusion, the paper argues that a truly just society cannot be built solely on market principles, but requires a synthesis of economic redistribution, cultural recognition, and ethical responsibility toward the most vulnerable members of society.

Keywords: social justice, capitalism, persons with disabilities, religion, inclusion

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FAITH-BASED SOLIDARITY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: THE MISSION OF THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA (SMOM)

In contemporary societies shaped by neoliberal economic models, the question of solidarity increasingly extends beyond the institutional frameworks of the welfare state and finds expression within civil society and faith-inspired initiatives. This paper starts from the assumption that religious traditions, despite the processes of secularization and individualization, still represent an important source of moral motivation for altruistic action and humanitarian engagement.

The theoretical framework draws on both classical and contemporary contributions from the sociology of religion and social theory. Particular attention is given to Max Weber's reflections on religious ethics, Robert Putnam's concept of social capital, and more recent perspectives on religion and civil society developed by Peter Berger and José Casanova. Within this perspective, religion is approached as a symbolic and normative resource that fosters networks of trust, mutual assistance, and collective responsibility.

The empirical focus of the paper is the humanitarian mission of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (SMOM), one of the oldest and most recognizable actors of faith-based humanitarian action in Europe. Through an analysis of its activities in Malta and beyond, the paper explores how principles of Christian humanism, service to the poor, and the ethics of charity are translated into contemporary forms of voluntary engagement. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which this organization connects religious tradition with modern practices of social solidarity, humanitarian aid, and international cooperation. The paper concludes that faith-based organizations such as the Order of Malta remain significant actors in the production and maintenance of social solidarity in the context of late capitalism.

Keywords: religion, solidarity, humanitarian volunteering, social capital, Order of Malta (SMOM)

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ETHICS OF RELIGIOUS BUILDING: SPIRITUAL MISSION AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Religious buildings are cult buildings that, through their architecture, aesthetics and arrangement, testify to the historical heritage and institutional development of a religious organization. In this research, the author analyzes the field of religious construction from the perspective of the ethical tension that arises between the intensive construction of religious buildings and social responsibility towards society and believers. The introductory part of the research points out the importance of religious construction and emphasizes its spiritual, cultural and social function. Then, the relationship is considered between representative religious construction and the rules of religious institutions to act in the direction of social and legal responsibility. Attention is focused on considering the question of whether a spiritual mission is affirmed through construction activities that contribute to social cohesion and solidarity, or is the focus directed towards institutional prestige that excludes the social dimension. In the final part of the paper, the author points out the need to establish a balance between the intensity of construction of religious buildings and the principle of social responsibility, as a key aspect of the contemporary activities of churches and religious communities.

Keywords: Religious building, state-church law, religious construction, Christian ethics, sociology of religion

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FROM PILGRIMAGE TO A TOURISM PRODUCT: RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND CAPITALISM IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

A complex social phenomenon that integrates religious, cultural, and identity dimensions, pilgrimage represents a religious practice of traveling to a sacred place, motivated by faith, spiritual needs, and the desire for transformation, whether personal or collective. This symbolic and often physical act of approaching the sacred, through spiritual purification, entails visiting a holy site, pursuing a spiritual goal, and engaging in a shared experience, most often mediated through ritual travel. Contemporary changes in the tourism market indicate that the concept of pilgrimage is evolving and expanding beyond a strictly religious framework, and it is precisely this transformation that forms the basis for the development of religious tourism, where traditional pilgrimage intertwines with tourism practices and the principles of a market economy.

The paper analyzes the transformation of pilgrimage from a traditional religious practice into a tourism product within the context of the development of global capitalism in contemporary society. Drawing on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, it examines how processes of globalization, commodification, and marketing influence the changing meanings and functions of religious travel. The study also considers the role of various subjects involved in religious travel, such as religious institutions, the state, and the tourism industry, in shaping and managing religious tourism destinations, as well as the implications of these processes for local communities and cultural heritage. Increasing attention is given to the impact of digitalization and contemporary media on the promotion of religious tourism destinations, as well as to the growing role of individualized spiritual practices in shaping tourism demand. In this context, religious tourism is viewed both as a space

for intercultural dialogue and as a potential site of conflict, particularly under conditions of intense global migration and political tensions. Special emphasis is placed on the relationship between spirituality and the market, where religious tourism simultaneously serves as a space for preserving religious values and for their economic exploitation. The paper analyzes how contemporary religious tourists redefine travel motivations, moving between faith and consumer patterns, thereby blurring the boundaries between pilgrims and tourists. Particular attention is paid to the paradoxes of contemporary religious tourism, reflected in the simultaneous strengthening of religious visibility and its commercialization within both domestic and international tourism markets. Finally, the paper highlights the need to establish a sustainable model for the development of religious tourism that would reconcile economic interests with the preservation of authenticity, cultural heritage, and the spiritual significance of pilgrimage in contemporary society, while emphasizing the importance of ethical principles and responsible governance of this complex social phenomenon.

Keywords: religious tourism, pilgrimage, capitalism, society

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THE IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD

This paper builds on the literature in which religiosity is defined as a central axis in the societies characterized by existential insecurity, poverty, high inequality, political instability, weak institutions, and uncertainty regarding everyday life, as argued by Ronald Inglehart. Under such conditions, religion serves an important function by providing a sense of order, control, predictability, and symbolic protection. This study problematizes the assumption that religiosity per se is conditioned by deprivation. The main hypothesis is that socio-economic deprivation is not equally associated with all aspects of religiosity, but primarily with the dimension related to the importance of God in everyday life. In other words, it is assumed that poverty, inequality, and lower levels of economic development will be more strongly associated with a high perceived importance of God than with religious beliefs as such.

The study is based on data from the most recent wave of the European Values Study (2017). Key indicators of socio-economic deprivation include GDP, the GINI index, and the percentage of the population living on less than \$5.5 per day, while controlling for gender, age, education, and income.

The results confirm the proposed hypothesis. The linear regression model for the importance of God demonstrates very high explanatory power, with lower GDP, higher poverty, and greater inequality emerging as the strongest predictors. In contrast, the ordinal logistic model for religious beliefs shows substantially lower explanatory power, although the same socio-economic factors remain statistically significant. It is particularly important that poverty and GDP exhibit considerably stronger effects in the model predicting the importance of God than in the model predicting religious beliefs.

The findings suggest that socio-economic deprivation is not primarily associated with religious belief as such, but rather with the dimension of belief in which God is positioned in the center of religion.

Keywords: deprivation, GDP, religion, God, EVS

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ISLAMIC ECONOMICS OF MUHAMMAD BAQIR AL-SADR AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The paper deals with the analysis of the conceptual foundations of Islamic economics through the prism of the works of Muhammed Bakir al-Sadr, one of its most significant theoreticians in the twentieth century. Muhammed Bakir al-Sadr Al-Sadr (1935–1980), born in Iraq, was a Shia cleric, jurist and philosopher, and apart from his intellectual work, he is also known as the founder of the Islamic Dawa Party, which makes him an important figure both in theory and in political practice. His capital work *Iqtisaduna* (Our Economics) represents the first complete systematization of the Islamic economic doctrinal framework. In his view, Islamic economics represents a system of principles derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Al-Sadr systematically develops this doctrine through three fundamental elements: the principle of double ownership, the principle of economic freedom in a limited sphere and the principle of social justice. The first element entails the simultaneous existence of private, collective public and state ownership, which positions al-Sadr between capitalism, which absolutizes private ownership, and socialism. Each type of ownership is assigned with a specific domain in which it may function. The second element concerns individual economic freedom, which, in contrast to capitalist unlimited freedom, is regulated by internal (moral-spiritual) and external (authority of the ruler) limitations, which directs freedom towards the common good. The third element is social justice, which represents the culmination of this system and is achieved through mechanisms of mutual responsibility and social balance, where work and need form the primary basis of distribution. This structuring of the economy, based on religious sources, is not perceived by al-Sadr as a mere ethical limitation of the market, but as an alternative economic order that arises from a specific Islamic understanding of man, property and justice. Therefore, his thought offers a significant theoretical framework for contemporary reflection on the relationship between religion and economy.

Keywords: Islam, Islamic Economics, Shiism, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, Social Justice

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RELIGION AND ECONOMICS: RELIGIOUS BELIEFS IN THE TIME OF CAPITALISM

The interpretation of religion in the context of the economy points to the conclusion that religion is an older phenomenon than the phenomena of capital and capitalism. Although religion is separated from the state in most countries, it is not separated from the ways of behavior and doing business. Many religious beliefs influence how people treat money: whether with rationality (Protestantism) or frugality (Zen Buddhism). So even though capitalism is considered a secularized social system, religion still exists in it. Many scientists wrote about it, the most famous being Max Weber. In any case, the main message is taking responsibility for one's own behavior, individual self-awareness, and awareness of kindness and solidarity. In the countries of Western Europe, the rise of religion and the rise of capitalism did not take place at the same time. The rise of religion and its dominance in those countries flourished in the Middle Ages, i.e. feudalism, and the rise of capital naturally occurred in the era of capitalism. The truth is that both sides had the idea of the well-being of the people in mind. In this research paper, the concept of religion and the concept of capital will be discussed, as well as their mutual connection. It is necessary to point out that religion is related to one country or nation. While capital has belonged to everyone since its inception, it appears in all countries. The development of capitalism and capital with the rise of banking and trade, emphasizing work as a means of survival, was an ideal field on which passions would be transformed into rational behavior, i.e. interest. This occurs because the demands of the times have become such that functional knowledge and professionalism, which are subordinated to market behavior and profit, have become necessary. This means that the knowledge that relied only on the teaching of the apostles and religious miracles, was no longer sufficient for everyday life. Furthermore, observing today's development of society and the demands of civilization, the question arises whether capital has become a kind of religion?

At the same time, here one should separate the career commitment to religion, and the religious people's belonging to one confession. Also, it is necessary to give an answer to the question: what about charity in today's societies?

Keywords: religion, beliefs, values, capital, well-being

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FINANCIAL STRESS, RELIGIOSITY, AND SENSE OF CONTROL – A MODERATION ANALYSIS ACROSS EUROPE

In this study, we examine the moderating effect of religiosity on the association between subjective financial stress and sense of control over one's life. In prior research, financial stress is consistently found to be associated with a lower sense of control over one's life, yet it remains unclear whether religiosity can buffer this negative effect. Based on the theory of religious coping, religiosity may function as a protective psychological resource that mitigates the negative impact of financial hardship on sense of control over one's life (self-directing pattern of religious coping). However, according to the same theoretical framework, religiosity may also undermine the sense of control by reinforcing feelings of helplessness (deferring pattern of religious coping). Our aim is to empirically test the direction and magnitude of this interaction. We use data from the eleventh round of the European Social Survey, from 2022/23, with a sample of 47,402 respondents from 30 countries across Europe. Subjective financial stress was operationalized as the respondents' self-reported assessment of how well they managed on their current household income (4-point scale), and religiosity was measured as the respondents' self-reported assessment of how religious they considered themselves to be (11-point scale). Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in three steps: demographic and psychosocial covariates (gender, age, education, interpersonal trust, social connections, and subjective health) were entered in the first step, main effects of financial stress and religiosity were entered in the second step, and the interaction term was entered in the third step. The results confirmed the significant and positive moderation effect of religiosity on the association between financial stress and sense of control. However, this effect is very weak, and the interaction term accounts for only 0.2% of additional variance. Although the direction of the effect is consistent with the self-directing pattern of religious coping,

its magnitude is negligible – suggesting that religiosity does not function as a meaningful buffer against the negative impact of financial stress on the sense of control.

Keywords: financial stress, religiosity, sense of control over one's life, moderation, European Social Survey

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СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ СПРАВЕДЛИВОСТЬ МЕЖДУ ГОСУДАРСТВОМ И ТРАДИЦИЕЙ: РОЛЬ РУССКОЙ ПРАВОСЛАВНОЙ ЦЕРКВИ В ФОРМИРОВАНИИ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЙ МОРАЛИ В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ РОССИИ

Отношение между религией, экономикой и социальной справедливостью в России сформировано глубокими историческими разрывами между советским периодом, характеризующимся институциональной секуляризацией и маргинализацией религии, и постсоветской трансформацией, в рамках которой происходит повторная актуализация религиозных институтов в публичной сфере. В этом процессе Русская православная церковь позиционируется как значимый социальный актор, участвующий в нормативном определении экономической морали и концепции социальной справедливости в контексте одновременного усиления государства и трансформации рыночных отношений. Цель работы заключается в анализе роли Русской православной церкви в формировании экономической морали в современной России с особым акцентом на концепцию социальной справедливости как точки пересечения государства, рынка и традиции, а также в выявлении того, выступает ли Церковь как автономный нормативный актор или как часть более широкой институциональной конфигурации, в рамках которой она участвует в легитимации существующего социально-экономического порядка.

Исследование основано на качественном подходе и реализуется через трёхуровневую аналитическую схему, включающую нормативный анализ официальных документов и публичных позиций Церкви, институциональный анализ отношений между Церковью и государством в постсоветский период, а также ограниченную эмпирическую иллюстрацию посредством анализа публичного дискурса и отобранных примеров практики

без претензии на статистическую генерализацию. В более широком теоретическом смысле анализ имплицитно исходит из предпосылки культурной укоренённости экономического действия и нормативного формирования рыночных практик, что открывает возможность интерпретации взаимосвязи религии и экономики вне строго экономистских рамок. Работа исходит из предположения, что современная концепция социальной справедливости в России формируется в межпространстве между государством и традицией, где Русская православная церковь играет значительную, но не полностью автономную роль, при этом нормативный каркас отражает специфические исторические, культурные и институциональные условия постсоветского общества. Это открывает более широкий теоретический вопрос о роли религиозных акторов в современных обществах, а именно об их позиции между нормативной автономией и институциональной интегрированностью в структуры власти.

Ключевые слова: социальная справедливость, экономическая мораль, Русская православная церковь, государство, постсоветская трансформация.

**RELIGION BETWEEN
LEGITIMATION AND
RESISTANCE: STRUCTURAL
VIOLENCE IN CAPITALISM**

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THE RISK OF POLITICAL INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF THE SACRED

In the modern world, in conditions of crises, wars and social instability, the risk of transforming the sacred into a resource of ideological mobilization is becoming particularly relevant. The sacred belongs to those phenomena that have exceptional semantic and emotional intensity. It is associated with boundary values, collective identity and the experience of unconditional significance. That is why the sacred can perform not only an integrative and moral-orienting function, but also become an object of political instrumentalization. In the classical sociology of religion, the sacred was considered as the basis of social solidarity. E. Durkheim showed that the sacred symbolizes the community itself, its values and collective identity. However, it is this connection between the sacred and the collective that makes it potentially vulnerable to political use: if the sacred is a symbol of a community, then it can be mobilized to protect, consolidate, or oppose the “Other.”

The political theology of K. Schmitt radicalizes this logic, according to which the key concepts of modern statehood are secularized theological concepts, and the political is defined through the distinction “friend – enemy”. In such a perspective, the sacralization of a political community or its struggle becomes a mechanism for legitimizing conflict. When political goals acquire the status of a “sacred cause,” they go beyond the reach of rational criticism and turn into an unconditional imperative.

The political instrumentalization of the sacred in conditions of war is especially dangerous. Military conflict, as a borderline situation, destroys everyday semantic structures and intensifies the need for symbolic justification of suffering and sacrifice. In this context, narratives about a “holy war,” a “sacrificial mission,” or a “messianic destiny” of the people can be formed. Such interpretations transform religious symbols into means of mobilization, where the sacred legitimizes violence and removes moral constraints.

R. Girard showed that the sacred is historically connected with the mechanism of violence and sacrifice, which stabilize the community by transferring aggression to a symbolic or real "victim". In the political dimension, this mechanism can be reproduced through the demonization of the enemy and the sacralization of one's own side. Thus, the sacred becomes not a space of transcendence, but also an instrument of symbolic justification of the conflict.

At the same time, the modern post-secular situation described by J. Habermas creates new conditions for the functioning of religious meanings in the public space. Religious traditions may retain an important moral potential, but their participation in political discourse requires translation into the universal language of civic argumentation. Without such a translation, religious symbols risk becoming tools for identification mobilization, which deepens polarization.

P. Tillich distinguished between authentic faith as a "limiting concern" and its idolatrous deformations, when relative realities – nation, state, ideology – acquire the status of absolutes. It is precisely this absolutization that constitutes the essence of the political instrumentalization of the sacred: the sacred dimension is transferred from a transcendent horizon to historically limited collective goals.

Thus, the risk of the political instrumentalization of the sacred lies in its ability to give political projects the character of unconditionality, moral inviolability and emotional mobilization power. In this case, the sacred ceases to be a source of moral criticism and a transcendent dimension of responsibility, and becomes a mechanism for legitimizing power, violence or ideology. At the same time, the sacred is not unambiguously destructive in a political context. It can also perform the opposite function – remind of the absolute value of human life, to limit violence and support ethical solidarity. That is why the key task of modern philosophical theology is to distinguish between authentic religious experience, open to transcendental responsibility, and its ideological forms, which transform the sacred into an instrument of power.

In a post-secular society, this problem becomes particularly acute: the stronger the existential and social instability, the greater the temptation to sacralize political identities. Therefore, a critical

understanding of the boundaries between faith, symbol and ideology becomes a necessary condition for preserving the humanistic potential of religious tradition.

Keywords: political theology, political instrumentalization, the sacred, post-secular society, authentic religious experience

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STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND RELIGIOUS STABILISATION IN PERIPHERAL CAPITALISM: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ORTHODOX DISCOURSE IN SERBIA AND GREECE (2009–2026)

This paper examines the role of the Orthodox churches in shaping societal responses to socio-economic crises within the context of peripheral capitalism, through a comparative analysis of Serbia and Greece from 2009 to 2026. It proceeds from the assumption that religious institutions remain significant social actors, particularly in times of crises, and investigates how Orthodox discourse interprets the causes and consequences of economic disruptions, as well as its potential contribution to the stabilisation or transformation of the existing social order.

The theoretical framework is grounded in the concept of structural violence, as defined by Johan Galtung, referring to the socially structured inequalities that systematically constrain individuals' and groups' capacity to realise their full potential. This perspective is further developed by Paul Farmer, who emphasises the material consequences of the global economic arrangements for poverty and social vulnerability. The analysis is also informed by the political economy of neoliberalism (David Harvey) and world-systems theory (Immanuel Wallerstein), which situate peripheral economies such as Serbia and Greece in structurally dependent positions within the global capitalist system.

The role of religion is approached through both classical and contemporary theories of its social function. Max Weber's insights into the relationship between religion and economic systems, Peter Berger's thesis of religion as a mechanism of symbolic legitimation, and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony provide a basis for interpreting religious discourse as a potential vehicle of social stabilisation. This perspective is further enriched by Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the religious field as a site of symbolic reproduction of power.

Methodologically, the paper employs qualitative discourse analysis, drawing on critical discourse analysis (Norman Fairclough) and a Foucauldian understanding of discourse as a practice that produces and reproduces power relations. The corpus includes: (1) official statements and pastoral letters of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church; (2) public statements by high-ranking clergy concerning economic reforms, austerity measures, social policy, and the post-pandemic context; (3) reports on humanitarian and social programmes of church institutions; and (4) media interviews during key moments of crisis. The analysis focuses on three indicators: (a) the naming of the causes of crises; (b) positioning toward state and supranational economic actors; and (c) the discursive translation of socio-economic problems into moral and identity-based registers.

The paper advances the hypothesis that the Orthodox churches in both contexts primarily function as agents of social stabilisation, even when explicitly acknowledging socio-economic injustices. Contemporary church statements illustrate this dynamic. For instance, in the 2025 Christmas Epistle, the Serbian Patriarch linked economic insecurity, inflation, inequality, and poverty to a broader crisis of trust in institutions, framing economic issues in moral and social terms, while emphasising solidarity and cohesion rather than systemic confrontation.

Similarly, responses of the Greek Orthodox Church during the financial crisis (2014–2015) foregrounded human dignity and social solidarity, while articulating a somewhat more pronounced critique of market logic and international economic actors. Statements by certain bishops—emphasising the primacy of freedom and human dignity over reducing the person to an economic unit—indicate a normative critique, albeit without a sustained challenge to the broader political-economic order.

Comparative findings suggest a difference in the degree of explicit criticism of international actors—more pronounced in the Greek case—but also reveal a structural similarity in the function of religious discourse as a mechanism for mitigating social tensions. The translation of socio-economic problems into a moral register can be interpreted through the concept of moral economy (Karl Polanyi; Didier Fassin), as well as through processes of depoliticisation

characteristic of neoliberal governance (Wendy Brown), in which structural issues are reframed as ethical or cultural concerns.

In this sense, the Orthodox churches may be understood as socially stabilising actors in managing the consequences of economic crises on the periphery of European capitalism. Their discourse simultaneously contains elements of normative critique and symbolic stabilisation, pointing to an ambivalent position between legitimatisation and potential resistance. The paper thus contributes to a broader understanding of the relationship between religion, political economy, and social stability, while raising questions about the limits of religious discourse as a space of critique in contemporary capitalist societies.

Keywords: structural violence, Orthodoxy, religious discourse, neoliberalism, peripheral capitalism, social stabilisation, Serbia, Greece

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РЕЛИГИОЗНЫЙ ЭКСТРЕМИЗМ В БОСНИИ И ГЕРЦЕГОВИНЕ — ЗЛОУПОТРЕБЛЕНИЕ СВОБОДОЙ ВЕРОИСПОВЕДАНИЯ

Основной проблемой исследования в данной работе являются формы угроз безопасности, возникшие в результате экстремистской интерпретации религиозных постулатов частью исламских верующих в Боснии и Герцеговине. Босния и Герцеговина была создана в очень сложных социальных условиях после гражданской войны, вызванной распадом СФРЮ. В таких условиях возникает религиозный экстремизм, и особой проблемой является бездействие части политических властей и субъектов международного сообщества в решении этого негативного социального явления.

Исследование этой социальной проблемы весьма актуально и научно обосновано, учитывая ее проявления в постдейтонской Боснии и Герцеговине. Научная значимость исследования в данной работе отражается в знании текущего состояния проявления веры и свободы вероисповедания. Таким образом, для социальных наук важно провести исследование по сформулированной проблеме, в рамках которой будут систематизированы и обобщены явления в сфере религии, наблюдавшиеся на протяжении нескольких десятилетий. Исходя из этой проблемы, в данной работе объективно исследуется религиозный экстремизм в Боснии и Герцеговине и злоупотребление свободой вероисповедания. В качестве временного периода объективно исследуется период с момента образования Боснии и Герцеговины в Дейтоне. В пространственном отношении предмет исследования включает территорию Боснии и Герцеговины и территорию Республики Сербской.

В дисциплинарном отношении предмет исследования относится к области социальных наук, наук о безопасности и психологических наук. С эпистемологической точки зрения предмет исследования рассматривается с научной точки зрения

посредством эмпирического исследования на отобранной выборке сотрудников органов безопасности. Выборка респондентов состоит из 362 человек, сотрудников полиции Республики Сербской из различных отделов и подразделений. Научная цель заключалась в изучении структуры отношения субъектов безопасности к религиозным экстремистам и их личностных характеристик. Конечным уровнем научной цели было научное открытие и научное объяснение феномена религиозного экстремизма в Боснии и Герцеговине. Научное предположение, выдвинутое в работе, следующее: если результаты исследования подтвердят наличие религиозного экстремизма среди верующих, то это будет означать нарушение религиозных свобод. Предмет, цель и гипотеза исследования определили научные методы, примененные в данной работе, а именно: основные аналитические и синтетические методы познания, и особенно статистические с использованием инструментов регрессионного анализа и психометрии. Социальное обоснование исследования в работе отражено в результатах, основанных на проверенных мнениях экспертов и аналитиков из психологической, полицейской и силовой сфер.

Особый вклад исследования заключается в результатах эмпирического исследования и обсуждениях экспертов из различных научных областей. Социальная значимость данного исследования состоит в создании прочной основы для объективного изучения и пересмотра правовой базы, регулирующей религиозные права и свободы. Проанализированная литература подтверждает основные теоретические положения о религии, религиозном экстремизме и насилии, которые возникают как негативные проявления злоупотребления свободой вероисповедания.

Ключевые слова: религия, экстремизм, безопасность, свобода вероисповедания, насилие, Босния и Герцеговина.

**RELIGION AND CAPITALISM
IN POST-SOCIALIST
SOCIETIES: SPECIFICITIES
AND CHALLENGES**

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THE POWERS OF THIS WORLD, LEFT AND RIGHT: IDEOLOGICAL OTHERINGS IN SOC-ADJACENT MEDIA DISCOURSE

Religious actors in post-socialist societies occupy a complex ideological space which is often difficult to map. On the one hand, socialisms frequently entailed regimes of secularization experienced as oppressive by the religious, and moving away from socialist systems of organization was usually coupled with desecularization. This has led to communism being constructed as the main enemy of religion. On the other hand, especially in the part of the world dominated by Eastern Orthodoxy, owing to shifting geopolitical positioning accompanied by narratives of East/West civilizational divides, constructions of global capitalism as the supreme villain have also been rampant. This is further complicated by church-state relations often based on mutual instrumentalization, leading to versions of religious nationalism to which Eastern Orthodoxy with local state-based churches is more amenable.

The Serbian Orthodox Church has held a particularly unstable ideological position in recent decades, reacting to both geopolitical and local reshufflings of power in complex and at times unpredictable ways. This paper will attempt to offer a cursory overview of some of the ways in which the public media discourse adjacent to the Serbian Orthodox Church has meandered through the thorny terrain of the postsecular, post-socialist landscape in which it operates. The corpus will include publicly available media content created by officials of the Serbian Orthodox Church, content citing its high dignitaries or other official representatives, and content created by or citing those who align themselves with Serbian Orthodoxy and purport to be speaking for the Church. The focus will be on reactions to various current issues and incidents prominent in the public eye, which prompted one or more of the actors to mention 'communism', 'capitalism', 'globalism', and synonymous or similar terms. The analysis will comprise highlighting discursive tactics geared towards enforcing various us/them binaries. Special

attention will be paid to exploring how religious nationalism features in constructions of the ideological Other, however it might be constructed.

Keywords: Serbian Orthodox Church, media discourse, post-socialist, postsecular, othering

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RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS IN THE DIMENSION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

The ethos of justice demonstrates itself in such social phenomena as responsibility, trust and desire, which reveal goals, principles, norms, rights in real social life. This determines the way of socio-cultural life of people and reveals the essence of social ties, as well as the relationship of a person to himself and the Other. Today, there is a transformation of responsibility: the range of responsibility is changing, responsibility is being transferred to the Other, whereas responsibility without fault and responsibility associated with solidarity, risk, and safety are emerging. In economic discourse, social justice is measured by such tools as responsibility, trust, desire and quality of life. The problem of social justice has always been at the intersection of economics and ethics. Economic systems determine the distribution of resources, access to labor, the level of inequality and social mobility, while religion shapes moral ideas about goodness, duty and responsibility. In the modern world, where global capitalism intensifies social differentiation, the issue of justice becomes particularly acute. Religious traditions, despite the secularization of society, continue to play an important role in shaping normative criteria for evaluating economic processes.

In his work "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism", M. Weber showed that religious ethics can influence economic behavior, shaping attitudes towards labor, accumulation and responsibility. However, religion not only legitimizes economic practices, but also sets their moral boundaries. It raises the questions: is the distribution of goods fair? Does economic success correspond to moral virtues? Is the market not turning into an autonomous force that subordinates human dignity to itself?

In most religious traditions, the idea of social justice is associated with the principles of solidarity, care for the vulnerable and moral responsibility for the community. In the Jewish tradition, the concept of tzedakah combines charity with the duty of fair distribution. In Islam, obligatory almsgiving (zakat) acts as a mechanism for

redistributing resources and supporting the poor. Christian social thought emphasizes the dignity of every person and the need to serve one's neighbor. Buddhist ethics emphasizes moderation and compassion as the principles of economic behavior. All these approaches indicate that the economy is not a morally neutral sphere.

Modern economic processes are often characterized by growing inequality, financial speculation and the depersonalization of labor. In such a context, religious ethics can perform a critical function, reminding us of the priority of human dignity over profit. Social justice in the religious sense is not reduced to just formal equality of opportunity; it includes concern for those who are on the periphery of the economic system. It is a balance between the freedom to engage in business and the moral obligation to maintain social cohesion. At the same time, religion can be integrated into the economic system and even used to legitimize it. Historically, religious narratives have sometimes justified social hierarchy as the "natural order." Modern forms of "prosperity theology" interpret material success as a sign of divine blessing that can contribute to the moral justification of inequality. Thus, the interaction between religion and the economy is ambivalent: it can both support the status quo and act as an instrument for its critique.

Keywords: social justice, responsibility, religion and economy, global capitalism, human dignity

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**RELIGION AND CAPITALISM IN MODERN
POST-SOCIALIST SOCIETY**

Modern post-socialist society is characterized by a social configuration in which classical forms of collective solidarity, institutional stability and long-term identities give way to networked, fragmented and temporary connections. In such conditions, capitalism functions not only as an economic system, but as a comprehensive logic of the organization of life, which determines models of work, consumption, self-representation and even emotional experience. Religion, which traditionally played the role of a source of meaning, a moral norm and a means of collective integration, finds itself in a difficult position between adapting to capitalist rationality and maintaining a critical distance from it.

Classical sociology, primarily M. Weber, pointed to the internal connection between religious ethics and the formation of capitalism. Protestant asceticism contributed to the formation of a disciplined, rational subject of labor, oriented towards accumulation and responsibility. However, in the post-socialist context, capitalism is increasingly freed from the ascetic dimension and acquires hedonistic, consumerist forms. Rational discipline gives way to a culture of constant flexibility, creativity and self-presentation. Religion in such an environment loses its status as the sole moral regulator and becomes one of many resources of identity.

The specificity of post-socialist society lies in the erosion of traditional institutional frameworks. The parish, civil society and religious community are no longer stable structures of socialization; they are often transformed into networked or mediatized forms of interaction. Online services, digital sermons, religious blogs and platforms create a new format of spiritual presence. The capitalist logic of the market influences the way religious content is presented: faith is increasingly presented as a “proposal”, and the believer appears as a “participant” or even a “client”. This gives rise to a process of commodification of religious symbols and practices. At the same time, post-socialist society is characterized by

increasing existential uncertainty: unstable employment, blurring of the boundaries between work and private life, and individualization of responsibility. In such a situation, religion can perform a compensatory function and offer community, moral guidelines, or a sense of meaning and stability. It becomes a space of symbolic integration in the conditions of social fragmentation. However, this compensatory role can easily turn into a tool for adapting to inequality, if religious narratives legitimize the social status quo, justifying economic inequality as a consequence of “personal responsibility” or “divine design”.

One of the key challenges is the tension between the ethics of solidarity and the logic of competition. Capitalism promotes individual success and self-promotion, while most religious traditions emphasize mutual aid, charity, and the priority of the common good. In the post-socialist context, this contradiction becomes especially noticeable, as social ties are increasingly subordinated to market rationality. Religion can either integrate into this logic, offering a “spirituality of success,” or act as a form of moral critique and alternative vision of society.

Another challenge is the political instrumentalization of religion in the context of globalized capitalism. In periods of economic instability, religious rhetoric can be used to consolidate identity, or mobilize against “external threats.” In this case, religion becomes a resource of symbolic power, rather than a space for spiritual reflection. A post-socialist society, deprived of strong social supports, is vulnerable to such processes.

Despite this, religion retains the potential for ethical resistance. It can shape the discourse of the dignity of work, social justice, care for the vulnerable and responsibility for the common world. In the public space, religious actors are able to raise issues of limiting the action of the market element, environmental responsibility, and humanization of economic relations. Thus, religion not only adapts to capitalism, but also questions its claim to universality.

Accordingly, the specificity of the interaction of religion and capitalism in the post-socialist society lies in the ambivalence: between commodification and criticism of capitalism, between adaptation and prophetic resistance of religion. The challenge is to preserve the ethical core of religion in the conditions of total market

rationality. The future of this interaction depends on whether religion can remain a source of alternative meaning and solidarity, without dissolving in the logic of consumption and competition.

Keywords: ethical core of religion, capitalist rationality, post-socialist society, commodification, Protestant asceticism

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NON-TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF MUSCOVITES CONCERNING MARTIAL STATUS

In the context of a global society, where capitalism transforms both economic and sacred spheres, an individual's matrimonial status becomes a factor influencing their religious preferences. Max Weber's theories on the Protestant ethic and Protestant capitalism, as well as later developments within the "religious market" framework (R. Stark), demonstrate how economic and social changes shape religious demand. Under the conditions of global capitalism—with its emphasis on individualism, competition, and consumerism—traditional religions, often rooted in communal values and marital stability, may lose their appeal.

New Religious Movements (NRMs) actively capitalize on these shifts by offering individualized spiritual practices focused on personal growth, self-realization, and the achievement of success (including material prosperity). People with "unmarried" status (single, divorced) may be more likely to experience social support deficits and face challenges of personal competition in modern society than the married population.

Research conducted among Muscovites in recent years reveals a trend toward the individualization of religious views and practices in modern capitalist society. Matrimonial status, having lost part of its traditional role, may serve as a factor driving the search for spiritual meaning within the "market for religious services".

Single individuals and widowers are in search of their religious identity. Nontraditional religions offer them a suite of practices and teachings that can foster personal growth and self-development. This aligns with the logic of capitalism, where everything—including spirituality—can be presented as a commodity, or a service for personal consumption and self-improvement.

Unmarried status (singleness, divorce, or widowhood) is one of the possible factors driving interest in nontraditional religions and

teachings, as well as high levels of engagement in their practices. This reflects an individual's effort to find support and a new value system within alternative religions that is more consistent with the realities of life under global capitalism.

Keywords: nontraditional religiosity, religion, matrimonial status

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NETWORKS OF FAITH: RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL IDENTITY IN POST-SOCIALIST SOCIETIES

In contemporary social sciences, there is a growing tendency to reinterpret religious communities through the lens of network structures. In the context of late capitalism and post-socialist transformations, religion continues to play an important role in shaping social ties, value orientations, and collective identities. At the same time, religious organizations are increasingly viewed, not only as institutional structures, but also as spaces of dense social interaction in which stable networks of communication emerge. The theoretical foundation of this approach lies in social network analysis, which allows religious communities to be studied as systems of interconnected actors. Classical works in network theory have demonstrated that social structures are formed through stable patterns of interaction, while an individual's position within a network determines their access to social resources, information, and symbolic capital. In the religious context, this perspective makes it possible to analyze mechanisms of participation, the diffusion of norms, and the formation of leadership roles within communities.

In the broader sociological tradition, religion has long been considered an important mechanism of social integration. Classical theories emphasized that religious practices contribute to the formation of collective representations and the strengthening of social ties. In contemporary societies characterized by increasing individualization and the fragmentation of social relations, religious communities may function as local centers of social communication, sustaining stable forms of solidarity and collective identity.

This analytical perspective becomes particularly significant in post-socialist societies, where religious institutions experienced a period of institutional rupture followed by rapid revival. Under these conditions, religious communities emerge as spaces where traditional forms of communal solidarity intersect with new forms

of social organization typical of the network society. Social networks formed around religious practices create channels for the transmission of values, norms, and symbolic resources, thereby influencing processes of local identification.

The network approach therefore makes it possible to integrate institutional and micro-sociological levels of analysis in the study of religion. Viewing religious communities as network structures opens new opportunities for understanding how local identities are formed and how forms of social solidarity are reproduced in the conditions of late capitalism and post-socialist transformations.

Keywords: religion, social networks, religious communities, local identity, post-socialism

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**RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE
NEO-LIBERAL SOCIAL POLICY SYSTEM
OF POST-SOVIET RUSSIA**

In post-Soviet Russia, religious organizations representing traditional faiths have secured a significant role in the social support system for families, assuming responsibilities that were once solely within the state's purview. Their initiatives, which encompass crisis centers, shelters, and targeted aid, illustrate the widespread institutionalization of religious charity. The incorporation of these institutions into social policy follows the principles of neoliberal management, featuring grant-based financing, competitive distribution of resources, service standardization, and professional development of staff.

According to J. Casanova's theory, secularization does not lead to the disappearance of religion; on the contrary, it brings it into the public sphere: having lost their monopoly on symbolic reproduction, religious institutions are forced to reassert their relevance by adopting the rules of modern political and economic systems. In post-Soviet Russia, this process takes on specific features: the state allows religious organizations into the public sphere, but retains control over them.

Projects implemented by religious NGOs with the support of state grant operators demonstrate how traditional charity is being transformed into a form of social service. Religious affiliation in the aid market becomes an argument that increases the chances of receiving funding. To express this in P. Bourdieu's terms, institutions based on gift exchange and mutual aid are transforming their practices to align with the efficiency criteria adopted within the grant ecosystem.

The post-socialist backdrop imbues this transformation with a distinctive edge. The state, which was formerly the monopolistic provider of social protection, now assumes the roles of regulator,

client, and ideological collaborator. In M. Foucault's terms, this is an example of governmentality, where non-state actors are involved in implementing public policy and taking responsibility. Consequently, religious organizations in post-Soviet Russia emerge as participants in the capitalist transformation, aligning their ethical frameworks with the requirements of the social services market.

Keywords: religious organizations, post-Soviet Russia, social service, public religion

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INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF FAITH AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AS POLITICAL CAPITAL IN THE NEOLIBERAL CONTEXT: COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF SERBIA AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The end of the Cold War brought the triumph of neoliberal ideology and profoundly altered the structure of the international system and order. The states emerging from the dissolution of the SFRY, as a part of the former Eastern Bloc, faced a multidimensional crisis in the post-Cold War period — institutional, identitarian, axiological, and economic. The consequences of war, the absence of adequate economic and institutional capacities, and the lack of historical experience in market competition contributed to the emergence of a transitional vacuum.

The dominant neoliberal model presupposes a reduced role of the state in market relations, the curtailment of social policies, and the emphasis on individualism as a supreme value. The successor states of the SFRY did not follow an identical path in their transformation processes, which consequently did not unfold at a uniform pace. These states transformed themselves employing different models, resulting in varying degrees of (un)success. In addition to international factors, local specificities and context also influenced the formation of the transitional vacuum. The lack of capacity for the autonomous implementation of transitional policies, combined with the simultaneous reduction of the state's role in social policy and market relations, enabled new actors to assume functions that had previously belonged exclusively to the state. This lack of capacity for competitive and sovereign participation in the neoliberal contest created conditions in which emerging political elites were presented with an opportunity to instrumentalize religious identity for the purposes of the struggle for political power and influence.

Religious identity was thus transformed into political capital, while religious symbolic capital and institutions were mobilized

by political elites and parties to secure political support and legitimacy. The relationship between religious and political elites is not unidirectional — religious actors, in turn, receive resources, privileges, and influence. Political elites exploited prevailing identitarian and moral disorientation to deploy religious identity as an effective political resource, compensating for the loss of social security by reinforcing a sense of identitarian belonging and shaping normative frameworks.

The main questions of this paper are why the mechanism of converting religious identity into political capital functions effectively within the neoliberal context of post-socialist states, which actors contribute to this conversion, and how this mechanism differs in the comparative cases of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The research aims to analyze the mechanisms through which political and religious actors in these two states convert religious identity into political capital and vice versa. The findings enable identification of the structural conditions facilitating this conversion, the concrete strategies employed by political parties, and the forms of reciprocity in the relationship between religious and political actors. The theoretical framework draws on Pierre Bourdieu's models of capital conversion, José Casanova's desecularization thesis, and Rogers Brubaker's approaches to the study of nationalism and religion. Methodologically, the study employs a comparative case study design (Serbia and BiH), incorporating a discourse analysis of public statements by religious and political actors, institutional analysis of the legislative framework and formal state–church agreements, as well as a secondary analysis of the existing theoretical and empirical research.

Keywords: neoliberalism, religious identity, political instrumentalization, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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«ПРАВОСЛАВНЫЙ КАПИТАЛИЗМ» В РОССИИ КАК СПЕЦИФИЧЕСКАЯ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКАЯ МОДЕЛЬ

В данной работе рассматривается концепция «православного капитализма» как своеобразная экономическая модель, развившаяся в постсоветской России и характеризующаяся синтезом неолиберальных экономических механизмов и православного духовного наследия. Вводя аналитическую основу, базирующуюся на тезисе Вебера о протестантской этике, статья исследует, как Русская Православная Церковь позиционирует себя как моральный арбитр экономических отношений, продвигая такие концепции, как «духовная экономика», социальное предпринимательство и «православная деловая этика». Анализируются исторические корни этого явления, включая восстановление влияния церкви после 1991 года, институционализацию «православной экономической науки» и роль духовенства в деловых кругах. Особое внимание уделяется критической оценке утверждений о специфике российской модели по отношению к западным формам капитализма, а также исследованию противоречий между неолиберальными императивами и коллективистскими ценностями православной традиции. На основе анализа практических примеров — включая «православные» банки, предприятия и образовательные программы — в статье делается вывод, что «православный капитализм» функционирует прежде всего как дискурсивная и идеологическая конструкция, легитимирующая существующие экономические отношения, а не как альтернативная экономическая система.

Ключевые слова: православный капитализм, российская экономика, постсоветский переход, религия и экономика, деловая этика, неолиберализм.

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MIGRANTS AS AN INDICATOR OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE AND STATE REGULATION IN POST-SOCIALIST SOCIETIES

Migration today is more than a demographic issue; it is central to discussions of fairness in society. In post-socialist countries, concepts of fairness are shaped by former socialist ideals of equality and by new systems influenced by capitalism, religion, and government regulation. Migrants are not merely people managed by governments – they reveal where and how fairness is defined. This paper examines how religious ideas and government regulation together shape the treatment of migrants in these societies. It considers how these forces create broader or narrower understandings of fairness. The research draws on interviews and analysis of key concepts, allowing for a nuanced understanding of both institutional practices and normative frameworks. In this context, particular attention is given to how political narratives, legal frameworks, and public discourse interact in shaping perceptions of migrants and their rights. Religious ideas are viewed as a call for broad fairness that can transcend borders, while government regulation determines how, or whether, these ideas are realized for migrants. This interaction is not static but evolves in response to shifting political priorities, economic pressures, and social attitudes. In post-socialist countries, this is particularly complex, as former ideals of equality encounter new market-oriented thinking, often producing tensions between formal commitments to fairness and practical limitations in policy implementation. Migrants are often the primary group through which questions of fairness are negotiated, as they occupy a position between inclusion and exclusion. Their status exposes the conditional nature of rights and highlights the boundaries of solidarity within national communities. Religious ideas can both challenge and reinforce unfair systems, depending on the context, institutional alignment, and political interpretation. In some cases, they provide a moral

framework for expanding inclusion and advocating for more equitable treatment, while in others, they may legitimize exclusionary practices by reinforcing cultural or identity-based distinctions. This makes religion a tool that can both contest and support inequality in contemporary society, revealing its dual role as both a source of normative critique and a mechanism of social stabilization. The paper's original contribution lies in conceptualizing migrants as a boundary-based analytical indicator of social justice, through which the dynamic interaction between universalist religious norms and particularist state regulatory frame.

Keywords: migrants, social justice, religious discourse, post-socialist societies, capitalism

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**LIVED RELIGION IN THE MARKETPLACE:
ADVENTIST ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE
MORAL ECONOMY OF POSTSOCIALISM**

This paper examines how religious and business identities intersect in the entrepreneurial activities of Seventh-day Adventists in post-socialist societies, focusing on the legacy of socialist Yugoslavia. The observance of the Saturday Sabbath has, in various contexts, represented one of the key obstacles to the successful integration of Adventists into the broader social environment. Due to the existence of a six-day workweek, this issue was also evident in the territory of the former socialist Yugoslavia. Because of their refusal to work or send their children to school from Friday after sunset through Saturday, local Adventists were often confronted with various forms of discrimination. In order to reconcile their religious commitments with economic obligations, many believers turned to different forms of self-employment. Given the socialist system of Yugoslavia, within which entrepreneurship was not encouraged, Adventist private entrepreneurs were predominantly artisans, traders, or small-scale farmers. The inclination of Adventists toward entrepreneurship has remained visible to this day in Serbia, with numerous church members being self-employed. However, following the collapse of the socialist regime, the period of post-socialist transition offered members of this religious group a significantly wider range of micro-capitalist activities in which they could engage. Relying on a qualitative methodology, primarily based on long-term fieldwork and in-depth interviews with Adventist entrepreneurs, this paper examines how entrepreneurs integrate religious values into their economic practices in the context of post-socialist transformation. The study is grounded in the lived religion approach, which seeks to understand religious phenomena in their practical, everyday forms, as opposed to religious prescriptions and theologically expected patterns of behavior and belief. From this perspective, it becomes evident that Adventist entrepreneurial activities cannot be understood as exclusively secular and purely

economically oriented practices, but also as a specific field in which their religious habitus is embodied. This embodiment is empirically observable in a number of practices that Adventists perform in the course of their business activities. These include the application of biblical principles in business, the use of entrepreneurship as a channel for disseminating religious messages, business-related evangelism, the performance of religious practices in the workplace, as well as reliance on the religious community as a source of social capital. The aim of this research is to contribute to a more adequate understanding of the relationship between (neo)Protestantism and capitalist activities in postsocialist societies, whose key characteristics include the revitalization of religion and the rise of entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Adventism, Entrepreneurship, Lived religion, Religious practice, Postsocialism

**INDIVIDUAL AND
COLLECTIVE RELIGIOSITY
IN LATE CAPITALISM
AND POST-SOCIALISM
(CONFESSIONALISM,
BELIEFS, AND RITUAL
PRACTICES)**

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CHRISTIANITY IN DECLINE IN EUROPE

The decline of Christianity in Europe is interpreted not only as an epiphenomenon, but now also as an integral part of the wider process of secularization associated with late capitalism. The share of Christians fell from 74% to 67%. The decline of Christianity relates primarily to late-capitalist Western Europe, where many individuals from Christian backgrounds now declare themselves to be of no religious affiliation. The decline of Christianity reflects the complex interplay of modernization, capitalist transformations, migration and the influence of national identities. France and the United Kingdom lost their Christian majorities largely due to the abandonment of religious identity as the economic security of late capitalism reduced the need for religious “comfort”.

In France, the key cause of secularization is the historical conflict between the state and the church, where deep distrust in church power has existed since the French Revolution. The French education system promotes a scientific, rational worldview. In the United Kingdom, the industrial revolution has changed the way of life, Christianity is losing its central role in everyday life. The cultural liberalism of late capitalism brought changes in values, and the strengthening of individual rights, multiculturalism and pluralism.

In Germany, there is a long-term and significant decline of Christianity, which, although not disappearing, is losing its social influence, with the number of believers being in decline. Germany is transitioning from a traditionally Christian society to a predominantly secular society, as part of a broader trend of European late capitalism. In 2025 alone, about 1.2 million people left the Catholic and Protestant churches. For the first time in modern history, the non-religious outnumber the Christians. Regular attendance at religious services is very low (e.g. about 6-7% of the Catholics go to Sunday Mass). Many churches are closing or merging due to the lack of believers. The most common reasons are secularization and change in values (less reliance on religion), church scandals

(especially abuses), demographic factors (ageing of the faithful, fewer baptisms of the newborn), and weaker interest of young people.

The Scandinavian late-capitalist countries may have gone the farthest in Europe in abandoning Christianity, where societies become functional without religion. It is a deeply secularized region where most people are not religious. The process of leaving Christian religion accelerated especially after 2000. Sweden is perhaps the most secular, with about 65% of the population not believing in God. Christianity is more a cultural tradition than a personal faith. The most common causes of Scandinavian secularization are high living standards and social security, higher education and trust in institutions, individualism (personal choice more important than tradition), weak social need for religion typical for late capitalism which takes over the social functions of the church.

It is important to emphasize regional differences: in post-socialist Europe (e.g. Poland, Romania, Serbia), Christianity remains stable or even grows stronger, partly due to the connection with national identity, historical experiences (especially in Poland, the fight against communism, the influence of the Pope) and increased importance of political, cultural, and national role of the church.

Keywords: decline of Christianity, secularization of Europe, late capitalism, France, Germany, Scandinavia, post-socialism, Eastern Europe

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(ДЕ)СЕКУЛЯРИЗАЦИЯ ПРАВОСЛАВИЯ: СИМВОЛИЧЕСКИЕ И РЕАЛЬНЫЕ ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ – ВЫВОДЫ И ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ

Православие и Сербская Православная Церковь (СПЦ) после Второй мировой войны были маргинализированы, депопуляризированы и поставлены в ситуацию выживания, что имело губительные последствия для всего религиозно-церковного комплекса и проявлялось системно, от утраты ранее несомненного общественного значения православия до проблематизации самих религиозных верований и обрядовой религиозной практики. В начале атеизации сербского общества в 1950-е годы укоренённость православия в сербском этносе служила барьером для быстрой реализации намерений новых властей, направленных на тотальную приватизацию и маргинализацию всех религий, а православия – в особенности. Однако уже в указанное десятилетие, а особенно с 1960-х и в течение 1970-х годов вплоть до конца 1980-х, институционально направляемая атеизация дала результаты в виде массового «отхода» людей от религии и Церкви. Этот отход был наиболее выражен в религиозном пространстве Сербии и Черногории, в отличие от римско-католических и исламских регионов социалистической Югославии, где процесс атеизации также имел место, но не достиг такого масштаба, как на православных территориях указанного государства. Поэтому процесс возрождения публичной роли религии на православных территориях тоже запаздывал по сравнению с римско-католическими конфессиональными регионами и начался лишь в начале 1990-х годов.

Религиозные изменения в направлении «приближения к православию» проявляются в начале 1990-х годов. В течение последнего десятилетия XX века в Сербии фиксируется устойчивая тенденция роста приверженности религии и Церкви, что подтверждается не только в сфере интеллектуально-репрезентативного измерения религиозности, но и в области обрядовой практики – как традиционной, так и актуальной, – а также в

сфере публичной деятельности Церкви на общественном уровне. В настоящее время молодёжь заметно более связана с религией и Церковью, чем ранее, что объяснимо отсутствием открытой атеистической индоктринации в системе образования и выраженной тенденцией кардинального снижения идентификации с атеизмом, особенно с его воинствующей формой, характерной для послевоенного периода. Подобные результаты предоставили исследователям основания интерпретировать религиозную ситуацию в Сербии в терминах ревитализации религии и десекуляризации сербского общества, тогда как публичная роль утверждённой религии и Церкви в турбулентные 1990-е годы вызвала у некоторых авторов опасения относительно возможной клерикализации сербского общества.

После 2000-х годов в Сербии формируется стабильная религиозная ситуация предполагающая: декларативное самоопределение большинства в пользу личной религиозности и веры в Бога (около четырёх пятых респондентов); несколько более расширенную церковно-обрядовую практику по сравнению с предыдущим десятилетием; а также заметную публичную роль Церкви в ряде общественных вопросов и проблем (Косово и Метохия, политическая сфера, вопросы гендера, аборта, языка и др.). Таким образом, во всех измерениях религиозности наблюдаются существенные изменения, однако они различаются по объёму, интенсивности и масштабу. Если учитывать измерение воцерковлённости номинальных верующих и их включённость в религиозное сообщество, остаётся значительное пространство для выявления определённых ограничений процесса возвращения к религии и Церкви. Аналитически можно отметить: идейный синкретизм верований, неопределённость религиозного сознания, декомпозицию веры в догматические положения православия, а также проблему ожидаемого практического религиозного поведения верующих. С глобальной точки зрения следует говорить о сосуществовании секулярности и религиозности (воцерковлённости); вопрос заключается лишь во времени и социальном контексте исследования – когда и где в индивидуальном и групповом поведении преобладает секулярность, а когда и где религиозность.

Ключевые слова: православие, Сербская православная церковь, эмпирические исследования, атеизм, десекуляризация.

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**МИРОВОЗЗРЕНЧЕСКИЕ СТРАТЕГИИ КАК
КЛЮЧЕВАЯ ФОРМА СОВРЕМЕННОЙ
РЕФЛЕКСИИ РЕЛИГИИ**

Для современного (позднемодерного) типа общества и человека характерно рефлексивное отношение к религии, которое принципиально отличается от наивного непосредственного отношения к ней в традиционных и архаических социумах. В нашем индивидуальном, групповом и массовом сознании присутствует сложный многоплановый комплекс представлений и оценок религиозной сферы жизни, основанный на её восприятии «извне», как объективированной реальности, который не связан с религиозными или духовными ориентациями личности. Эти представления и оценки, при их разнородности и некогерентности, носят по большей части секулярный характер, будучи сформированы мейнстримной светской культурой.

Соответствующий блок коллективных представлений функционирует в режиме и контекстах повседневного знания, формируя «религиозную» составляющую жизненного мира субъекта. В течение жизни последнего он претерпевает большие или меньшие изменения в зависимости от развития акцентов релевантности соответствующих аспектов реальности, и выполняет функцию «когнитивной карты», ориентирующей человека в его взаимодействиях с религиозными проявлениями социальной жизни.

Стержневой структурой этого комплекса знания о религии представляется установка на отношение к ней, задающая ряд ключевых мировоззренческих ориентаций личности. Такую установку мы определяем как «религиозно-мировоззренческую стратегию». Религиозно-мировоззренческие стратегии формируют типический паттерн долговременной ценностно-ориентированной и генерализированной рефлексии, конструирующей практическое отношение человека к религии и тесно

ассоциируемым с ней составляющим и аспектам личностной, общественной и культурной жизни.

В качестве оснований для их классификации рассматривается две переменные субъектного отношения: а) установка отношения к священному сверхъестественному (П.Л. Бергер) – принятие (религиозная) или отрицание (секулярная); б) отношение к культурным и общественным проявлениям религиозной жизни – их принятие или отрицание. Современный доминирующий светский образ мышления позиционирует их как автономные области фактов, что рассматривается нами как одна из ключевых причин множественности религиозно-мировоззренческих позиций.

На базе указанных оснований, из сложившегося и растущего многообразия мировоззренческих ориентаций мы, в первом приближении, выделяем шесть основных идеальных типов религиозно-мировоззренческих стратегий, получивших достаточно широкое распространение в обществах современного (позднемодерного) характера. К ним относятся: 1) конфессиональные стратегии (религиозная установка + принятие конкретной конфессиональной традиции); 2) «духовные» стратегии (религиозная установка + отрицание любых «готовых» конфессиональных традиций); 3) атеистические стратегии (радикальная секулярная установка + отрицание любой конфессиональной традиции); 4) эклектические стратегии (религиозная установка + мозаичный выбор элементов разных конфессиональных традиций); 5) «парадоксальные» стратегии (секулярная установка + принятие отдельных элементов конфессиональной традиции); 6) агностические стратегии («мягкая» секулярная установка + отрицание любой конфессиональной традиции). В настоящее время ведётся эмпирическая верификация предложенной типологии религиозно-мировоззренческих стратегий и их ценностного и поведенческого «наполнения».

Ключевые слова: отношение к религии, повседневное знание о религии, Поздний Модерн, рефлексия религии, религиозно-мировоззренческая стратегия.

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THE EXTENT OF RELIGIOSITY AS AN ASPECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC BEHAVIOR MOTIVATION: CARTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study has been to demonstrate how the regional specifics of the relationship between indicators of religiosity and the attitudes related to family and general motivation of demographic behavior are reflected in different constituent entities of the Russian Federation. The research hypothesis is that religiosity tends to form more family-centric attitudes. The cartographic method was used, as it allows for a visual demonstration of the dynamics of changes in the responses by the interviewees from Russia within the framework of the World Values Survey. The methodology of this study is based on Ronald Inglehart's theory of modernization. This concept examines the transformation of value orientations during the transition from an agrarian to a post-industrial type of society through a shift from traditionalism to secularism, and from survival values to self-expression.

Data from the second to the seventh wave of the survey were used for visualization. The following questions regarding religion were considered: the degree of its importance in a person's life, self-assessment of the activity of participation in a religious community, and religious self-identification. To assess demographic behavior and its motivation, the following indicators were used: the degree of importance of family, the ideal number of children, and a number of statements about family life that were presented to respondents to express their degree of agreement with them.

The cartographic data show that the degree of importance of religion and family in a person's life changes in a multidirectional manner depending on the region. Religion and its functions have become more important for the regions of the North Caucasus and the Southern Federal District as a whole. At the same time, the importance of family has changed quite synchronously across all constituent entities of the Russian Federation, becoming higher.

The cartography of responses to the question about religious self-identification showed that the level of religiosity of the population is directly correlated with the assessment of the importance of religion and religious traditions, regardless of regional specifics, but it does not affect the perception of family.

Of particular interest is the question of how much respondents identify themselves as members of a religious community. The maps constructed based on the results of sociological monitoring showed that membership in religious communities decreases in parallel with the increase in the degree of importance of family in people's lives. This can probably be explained by the change in the respondents' main activity from being members of a religious community to building family relationships.

This study provides a promising direction for studying the role of religion in shaping the demographic behavior of the population in the context of the transition to a post-industrial society. Our content analysis of the observations will continue after the publication of the eighth wave of the World Values Survey.

Keywords: family attitudes, demographic behavior, degree of religiosity, worldwide values research

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RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES AND EDUCATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – A POST-SOCIALIST CONTEXT

This paper presents the results of a study of the religious identity of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the practice of providing religious education in state schools. The questions to which answers are given relate to the contribution of religious education to the coexistence of citizens of different religions. Does religious education in state schools fuel mutual violence or distancing, or does it reduce it through mutual recognition? What is the responsibility of religious teachers for the future of the state? Has a post-socialist society found a way to religious tolerance in comparison to the period of socialism and religious invisibility?

My starting point is that there is no difference in the value system of monotheistic religions. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam advocate values that are universal and contribute to the common good. Abuse of religion is when it is used for what it does not stand for, when it is practiced contrary to the values that its teachings advocate and are based on. The paper addresses the values which monotheistic religions are based on, in written stories, or biographies of saints. They advocate a “both-and” rather than an “either-or” strategy. This involves both I and you, God and man, religion and science, my will and your will, my being and your being, my religion and your religion under the heaven whose sun shines equally until the last harvest that will be the measure of the past.

It is clear that in Bosnia and Herzegovina the population is aging. The process of depopulation is evident and the average population age is 46. This means that the lack of self-sustainability of the state is not caused by the lack of resources, or excess of religion, but due to the lack of life, birth, youth, and the excess of abuse of everything that is pro-life. There is also the lack of religious knowledge, and because of that religious education in schools is intended to give respect to religion in the public sphere. Religious

teachers are expected to contribute to the development of the awareness of God's existence, as well as of the value of life, responsibility, well-being for all, and of the common good.

Keywords: Religion, religious education, civic education, Bosnia and Herzegovina, common good

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**THE RELIGIOUS IN THE PUBLIC SPACE OF
POST-CAPITALIST SOCIETY**

Modern post-capitalist relations fundamentally alter the nature of the public sphere, which is becoming secular, while the public policy implemented within it separates the interests of the states and the peoples from religious views. Being a powerful ideology, institutionalized religion is a phenomenon that is simultaneously both personal and public. Religious institutions become a space of public policy for both the authorities and the people. Post-capitalist society is viewed as a concept denoting a possible transformation of the socio-economic order following the dominance of classical market capitalism. This involves not only a change in the forms of ownership or production, but a deeper reassessment of values, models of solidarity, and ways of organizing the public space. In this context, a question of particular importance arises: what is the place of the religious in a society that seeks to move beyond market rationality, individualism, and commodification?

In the classical modern project, religion was gradually displaced from the public sphere, yielding to the autonomy of politics, science, and economics. However, the experience of the 20th and 21st centuries has shown that the complete privatization of faith did not occur. On the contrary, religious actors continue to participate in public debates, especially when it concerns human dignity, social justice, or the boundaries of technological progress. In a post-capitalist perspective, this participation may acquire new meaning.

Post-capitalism is often associated with the transition to a knowledge economy, digital networks, resource sharing, and increased social responsibility. If the market is no longer the sole organizing principle of society, then the public space opens up to alternative forms of solidarity. Religious traditions, which have historically shaped moral conceptions of justice, mercy, and mutual support, can become an important source of ethical guidelines in this process.

At the same time, the religious in the public space cannot claim a normative monopoly. Post-capitalist society, like post-secular society, is characterized by pluralism of worldviews. This means that religious arguments must be presented in a form open to inter-worldview dialogue.

One of the key areas of religious presence is the social economy: mutual aid initiatives, charity, volunteer networks, and cooperative projects. In the post-capitalist context, these can transform from marginal practices into essential elements of a new social architecture. Religious communities are capable of supporting a culture of gifting, selflessness, and responsibility for the vulnerable – elements that transcend the logic of profit.

Nevertheless, challenges do exist. The religious can be used to preserve old hierarchies, or for political mobilization during transformations. In periods of structural change, the risk of ideologizing religious symbols increases, where they become markers of identity rather than sources of moral reflection. Therefore, it is vital to maintain the critical balance between tradition and openness.

The ethical dimension of the religious plays a special role. If post-capitalist society seeks to overcome the reduction of human being to the function of an economic agent, it requires new conceptions of dignity, community, and responsibility. Religious traditions can contribute to the formation of such a discourse by emphasizing the value of every individual regardless of their productivity or social status.

Thus, the religious in the public space of post-capitalist society is ambivalent. Its constructive role depends on its capacity for dialogue and the preservation of its ethical core. In the face of post-capitalist transformations, the religious can contribute to a more humanistic public space, where economic rationality is balanced by moral responsibility.

Keywords: post-capitalism, public space, the religious, solidarity, ethical responsibility

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ATTITUDES TOWARDS RELIGIOSITY IN BULGARIAN CONDITIONS

The present paper explores attitudes towards religiosity in the Bulgarian context within the framework of contemporary social transformations. The main goal is to analyze religious beliefs and identity, as well as to track participation in various religious practices of the Bulgarian population, using the empirical data from the European Social Survey (ESS Round 11, 2023–2024). Various results from the European Social Survey are presented, comparisons with other countries participating in the survey are also made, while generalizations and trends in the development of religiosity as a multi-layered phenomenon characterized by a high degree of symbolic belonging are outlined.

Keywords: religiosity, religious identity, religious practices, European Social Survey (ESS), Bulgaria

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THE CULTURE OF LATE CAPITALISM AND THE RELATIVIZATION OF RELIGIOSITY THROUGH THE FLUIDITY OF LIFESTYLE

The culture of late capitalism not only promotes specific values, among which adaptability and flexibility are particularly important, but also presupposes the ideal neoliberal subject: the consumer. This raises the question of the survival strategies of religion in late capitalism, and the ways in which religiosity adapts to the market, consumer society, and the fluid, highly individualized life of the individual (Bauman). In the world of the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski & Chiapello), capitalist virtues are highly valued: flexibility, adaptability, autonomy, constant mobility and networking, a project-based logic, and horizontality, with a particular emphasis placed on creativity and innovation (largely oriented toward the market), as well as the integration of all forms of critique.

Since Judeo-Christian religiosity (as the most dominant in what we call “Global West”), in its essence, stands in stark opposition to the shifting currents of the new spirit of capitalism, this paper will examine the ways in which religiosity, as well as religious affiliation, persists within the late-capitalist milieu. Furthermore, it will explore how religiosity has come to function as a lifestyle, whether through adaptation, or through capitalist integration and absorption of its own critique. The aim of this theoretical inquiry is to intersect postmodern interpretations of the world with religious perspectives, in search of points of overlapping between the fluid way of life and religious belief. This paper does not aim to provide definitive answers; rather, it will explore the topic through discourse and image analysis (symbols as a form of communication with the Other), focusing on religious influencers on Instagram.

Keywords: religion, late capitalism, new spirit of capitalism, lifestyle

**RELIGION, ETHICS,
AND VALUES IN
NEOLIBERAL SOCIETIES**

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THE RETURN OF PATRIMONIAL CAPITALISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF KLEPTOCRATIC STATES

The term patrimonialism was coined by renowned German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) to define the traditional power structure which reigned supreme in premodern times and was supposed to wither away with the onslaught of modernity, national state and rational bureaucracy. As it becomes strikingly clear, it stubbornly refuses to do so. On the contrary, it is returning and gaining ground. The rise of patrimonial rule on all levels and in all walks of life, including state bureaucracy, business, academia, and non-governmental organizations, has substantial moral, political, legal and international implications. What becomes more and more clear is that patrimonialism is not an exclusively traditional form of rule. It resides and easily blends with its counterpart – rational bureaucratic rule, and is capable of eternal recurrence. The post-modern condition of the decline of morality and truth seems to create a perfect milieu for this recurrence.

The current transition to neoliberalism with its strategic rationality and prisoner's dilemma pedagogy unexpectedly gives a new impetus to the patrimonial revival. The neoliberal subject has come to animate contemporary markets and politics. It reduces preference satisfaction to narrow self-interest. Erosion of the public sphere is producing unprecedented levels of inequality, whenever neoliberalism comes to dominate. Strategic rationality governs all purposive agency, but it is not a value-neutral tool, much less a perennial structure of purposive agency. Neoliberalism views life as ceaseless struggle. The morals is codified in non-cooperative game theory; neoliberal citizen, just like neoliberal states, are the strategic rational actors. Rational choice justifies ends irrespective of means. Patrimonialism is now returning to claim back the legacy of modernity under the banner of game theory. It all gives rise to the *kleptocratic state*. Kleptocratic state is not a pejorative term, but a social reality. The definition is simple: by kleptocratic state I understand a patrimonial state *in extremis*. It is not a political but

a private state – a state, which belongs to a rent seeking predatory elite and is shamelessly used to extract personal gains for the few. It triggers corruption on an unprecedented scale, as well as despotism, totalitarianism, and the decline of the rule of law, accountability of governance and public justice. Kleptocratic arrangements may be reminiscent of premodern or early modern despotism. But it is not the same. Kleptocracy is part and parcel of postmodernity, including post-truth, manipulative media, artificial intelligence, game theory and global organized crime. Kleptocracy is showing its ugly head all over the world. A series of cases of seeking for-life-presidency all over the Global South is its starkest display. What is even more interesting from the perspective of our conference, these kleptocratic states are coming out with a faked ideology and even quasi-religiosity of sorts, imposed by the corrupted elite on the indifferent and fragmented masses.

Keywords: Capitalism, patrimonialism, state, religion, postmodernity

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**THE IMPERATIVE OF UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY
AND DIALOGUE AND GLOBAL ETHICS TOWARD
PEACE IN TODAY'S GLOBAL SOCIETY**

This paper thoroughly explores the essential concepts of universal responsibility and global ethics, emphasizing their critical role in cultivating enduring peace within our increasingly interconnected global community. As societies become more intertwined through advances in technology, economy, and culture, the need for a profound understanding of shared ethical principles becomes indispensable. The author argues that true and lasting peace cannot be achieved through force or coercion; rather, it must emerge from a foundation built on ethical values, moral consciousness, and meaningful interreligious dialogue. The study posits that the dynamics of peace are deeply intertwined with the recognition of our collective responsibilities, urging individuals to acknowledge that every action they undertake holds both personal significance and broader implications for humanity.

Central to the thesis is the notion that individuals must cultivate a sense of responsibility that extends beyond their immediate surroundings. This includes accountability not only to themselves but also to the larger global community, the natural environment, and descendants yet to come. The paper posits that in order to foster understanding, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence among diverse peoples, cultures, nations, and faiths, dialogue emerges as an indispensable ethical and communicative tool. Through dialogue, disparate perspectives can converge, fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration, which is essential for addressing the complex challenges that face humanity today.

In its conclusion, the paper advocates for a profound ethical transformation that is anchored in humanism and global solidarity. It argues that universal ethics ought to function as a guiding principle for collective human action, thereby steering society toward a more humane, equitable, and harmonious global landscape.

This ethical framework is envisioned not simply as an abstract ideal but rather as a tangible, actionable guide that informs individual and collective behaviors in daily life. Such a transformative approach requires a commitment to educating individuals about their interconnectedness and responsibilities to one another and the planet.

Ultimately, the paper underscores that nurturing a culture of peace anchored in universal ethics is not merely a lofty aspiration; it is a practical necessity. By embracing ethical responsibility and fostering dialogue, individuals and communities can contribute to the creation of a world where peace is not the absence of conflict, but a proactive state of harmony rooted in understanding and respect for all. In this way, the study not only highlights the theoretical underpinnings of global ethics, but also provides a roadmap for applying these principles to real-world scenarios, encouraging a collaborative endeavor towards a more just and peaceful world.

Keywords: Universal responsibility, global ethics, global society, dialogue

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PROPHETS OF POST-HUMANITY: TESCREAL AS A SECULAR ESCHATOLOGY OF TECHNO-CAPITALISM

This presentation aims to introduce the acronym TESCREAL, an ideological complex encompassing the following ideologies: transhumanism, extropianism, singularitarianism, cosmism, rationalism, effective altruism, and longtermism. The acronym TESCREAL is not just a mere enumeration of trendy ideas and worldviews from the perspective of Silicon Valley, but something much more dangerous. This sophisticated secular theology serves the interests of the global techno-oligarchy and techno-capitalism. The most famous promoters of these ideas to the public include Elon Musk, who plans to colonise Mars as a salvation for humanity, Peter Thiel, who wants to defeat death and live forever, and Sam Altman, who promises a technological utopia of a society of abundance after inventing AGI, artificial general intelligence. All of them actually advocate for the salvation of humanity through technological transcendence. However, this is a perfidious form of “ethics washing”. These narratives transform the extreme accumulation of capital in the hands of techno-billionaires into a messianic mission, in which technological domination is a prerequisite for the species’ eschatological salvation. In the presentation, I will analyse the connection between technological capitalism and the new digital secular eschatology.

While traditional religions offered salvation through the grace of God, TESCREAL ideologies offer salvation exclusively through technology. In this narrative, the “Singularity” is positioned here as the secular equivalent of the Second Coming. At the same time, the colonisation of space and the digital uploading of consciousness are used as metaphysical justifications for ignoring the structural injustices of today’s society. This narrative represents the pinnacle of perverted techno-capitalist logic, as the very future of humanity is transformed into a speculative commodity. The current problems

facing humanity, such as climate change, the ecological crisis and growing social inequality on the global scale, become mere “statistical nuisances” in the long-term calculation of the salvation of the post-human elite.

We will emphasise the deconstruction of “effective altruism” and longtermism as the ideological shield of techno-billionaires, as they hide behind philanthropy and philanthropic projects to avoid social responsibility and tax regulations, while at the same time financing projects that treat the human body as a “legacy code”, obsolete hardware ready to be discarded. From the theological perspective, this view of the human body represents a form of digital idolatry in which simulations and data are elevated above the inviolable dignity of the concrete, physical human being created in the image of God. In conclusion, TESCREAL ideologies are not just a collection of strange and harmless ideas of the Silicon Valley rich combined with philosophers, but, much more dangerously, the fundamental operating system of contemporary techno-capitalism. TESCREAL ideologies provide moral legitimacy for unlimited resource extraction, promoting a technological utopia that is within reach, yet eternally distant. At the same time, they serve to solidify the technological oligarchy’s saviour status through the narrative of technological salvation for humanity.

Keywords: TESCREAL, techno-capitalism, secular eschatology, Silicon Valley, religion

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**LANGUAGE IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION
IN A POST-SECULAR SOCIETY**

The problem of language occupies a central place in the understanding of religion as a form of communication. Religious experience becomes socially meaningful only when it acquires linguistic expression. In a post-secular society, the question of the language of religion acquires particular relevance, since religious meanings return to the public sphere, entering into dialogue with secular forms of rationality.

In the philosophy of religion, language has been seen as a symbolic mediator between the human and the divine. Symbols open the dimension of “limit concern” and allow a person to interpret his/her own existence on the horizon of absolute meaning. Thus, religious language performs not an informational, but an existential-orientational function.

Religious experience requires linguistic articulation in order to become a part of the shared world. A. Schütz shows that different “semantic provinces” of reality are connected through communication, which makes subjective experiences socially intelligible. In this context, religious language is a way of translating the experience of transcendence into forms of everyday communication (Schütz A.).

P. Berger considers language as a key mechanism for maintaining the “sacred veil” – a symbolic universe that gives the world meaning and stability (Berger P.). Through narratives, prayers, sermons and ritual formulas, religion legitimizes a certain image of reality. However, in a modern pluralistic society, this universe is no longer the only one and without an alternative, which creates new challenges for religious communication. J. Habermas introduces the concept of a post-secular society, in which religion does not disappear, but coexists with secular worldviews in the public sphere (Habermas J.). The key condition for such coexistence is mutual

translation: religious arguments must be transformed into a language accessible to all citizens, regardless of their beliefs.

The problem of translating religious language is related to its dual nature. On the one hand, it is the language of faith, symbol, and tradition; on the other, it can act as a source of ethical and social orientations. In the post-secular context, religious communication becomes a space for interaction between these two levels: intra-confessional and public.

At the same time, the post-secular situation also exacerbates the risks of linguistic instrumentalization of religion. When religious language is used for political mobilization or symbolic demarcation of "one's own" and "others", it loses its universal ethical potential and turns into a means of identification confrontation.

The ontological dimension of the problem of language is revealed in the philosophy of M. Heidegger, who considered language the "house of being" (Heidegger M.). In this context, religious language can be understood as a special form of openness to the dimension of the sacred, where the word not only communicates, but also opens up a new way of being in the world. In the post-secular era, this function of language acquires special significance, since it allows us to preserve the space of meaning in the conditions of fragmentation and value uncertainty.

Thus, language in religious communication of a post-secular society performs several interrelated functions: it symbolizes transcendent experience, integrates the community, translates religious intuitions into publicly significant meanings, and opens up horizons of existential self-understanding. Its specificity lies in the tension between symbolism and rational argumentation, between tradition and translation, between the inner language of faith and the language of public discourse.

Keywords: language of faith, dialogue of traditions, postsecular pluralism, translation of sacred texts, religious communication

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REFRAMING HUMAN DIGNITY: BETWEEN RELIGIOUS ETHICS AND NEOLIBERAL RATIONALITY

In contemporary societies shaped by rapid economic and technological transformations, the concept of human dignity is increasingly situated at the intersection of competing normative frameworks. Religious ethics traditionally understands dignity as an inherent and inviolable value grounded in the sanctity of human life, whereas neoliberal rationality tends to approach dignity through autonomy, choice, and individual responsibility. This tension raises important questions about the stability and meaning of human dignity in late modern societies. This paper examines how human dignity is reconfigured within the dynamic interplay between religious moral frameworks and neoliberal forms of governance. In this context, religious ethics is treated as a normative resource that enables a critical reflection on contemporary transformations of human dignity.

The paper argues that the growing emphasis on individual autonomy as a central organizing principle of social and legal systems contributes to the gradual transformation of dignity into a conditional and potentially instrumentalized concept, closely linked to the capacity for rational decision-making and self-determination. Under such conditions, choices that appear autonomous are often shaped by structural constraints, including economic pressures, institutional arrangements, and increasingly, technologically mediated forms of decision-making. The analysis pays particular attention to ethically sensitive contexts, such as end-of-life decision-making, where the boundaries between autonomy, dignity, and external influence become especially blurred. Rather than framing religious and neoliberal perspectives as mutually exclusive, the paper interprets their interaction as a site of ongoing normative tension in which competing understandings of human value and moral limits are continuously negotiated. From the legal perspective, the paper examines the European Court of Human Rights' role in navigating

these tensions, particularly through its interpretation of the right to respect for private life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Court's jurisprudence reflects an effort to balance respect for individual autonomy with the protection of life and the prevention of potential abuses, thereby mirroring broader societal attempts to reconcile divergent conceptions of dignity. The paper concludes that the contemporary challenge lies in critically engaging with the coexistence of religious ethics and neoliberal rationality. In doing so, it emphasizes the need to preserve a robust understanding of human dignity that resists reduction to purely instrumental or market-based logic, while remaining responsive to the realities of pluralistic and evolving societies.

Keywords: human dignity, religious ethics, neoliberal rationality, autonomy, human rights

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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL VALUES OF SERBIA AND RUSSIA

The study of value attitudes and the influence of the national cultures of Serbia and Russia is of strategic importance in the context of globalization and westernization. Of particular importance is the formation of deep-seated cultural codes manifesting in various spheres, including religious ones. To provide better understanding of the national cultures, we propose a detailed analysis of the cultural values of Serbia and Russia, based on the methodology of the typology of cultures by G. Hofstede, updated based on modern research.

The geographical location and historical context have a significant impact on the formation of value attitudes among the peoples of Serbia and Russia. Both countries are characterized by high levels of collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance, which have served as the fundamental factors in the formation of government institutions based on hierarchical models of governance and decision-making.

Despite the pronounced similarities in cultural dimensions with Russia, Serbia demonstrates a slightly greater commitment to Western values, with lower levels of power distance, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and restraint.

In contrast, Russia demonstrates a high level of regional variability in cultural values, due to its multinational population composition and geographical size. The post-Soviet transformation of the economy and the varying levels of commitment to Western values among different ethnic groups have played a significant role in the differentiation of cultural values at the current stage.

Therefore the cultural values of Serbia and Russia and their dynamics reveal a number of similarities and differences. The globalization and westernization have played an important role in the modern dynamics of cultural values and their variability, which is

especially relevant for Serbia in the context of European integration. Presently, there is a certain transformation of values towards individualization. The analysis conducted bears potential for further research in this area.

Keywords: cultural values, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Serbia, Russia

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SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN A POST-SECULAR SOCIETY

Post-secular society is characterized not by a return to pre-modern religiosity, but by a new configuration of coexistence between the religious and the secular. Secularization has not led to the disappearance of religion; instead, it has transformed the modes of its presence in the public sphere. Religious practices—such as prayer, worship, pilgrimage, charity, and rituals of remembrance—function today under conditions of pluralism, mediatization, and individualization. Their content and form are largely determined by the social contexts in which they are performed.

The first important context is the pluralistic public space. In modern societies, diverse worldviews coexist within a shared legal and communicative framework. Religious practices no longer hold a monopoly on the symbolic organization of social life, but they can participate in shaping moral discourse. Charitable initiatives, volunteering movements, and civic activism associated with religious communities become a form of the social presence of faith. In this context, religious practice transcends purely cultic activity and acquires a civic dimension.

The second context of socialization is the individualization of religiosity. The modern individual increasingly constructs their own spiritual trajectory, combining elements of different traditions or reinterpreting the heritage of their own confession. Religious practice becomes a part of personal self-development, a way of overcoming existential anxiety, or a search for authenticity. Such individualization strengthens the subjective dimension of faith but, at the same time, may weaken the institutional stability of religious communities.

The third crucial context of modern religiosity is linked to mediatization. The mediatization of the religious is one of the key processes in the transformation of contemporary religious culture. This is not merely about using media to broadcast religious content,

but about a deeper change in the ways faith is represented, experienced, and institutionalized under the influence of media logic. In the digital age, the religious increasingly exists within the mass communications environment, where it is subject to the rules of visibility, speed, and competition for attention. In this sense, mediatization signifies a structural interaction between religion and media systems that do not just transmit content, but also shape the way it is perceived. Digital technologies change modes of communication, creating new formats of religious presence, such as online services, live-streamed worship, virtual pilgrimages, religious blogs, and social media communities. This expands access to religious experience, but also transforms its nature.

The fourth context is related to crisis situations and social upheavals, such as wars, economic instability, and pandemics. In such conditions, religious practices perform the functions of support, solidarity, and the symbolic interpretation of suffering. Prayers for peace, rituals of remembrance, and pastoral care acquire special significance. Religion proves to be a resource for moral integration amidst the fragmentation of social experience

A distinctive feature of post-secularity is also an increase in reflexivity. Faith is no longer perceived as an unquestionable tradition; it requires conscious choice and argumentation. This changes the nature of religious practice: it becomes not only the performance of a rite, but a meaningful form of participation in the community. Such reflexivity fosters the development of interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

In conclusion, religious practices in post-secular society are defined by pluralism, individualization, mediatization, and crisis transformations. Religion is no longer isolated; it actively interacts with social processes, adapting while maintaining its potential for critique and its role as a space of meaning and solidarity.

Keywords: intercultural dialogue, religious practices, mediatization, fragmentation of social experience, search for authenticity

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**INDIVIDUALIZATION OF RELIGIOSITY IN
A NEOLIBERAL SOCIETY**

The current stage of globalization is implemented based on the ideas and values of neoliberalism, which are artificially introduced in countries with highly diverse cultures. The dominance of the neoliberal form of globalization, which is unacceptable for all countries without exception, creates the need for the formation of an alternative concept of globalization. This alternative includes universal human values and moral norms that take into account the interests and spiritual aspirations of the broader masses of humanity. On the forefront of this widespread protest movement is alter-globalism, the main idea of which is not the denial of the objective processes of globalization, but the critique of its neoliberal form. While anti-globalism focuses on the critique of globalization itself, alter-globalism, while criticizing the neoliberal model, seeks to develop a new model of globalization that meets the imperatives of modernity.

Neoliberal society is characterized by the dominance of market rationality, the cult of autonomy, and the shifting of responsibility for life success onto the individual. Faith increasingly becomes a matter of personal choice, and religious identity is considered an element of an individual project of self-construction. The individualization of religiosity emerges as one of the characteristic features of spiritual life in the neoliberal era.

Traditional forms of religious belonging implied inclusion in a stable community, a normative system, and mandatory participation in ritual life. Religion performed the functions of integration and socialization, defining moral guidelines and ways of interpreting the world. However, under the conditions of neoliberalism, the tendency toward selectivity intensifies, where the individual independently determines the degree of participation, combines elements of different traditions, or interprets dogmatic tenets according to their own experience. Faith is no longer perceived as

an alternative-free heritage, but rather as a resource for personal development.

Neoliberal culture stimulates constant self-improvement, flexibility, and the ability to adapt to change. In this context, religiosity is often integrated into the discourse of self-actualization. Spiritual practices may be viewed as tools for psychological stability, increasing productivity, or achieving inner harmony. Meditation and individual prayer practices become part of personal growth, and subjective experience takes the place of collective identity. At the same time, individualization does not mean complete de-socialization; it is accompanied by the emergence of flexible, networked, and often digital communities. Online platforms, social networks, and virtual groups create a space for the exchange of spiritual experience without a rigid institutional connection. Faith becomes mobile, translocal, and capable of existing outside the traditional framework of the parish or denomination. This corresponds to the logic of neoliberal mobility and decentralization.

However, the individualization of religiosity is ambivalent in nature. It promotes freedom of conscience and pluralism, allowing individuals to consciously shape their spiritual paths. On the other hand, the excessive privatization of faith risks reducing religion to a mere “psychological service”, weakening ethical solidarity and the depth of communal experience.

A critical challenge remains that of social responsibility. Neoliberal logic treats life’s hardships as the result of individual choices, potentially obscuring the structural causes of inequality. If religiosity becomes entirely individualized, it may lose its prophetic potential to critique injustice—a role traditionally held by religious ethics centered on the common good.

Thus, the individualization of religiosity reflects the broader modern shift toward autonomy and mobility. The future of faith in such a society depends on its ability to reconcile personal freedom with a commitment to social solidarity.

Keywords: individualization, neoliberalism, religiosity, subjectivity, solidarity

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RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF NEOLIBERAL IDEOLOGY

Modern society is increasingly shaped by neoliberal logic, which prioritizes markets, competition, individual responsibility, and economic efficiency. In this reality, the individual is viewed primarily as an autonomous subject investing in their own “human capital”, bearing sole responsibility for success or failure. This transformation has a profound moral dimension, altering values of justice, solidarity, and the meaning of life. Consequently, the role of religion as a source of ethical orientation and a critique of neoliberal culture becomes paramount. Neoliberal rationality promotes the individualization and privatization of morality. Success is interpreted as a result of personal effort, while social problems are seen as individual failures. This logic weakens collective responsibility and fosters a culture of constant self-competition and existential anxiety. In this landscape, religion performs a dual function, that of adaptation and critique.

Adaptation: Some modern religious forms integrate the language of success and self-actualization. This is most evident in “prosperity theology”, which links material wealth with divine blessing, effectively legitimizing market logic within the sphere of faith. **Critique:** Conversely, religious traditions maintain a powerful critical potential. Values of solidarity, mercy, and care for the vulnerable—central to Christian social ethics, Islamic social responsibility, Buddhist compassion, and Jewish social justice—stand in opposition to the reduction of humans to mere “economic agents”. In the conditions of rising social inequality and loneliness, religious communities offer a space for solidarity and moral reorientation. They foster an alternative logic based on trust and mutual aid rather than competition. In the neoliberal era, however, religious authority requires individual confirmation; tradition is no longer an unconditional given, but is filtered through personal experience and life strategies. This marks a shift from institutionally driven religious culture to interpretative and selective forms of faith.

In the post-secular context, religion contributes to public discourse by offering a language of values that transcends utilitarian rationality. It addresses questions of dignity in labor, the ethical limits of the market, and social responsibility.

In conclusion, the interaction between religion and neoliberal society is ambivalent. While adaptation to market logic risks the instrumentalization of faith, religion's ethical potential lies in its ability to restore values of human dignity and justice. It is within this tension between accommodation and critique that religion maintains its relevance as a moral compass in the contemporary neoliberal world.

Keywords: neoliberalism, religious traditions, moral and ethical norms, value of solidarity, post-secular society

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BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY: THE RELEVANCE OF NEOFIT RILSKI'S MORAL MESSAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH IN EDUCATION

This study examines the relevance of the moral messages to teachers contained in the pedagogical legacy of Neofit Rilski in the context of the contemporary competency-based approach to education. Through a theoretical-historical and comparative analysis, the Renaissance model of teacher as a moral authority, spiritual mentor, and public educator is reconstructed. This model is compared with the contemporary competency profile of teacher. The study identifies both enduring core values (responsibility, setting an example, serving society) and significant transformations associated with the shift in the pedagogical paradigm. A critical assessment is made of the risk of reducing the moral dimensions in the context of the technologization and instrumentalization of education. In conclusion, guidelines are proposed for integrating Renaissance moral ideas into contemporary professional teachers' training.

Keywords: Neofit Rilski, Bulgarian Renaissance, moral education, teacher roles, new educational paradigm

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RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATION AFTER SECULARISATION: HOLINESS IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S VALUE SYSTEM IN THE LIGHT OF THE SPIRITUAL LEGACY OF ST. JOHN OF RILA

The technological transition marks out a new field in which humanity will develop, and creates new boundary zones in both the individual and social dimensions. Human beings will have to reconsider the basic paradigms of their existence, including fundamental existential questions. At the same time, the intensified use of artificial intelligence is reshaping the world and visibly extending postmodernity as an event-like manifestation of individualism, pluralism, and secularisation. The possibility of a new "synthetic reality", in which the human being and technology are synchronised, may mark the end of the pronounced struggle against the sacred that characterised the last century. This unfamiliar world requires new solutions and needs everything that can sustain the human being within the human world, now more than ever. In this respect, religion and philosophy have once again become part of educational discourse. The possibilities of religion and of the Church to influence the human person through their original, eternal, and unchanging ethical and moral messages are being reconsidered, since these messages make it possible to give meaning to every problem and situation.

In this context, our research interest is directed towards the way contemporary young people understand holiness and its correlation with the testament of St. John of Rila, undoubtedly the most well-known Bulgarian saint. His testament reflects the thousand-year tradition of the Orthodox Church and offers guidance for real life in a community founded on enduring Christian values. The present study is based on research conducted among university students in pedagogy and is dedicated to the 1080th anniversary of the saint's dormition and the 1150th anniversary of the birth of the Bulgarian saint St. John of Rila the Wonderworker. The study analyses The Testament of St. John of Rila, identifying key categories

related to values that are foundational to Christian spirituality. On this basis, a questionnaire survey was developed and administered among university students in search of a correlation between these categories and the possibility of actualising them within the new technological reality.

Keywords: technological transition, holiness, postmodern secularization, orthodox spirituality, value formation

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PEACEMAKER VS. PEACEKEEPER: HOW THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF PEACE HAS BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD WITHIN THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

This paper will explore the Biblical concept of peace and its possible distortions in light of recent events within the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbian society at large. With the recent political tensions that have been taking place in Serbia, there has been much public talk, especially from the clergy (led by the Patriarch), of what it means to be a *peacemaker* (as referred to in the Beatitudes, in the Gospel according to Matthew: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”, Matthew 5:9). Relevant Biblical passages, as well as various teachings from the Church Fathers and other significant theologians in Church history will be analyzed. The difference between a *peacemaker* and a *peacekeeper* will be discussed, while also exploring the Christian principle of obedience as it relates to peacemaking / peacekeeping. We will consider the role that conscience (referred to by John Henry Newman as the *aboriginal vicar of Christ* within one’s soul) has to play in obedience to a superior within the Church, as well as the consequences of practicing obedience to a superior while neglecting one’s own conscience. We will explore some recent examples of this phenomenon within the Serbian Orthodox Church. We will also discuss the relationship between the Church and the State as it relates to maintaining true peace within society: can the Church and the State truly be in full cooperation and harmony, or are they institutions with different goals and interests, and should therefore be kept at a certain distance from each other? How does that play out in a society in which the vast majority of people identify as members of the Church, but also want to protect the secularity of the state defined by the law? An attempt will be made to draw from these analyses’ relevant conclusions about the current moral state of our Church and its role in Serbian society.

Keywords: peace, church, Orthodoxy, Christian ethics, society

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RELIGIOUS FICTIONALISM IN NEOLIBERALISM

This paper looks at religious fictionalism (RF) as a special form of religiosity in the context of neoliberal society. Usually, there are three main positions about belief in God: theism, agnosticism, and atheism. Religious fictionalism can be seen as a form of atheism. In simple terms, it says that religious beliefs can be treated as useful fictions. At the same time, people can still take part in religious rituals and practices. By doing this, they can gain certain personal, moral, or social benefits.

RF can be explained through three main ideas. First, it has an atheistic view, because it does not accept that God exists. Second, it claims that religious language and practice can still be useful in everyday life. Third, it argues that the benefits of a religious way of life can be achieved even without belief in God.

This paper does not see RF only as a result of cultural diversity. Instead, it connects it with changes in modern society, especially in neoliberal conditions. Today, people are more responsible for shaping their own identity. They often choose between different systems of meaning and do not rely on strong traditional authorities. In this situation, religion does not disappear, but changes its role. People can use it in a more flexible way, without fully believing in its teachings. They can act “as if” they believe, even if they do not accept religious truths.

In the final part, the paper critically examines whether RF is a coherent position. It focuses on the tension between rejecting belief in God and still practicing religion. It also asks whether this position can remain stable, or if it leads either to real belief or to using religion only as a tool. The paper concludes that religious fictionalism shows an important change in how religion is understood and practiced today.

Keywords: religious fictionalism, neoliberalism, religious practice, subjectivity, ontological commitment

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