RELIGION IN LATE MODERN SOCIETY

(A Thematic Collection of Papers of International Significance)

Yugoslav Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (YSSSR), Niš

Committee of Education and Culture
of the Diocese of Požarevac and Braničevo

Niš, Požarevac, 2022.

Published by

Yugoslav Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (YSSSR), Niš
Committee of Education and Culture
of the Diocese of Požarevac and Braničevo

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Print

Grafičar, Užice

Circulation

100

ISBN

978-86-86957-23-8 (YSSSR)
978-86-82200-01-7 (CECDPB)

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Ethical and Religious Challenges within Metaverse[1]

Abstract: The current crisis has pointed out weaknesses and raised issues concerning the religious situation in the newly formed circumstances – in conditions of pandemic, war, isolation. The Internet with its growing influence on social patterns, and the metaverse as a proposed unique virtual world which is assumed to be the future in development of the global network, represent a new space for these challenges. Given that there is still no ethical consensus on virtual world issues, this paper discusses the possible implications of interactions in the virtual reality of the metaverse. Based on the current factual situation and assumptions, an analysis of the dichotomous relationship between the actual religious rites practice in the physical world and the expected virtual religious practice in the metaverse, was performed. Theoretical bases have been laid for further considerations of the influence of the metaverse phenomenon on religious behavior/practice, and on individual and social life, as well as for considerations of the responses that religion should give to the topical, set challenges. It was concluded that under certain conditions the metaverse can be an opportunity to respond to some of the challenges that religious communities face.

Keywords: metaverse, religion, Internet, pandemic, challenges.

Introduction

The contemporary crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic, the resulting isolation, and, more recently, armed conflict on European soil, are affecting Europe on several levels. There is an ongoing change in social patterns

[1] This work was supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (Contract No. 451–03–68/2022–14/200053).

on the European continent and the world. The Internet has become one of the main channels of communication and informing, irreplaceable and necessary for modern people, which has made certain patterns of behavior and social interaction primary. Due to the current events, the issue of the metaverse as an assumed platform of virtual reality, which according to announcements should soon become real, is again at the center of attention.

The metaverse is described as the next step in the evolution of the Internet and is an online space that allows people to interact through socializing, work, or entertainment. It is accessed by means of specially designed glasses or bracelets, and is conceived as a social sphere in which users interact with each other with the help of personalized avatars, which makes the experience of the metaverse close to reality. The concept of the metaverse can be described as the binding of a large number of smaller digital worlds and experiences through technical standards that allow users to move between them, carrying their virtual identity, social connections, and possessions. The metaverse can be defined as a post-real universe in which physical reality is merged with digital and virtual reality in a multiuser environment (Mystakidis, 2022). A former Amazon Studios head of strategy, and a metaverse essayist Matthew Ball is widely quoted as defining the metaverse as „massively scaled and interoperable network of real-time rendered 3D virtual worlds which can be experienced synchronously and persistently by an effectively unlimited number of users with an individual sense of presence, and with continuity of data, such as identity, history, entitlements, objects, communications, and payments" (Ball, 2021). However, the impression is that, for now, the whole concept of the metaverse is without a clear path between idea and reality. What is simply understandable is the idea of using it as advertising space in the future, which is causing quite a lot of interest from numerous companies.

The development of the idea of the metaverse

The origin of the concept and term metaverse is linked to the science fiction writer Neal Stephenson, who in his novel *Snow Crash* (1992) depicts a dystopian society where technology reaches its peak and creates more problems in human life than benefits (Stephenson, 1992). In response, he creates a parallel universe known as the metaverse, where people can forget their worries and fulfill their every wish (Tirado Morttiz, 2013).

The next important step in the evolution of the idea of "life" in virtual reality was the launch of an online multimedia platform in 2003 that allowed users to create their virtual representation, an avatar, and lead a "second life" in the virtual world. *Second Life* is also the name of this online platform which was developed at *Linden Lab* in San Francisco.[2] Interest in this project has grown again with the development of the idea and concept of the multiverse, considering that the platform represents its virtual world built only for social interaction. Users of the *Second Life* platform do not have a defined goal, as would be the case if it were a game, but the emphasis and focus are on mutual interaction and content freely generated by users. As such, the virtual world promised the realization of dreams. Residents are free to determine the meaning and purpose of their activities but also their moral suitability. Creating content in virtual reality is not limited, which implies that everything is allowed, even actions that would be interpreted as immoral and illegal in the real world (Gooskens, 2010). In August 2022, under the *Spirituality & Belief* section of the *Second Life* platform, there were 41 virtual destinations where residents can join the discussion groups or gathering spots where they are supposed to express and share their personal beliefs (*Second Life*, n.d).

Currently, the leading company in terms of developing the idea of the metaverse is Meta, the recent Facebook. In 2019, the virtual reality platform *Facebook Horizon* was launched, which soon became *Horizon Worlds* – a free game in virtual reality and a system for creating new games.[3] The founder, chairman and CEO of Meta, Mark Zuckerberg, explained that "metaverse is a vision that spans many companies — the whole industry" (Zuckerberg, 2021).

Ethical issues

Zuckerberg states that the metaverse will provide users with comfort and an intense experience of presence, similar to the natural presence (Zuckerberg, 2021). This kind of experience goes beyond the realm of simple entertainment. Entering virtual reality, that is, into the public space of the metaverse as its assumed future, also introduces a level of new ethical issues (Kenwright, 2018). Content creation without restrictions and limitations, and freedom in personal actions are circumstances under which the use of virtual reality can enter the sphere of unethical behavior (Ramirez, LaBarge, 2018). An example

[2] See: https://secondlife.com/.

[3] See: https://www.oculus.com/horizon-worlds/.

of behavior in the virtual world that would be characterized as immoral in the real world is encouraging the sexual abuse of female computer simulations in a Japanese game (Gooskens, 2010). Although there is an awareness that such a gesture will neither physically nor emotionally endanger anyone directly, its ethicality is doubtful. While the intense and immersive experience of virtual reality is increasingly popular, the ethical complexities of the virtual world are a topic of much debate (Kenwright, 2018). One of the proposed models for the solution is the so-called "The Equivalence Principle," which in short, implies that everything that is prohibited and unethical in the real world should also be prohibited in virtual reality (Ramirez, LaBarge, 2018).

Instead of identity being built through long-term processes that begin at birth, it could become the subject of free and even random selection in the metaverse. If users of the metaverse are allowed to choose their personal representation without restrictions, can it actually lead to the discovery of true identity, an identity that an individual in the world longs for and seeks without forming it due to social, geographical, or cultural givens? The equality of all users, which has been an imperative of the metaverse since the very beginning, promises a liberating experience for users. It allows the judgment of an individual to be formed in relation to how the person wants to be seen, his or her character traits, and emotional and intellectual capacity, instead of the person being classified in advance according to his or her physical presentation or limitations. The imagined concept of a virtual place is a dream of a place where the hierarchies and limitations of the real world disappear, where everyone can be a hero and can realize their unfulfilled dreams. Therefore, traditional moral values do not have to automatically apply as such and be copied into virtual worlds (Kenwright, 2018). Although the metaverse is conceived as a virtual utopia that should bring a new quality to the lives of every user, the concept of the metaverse is imbued with numerous ethical questions for the solution of which it is necessary to find an adequate model.

If we take into account the experience gained in connection with the consequences of using social networks, we have witnessed that their platforms have become a breeding ground for violence and hate speech through abuse (Bond, Bushman, 2017; Khalafat et al., 2021). It is reasonable to expect that such patterns of behavior will become a reality in the metaverse as well, especially when it is taken into account that users will be anonymous, represented by their avatar. From the point of view of the acquired experience, in order to prevent this, it is necessary to define the ethical framework and establish restrictions and prohibitions by introducing appropriate regulations. Although the causes of violent behavior can be varied, there is an established opinion about the connection between the perpetration of violence and exposure to violence in the media, digital media, and entertainment (Boyle, 2004; Carter, Weaver, 2003). Social networking platforms have administrators who are responsible for monitoring, following, and sanctioning any unacceptable behavior. Given that the metaverse is a reality whose functioning we can currently only have assumptions about, the issue of abuse and violence, that is, its prevention is a current ethical issue. In the digital era, organizations and individuals are obliged to respect ethical and professional responsibility towards the public sphere.

The issue of ownership structure and management represents another challenge that entails ethical and security issues such as the issue of personal data protection. If the metaverse is managed by technological giants, old problems such as compromised data privacy, theft, manipulation, and favoring of certain content and even opinions will remain current. The business interests of large corporations should also be taken into account, as it is expected that their business interests will take precedence. The politics of multinational companies is not focused on solving real-world problems because their interest is profit. This current issue related to the Internet will not bypass the metaverse. It is estimated that by 2024, the tangible assets of the metaverse traded on the stock market will grow to $80 billion in assets under management (Sin, Kanterman, 2022). The metaverse is conceived as a world of equality for all, but the practical realization so far does not promise equality in the real world. The fact that Facebook company changed its name to Meta raises suspicions that the company's intentions are not modest in the material sense, just like the intentions of other technological giants that have expressed interest in its projects. Although digital technologies and virtual worlds should belong to people as much as to industry, it is expected to ask the question: how realistic will it be for users to be free from imposed centralization in the expected digital spaces?

Religious issues

One of the issues of identity formation in the metaverse is the issue of religious identity and its realization in the new reality. If we consider that the concept of religious identity refers to how individuals develop their personal sense of religious and/or spiritual identity during their lifetime (Etengoff, Rodriguez, 2020), the question arises as to how this personal sense will develop and be practiced in the metaverse. On the one hand, we have traditional religious systems with their specific rites and rituals, as well as ethical systems. Alternatively, postmodernism holds that there are no universal religious truths or laws, but spirituality becomes synonymous with one's personal faith and ethical beliefs, including private behaviors such as prayer and personal morality. Individuals can therefore be religious but not spiritual, spiritual but not religious, both religious and spiritual, or neither (i.e., agnostic or atheist) (Etengoff, Rodriguez, 2020).

It is here that we come to the central challenge that the presented reality of the metaverse can pose to the established practice of religious rites in the physical world and assumed religious behavior in the metaverse. If we start from the assumption that traditional religions need concrete matters, the question arises as to how much of the fullness of religious life is available in the metaverse in that case. The Judeo-Christian tradition, as well as the Islamic tradition, certainly has an affirmative attitude towards matter as God's creation. Other religions also have their own rituals that incorporate real matter. The dichotomy that would arise between two diametrically opposed approaches, if we take the metaverse as an exclusively virtual world, represents perhaps the biggest challenge and raises questions that require deeper consideration. In fact, given the essentially insurmountable difference, the question legitimately arises whether, and in what way, it is even possible to overcome this dichotomy. On the other hand, the idea of practicing religion in the metaverse offers numerous opportunities that are not available in the physical world. Representatives of religious communities, participants in religious services and researchers approach to this issue in two different ways.

The first known project of practicing religion in the metaverse dates back to 2016, when a pastor from Virginia in the United States founded Virtual Reality Church (VR Church) as a spiritual community that celebrates "God's love for the world" (*VR Church*, n.d.). The appearance of the virtual church might be interpreted as a way of meeting new challenges and using new opportunities made by the technological progress (Bryson, Andres, Davies, 2020). The supporters of a church that earlier appeared on the Internet firmly claim that the virtual church is the real church, since the communities that it forms and rituals it performs are as authentic as those in the real world (Estes, 2009). Some representatives of the Christian religious communities, such as a representative of Baptists, advocate the position that their online Church must be embraced and encouraged, that it is still developing which means it is in the changing process, and that in future it could look pretty different than the church we now (Mullins, J. T. 2011).

Proponents of the idea of virtual churches present their arguments, which they believe unequivocally speak in favor of their position. One of the key ones is that the religious communities simply have to keep pace with the development of the metaverse or face grave danger. If the religious communities refuse to accept the new reality, they will be abandoned or neglected as the population of the world becomes more engaged in the virtual world and as more activities are carried out in the metaverse (Estes, 2009; Pillay 2020). Another argument is that in this way, the religious communities can significantly expand their mission and reach those people that they cannot easily reach in the real world (Estes, 2009). In the first place, this applies to those people who are bedridden, in the hospital, or housebound for health reasons. Churches in the virtual world offer the possibility of easier access to people who, for numerous reasons, are unable to attend the ceremonies, due to health conditions or spatial isolation. According to an investigation from 2016, an elderly American population feels benefits of participating in a virtual teleconference church which is the specific type of the virtual church (Russell, 2016). The possibility of their participation in the religious community is a benefit that the metaverse can bring, but also a significant improvement in the quality of their lives.

As a counter-argument, it is preferable to point to the Pontifical Council for Social Communications attitude that "There are no sacraments on the Internet" (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002). Catholic theologians that are against a reductionist religious experience accessible through the Internet ask whether an avatar can participate in a prayer event; whether is it liturgical; and whether can an avatar be the one who receives communion, which is in a virtual Eucharist (Spadaro, 2014). At least as far as traditional Christian churches are concerned, it is precisely the moment of the participation of matter that is crucial in the essential ecclesiological understanding (Spadaro, 2014). A legitimate fear that the virtual church causes is that it could introduce serious distortions into the current understanding of the Church itself, not just some of its liturgical or sacramental practices. Cyberspace should be used for catechesis which could enrich people and lead them to true community, not for replacing the world with virtual (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002; Radovanović, Tomić, 2020).

The experience of the pandemic has actualized the issue of using information technologies for religious purposes. Certain church services are practiced through apps like Zoom or streamed live through YouTube. However, the nature of this means of communication is quite different from what virtual reality offers. With avatars, users can completely hide their real identities. In that case, the question of the authenticity of the community arises if the real identities of its members are masked or hidden by their avatars. It can be noticed that until today we have not had an Orthodox reaction to the idea of the phenomenon of the metaverse, nor an attempt to give Orthodox viewpoints on the mentioned issues.

Discussion

Daily use of the Internet has brought about a change in where and how people socialize, earn a living, gather and share information, educate and consume media (Radovanović, Tomić, 2020; Radovanović, Tomić, Vasojević, 2022). The world is rapidly moving towards ubiquitous connectivity that is shaping society in a new way. Technology has penetrated into every pore of society, even into the religious practice and Orthodox iconography research (Peptenatu et al., 2022; Milovanović, Tomić, 2016). In addition to numerous advantages, the expected course of development also brings new challenges and reasons for concern. Within current topics such as ethics, surveillance, terrorism, and crime, the issue of security and trust in society and civil liberties is also addressed. Solving privacy and data protection issues is a big challenge. Religion on the Internet and in metaverse became challenged during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pillay 2020). Given that stopping the development of information and communication technologies is not an expected option in the future, solving new social challenges that are a consequence of this development and that are a threat to society, is an issue for which it is necessary to find an adequate solution model.

Already in the early nineties of the last century, as part of achieving an increasingly realistic experience of the virtual world, there was a need for the integration of physical, or real-world interface devices with generating and displaying the virtual environments (Metzger, 1993). However, the increasing prevalence of virtual reality is becoming a source of personal and social risks and threats. The future overlap and integration of our digital presence with the physical world, which some researchers predict (Donath, 2014), could lead to even more expressive ethical and religious problems. Given that the emotions and experiences realized in virtual reality are real, there is a concern about the future relationship between virtual reality and the physical world for individuals. Virtual reality is an artificial environment that a person has personally created and which, as such, can have an unpredictable and strong impact on the human psyche (Lee, Kim, Uhm, 2021; Lavoie et al., 2021).

In a virtual church, the physical elements are simulated, and the avatars of believers, not the believers themselves, participate in these virtual elements. Contrary to that, the Orthodox experience (of the Church) is the presence in liturgical gathering for the purpose of prayer along with the community of believers, and above all for the sake of participating in the Holy Eucharist (Zizjulas, 2001). Here we come to a probably crucial point and an irreconcilable difference between the two concepts. It would be a mistake to think that virtual reality could replace the real, tangible, and concrete experience of the Christian communities. The Orthodox experience of the church implies a physical, material reality in which believers participate in the Holy Eucharist. With that, we come to the conclusion that the virtual churches, no matter how tempting the idea is and no matter if we have to accept the inevitability of technological development going in that direction, cannot replace a concrete liturgical gathering. Without rejecting the possibility of further dialogue and the adoption of new possibilities that the method of communication in virtual reality will potentially bring, it is still necessary to draw a line at the very beginning.

A significant argument is that this method of communication allows for reaching the widest possible body of believers, as well as those who are not currently believers. The possibility of preaching the Gospel and catechizing in this way is certainly not negligible.

On the other hand, the question arises as to how much of the technology needed to achieve communication in virtual reality is actually available to a large number of people. The technologies needed to implement the idea of virtual reality into practice are quite expensive, and inaccessible to a large number of people. Therefore, this argument can be taken as partially correct and certainly as an idea that should be taken into consideration. It is estimated that in 2020, 26 million people owned VR headsets globally (Gilbert, 2022). This data alone tells us that the global application of new technologies is far from coming to life soon, and the economic moment is one of the main reasons (Gilbert, 2022).

The Roman Catholic Church gave its answer in the founding of MetaCatholic, a project led by Fr. Ian VanHeusen. In the words of VanHeusen: «The question is not if this technology will be coming or not, but how will the Catholic Church respond to evangelize in this new space» (VanHeusen, 2022). This quote contains the essential question and challenge. How in a creative way and with a sufficient amount of caution, one should approach the upcoming challenges? No matter how much one likes the idea of virtual reality and its impact on everyday life, there are assertions that by the end of this decade it will be clear that metaverse has arrived (Ball, 2022). Answers to some of the questions will help to determine the boundaries for the ethical use of new technologies.

To that should be added the possibility that the metaverse deepens the gap between those who have access to modern information technology and those who do not. There is also a real threat from industrial giants who already perceive the metaverse as an opportunity to expand their dominance and increase their profits derived from digital sources. To ensure transparency and security, it is necessary to anticipate and prevent problems that could arise due to the existence of a centralized environment managed by one mega entity.

Metaverse is currently an open space for anything that users could create including the new kind of "church" and new kind of religion. While traditional religious communities that include Christian Orthodox Church hesitate, new religious communities are being formed to fulfill the religious needs of the metaverse participants and to open the big door of the future generations' space. However, a today's average Orthodox believer wouldn't feel comfortable to share a virtual church space with an avatar that has for example a fox head. But the additional question to this topic is will the future average Orthodox believer change its position under the influence of technological progress? And will the Church follow?

Conclusion

The ever-faster progress and development of the Internet and the ever-increasing speed of data transmission have also influenced changes in society as a whole. The Internet has become an integral part of everyday life. It enables connecting with friends and family, business, education, shopping and much more, and the access to it is provided via phones, tablets, laptops, watches. It is found in homes, offices, means of public transport, and even on the streets. The Internet has revolutionized modern life in many ways, and is still developing in the direction of increasing its availability and presence in various segments of everyday life. Social networks, as one of the most dominant pieces of content on the Internet, largely determine patterns of behavior and thinking. Some of the recorded consequences of their over usage are the problems in socialization and the psychological disturbances. The abuse of freedom offered on the Internet has called into question the moral aspect of virtual reality. If we take into account all the assumed potential problems that can be caused by Internet usage and social networks as we know them today, we can make an assumption about the impact of even greater Internet availability and more massive use of virtual reality, which is the assumed future of the metaverse. Those same pitfalls could be just as prevalent, if not worse, in the wide-open metaverse, with its array of vast virtual worlds for both work and play. To conclude, the key problem with this concept is primarily the transfer of events from the realm of physical reality to the realm of metareality, i.e., virtual reality. In addition to established ethical dilemmas, this transfer, that is, the future relationship to the material world and finding a way to maintain an affirmative approach to the material world, presents challenges that are also posed to religion. Although there are no concrete indications of when or how this concept will be implemented on a global scale, virtual reality looks like an unavoidable future that will shape the patterns of future interactions. This requires serious consideration and dealing with the topic of the metaverse. The idea of the metaverse and the outlines of its appearance pose many dilemmas for social science researchers, religionists, ethicists, philosophers, as well as everyday Internet users.

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Crisis of Law and Spirituality

Abstract: Modern legal systems, national and international, are not able to successfully solve the accumulated problems in relations between people. The result is drastic violations of human rights, health, financial, ecological, geopolitical and other crises that threaten the survival of humanity. The legal profession has lost its reputation and trust among people, and judicial institutions are weak to respond to challenges. The reason for this is a systematic distancing from the essence of human nature, from man's need for truth and justice, dignity, humanity and love. The separation of the church from the state and a strong departure from religion, had the effect of society letting go of a key value of a universal character that is much more than religion. The view of man and reality, by taking away that vital element, was so narrowed that it threatened the foundation of the human being. It is about spirituality, a value that should be returned to people, and incorporated into law. Without the synergistic action of reason and faith, rational and intuitive, we cannot create a global human right that can lead humanity out of the vicious circle. Looking at the relationship between law, morality, religion and spirituality, discovering the key causes of the crisis in which law found itself, as well as the role of spirituality in the demanding process of healing the global legal system, is the subject of this paper.

Keywords: law crisis, spirituality, global human law.

Introduction

The national legal systems of modern secular states, just like the existing international legal mechanisms, are not able to solve the accumulated and increasingly complex problems in relations between people. Humanity is in serious trouble.

We are witnessing flagrant violations of human rights, financial, environmental, health and other scandals and upheavals, very low reputation of the legal profession, deep dissatisfaction of its members… When we look at this difficult and worrying situation from the point of view of law, we can call it a chronic crisis. It is indisputable that we are seriously late, and that perhaps the last moment is left to look for adequate solutions in the sphere outside the classic, unsystematic, so far extremely unsuccessful, attempts within the vicious circle.

The content of this paper, although not great in its scope and depth of problem analysis, nevertheless represents just that, a modest attempt to point out the problem and the way out of the crisis. In particular, to offer a line of thinking in order to find better answers to the heated process of globalization, rapid and unpredictable technological changes and the numerous risks they bring. It is filled with concrete reflection on the relationship between law and spirituality and the importance of their unhindered communication in which the potential for a solution lies. In that sense, the consequences of that attitude on the participants in the judicial system, and more broadly on the entire society, were also considered (Dedeić, 2021:1). The gravity of the situation does not allow the luxury of ignoring any resource of knowledge and experience from the rich treasury of humanity, especially not the one that has dominated for centuries.

With the help of various methods (logical, historical, sociological, psychological, method of spiritual theology, etc.), and aware of their limitations, and relying on the original biblical spirituality, research should review the existing situation, see the causes and theoretical and practical solutions that exist in the world. For success, it is important to be part of a community that works to build a global human law and a global humane community, at the center of which is a dignified and free individual, and not the state or anyone's group or individual interest.

It is indisputable that the application of spirituality in medicine, sociology, psychology and other sciences and practices is becoming more and more successful. This leads us to the conclusion that it is necessary to see its potential in the light of its application in legal life. An additional reason that encourages this type of research is in the fact that there have been very few attempts of this kind in the academic world and practice, and in our country there are almost none.

The fact is that this is a very extensive and complex topic. This is exactly what determined us, for the purposes of this paper, to single out and present only a few of its segments from the multitude. It is not about the intention to mark them as the most important, but to encourage the professional public to, through these few representative points, focus their attention on the phenomenon and understand the social significance of research. In particular, the paper considers the following things:

1. Basic differences between law, morality, religion and spirituality;
2. Content and character of the relationship between law and spirituality;
3. Causes of the crisis of law and the role of spirituality in overcoming it.

When we talk about law, we are not focused on a specific legal system, but it is a general understanding of the phenomenon. At the same time, since humanity inherits a significant number of different spiritual paths, this is about experiencing spirituality which is certainly universal in its character and scope, but is also contained in the Christian ideology that is close to us. That choice was made (with maximum respect for all other paths to truth, love, goodness and beauty), because this form of spirituality is historically and culturally closest to us. We experience it as our path. At the same time, we must not forget, at the very beginning of thinking about the relationship between law and spirituality, that spirituality is not the same as religion. It is a phenomenon *sui generis*, which is a different and much broader concept than religion.

Understanding the relationship between law and spirituality requires a lot from researchers, but openness of mind seems to come first. Some authors justifiably emphasize the need for synergy of *ratio* and faith in that endeavor (Trajković, 2017:xi). In any case, the researcher must possess a rational and intuitive ability to understand law much more broadly than is usual. To get rid of all prejudices and classical theories. To understand that the law is not only what is seen, that set of norms published in the official state gazettes, and whose respect is ensured by the very state that passed them. No matter how wisely this legal-institutional framework is made, it is far from encompassing all aspects of life, and even such a narrow view of reality carries the danger of materialist reductionism and often leads to exclusivity and the establishment of inhumane, extreme regimes. Fortunately, law, just like the people who create, interpret and apply it, has its own spiritual nature. There are authors who claim that law, just like man, has body, soul and spirit. (Domingo, 2018).

Law, spirituality, morality and religion

Law is, at its core, a filigree system of legal norms. They are complex, according to the hierarchy, from the constitution, as the highest legal act in one state, through the law, all the way to the lowest legal act. The law is created by people for very pragmatic reasons, to regulate their mutual relations, that is, to create a complex but unique framework of obligatory rules of conduct. These rules are there to enable the normal life and development of the individual and the community. There is certainly a sting (sanction), which affects everyone (at least it is a desirable assumption) who does not respect the prescribed rules. So the primary focus of interest in law is a human being and his/her relationship with other people.

The whole human life is tied to law. It follows him as a shadow from conception (nasciturus), through life until death, and even after it (inheritance). In most cases, we do not even notice that our relationships with other people are under the supervision of law. We don't think about it, we focus on other things, until we voluntarily, or without our will, find ourselves in the middle of a lawsuit. Then we become aware of the fact that we have observed the world insufficiently comprehensively and that unexpectedly, in our small field of vision, law becomes a very serious reality. Regardless of whether we are in the role of a defendant, prosecutor, witness, expert… No matter how small and unimportant we may seem to ourselves in all this, our spiritual influence is significant. Likewise, apart from court proceedings, the moment we fulfill a legal obligation (contractual), or when we comply with a prohibition and act in accordance (or non-compliance) with the set rules, we maintain the balance of the legal order (or imbalance with the risk of large-scale disruption-»the butterfly effect»). We must be aware that we are all creators of a culture or non-culture of law. However, we cannot be idealists and look for in others what is inherent only in God's love (Pope Francis, 2016: 177).

Courts exist to deal with disturbed interpersonal relationships in accordance with the law. Before the court (or alternative forum) are participants whose relationship is more or less injured. They thus become part of a complex, often lengthy and exhausting procedure that seeks to resolve a case by a decision that is, in legal terms, final and enforceable. One important question that arises at this moment is whether a broken relationship that receives a legal epilogue in the form of a final and executed decision, represents the end in the spiritual sense, that is, the return of peace and harmony in human life and community life (Kimmel, 2021:3). Has social justice been achieved with the help of law and the final legal act? How does the defendant, lawyer, prosecutor, witness, expert, the general public feel in a specific situation? Is everyone's conscience at peace, or is a gap made between what we truly are and what we pretend to be because that is expected of us? The existence of such gaps is a common occurrence in the judiciary and never leads such a path in the right direction. Especially not when, as is the case, the judiciary is donated by a (non) culture of revenge. Real law is an instrument for achieving justice, not revenge. Justice must respect repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. As a symbol of equality and justice, it must be a global phenomenon, a common good, such as to bring freedom, peace, happiness and dignity to every human being.

It is spirituality that can remove stereotypes and prejudices that make it impossible to achieve this and reveal the real truth.

No matter how imposing and authoritative the courts and their officials acted, it seems that their reach is relatively small. It is an experiential fact that an incomparably higher number of disturbed relations between people remain outside the scope of law. For one reason or another, the people who have the right to, do not want to start this complicated, slow and expensive mechanism, which brings with it stress and discomfort, and often with a rather uncertain outcome. Unfortunately, mistrust in the judicial system is one of the key reasons for such a decision. With all these disturbed relations that do not seek satisfaction in court, the practice shows that a certain percentage of those who are in court proceeding, for various reasons, do not receive an epilogue, or decisions have never been executed. This tells us that we must take into account the fact that it speaks of the limited power of law, of its limited preventive and repressive scope (not only temporally and territorially and personally). And yet, no matter what, life demands that every problematic relationship, whether the subject of a legal process or not, find its solution. The ultimate goal of law is not and must not be a struggle of opinions and arguments in courtrooms, but the establishment and maintenance of peace and harmony in society. With all these cumbersome national legal systems and international norms and institutions, global society is in imbalance, and global human law does not exist. So where is the solution?

Morality as a value system precedes law and is a very powerful instrument in any society. Law incorporates into its system the minimum of accepted morality in one community, transforming one part of morality into legal norms. Without moral principles, law could function for a while, but not for long, and it certainly would not be a human law, because those very principles help it to realize its basic goal – the establishment of justice. At the same time, moral norms / principles remain a very important factor in the process of interpreting the law during its application. Moral principles are especially important for resolving difficult cases that should be subsumed under insufficiently precise and comprehensive legal norms (legal gaps). In some cases, it is possible to resolve a dispute without law, in fairness (clause *ex aequo et bono*).

There is more and more talk about ethics and the importance it has in the judiciary and the corporate culture of the business world. People's awareness is growing that the road to crisis is paved with ignorance and immorality. (Dedeić 2006, and Dedeić, 2019: 669–679). When it comes to the legal profession, there are codes of ethics, as codified rules of desirable behavior that are binding on members of the profession. If we look at ethical norms from the point of view of spirituality, the question of why someone adheres to these rules is more important than whether he adheres to them (Silecchia, 2000:178). If it is a fear of disciplinary responsibility then it is very little spiritual progress and low awareness of moral values importance. Then rule reach only the mind, unlike really accepted moral and spiritual values that reach the heart. Moral norms, by the nature of things, spring from spiritual rules, and that channel of communication should be strengthened by spiritual development.

There is an old Latin saying that any definition is dangerous. It is especially confirmed in the situation when we want to define spirituality. Every attempt to catch something that is infinite and inexpressible in the web of words seems futile to us. However, many philosophers and theologians have persistently tried to do so for centuries, even not giving up today. Without the need to delve into a more precise conceptual definition, we will turn our attention to the following. The very root of the word spirituality reveals the presence of the spirit, and religions with their doctrine try to penetrate deeper into meaning and tell us about the search for meaning, ascension above the self, turning to a superior being, searching for truth and salvation.

Spirituality for us is based on the fact that God is a person, present and active in every segment of life, even in the procedures of passing and applying law. Perhaps it is most true to say that spirituality is life with God, in God, for God. It is the daily fullness of life realized through the connection with the Absolute, with the source of life, truth, goodness, love and beauty. Only a God-turned man is able to experience himself, other people, animals and the whole reality as One. Such an oriented person perceives himself as a part of that global community. In the same time has a strong sense of duty to guard it, build it, and feel the need to respect its rules (legal order). He also has the need and pleasure to realize himself by giving his whole self for the benefit of that community (the principle of giving in Christianity). Then man actively participates in connecting the metadimension with the dimension. There is no need to emphasize the healing role and importance of such a person in the legal system.

Spirituality, unlike law, does not threaten people with potential punishment, nor does it use force to resolve a contentious relationship. Its power springs from God's gifts of mercy and love, and its most powerful form is manifested through repentance and forgiveness (the golden section of law and spirituality). Fear of punishment is an unreliable, inefficient, unethical and socially unacceptable guardian of the legal order for a healthy community. Intention (individual and collective) is an essential component in real prevention. it is the link (channel) in the communication of law and spirituality (Domingo, 2019:19). Violation of the norm is encouraged by the realization of one's own interest to the detriment of the common interest. Sincere spiritual intention is the result of the desire to overcome one's own interest and serve the community. The higher the level of such intention, the more stable the legal order. Therefore, as a corrective to the use of force, spirituality is necessary for law to be used properly and over time, in accordance with the spiritual growth of people, diminished through the evolution of the state and law (the result of this influence is the fact that the death penalty was abolished in most countries). Spiritual growth enables a person to find meaning in respecting the law, which affects the legal order and the stability of the legal system. Then law becomes an instrument of social justice and not revenge («an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth»).

Religion is, just like law, the work of human hands, and as such is subject to all the flaws of imperfect human action. As an ideology, it tries to articulate man's efforts to establish contact with the divine, the Absolute. It is, as a rule, an organized, institutionalized and practical belief system. Religion is a doctrine, a way of directing and satisfying the need of believers for the spiritual life by believing in a superior being. (Silecchia, 2000:176) The most important segment of religion, without which it loses its meaning, is spirituality. It is spirituality that turns religion towards man's relationship with God, other people and the whole of reality. The universal character of spirituality makes it a common denominator of all religions, while what remains of religion is a concrete cultural expression. When it comes to law, the significance of religion is that law arose from it (Western civilization). The separation of religion from law has caused one serious collateral damage with long-term consequences – the separation of spirituality from law.

The relationship of law and spirituality

Rethinking the relationship between law and spirituality requires more than a scientific-methodological approach. It is a complex endeavor that guides the researcher through two dimensions. He is forced to move in a space in which both God and man act, both individually and collectively, conscience, sin and salvation are to be met.

Attempts to convince this relationship, to present the correlation of law and spirituality in an understandable, almost technically precise way, are interesting and praiseworthy. One of them tries to present the relationship between spirituality and law by comparing the pillars on which they rest. Love, as a basic principle of spirituality, is compared to justice, to which law aspires. Fellowship as a pillar of spirituality is correlated with the basic legal institute of agreement. And finally, the spiritual virtue of community service is compared to the human rights that every legal system should protect. (Domingo, 2018:12–16)

One of the pragmatic approaches is to approach the understanding of the relationship between these two phenomena by comparing the goals they strive for, the methods by which they are realized or their reach and the influence on people and events, etc. The goal of law is the realization of justice (fairness and equality), and the ultimate goal of spirituality is to live with God through the establishment of love among people. Law use dogmatic methods based on rational-logical judgment, while spirituality is based on intuition and contemplation, ie transcendental. A complete life filled with meaning requires a person to use all his potential contained in body, soul and spirit.

As we have already mentioned, understanding the relationship between these two phenomena requires the ability to overcome the limitations contained in conventional approaches and their definitions. To experience the law only as a set of norms of behavior of people whose respect is guaranteed and provided by the state with its institutionalized apparatus of force, keeps us locked in a box from which we must jump out. Another danger that threatens to obscure our view is to understand spirituality narrowly and equate it with the notion of religion. The result can be achieved only by openness to intuitive methods, to the transcendental, to techniques that transcend rational logical thinking, where they do not reject it, but make full use of its potential. It is a step forward from the dimension in which positive law dominates, to the meta-dimension, in which the ruler is meta-law (the idea of divine law has been discovering for centuries). It is necessary, in addition to an open mind, to have an open heart, in order for a person to change in the encounter with something we call the Absolute One, which is both the source and mouth of everything, the whole of reality. For a lawyer, this means discovering the spiritual nature of law (Domingo, 2019:3) For one who seeks wholeness and truth, that is the only way.

We have said before that the disputed relationship, regardless of whether it is resolved before a court or an alternative forum, must be resolved on a spiritual level. This level enables the final end of disorder. The end never takes place at the level of law and its rational-logical reasoning, but happens in the human heart. It is the moment when a change occurs, a release from attachment to the outcome, to the dilemma of who is to blame and who is not. The opportunity to break with the past event which has harmed a person's material or spiritual integrity. Spiritual resolution is in repentance and forgiveness, and it is completely future-oriented. It is the right way for a person to get rid of negative feelings: hatred, fear, rejection of oneself, others and reality as it is. It is the power of spirituality without which law cannot fulfill its social function and achieve universal justice.

The legal system is set up in such a way that the decision-making process takes place through several instances. For the sake of a higher degree of certainty that the decision is correct, it is exposed to the procedure of reconsideration at a higher level. When all instances are exhausted, the matter is forever over (*ne bis in idem*). The spiritual approach to the problem requires us to ask ourselves whether there is a higher level than the one at which the final legal epilogue was achieved? Is there another level above the legal, some meta-dimension above the dimension, some meta-law above the law? Here is a unique opportunity to ask ourselves and consider the claim that a problem created in one dimension (*holonic*), can only be solved in a higher (*holistic*) one (Domingo, 2019:9–12). Specifically, the disputed relationship will be resolved in the meta-dimension, the rules of meta law. Many relationships that were resolved by a final legal decision remained unfinished because they did not receive satisfaction on a spiritual level. Punishment, whatever its type and severity, does not bring satisfaction to the victim (or relatives, friends, the public…) if there is no spiritual satisfaction. If the conflict remains unresolved in the heart nothing is done. The judicial system needs a spiritual component in order to achieve wholeness and bring the final balance to a disturbed relationship. It seems that not experiencing the spiritual nature of law and the opinion that spirituality has no place in justice is a very wrong approach that goes back to the distant past. The separation of law from religion and the church from the state may have been a civilizational shift of the time, but the separation of spirituality from law undermines integrity. There is no humane global law without spirituality. The central subject of protection in global law must be the individual and not the state (Domingo, Witte, 2020:21).

However, bringing the spiritual component into the judiciary (certainly into the legislative and administrative spheres) is not an easy task, but it is the only one that leads to the final result. The necessity of the use of force and punishment is not denied here, but it is pointed out that it is a matter of limited success. Therefore, a fundamental spiritual reconstruction of the system is needed. Civil society will have the main role in that process (Domingo, 2010:7)

Man is a being of relationships. The modern world is not based on solidarity and does not allow free communication between people. The result is terrorist attacks, the refugee crisis and the like. A natural and healthy state is a harmonious relationship, as a result of realized justice. The problem is when justice is perceived as a need for revenge. Is that justice? Can such an approach to the problem restore peace and happiness to the victim and the community, after the final legal outcome? It seems that it is not and that it is just the opposite path to true reconciliation and peace in the heart – the path of repentance and forgiveness. It is the only path facing the future and represents the release of a hostage of a past painful event, which cannot be erased but can be prevented from being a source of hatred, fear, anxiety and confinement.

We also recognize the centuries-old influence of spirituality on law in the fact that modern legal systems included certain institutes of forgiveness. Examples include pardon and amnesty, as well as debt forgiveness. (Minow, 2021). The development of law must go in the direction of nurturing a culture of forgiveness and social justice, instead of revenge and revenge. Spiritual questions are questions of the deepest truths and true humanity.

The crisis of law and the legal profession and the way forward.

Life is a dynamic phenomenon in a constant movement between good and evil. Society, as a community of people who create it, is in constant change. The law is like a theory, gray, restrictive, it tries to place these living relations between people in a legal-institutional framework. It is very important to constantly monitor the extent to which the legal system performs the role entrusted to it and fulfills social goals and whether its spiritual nature has been achieved. As a rule, law does not like change, it needs stability in order for its application to be predictable. That is why it is very important that lawmakers feel the moment for change, resist inertia and respond to the demands of time. The process of democratization of society and modernization under the influence of a strong wave of globalization and rapid technological changes has brought great challenges and the law seems to respond inadequately to them. The result is a crisis in many spheres, destructive action that disrupts social balance and the legal order. Basic human rights, respect for personal freedom, moral autonomy, freedom of conscience are endangered… How to change that?

The national rights of developed countries and international law and its conventions fail to do so. As a consequence of failure, we have serious human rights violations, hunger and poverty, forced migration, trafficking in children, people and human organs, organized crime and corruption… It is obvious that modern law eludes the ideal of justice (fairness and equality) because it has become an instrument of division people and not rapprochement and togetherness. The process of globalization further encourages differences and divisions. Where are the fundamental errors in that system? How can each individual find his place in the global society so that he would be a stable factor of the legal order and not a creator of internal and external conflicts?

Law should protect the global community and community because that is one of the basic values of (Christian) spirituality. The community should be based on equality and fair treatment of each individual. If all humanity is connected by one spirit, then it is the only true community in which all people are. It rests on individuals who explicitly and implicitly respect themselves and other members of society. It is right there to provide a minimum of protection and ensure that respect. That is the meaning of law, but still the global human community does not exist just as there is no global law. The old saying «divide and rule» still reflects our reality. Although all humanity is one community, in the sense that it is united by one spirit, it is divided into insufficiently well-organized groups that are more opposed to each other than connected. Each of them has its own legal system that protects it from the others, forcibly maintaining the external and internal balance. That must change.

Deformations from the macro level (law that does not rest on the protection of each individual and has no global reach, but produces, protects and encourages particular interests) are transferred to the micro level – to the entire legal profession and all participants in the judiciary. The consequences are reflected in the absence of true meaning in life and work, which is expressed as the dissatisfaction of members of the profession and in the seriously damaged reputation that they should enjoy in society. The court proceedings are filled with traumas, not only for the direct participants, but also for the professionals. Dealing with human greed, selfishness, violent nature, psychopathological phenomena affect a person who is exposed due to his profession. Spiritual growth is a way to more easily overcome problems of this kind. Observing another person as a spiritual being with whom we are connected, helps to better understand the whole situation, human nature and our own limitations.

The law is applied by members of the profession: judges, prosecutors, lawyers, but also experts of various professions, so there are parties, witnesses… all these participants bring a certain spiritual culture or non-culture into the procedure. The problem is if we behave in a certain way, which we think is appropriate for the given situation (or that it will meet with the approval of others), while our conscience says the opposite (Kalscheur, 2006:4). This is, as research shows, the cause of dissatisfaction within the legal profession. Research in law shows a large number of alcohol and drug addicts among lawyers in the United States, and not a small number of those who raise their hand against themselves. At the same time, the public has a very bad opinion of lawyers. This shows that one respectable profession is in crisis because it does not serve the purpose for which it exists, and that is exactly the goal for which the entire legal system exists, and that is the realization of justice. Precisely in becoming such a goal right, the social community should open the door of spirituality wide. Justice is realized as a fair approach to every individual who is respected and equal with others.

Moving in that direction implies education and enabled social growth. It is necessary to include spiritual education in law studies and professional education of lawyers and the media, in order to develop awareness of the spiritual nature of law and create a culture of repentance and forgiveness, rather than revenge. It is also necessary to launch research aimed at studying the relationship between law and spirituality and creating a global human law and a global humane community, based on a dignified and free individual, regardless of nationality or any other affiliation.

Conclusion

Interdisciplinary research of connection between law and Christian spirituality makes sense for several reasons. First, that connection exists. There is no sense in denying something that is indisputable, and the consequence is that law, in addition to being rational, social and psychological, is also a spiritual phenomenon. Another reason is that the topic is completely unexplored. In this sense, research of this kind has academic and practical significance. It enables the monitoring of the world trend in research work, and at the same time the search for practical solutions. Third, but not the last in the final series, that the existing legal system (national and international) has moved away from basic spiritual values and as such cannot respond to the serious challenges posed by globalization and accelerated technical and technological development.

Spiritual values and ideas have always been the light and illumination in the legal system and an evolutionary force that, with its global reach, pushed civilization forward towards a more humane society.

Spirituality has always been an inspiration that brings light into a problematic relationship, directing reflection towards the future. It offers a solution outside the existing legal-institutional framework, in the meta-legal space, that is, in the holistic dimension of spirituality. Citizens' trust in legal institutions implies that the law establishes justice, thus eliminating all forms of discrimination and domination over the individual. Such a law is in accordance with meta-law (Absolute Law). Fear of punishment has been replaced by a sense of belonging to the community, and the actions of the individual are directed towards the good of the community.

Just as the common spirit unites all of humanity into one, so the unique spiritual dimension of law is what is common to all legal systems. Spiritual connection between different legal systems is the basis for building global human law. Humanity needs a system of law that is not built on the interests of states but on the principle of solidarity between free and equal individuals.

Law needs a fundamental change, through illumination and inspiration that comes from spirituality. It is always the right moment for change, resurrection to a new life. Within the legal profession (and the whole society), that would mean more life meaning and less dissatisfaction, depression, alcohol and drug addiction, suicide… While there is a division into self – society, there will be a conflict between one's own and common interest. Spirituality affects social cohesion by giving the individual a different meaning. God never divides, never rejects, but always works for unification.

Christian spirituality implies faith, but also life in it, in accordance with its values. It is not possible to separate one's Christian self and professional self without negative consequences. Like the relationship with God, the relationship with another person must always be in accordance with the highest values, in the first place with love.

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Phenomenon of Disciplenship in the Biblical Theological Practices

Abstract: An analysis is made of the phenomenon of discipleship in the discourse of biblical theological practices. The phenomenon of discipleship in biblical theology is compared with modern practices in the context of the identity of Christians. It is proved that the New Testament theology is an ideal model of discipleship in the context of the relationship between Jesus and the disciples. It is noted that the prosperity of discipleship occurred in the New Testament period of the apostolic church. Decline is the division of apprenticeship into separate practices, which over time have acquired independent forms. Recovery is an attempt to revive holistic discipleship by actualizing it in modern gospel practices. The evangelical community comprehends its tradition and searches for its own Christian identity, which influences the development of evangelical theology, including biblical studies. The revival of interest in biblical theology is associated with problems of adaptation and interpretation of the theoretical foundations of evangelical theology. The revival is also associated with the presence of a sufficient number of scholars in the field of Old Testament and New Testament theology, as evidenced by the appearance of the Slavic Biblical Commentary. It is proved that the New Testament discipleship cannot exist in isolation and is dependent both on the Western Gospel tradition and on other Christian traditions, which is characteristic of modern society. Despite the versatility of the New Testament discipleship and the theological problem of finding the central idea of the Bible, the New Testament ideal model of discipleship in the context of the relationship of Jesus and the disciples with the prospect of realization is the text of the Gospel of Matthew. The idea is declared that it is impossible to talk about one model in the apostolic period of the church, because there are two main New Testament models of discipleship: discipleship in the context of the «Jesus – his disciples» relationship and the discipleship of the apostle Paul. They clearly reflect the main trends and the diversity of the theology of discipleship in New Testament texts. The main sign of the gospel community is the church and educational crisis, caused by the fact that the church has ceased to fulfil Christ's last will – to make all nations disciples. Attempts are being made to global reception and projects are being proposed for global transformation of the gospel tradition. Among a significant number of modern gospel practices, current and new discipleship practices are identified that are trying to actualize the New Testament discipleship. Existing practices, which include education, leadership and missionary work in the perspective of training leaders of various ministries, are generally recognized, often interfaith, and meaningful in the context of Christian identity.

Keywords: the phenomenon of discipleship, biblical theological practices, Christian identity, New Testament teachers, theological education.

The issue of seeking Christian identity affects the understanding of evangelical Christianity. The modern practice of apprenticeship is an attempt to actualize the New Testament model of apprenticeship in the culture of postmodernism, as well as to offer a holistic approach to the restoration of apprenticeship in an ecclesiological perspective. The background for the decline of discipleship is described in New Testament texts. The first of them is that the followers of the teachings of Christ reconciled to the name that they received from outsiders and exist to this day. We are talking about the name "Christianity" (Фірігос, 2017: 28). The event that took place in Antioch became a turning point for the identity of Christians. The followers of Christ, using an unnatural name for themselves, gradually changed their spiritual nature. From the very beginning of its existence, Christianity conflicted with Roman power (Вермеш, 2014: 229). But the persecution, which included cruel torture and martyrdom, was not the cause of the decline of discipleship. The church developed in difficult conditions, contrary to which it spread its ideas. The blood of the martyrs, as Tertullian wrote, became the seeds of the Church. The more Christians were killed, the more they became. It seems that Christians after the apostolic era did not understand the idea of New Testament discipleship. The church was engaged in the struggle against all free thought, and the apologists played a significant role in this (Бычков, 1999: 46). The church tried to preserve its identity, but in fact, without noticing it, it lost it. In our opinion, the identity of ecclesia is hidden in apprenticeship. P. Schaff, describing the success of Christianity in the pre-nicaean period, indicates that it has adapted to all walks of life. He considers a value a teaching that has divine power (Шафф, 2007: 26). It was during this period that the first decline occurred, when the doctrine separated from apprenticeship and took an independent position in the church. The doctrine turned into a system of dogmas, later it became known as theology

(Гарнак, 2001). Not teachers in the New Testament sense, but professional clerics began to be in charge of teaching. Most of the church fathers not only had then classical education, but exceeded their contemporaries with talent and level of education (Шафф, 2007: 25). New Testament teachers, in particular Barnabas and Paul, were also educated, but taught at the level of interpersonal communication, thus realizing spiritual education.

One of the reasons for the decline in discipleship was the rupture of the Christian church with Judaism (Фірігос, 2017: 27–28). The Jewish educational system was the foundation upon which New Testament discipleship was built. It should be noted that the training of the Jewish model also underwent a certain crisis: there was a significant increase in disciples per teacher, which indicated a decrease in the number of teachers or an increase in the number of people wishing to study (Сантала, 2002: 43). At the same time, Christianity became a personal development path in the Greek world, which influenced the Jewish sign of discipleship itself – a combination of teacher-disciple relations and learning for the sake of a general knowledge of God. New Testament texts say little about translating discipleship into practice, and even more so, understanding it. An exception is the corpus of the writings of Paul and about Paul. It seems that the other apostles and New Testament figures did not carry out a sufficient reflection of discipleship. Their main attention was focused on teaching, and not on the interaction of teaching and disciples.

The advantage of teaching over other disciple components, its comprehension and dissemination was one of the reasons for the emergence of theological education. Church Fathers and early Christian apologists were deeply interested in educational issues. The main call for teaching was Matthew 28: 18–20, which contained the following components: walking, baptizing, and teaching. But with the spread of Christianity, educational institutions began only to teach (Генгель, 2002: 69), unlike the apostolic church, where preaching and teaching were equivalent and had both an internal character and a missionary one. Subsequently, teaching became noticeable to separate and acquire the priority, and the evangelism as part of the discipleship preceding baptism and teaching, moved away (Генгель, 2002: 70–71). The theological schools, founded in Alexandria and Antioch, became prominent in the future (Бриллиантов, 2007: 299–329). At first, neophytes studied in them, who were preparing for baptism. In the time of Clement and Origen, classes were created for capable disciples, where secular disciplines were also taught, although they were not equated with theological disciplines, but they were an important element in the learning process (Бриллиантов, 2007: 78).

Gradually, Christian enlightenment replaced discipleship. In medieval universities, the formality of classroom instruction replaced the informal and interpersonal relationships of apprenticeship. The catechization of the early period of the church is a manifestation of the advantage of teaching over other components of discipleship. And although by its nature, catechization is positive, but compared with the New Testament discipleship it does not represent a holistic phenomenon, which consists in the conversion of the disciple by teacher who spiritually gave birth to the disciple and teaches him before and after baptism, preparing him to continue his discipleship. The church gradually turned into a political organization, which influenced the ecclesiological identity and contributed to the realization of discipleship. The political nature of the church was expressed in the immunity that it received during the persecution at the imperial level. The church formed an organization that could function even under global persecution. The only thing that Constantine could do was to unite the Diocletian nationless empire with the church. The church disappeared as an independent value (8). Having received political power, she armed herself with the idea of ensuring public order. The church view focused on maintaining peace and unity within the church itself, which was not at all gospel, but rather political in nature. The unity of the church determined the unity of the state. Interpersonal relationships were regulated by church discipline. Church authority has become vertical (Вермеш, 2014: 245).

The creation of the Armenian Church and the Christianization of the Roman Empire ensured a rapid increase in the number of followers. The church had to rethink the vision of the mission, which aims to ensure an internal order, which, in length of time, began to identify with the kingdom of God. This is due to the fact that faith over time has ceased to be a personal matter. People were actually made Christians by birth, performing the sacraments of the church in chronological order. Over time, the realization came that the kingdom of God should expand. Of course, most likely, the spread of the Kingdom of God expressed the will of the Church in a political sense. The anomaly of this mission of the kingdom of God was the Crusades.

Considering the development of discipleship from a historical perspective, three practices that the church carried out in the aftermath of the apostolic period are noticeable: baptism, teaching, and missionary work. Although baptism was considered a sacrament, in most cases it was formal. The teaching was focused on preparing the clergy. The missionary activity of spreading the Kingdom of God foreseen primarily political influence. The end result of missionary activity, often of a military nature, was the conquest of new territories that were forced to Christianize. Accordingly, there were churches that needed new priests, which reminded to some extent the main law of the market "demand creates supply."

The decline of holistic discipleship and its division into separate practices should be understood as a combination of church events and phenomena, which gradually led to the threat of the disappearance of what the ecclesiological community identifies, the awareness of the original meaning of the church, laid down by Christ and the apostles, disappears. The decline of discipleship occurs throughout the history of the church, as well as its revival in individual traditions and their practices. After the decline of discipleship as a holistic phenomenon, there were some attempts to restore the New Testament apprenticeship by means of individual Christian practices. In the patristic period, individual practices of holistic apprenticeship were revived in catechesis (Гаврилюк, 2001), and in the Middle Ages – in monasticism (Санников, 2001: 77), the embodiment of some of the New Testament components of discipleship also took place in craftsmanship by the example of a master and disciple, by passing the ecclesiological context of discipleship. During the Reformation of the Masters, the restoration of holistic apprenticeship did not take place, however, its ideologists were engaged in no less important dogmas and ideas (for example, a return to the original sources), which became fertile ground for further attempts to revive the New Testament apprenticeship. The idea of the congregation is a very significant achievement in the recognition of community as a unit of embodiment of holistic discipleship. In an era when the Reformation is understood not only as a general phenomenon, but also as a challenge for everyone personally, there is a rethinking of the idea of spiritual birth. V. Bachinin writes that everyone had to experience their small reformation, which is realized through refining and changing thinking (Бачинин, 2017: 287–298).

The processes of the Master Reformation became the basis for the restoration of the New Testament holistic discipleship, in particular, the desire for personal revival of each Christian as evidence of belonging to the Reformation and a sense of belonging to the Church as a community of believers. Compared to the Master Reformation, the Radical Reformation has accomplished more in restoring discipleship in the community. Anabaptism as a manifestation of the Radical Reformation dates back to January 21, 1525 in Switzerland with the creation of the Swiss Brothers Church for "true Christian baptism" in adulthood. This community sought to create a church according to New Testament models, which was to be expressed in absolute trust and faithfulness to Christ as a condition of salvation and baptism (Шафф, 2007: 17). The main thing should not be the question of the liturgy, but the attempt to understand what the nature of the church should be. This church, like the apostolic church, should consist of those who proclaim Christ as Lord proposes the conscious baptism, and not just those who were born in this parish. The Lord's Supper should be carried out only for those baptized in the spirit of apostolic simplicity… it should become a guarantee of fraternal love and serve as a remembrance of the one and sufficient atoning sacrifice of Christ (Шафф, 2007: 23). "The Church of Jesus Christ is primarily a community of brothers, true members of the "Body of Christ", that is, those who have experienced a birth from above, who live according to the Word of God, guided by His Spirit" (Кириллов, 2017: 40).

Such an understanding of the church was a serious challenge not only for the historical church, but also for representatives of the Magisterial Reformation. Unlike the latter, the Anabaptists sought to reform not the external expression of the church (structure and liturgy), but its internal position, returning to the ecclesia of the apostolic pattern. Of course, many factors influenced the Gospel theological position of the Anabaptists, including the medieval spirituality of Erasmus, the teachings of Zwingli and Luther, but most of all – the Bible (Шафф, 2007: 30). The difference between the Catholic and Protestant churches was expressed in the persecution of the Anabaptists, which further identified them with New Testament followers. The theological concept of the Anabaptists was concentrated around the idea of community, in particular, six signs are mentioned by which the Church of Christ can be recognized. We are talking about pure biblical teaching, gospel baptism and the Lord's Supper, following the Holy Scriptures, sincere Christian love, open confession of Christ and suffering for faith (Кириллов, 2017: 40–41). The Anabaptist ideas about the church, it would seem, are similar to the New Testament example, but from the point of view of holistic discipleship as the nature of the church, the main idea that was present in the early period of the church is lost – teaching and continuity. The lack of emphasis on spiritual teaching is obviously associated with the struggle against the idea of papacy. Anabaptists proclaimed the community of the local church. In the ecclesiological system of the Anabaptists, there is no idea of historical continuity. Discipleship of the New Testament provides for continuity from teacher to disciple. The ecclesiological community is a collection of teachers and disciples who follow Christ. The Anabaptists, rejecting the continuity of discipleship, giving preference to personal experience, repentance, rebirth, following Christ, etc., moved away from the main essence of the New Testament understanding of the church, which was a family where there were spiritual parents and children who were both brothers and sisters and mentors to one another. Anabaptism, with its attempt to revive the New Testament understanding of the church, influenced the ecclesiological concept and theology of modern gospel tradition.

Anabaptists are not the only ones who have come close to restoring holistic apprenticeship. John Wesley in the 18th century tried to restore discipleship, and that contributed much to the national spiritual revival of England. The attempt by J. Wesley became the prototype of modern Christian discipleship as a set of individual practices, which are just a semblance of a New Testament holistic apprenticeship. Unlike the Anabaptists, Wesley's apprenticeship provided for teacher-disciple relations in the organization of ecclesia. The disciple group, Wesley called the "class", was so effective that Michael Henderson calls it the core of the Methodist movement, the mechanism of change, the vehicle through which each member of the group learns Christian doctrine. Describing Wesley's approach, it should be noted that he tried to answer the needs of the then society by combining pastoral methods known to him, his own spiritual experience, deep theological beliefs, proven methods of other Christian contemporary leaders and adapting them to his circumstances. Gospel tradition is understood as a set of practices that are common to all denominations of evangelical Christians. In the context of the study of New Testament theology, such common practices are education, leadership, and missionary work. From time to time there was a desire for renewal, which came into conflict with church traditions. All waves of church renewal associated with a return to early church practices. The Wesleyan movement is one of such attempts to revive the spirit of early Christianity. The basis of this movement was the following elements: personal spiritual growth within close fraternal fellowship; accountability to a spiritual mentor; mutual help; proclaiming the truth of the gospel in love. They were based not on creeds, but on living biblical beliefs; not in general meetings, but in friendly communication; not in the transmission of information, but in apprenticeship (Хендерсон, 2006: 13). Spiritual instantaneous birth is important for apprenticeship groups; it is the entrance to the community, a rite of passage through which a person joins the educational process (Хендерсон, 2006: 63). The influence of the practical ideas of theology is felt in various gospel traditions, including the method of incarnating discipleship. A return to the original sources during the Reformation was a favourable condition for further attempts to restore the idea of the church on the model of the New Testament, starting with the apprenticeship, which has declined. The decline of discipleship as an ecclesiological phenomenon contributed to the emergence of Anabaptism, which was most able to approach the restoration and embodiment of ecclesiological ideas on the apostolic pattern.

The modern evangelical Christian community is going through a special time. On the one hand, there is a crisis of searching for one's own identity and comprehension of one's own tradition, caused by various political, cultural and religious phenomena, which have become serious challenges of our time (Станкевич, 2018). That led to a rethinking of key doctrines, including ecclesiology in the social dimension and missiology in the context of church activity. On the other hand, the evangelical community has embarked on the path of academic integration, which allows us to comprehend and analyze our own history and theology, easing the crisis. Researchers, who belong to the gospel tradition, are trying to comprehend various aspects of Christianity. The East European gospel tradition has its own specific history (Славянский библейский комментарий, 2016: 9), which, of course, determined its current status. Anti-religious pressure and apologetic thinking influenced the worldview of the gospel community, as well as modern social processes, led to the development of an original theological understanding of freedom. The complex social processes taking place now affect self-determination and understanding of the gospel identity and self-identity. The key terms that describe the present are "postmodernism," "globalization," and "postsecularity." The current situation does not arise from the past, does not follow from previous experience, it breaks the continuity, condemning its own sources and describing the world using a prefix the "post" (after) (Шафф, 2007: 282). The main features of modernity is postsecularity as a state of culture. A postsecular society is a society in which secular and religious exist only thanks to each other. A society in which neither aggressive evangelism, nor violent secularity acts (Шафф, 2007: 283). The second sign is globalization as a universal connection. Globalization erases the boundaries of local structures. The main positions of globalization are determined in the sociocultural space, where the primacy belongs to computer technology, information, the services market, virtuality, the culture of postmodernism and the cult of consumption as a new global religion. Modern secular society is characterized by post-Christian moods, a crisis of democracy and capitalism, aggressive tolerance, lack of freedom to be oneself, the demand for a strong hand and power capable of unification.

The leading evangelical sign is the church and educational crisis. S. Flugrant, commenting on the Epistle to Timothy, concludes that one of the most important problems in Eastern European Christianity is the church's misunderstanding of the importance of discipleship (Флюгрант, 2016: 1739). The church is in critical condition, which is expressed in crises of preaching, the gospel, family, morality and ethics of both leaders and ordinary Christians. The problem is that at the same time the church feels self-sufficient, grows quantitatively, developing various ministries, management and administration, building temples. But the tragedy is that the church ceased to fulfil its function – to generate disciples (Халл, 2001: 8–12). B. Hull resorts to images, calling people who are engaged in apprenticeship, the cardiovascular system on which the condition of the whole church depends: "The cardiovascular system of the church is the principles that bring good fruit" (Халл, 2001: 9).

The principles of discipleship are lost and forgotten by the modern church. The crisis has spread to theological education. The crisis of theological education is manifested not only by a decrease in the number of people who want to get a theological education, but also by a lack of understanding of its mission and relations with the church: "Few of the evangelical leaders of Central and Eastern Europe doubt that theological education requires strategic renewal" (Пэтти, 2016: 13). The crises of church service and education, which did not meet each other's expectations, are interconnected. Studying the educational process, its mission and organization, one should highlight the following accents and tasks of theological education: to educate strong leaders; to develop domestic theology; to promote the development of domestic teachers; find and encourage capable ones to serve; to develop intellectual abilities; to educate and train the skill of quality service; develop awareness of the need for teamwork; to develop personality and character (Пэтти, 2016: 32). S. Patty writes: "Future models of theological education will be as effective as they can form not only the mind, but also the hearts of a new generation of leaders. Living things are born from living things. No educational system is capable of replacing apprenticeship" (Пэтти, 2016: 73). This is a serious challenge to the modern Christian community: to realize, convey to each ministry leader and jointly embody what Jesus spoke about in the Gospel of Matthew.

Modern theological education is also experiencing a crisis of discipleship, the essence of which is the relativisation of the consciousness of the gospel community, which prompted church leaders to think about how to acquire new believers. The question is actually relevant. Evangelical Christianity no longer sees effectiveness in global and local evangelism. This awareness is local in nature and requires a theological rethinking and dissemination of the idea, the essence of Christian discipleship. Jesus called the disciples and prepared them to make all nations disciples. Discipleship is a lifestyle, the end result of which is the church: "If you make disciples, you always get the Church, and if you make the Church you rarely get disciples" (Галлати, 2015: 50). "Theological schools are an organic part of the Church… The condition of the Church is always reflected in the seminary, in other words, the condition of the seminary is a mirror image of the Church, because the Church is primary, the seminary is secondary" (Пэтти, 2016: 6). This problem is related to the transfer by the local church of certain duties to theological educational institutions. What does it mean? Firstly, the assertion of the primacy of the Church means that the church is responsible for the spiritual condition of the members of the local church. The local church should train ministers. Secondly, the statement about the secondary nature of the seminary means that it helps and complements the work of the church, but does not replace it in any way. Perhaps the essence of the problem lies in the fact that local churches are not fully aware of their own mission on a global and local scale. There is no holistic view of the mission of the church, since it is based on several texts of the New Testament. In a state of social, political, educational, and church crisis, mass awareness of the need for global change comes. Their expectations are the main feature of modernity. Attempts are being made to a global reception and global transformation projects are being proposed. Three modern types of activity are selected, which by their nature are interfaith, but have the goal of educating and training ministers. We are talking about formal theological education, about a school of leadership and missionary activity which are considered to be generally recognized as gospel practices that embody the New Testament principles of discipleship. In these practices, the gospel tradition tries to revive the New Testament discipleship, taking into account the peculiarities of time and new knowledge of psychology and pedagogy (Лидерство: теория и практика, 2014: 7-8). The current and new discipleship practices can also be called modern Christian discipleship, which is just a semblance of a New Testament discipleship, holistic in nature.

In the modern post-modern gospel environment, the word "apprenticeship" is associated with the word "education" (Пронин, 2018: 11–14). The church community, on the one hand, has high hopes for the development of theological denominational and interfaith education, because the seminary, as a typical denominational educational institution, helps, and often makes up for church flaws and omissions. On the other hand, church leaders are wary of the secularization and integration of dogmatic theology with academic disciplines. A student finishes a seminary with knowledge that is difficult to embody into church service and community service (Хендерсон, 2006: 64–65), for which the church is often not ready. The philosophy of education is embedded in the New Testament teaching model, which is taken from the texts of the New Testament. Education and Christianity in its original form were almost synonymous (Головин, 2013: 65). But the problem is that education in the modern sense is not identical with New Testament discipleship, only for the reason that Christianity has long ceased to be a community of disciples. The question is whether the educational institution is an ecclesiological community. If this were so, then the mysteries that are recognized by the gospel believers should be realized, that is, water baptism and the Eucharist, which are mandatory components of the New Testament discipleship, should be realized. Over the past fifteen years, a certain rethinking of theological education in the gospel environment has been carried out, because the latter is an important component of development in confessional strategies. Education is a tool for social transformations (Райчинец, 2013: 67), defining theological consciousness and stimulating the transformation of internal and external church processes. The development of the church is directly proportional to the effectiveness of theological education.

In this context, education is understood, first of all, as a spiritual practice, and not as an academic process with all standards and procedures. Gospel education, on the one hand, has a spiritual-forming and educational character, and on the other, an informational and academic one. It is the spiritual component of education that is perceived as a modern practice of discipleship, which is modern not in the sense that it has arisen recently, but in the fact that it is an activity that now embodies and implements the New Testament principles of discipleship. A historical review found that the turning point in the implementation of apprenticeship was a change in emphasis from apprenticeship as a whole to learning as part of apprenticeship. The doctrine turned into dogma, and then into systematic theology, bypassing the other components of discipleship (Ткаченко, 2016).

Modern theological educational institutions ensure the functioning of programs and the entire academic process as a whole, identify the key problems of theological education, offer alternatives and try to look into the future. But the irony is not even that it all happens during a crisis (Пэтти, 2016:13), but that this crisis exists as much as education itself. The seminary did not live up to the expectations of the church, the main of which are: education of ministry leaders who can work with the biblical text and interpret it in accordance with confessional dogma (Beilin, Semenova, Petrusenko, Chervona); gospel teaching practices that will help to perform effectively ministry in the church and in society, help in spiritual formation (fellowship with God, seeking the will of God, humility, respect and fidelity to the church, etc.); accomplishment of evangelism and missionary activity. The question of the interpretation of the Holy Scripture, dogma, relations with God, evangelism and mission – this is the competence of exactly the ecclesiological community. Theological specialties in educational institutions should help the church, not replace it. The problem is that the seminaries tried to satisfy and catch up with what the church lost, which essentially caused a crisis. Misunderstanding of the role of both parties, shifting responsibility to each other led to a bilateral conflict.

The main task of modern theological educational institutions should be to implement and disseminate the principles of New Testament discipleship. If theological education affects the church, then the academic community should proclaim the importance and necessity of discipleship in an ecclesiological perspective. It is the theologians who should determine and declare a programmatic course to return to the integrity of discipleship and propose a course towards the restoration of the church, in every possible way promoting and spreading the idea that the principle of discipleship is the basis of its theological meanings.

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Постлиберальная политическая теология и дехристианизация общества

Аннотация: Статья посвящена анализу интеллектуальных и богословских достижений радикальной ортодоксии, одного из самых влиятельных богословских и почитических дискурсов эпохи модерна. Констатируя переломный момент в истории западной цивилизации и ее политических систем, тологи радикальной ортодоксии выдвинули и обосновали целостный проект постлиберальной общественно-политической системы, который, по их мнению, содержит практические пути преодоления кризиза неолиберализма. Наиболее системные теополитические проекты в рамках радикальной ортодоксии были предложены Джоном Милбэнком и Адрианом Пабстом. Их цель проявляется в попытке переосмыслить политику и общество в постсекулярной парадигме, пытаясь вернуть трансцедентные ценности в публичное пространство.

Ключевые слова: постлиберализм, постсекулярность, трансцедентальные ценности, публичное пространство, политическая теология.

Начало второго тысячелетия нашей эры ознаменовалось системным кризисом капитализма, который затронул прежде всего западную цивилизацию и основы её политической системы – либеральные концепции политической мысли. В этих условиях богословы радикальной ортодоксии выдвинули и обосновали целостный проект постлиберального социально-политического устройства, который, по их мнению, содержит практические пути для преодоления кризиса неолиберального общества. Наиболее системные теополитические проекты в рамках радикальной ортодоксии предложили Джон Милбанк и Адриан Пабст. Характерной чертой их концепций является стремление к переосмыслению общественно-политических процессов в парадигме постсекулярности таким образом, чтобы вернуть трансцендентные ценности в публичное пространство. Радикальные ортодоксы делают особый упор на роль гражданского общества в процессе утверждения общего блага в противовес тенденции доверять его государству и рынку. Милбанк и его единомышленники предлагают выстраивать политику «снизу», начиная с организации местного самоуправления, формирования кооперативов, профессиональных гильдий и разнообразных, инициированных церковью, социальных проектов. Церковь должна быть в эпицентре общественно-политической жизни и выступать в роли пророка, борясь против несправедливости и злоупотребления государством своими полномочиями. Несмотря на то, что теологические идеи радикальной ортодоксии активно изучаются на протяжении последних десятилетий, теополитическая перспектива этого влиятельного богословского течения исследуется только фрагментарно. Акцентируя внимание на необходимости децентрализации и активизации участия граждан в демократических процессах, теополитическое видение радикальной ортодоксии имеет значительный конструктивный потенциал для формирования политической теологии. В условиях углубления разочарования в либеральном устройстве проект постлиберализма может выступить альтернативной политической теорией, призывающей к добропорядочной политике и предлагающей структурные реформы в политической, экономической и образовательной сферах. Постсекулярное понимание роли теологии, призванной осмысливать все сферы жизни человека, может способствовать переходу парадигмы политической теологии от изоляционизма по отношению к государству и общественным институтам к переосмысленной общественно-политической роли церкви (Бейлин, Желтобородов, 2019a).

Подавляющее большинство актуальных теополитических теорий сохраняет дуализм сакрального и секулярного, в то время как радикальная ортодоксия ставит своей целью преодолеть его, ориентируясь на среднегодовой идеал синтеза этих сфер. Критика Дж. Милбанком социальных теорий основана на демонстрации насильственной онтологии секулярных конструктов, что предопределено кризисным состоянием современного либерально-демократического устройства. Сформулированный Дж. Милбанком концепт «онтологии мира», в рамках которого вместо традиционного нарратива непреодолимой конфликтности социального устройства, обусловленного стремлением социальных субъектов к самосохранению был предложен альтернативный нарратив онтологической возможности гармоничного сосуществования человечества. Для Милбанка и других представителей радикальной ортодоксии свойственна оптимистическая антропология, опирающаяся на убежденность в фундаментальной доброте творения и врожденной склонности людей к мирному и гармоничному взаимодействию. Целесообразно уравновесить оптимистическую антропологию радикальной ортодоксии богословской традицией пессимистической антропологии, ведь на протяжении истории в обществе наблюдаются как проявления тотального насилия, эксплуатации и непримиримости, так и проявления милосердия, любви и общей заботы об общем благе. Акцент на одной из этих характеристик природы человека обуславливает необъективный взгляд на реальность, а значит, и появление нежизнеспособной политической теологии. Возможно следует осмысливать природу человека в рамках категорий «смиренной» антропологии, согласно которой человек, осознающий собственную склонность к несправедливости и насилию, всеми силами стремится к мирному и гармоничному взаимодействию с другими членами общества.

Политическая теология Дж. Милбанка обладает значительным потенциалом для критического осмысления секулярного порядка и свойственного ему разделением сакрального мира церкви и светского автономного пространства государственной политики, экономики и других сфер общественной жизни. Пытаясь вернуть трансцендентность в публичный дискурс, Дж. Милбанк побуждает церковь воздействовать на все сферы общества, трансформируя их. Предлагается модифицировать теорию постлиберализма, сохраняя её идейные и нравственные основы, и дополнив их более взвешенным взглядом на человеческую природу. Данный концепт, который можно определить как «постсекулярный либерализм», дополняет стремление сторонников радикальной ортодоксии решить внутренние проблемы либерализма.

Критика института государства как источник насилия, его оппозиционализм является важным инструментом распознавания и превенции насильственных проявлений государственной власти. Следует отметить, что при этом не учитывается необходимости различения исторических моделей государственного тоталитаризма и форм государственного устройства, которые призваны ограничивать насилие и обеспечивать общее благо. Политическую экклезиологию, интерпретирующую церковь как альтернативный политический организм, в котором возможно осуществление подлинной ненасильственной политики, можно классифицировать как проявление изоляционной теологии, ведущей к дистанцированию церкви от публичного пространства и религиозного опыта как опыта веры (Бейлин, Желтобородов, 2019). Отрицание Милбанком секулярности чревато потерей нейтрального пространства для диалога и отстаивания им христианства как единоверного метанарратива, что, по мнению его оппонентов, открывает путь для тоталитаризма догматического насилия (Г. Хайман, Т. Джейкобс и М. Доак), универсализация Милбанком понятия власти, определяющей все её институты насильственными (Н. Лаш, Р. Доэрксен), есть отрицание им идей пацифизма (А. Паддисон).

Формулируя основные идеи «христианского социализма», Дж. Милбанк выходит за пределы общепринятого понимания правого и левого политических спектров, обосновывая потребность в «третьем пути» вне «социалистического» дискурса. Милбанк критикует исторические проявления социалистической политики, как пытающейся действовать в пределах капиталистического рынка, подчеркивая потребность глобального перестроения «правил игры» и замены их принципами взаимного обмена дарами, справедливого распределения благами и возвращения в экономику ценностных ориентиров. Поскольку эта концепция противоречит историческому опыту социалистических экономик, проект Милбанка кажется более уместным описывать в терминах «солидаризма», «теологии справедливого обмена» или «посткапиталистической экономики».

Политическая роль церкви состоит не в том, чтобы освящать государство, заменяя представительное правительство, а, наоборот, в обучении представителей государственного и общественного секторов принципам добродетели, ведь без этого демократия не может хорошо функционировать (Milbank, Pabst, 2014:11). В таком случае, конституционная монархия выступает более сбалансированной формой правления в отличие от светского регулирования, что балансирует между крайностями тиранической абсолютизации власти, с одной стороны, и склонностью к анархическому релятивизму – с другой.

Милбанк и Пабст отмечают необходимость увеличения роли монарха, максимального использования им своих возможностей предлагать правительственные пути решения долгосрочных проблем страны, а также поднимать критические вопросы относительно текущей политики. Следовательно, монарх или его символический эквивалент (которым может быть президент) становится способным обновить, оживить и демократизировать свою традиционную роль. Во-первых, как арбитр, он может способствовать соблюдению всеми участниками политического процесса своих конституционных полномочий и верховенства права; во-вторых, он может выступать в роли посредника и гаранта того, что правительство, парламент и судебная система будут брать должную ответственность за обеспечение общего блага и достижение долгосрочных национальных целей в соответствии с интересами общества (Milbank, Pabst, 2016:159).

Хотя сторонники радикальной ортодоксии разработали целостный и убедительный теолого-политический проект, он все же не лишен определенных недостатков. В частности, следует обратить внимание на замечания Роуэна Уильямса, констатирующего историческую недостоверность утверждения о том, что Испанская и Британская монархии до XVII века продолжали традиции средневековых монархий и «в определенной степени утверждали всеобщее благо» (Williams, 2016). Уильямс вполне оправданно подчеркивает, что оба королевства в большинстве своем обеспечивали собственное процветание за счёт работорговли. Следующим важным элементом постлиберального устройства общественно-политического устройства является определение места и роли Церкви. Милбанк и Пабст радикально противостоят секулярным тенденциям, представляющим государство и Церковь абсолютно независимыми политическими структурами, постоянно конкурирующими между собой. Решение этой проблемы заключается в переосмыслении роли Церкви как призванной предложить лучшие законодательные и политические инициативы, поскольку решения либерального государства часто способствуют дехристианизации нации.

В настоящее время богословы отмечают, что церковь способна стимулировать более активное участие населения в системе местного самоуправления. В частности, современная церковь, поддерживая приходскую систему, имеющую широкую сеть социальных и общественных инициатив, может помочь в процессе структурирования и координации местной жизни, активно участвуя в различных сферах общественного развития, таких как образование, здравоохранение, бизнес. Церковь владеет сетью социальных и общественных инициатив: молодежными кружками, группами для матерей и детей, кредитными союзами и медицинскими службами, а также предоставляет разнообразные экономические и социальные услуги, такие как помощь продуктами питания, проведение благотворительных обедов для пожилых людей, предоставление убежища для бездомных, финансовое консультирование и т.д. Социальное пространство церкви охватывает разных представителей, поэтому церковь способна влиять на большее количество людей и групп, чем любая другая форма ассоциативного объединения членов общества.

Итак, в практическом смысле современная церковь, поддерживая приходскую систему, помогает структурировать и координировать повседневную жизнь, создавая платформу для более широкого привлечения людей к улучшению быта в собственном окружении и обеспечении развития таких сферах как образование, здравоохранение, бизнес и т.д. Активизация приходской системы потенциально может увеличить влияние и контроль Церкви над государством и свободным рынком, которые в последние десятилетия стали доминировать из-за уменьшения роли церкви в гражданской, социальной, образовательной и культурной жизни общества (Prochaska, 2008:3). Вследствие этого многие люди не видят связи между миссией Церкви и основными сферами собственной публичной и частной жизни. Поскольку большинство людей мыслят прагматично, христианство становится для них малопонятным, ведь они уже не видят его практического воплощения.

В такой ситуации Милбанк и Пабст предлагают реализовывать принципы постлиберальной политики, согласно которой церковь не может мыслить себя только в категориях выживания и обновления, понимая свою роль только в провозглашении трансцендентных истин. Роль церкви усматривается в создании подлинного сообщества, стремящегося к свободе и справедливости, которые воспринимаются как этические категории. Эти сообщества могут быть объединены только вокруг общей этической цели общественного бытия – быть вместе в свободной гармонии. Наконец, авторы настаивают на необходимости не только активизации местного самоуправления и регионального представительства, но, прежде всего, на участии отдельных лиц и групп в общественных политических дебатах и принятии решений. В то время как либеральная демократия склоняется к «демократическому деспотизму» и тирании массового мнения, постлиберальная «политика добродетели» подчеркивает необходимость подлинного плюрализма, в котором могут быть озвучены и рассмотрены различные идеи. Источником жизнеспособности такой представительной системы является совокупность различных идей и наличие выбора между реальными альтернативами по телеологическому стремлению к общему будущему. Таким образом, авторы пытаются найти новый путь в реализации принципа единства в многообразии.

В противоположность либеральному устройству государства, построенному на идее, что постоянная конкуренция множества индивидов каким-то образом образует единый искусственный порядок на основе общественного договора, Милбанк и Пабст приходят к выводу, что нестабильный гибрид «либеральной демократии» порождает олигархический симулякр и открывает путь для его преодоления к «чистой демократии», поскольку это диалектически ведет к тому же олигархическому режиму. По их мнению, возникает необходимость в переосмыслении способов усовершенствования работы исполнительной, законодательной и судебной власти в рамках либеральной демократии.

Итак, Милбанк и Пабст обосновали проект постлиберальной социально-политической теории «политики добродетели», стремящейся способствовать индивидуальному развитию и взаимному совершенствованию. Постлиберализм направлен на то, чтобы восстановить древние и разнообразные традиции «консервативного христианского социализма», отстаивающего идею общности и соучастия, подчеркивая потребность в ценностном и нравственном воспитании населения и обеспечении равноправия. Высказывается идея об активизации широкого народного движения для формирования политики общего блага, что сможет преодолеть бинарные разделения, разделяющие западные страны и весь мир: молодых против стариков, капиталистов против рабочих, местных против иммигрантов, города против сельской местности, верующих против атеистов. Милбанк и Пабст предлагают найти новые способы объединения отдельных лиц и групп с противоположными ценностями и интересами, чтобы стать более широким межклассовым и межкультурным движением. «Политика добродетели» призвана переосмыслить христианский экуменизм на основе гражданской ответственности, а не просто внутреннего идеализма. Следовательно, задача христианских церквей, согласно идеям радикальной ортодоксии, заключается в увеличении их влияния на общество не только через политические партии, но и через активное участие в экономической, культурной, образовательной и политической сферах жизни общества.

Проект Милбанка и Пабста не вызвал заметной критической рефлексии в богословской среде, за исключением отдельных рецензий их работ. Роуэн Уильямс в контексте жесткой критики либерализма спрашивает действительно ли либеральные идеи настолько непригодны для воспитания добродетели и внедрения коллективного благополучия?

Правильно ли считать, что либеральная политика, работая на своеобразный процессуальный агностицизм в государственных делах, тем самым разрушает любое понятие всеобщего блага? Он, в свою очередь, считает, что все еще сохраняется возможность реанимировать либерализм благодаря развитию в либеральной политике того, что не касается «отрицательной» свободы или нейтральных процедур абстрактной справедливости (Williams, 2016).

Наиболее комплексно на этот счёт высказал свою позицию американский богослов Джонатан Коул. Он отмечает, что постлиберальные политические богословы, предлагая возрождать такие понятия и практики, как «солидарность», «взаимные обязательства», «плюралистический организм», «конституционный корпоративизм», «персонализм» и «субсидиарность», упускают из виду тот факт, что на самом деле эти явления существуют в разной степени, хотя фрагментарно и непоследовательно, в разных странах либерального мира (Cole, 2017). Несмотря на содержательную критику либерализма, осуществленную Милбанком и Пабстом, Коул отмечает, что они не предлагают по-настоящему структурных изменений, которые могли бы решить системные проблемы либерализма. Такие идеи, как уважение каждой общественной роли, необходимость альтернативного делового этоса, призваны превратить человеческое достоинство в «социальную валюту». Однако эти предложения призывают прежде всего к культурным изменениям и переосмыслению общественных ролей, но не предлагают радикальных, опять же, структурных изменений. Представляется, что Коул и Уильямс предполагают, что постлиберализм позиционирует себя как антилиберализм, однако, исходя из работ радикальных ортодоксов, можно утверждать, что концепт постлиберализма – это попытка найти новое измерение либеральной политики, выявить и исправить её системные недостатки. Предложив целый ряд конкретных предложений по реформированию социально-политической сферы, их проект выступает целостной альтернативой современному либерализму, оставаясь в его системе координат. Как отмечает историк Юваль Харари: «Проект постлиберализма мог бы стать толчком к перерождению либерализма в новой форме. В прошлом либерализм уже подвергся кризисам, подобным современным» (Harari, 2018).

В условиях существующего глобального кризиса либерализма, есть основания сделать вывод, что благодаря попыткам его переосмысления, сохраняется возможность найти новое измерение либерализма. Не отвергая идейные и нравственные основы постлиберализма радикальных ортодоксов, но дополнив его более взвешенным взглядом на человеческую природу, кажется реалистичным при условии преодоления секуляризма как господствующей парадигмы современности, выстроить либерализм «с добродетельным лицом», или же очертив его как «постсекулярный либерализм».

В настоящее время политическая теология представлена как отдельная область богословской науки. Определены основные направления развития современной теополитической мысли, среди которых главная новая политическая теология, теология освобождения и публичная теология. Эти три течения развивали свои концепции в рамках искусственного разделения между сакральным и светским пространствами, в то время как радикальная ортодоксия ставит своей целью преодолеть это разделение. Радикальные ортодоксы выстраивают свои концепты в парадигмах постсекулярной философии и постлиберальной теологии, тесно взаимодействуя с представителями этих течений. Радикальная ортодоксия истолковывает традицию, переводя её на язык постмодернистской современности. Так же развивается «онтология причастности», которую переосмыслил Милбанк, подчеркивающий гармоническую связь всего творения с Богом. Радикальные ортодоксы отмечают центральную роль для христианского мировоззрения сакраментальности, литургии и религиозной эстетики, отмечая важность познания Бога всеми органами чувств. Характерной особенностью этого направления теополитической мысли является всесторонняя критика модерна и либерализма. Радикальная ортодоксия считает, что церковь должна играть для общества роль культурного критика и быть инициатором общественных трансформаций. Милбанк и Пабст стремятся выстраивать современный дискурс в парадигме постсекуляризма, преодолевая миф об автономии светской рациональности. Милбанк отстаивает идею восстановления роли теологии как дискурса, задача которого состоит не только в осмыслении, но и в критике и легитимации всех общественных знаний. Его ключевой тезис состоит в том, что в корне секулярных социальных теорий лежит насильственная онтология, а её генеалогию можно проследить в истории политико-философских идей Нового времени, от Томаса Гоббса до Фридриха Ницше. Милбанк доказывает, что именно концепт секуляризма, с характерной для него насильственной онтологией, способствовал усилению власти государства, которое приобрело роль единого инструмента установления мира между перманентно конфликтующими индивидами. Но, с другой стороны, в результате образования этого светского пространства произошло превращение государства в инструмент насилия.

Существует три основные группы оппонентов концепций Джона Милбанка, одни выступают в защиту секулярности, что чревато потерей нейтрального пространства для диалога, вторые критикуют отстаивание радикальным ортодоксом христианства как единоверного метанарратива, что, по мнению оппонентов Милбанка, открывает путь для тоталитарного догматического насилия, а третья группа пытается найти более конструктивную позицию между радикальным отрицанием секуляризма и их поддержкой. В контексте продолжения линии мнения второй группы, отмечена амбициозность взглядов Милбанка, в которых оправданно усматривается опасность тоталитарности христианского дискурса. Более взвешенный подход к решению этой проблемы усматривается в возможности сохранения мировоззренческого плюрализма и возможности выражения различных мировоззренческих позиций в публичном пространстве. Рассмотрен предлагаемый Милбанком концепт построения убедительного мифа о врожденном миролюбии человека, призванный преодолеть нигилистический метанарратив современности, для которого характерна насильственная онтология. Согласно Милбанку, такая замена нарратива может способствовать минимизации насилия. Сущностные аспекты его концепта можно подытожить в трех основных составляющих: во-первых, практика милосердия и прощения; во-вторых, примирение, единство между различиями и практика добродетели; в-третьих, оптимистичный взгляд на человека и его природу, что обуславливает возможность мирного сосуществования людей. Представлен более взвешенный взгляд на природу человека, учитывающий склонность человека к насилию, эксплуатации и непримиримости, так и проявления милосердия, любви и общей заботы об общем благе. Предложено приобщить рациональную составляющую этого аргумента, отстаивающую эффективность христианской практики примирения на основе исторических данных.

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Post-liberal Political Theology and the De-Christianization of Society

Abstract: The article is devoted to analysis of intellectual and theological achievements of radical orthodoxy, one of the most influential theological and political discourses of postmodern era. Stating the turning point in the history of Western civilization and its political systems, theologians of radical orthodoxy put forward and substantiated an integral project of post-liberal socio-political system, which, in their opinion, contains practical ways to overcome the crisis of neoliberal society. The most systematic theo-political projects within the framework of radical orthodoxy were proposed by John Milbank and Adrian Pabst. Their goal is manifested in an attempt to rethink politics and society in a post-secular paradigm, trying to return transcendent values to public space. Theological concepts of reforming the political system proposed by W. Cavanaugh and A. Pabst are scarcely explored in Western theology, and they remain virtually unknown for the local scientific community. Thus, lack of systematic study of theo-political concepts of radical orthodoxy and of their critical analysis determines the relevance of this study. Today theo-political radical orthodox vision is extremely relevant for the Ukrainian context, particularly because of its emphasis on the need for decentralization, which promotes active participation of citizens in democratic processes. Given the dominance of post-truth and manipulative technologies in the local public space, as well as deepening frustration with the liberal system, the project of post-liberalism can become an alternative, primarily because of a proposed vision of a more virtuous politics. At the same time, structural reforms in political, economic, and educational spheres proposed by the radical orthodox are valuable. Their post-secular understanding of the role of theology, which is designed to rethink all spheres of human life, can facilitate the change of the political theology paradigm from isolationism regarding the state and social institutions to the reconsidered socio-political role of the church.

Comprehensive study of the political theology of radical orthodoxy was conducted, in particular, theo-political concepts of its most influential representatives, namely J. Milbank and A. Pabst.

Defining theological intentions of radical orthodoxy were compared with other modern trends in political theology, which helped to conclude that the vast majority of current theo-political theories retain the dualism of sacred and secular, while radical orthodoxy aims to overcome it, focusing on the average ideal synthesis of these areas. J. Milbank's critique of social theories is based on the demonstration of a violent ontology of secular constructs, which determines the crisis state of the modern liberal-democratic system. The concept of the «ontology of peace» formulated by J. Milbank was studied, in which instead of traditional narrative of overpowering conflict of social order caused by the desire of social actors to self-preservation, and an alternative narrative of the ontological possibility of harmonious coexistence of mankind was proposed. Milbank and other representatives of radical orthodoxy are characterized by optimistic anthropology, which is based on the belief in the fundamental goodness of creation and the innate human tendency to peaceful and harmonious interaction. It is proved that this view does not have sufficient theological and historical grounds. It is proposed to balance the optimistic anthropology of radical orthodoxy with the theological tradition of pessimistic anthropology, as throughout history in society there are manifestations both of total violence, exploitation, and intolerance, and manifestations of mercy, love, and common concern for the common good. It was proved that the emphasis on one of these characteristics of human nature leads to a biased view of reality, and hence the emergence of unviable political theology. It is suggested to comprehend human nature within the framework of categories of «humble» anthropology, according to which a person, who understands his or her own tendency to injustice and violence, by all means seeks peaceful and harmonious interaction with other members of society. It was proved that J. Milbank's political theology has considerable potential for a critical understanding of a secular order and its inherent division of the sacred world of the church and the secular autonomous space of public policy, economy and other spheres of public life. In an attempt to return transcendence to public discourse, J. Milbank thus encourages the church to influence all spheres of society by transforming them. It is proposed to modify the theory of postliberalism, preserving its ideological and ethical foundations, and supplementing them with a more balanced view of human nature. This concept, which can be described as «post-secular liberalism», complements the desire of supporters of radical orthodoxy to solve the internal problems of liberalism.

The critique of the theo-political concepts of radical orthodox was systematized and generalized and several of its directions are singled out. In particular, Milbank's denial of secularism is criticized as the one that may cause the loss of a neutral space for dialogue. It was specified that:

By formulating the basic ideas of «Christian socialism», J. Milbank goes beyond conventional understanding of right and left political spectra, justifying the need for a «third way» outside the «socialist» discourse. Milbank criticizes the historical manifestations of socialist policy as one that seeks to operate within the capitalist market, emphasizing the need for a global restructuring of the «rules of the game» and their replacement by the principles of mutual exchange of gifts, equitable distribution of goods and return to the economy of values. As this concept contradicts the historical experience of socialist economies, Milbank's project seems more appropriate to be described in terms of «solidarity», «theology of fair exchange» or «post-capitalist economy».

Keywords: post-liberalism, post-secularity, transcendental values, public space, political theology.

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Transformation of Religious Sacrality into Dionysian Practices of Communication

Abstract: The article analyzes the spiritual situation of our time, which is characterized by the domination of the values of the consumer society, individualization and atomization, erosion of the status of the Alien in modern society, systemic crisis of sociality, significant transformations of the communicative culture of a modern person. It is substantiated that the "market man" and at the same time an ordinary representative of the consumer society sees the purpose of life in the acquisition of well-being, comfort and pleasure "here and now". The market transcends ideologies, forming an ideal space not as a meeting place, but as a space of empty distance, which absorbs any distance, including the human personality and the belief in God, turning it into a commodity. The logic of the market, subordinated to its own logic, forms a person as a monadic consumer – "situational I", which does not so much adapt to the situation as it adapts to the situation of the market idol, forcing a person to impersonal communication with other people. In these circumstances, market assessment takes place as a devaluation of the human personality, its translation into a discourse of a functional purpose, constitutes a radically different, in comparison with the Christian, anthropological model. It is noted that in the conditions of modern society, the Orthodox community cannot unite solely on the basis of a common faith, but needs to strengthen the loci of common interests and experiences. It is shown that the Orthodox community embodies an intersubjective existential community in a consonant experience of being. The processes of transformation of the communicative space of modern society, filled with modular sensory-rich communications, virtualized communication on the Internet, have been critically rethought. These aspects, have an ambivalent influence on the state of sociality of modern society, embody its significant communicative tendencies: aestheticization and increase in "fast" communications, replacing the depth of communications with their diversity; tendencies to remove a person from direct communication in favor of a virtual one.

Keywords: religious sacredness, consumer society, values of Christianity, post-Christian culture, tolerance, theological dialogue with the Other, atomized society, communication.

The modern era is characterized as something conceptually indefinite, such that does not lend itself to meaningful description, but is better clarified with the prefix "post" and even "inter-", metaphors of incompleteness, openness, fragmentation, eclecticism, contextuality, decentration, as well as the absence of a common convention about the goals and ways of further following mankind. This time, which, according to V. Welsh, acts as a "constitution of radical plurality", in which real radical plurality forms the basis of the constitution of communities, determining other "plural images of meaning and action" (Welsh, 2004:15–16).

The question arises, can the modern era be something value-related with Christianity? By the generality of certain thought constructs, an affirmative answer follows. Such, which John Burkhard mentions, noting such unifying positions: rejection of a dualistic view of the world; from any forms of "basicity"; from "totalization" and the role of metanarratives; from inhuman nihilism; and, conversely, a positive attitude towards relativity and the return of the other (Burkhard, 2004:6). In general, agreeing with him, we will not overestimate their points of contact, highlighting the two main loci of modern society that make impossible their value dialogue and synthesis – the market and consumer society as the quintessence of the spiritual situation of our time.

The market and consumer society, as a kind of value proposition, constitute the main competition for Christianity in the spiritual space of modern society. This is not surprising, because since the time of its emergence, Christianity has oriented a person to a radically different axiological model. Hence followed the tasks of educating the "inner" person, called to spiritual growth, and not to worldly success; a person who would recognize God's law as the basis of his worldview and relationships with other people and, accordingly, the Christian type of personality as the foundation of the evangelization of society (Beilin and others, 2019).

The most destructive for the future Christian community is the system that contributes to the formation of a personality type opposite to the Christian one, which is observed on the example of a "market man" and at the same time an ordinary representative of a consumer society with his down-to-earth interests, desires, values, massization of ideas and preferences, and philistine morality. The purpose of such a person's life is prosperity, comfort and enjoyment "here and now", and not the expectation of the triumph of the Kingdom of God. Postmodern anarchy of desires strives to be free from any seriousness, and therefore tries to free itself from religion (Cherenkov,205:285).

The specificity of the market ideology, according to David Hart, is that "the market transcends ideologies; it represents a post-Christian culture of communication, commerce and modern values, a myth that shapes the economy, politics and morality of modernity, an ideal space in which desires are formed; this place is any place, the distance of all things, now even not a market square, not a meeting place, not a public place, but simply dry, empty distance that absorbs any other distance" (Hart 2010: 645).

Thus, D. Garth does not even point to the anti-Christian dominant of the market. In the context of the fact that Christianity can also be sold as a commodity, "packing" it into a person's desire to be connected to the highest reality, chosen by God, devoted to God and society. Associated with this is a certain experience of reincarnating oneself into another – a person who is consumed by the market and created by the market from what she consumes" (Hart, 2010:647–649).

Obviously, in this case, we should talk about the market type of person, when the situational "I" does not so much adapt to the situation as it adapts to the market situation. Idol is coolly observing the torment of this adaptation.

The market reduces a person either to the manufacturer or to the consumer of the product and draws him into the network of market communications with people.

Under such conditions, market assessment takes place, which is a devaluation of the human personality, its translation into a discourse of a functional purpose. So, according to E. Fromm, "personal market", which sells specialists, the exchange value of which consists of two components – professional competence and "pleasant personality" (Fromm, 1992). Personality also becomes an object of sale. Personality pleasure is assessed as a set of appearance, manners and character traits demanded by the market, such as cheerfulness, energy, ambition and other qualities.

Self-presentation skills and self-promotion provide added value. Fundamental and important for interpersonal relationships character traits, in particular sincerity, decency, honesty, are shifted to the sidelines (Frankl, 1990:72–73). The most important thing is that a mechanism tested within the framework of the personality market, reproduced for a long time, transforms a person's perception of himself. The subject of the market is a monadic consumer of the free market, or the capitalist is ready for risky undertakings (Hart, 2010:652) – not to worry about real self-realization.

Rather, he is trained to be a demanded "product" or someone who has become a "product" enough to determine the price of this "product", living in the first case according to the principle: "I am what you want!", And in the second – "You are what the market wants from me"! Market volatility does not provide for the intrinsic value of a person, on the contrary, it calculates ways to replace one person with another; the cycle of reincarnations with the depletion of the resource of people and the subsequent search for a human source of resources. So, living by the values of the market is like turning away from the cross of Christ and worshiping the golden calf.

In a traditional society, for a long time associated with the Christian religion, excess consumption was in every possible way restrained thanks to the levers of responsibility before God, family, clan, workshop, homeland. The same social strata that consumed more than others tried to legitimize this in an ethical or religious manner. In the first case, through service to the fatherland, charity, patronage; in the second – "by birthright", when material well-being was justified by belonging to a certain family, was considered the will of God.

The situation changed with the advent of the era of individualized consumption and its acquisition of a hypertrophied form due to the rise in the value of individual pleasure, as well as atomized-disintegration processes in society, which minimized the possibility of community suppression of consumerism. Modern Christianity, as in previous times, does not approve of excessive consumption, seeing in it a manifestation of man's sinfulness and depravity, the result of his falling into a state of spiritual seduction, when a person takes a lie for truth.

Not only because of the destructive attitude for Christian spirituality, but also because of its ability to marginalize Christians in a global context (Cherenkov, 2015:289]. More precisely, to offer the modern person a life strategy that will distract him from Christianity. This is not surprising, because consumer values are attractive to a modern person as much as hedonism has been attractive at all times. Desire acts as the subjective basis of the market, because "it thrives on desire… This is not the desire of God or another, but the desire for nothing like that which produces only for the growth of desire "; "A wandering desire… tending to consumerism and the subsequent sale and advertising of fascinating garbage and pleasant amenities" (Hart, 2010:649–650).

Desires growing exponentially, transformation through advertising mechanisms into a cult, are able to obscure the Christian paradigm, distracting from it and forming a radically different life dominant.

Under such conditions, Christianity moves to "islands" surrounded by market relations. What is happening around these "islets"? hunting continues, the participants of which are contemporaries, as Z. Bauman called, "people-hunters" (Bauman, 2013:149–151), which coexist in one territory, a global confrontational field and treat others as a "resource" or as a "barrier" for a successful hunt. The values of consumerism have not only anti-Christian, but also anti-dialogue potential.

As a specific lifestyle, consumerism is distinguished, on the one hand, by the advantage of the economy over culture, and, on the other hand, by the intentions of consumption over the intentions of activity and communication. We are talking about its ability to generate pseudo-dialogue and pseudo-integrating strategies that significantly impoverish interpersonal communication. To unite consumers around a certain brand or a separate product in order to create a feeling of belonging to the fetish, what it seems to contain, hide, and offer.

To transfer a certain product into the sphere of status necessity and symbolization by providing it with those characteristics that it does not actually possess. Generate consumerist metaphysics of spirits – a personal form of commodity metaphysics, when consumer ideology forces us to use commodity markers to designate important events and stages of their lives; your moods, thoughts and feelings. The result of all this is to create a quasi-religious cult, translating the religious energy of many people into the mainstream of Dionysian practices. Substantially, through leveling the possibility of intersubjective communication due to the shift in the focus of her attention – from another person in favor of a reified quasi-subject with whom the person is in an internal "dialogue". This quasi-subject becomes such efforts of the advertising machine of branding, which "imposes" on the product qualities unusual for it, including sensory loci – to capture, grant freedom and a feeling of lightness, amaze and the like. Branding of a product, with the aim of selling it, also changes the axiological attitudes of the human consumer himself – from communication to cupping and collecting; from an attempt to find his calling to the desire to surround himself with fetishized markers of his own well-being (Gaznyuk, Dyachenko, 2019:148). Thus, the consumer type of personality is cultivated, which exists according to the principle "Work and use!" The life of such a person is divided into two parts: the consumption of goods and the reproduction of oneself for the most productive consumption.

As D. Hart notes, the market and the dominant on consumption also melt "the refractory values of beauty, need, and awe, transforming them into a universal value of value." The subsequent anti-Christian dominant of the market is the impossibility to draw the line between the gift and the object of consumption, when the gift as such seems to disappear, and "any existence takes the form of a consumer object" (Hart, 2010:.655). How consumerism can transform the perception of spiritual values was clearly shown by Z. Bauman, considering this on the example of glory. He notes that if earlier fame was the result of long-term hard work in accordance with one's own talent, which bore fruitful fruits, today fame has been replaced by popularity "as an instant version of immortality" (Bauman, Electronic resource). The transfer mechanism is the same – from long and complex to fast and simple, interesting for perception, even provocative. Interpersonal relationships are also transformed into the market method, which should be either useful or pleasant, allowing either to work productively, or efficiently, with maximum pleasure, to consume.

The personality that has developed in the consumer society internalizes its own values onto other people, expecting the same from them – to help satisfy needs, create a feeling of comfort, ease, and the like. In this vein, one can single out the model of "pure relations" that is relevant for modern society, already in a secular version, and not in the way it is presented in Catholicism. This refers to the concept of "pure relationships" by E. Giddens (Giddens, Electronic resource) where he considers love as one of the manifestations of "pure relationships" – relationships, the significance of which is determined by themselves, more precisely, by their eudemonistic component. They are based on emotional communication; unconditional perception and acceptance of another personality, mutual self-disclosure; do not contain any purpose other than their own continuation. But they stop in the same way, if one of the parties, through some internal or external circumstances, no longer experiences the joy of "pure" communication. Even family relationships today are influenced by the primacy of "clean relationships". As S. Bauman rightly notes, in modern society we observe a deviation from the traditional (deontological) goals of family life towards its arbitrary interpretation: "The orientation of the spouses towards mutual responsibility to children and family is minimized.

Partnership in marriage is also considered to be something to be consumed, not produced; it is evaluated according to the same criteria as all other consumer goods… when the task becomes to get pleasure from a product that is already ready for use " (Bauman, Electronic resource).

The formation of a market type of personality is accompanied by high dynamics of aestheticization of the world perception. This is understandable, because the aesthetic dominant, in terms of brightness, imagery, attractiveness, is laid in the basis of sales strategies designed to sell goods as quickly and profitably as possible.

One of the most popular selling methods is art – a universal code that most people understand, as is the protocol of meanings. Another universal code for people is beauty, which is associated with health, youth, happiness and hope for the best. Beauty attracts attention and grabs, which means it makes you buy. Beauty is inseparable from fashion, which offers us ways to "package" beauty. The fluidity of fashion only emphasizes the absoluteness of beauty. However, it makes it possible for each person to become closer to the aesthetic ideal. The "heroes" of consumer culture show how to do this in practice. Their task is to demonstrate to the public how to be fashionable and stylish in this sense, not only in clothes and accessories, but also in behavior and lifestyle. In a consumer society, aesthetic discourse extends to various spheres: not only for sale, but, for example, on public life and politics, when one or another policy is chosen optimal for its anthropological characteristics clothing, manners, and even a lifestyle intended for external consumption.

The next important point from the perspective of theological dialogue is the change in the status of the Other and the Alien in modern society (at least in the countries of Christian civilization). Contrary to the policy of tolerance declared by governments and numerous public organizations of various state and global programs, it requires a certain social background that is favorable to minimize xenophobia, fear and hatred of the Alien or bias towards the Other.

This is a rather difficult task in the context of modular fast interactions, various ideological influences against the background of a not always stable socio-economic situation and our life in the present time. The notion of tolerance itself is not well-established either, which is understood as a sufficiently wide range of phenomena that do not fall under the characteristics of aggressive behavior. In modern civilized society, the universal way of responding to otherness (either otherness or alienation) of a second person is tolerance as a form of loyal, non-aggressive attitude towards the Other, "not like you".

Such a cultural reaction to the "not like" one suffered by the response of a civilized society to the victims of world and numerous civil wars, revolutions and other social upheavals. From the standpoint of common sense, it is quite understandable – tolerance is better than enmity. However, it must be admitted that tolerance is not a homogeneous phenomenon, and its ranking is based on many criteria. V. Lektorskoy proposed the optimal gradation of tolerance, firstly, as indifference to the religious, philosophical and everyday views of the Other; secondly, as respect for the Other, views, worldview paradigms of which the I cannot understand, with which I cannot interact and at the same time realizing that all cultures are different; thirdly, tolerance as the superiority of the weakness of the Other, who has less true beliefs, and the resulting need to endure the disadvantages of the Other's views; fourthly, tolerance as respect for the position of the Other, combined with an attitude towards mutual changes in views as a result of a critical dialogue (Lektorsky, 2001:34).

Therefore, in addition to the positive consequences of restraining aggressive impulses, a tolerant society may face the threat of general indifference to the "Other", no longer an enemy, but not a friend either; near, but at the same time far. More precisely, a stranger whom I will not try to get to know, so as not to violate his privacy rights. One of the definitions of tolerance suggests its interpretation as a type of indifference to the forms of pleasure of the Other. On the contrary, in the norm the ethical "response" to the pain and suffering of the Other is a natural human reaction – compassion.

In the case of tolerance, one should not look for "pure" correspondences to this construct in simple moral norms or in Christian morality. As for the latter, she talks about the need for patience, humility, reconciliation and, especially, about love. But all these feelings are "cordial", devoid of rational layers and are quite understandable to every person, which cannot be said about tolerance. Despite its rational design, it is a difficult phenomenon to comprehend.

"Tolerance in relation to another person is tolerance, which is always compulsory, and then can become hatred, violence (Vasil'va, 2009:298). This means that it, like any synthetic construct, needs support and cultivation.

Restraining manifestations of one's own religiosity for the sake of tolerance towards Others can have different consequences. One of them was named by F. Fukuyama, who believes that the obligation to be open to all beliefs and "value systems" of the world weakens the ability to adhere to any one doctrine, because of which the power of social life is declining (Fukuyama, 2004:487). In the modern world, this manifests itself in a spiritual search for oneself, which can take on various forms: from faith to nihilism; from spiritual development in the bosom of one religion to eclecticism, when a person simultaneously combines, for example, the Christian worldview with elements of some other religious systems.

Or, on the contrary, begins to perceive equality in the diversity of religious beliefs as homogeneous equality. At the anthropological level, the phenomenon of tolerance becomes a "technology of dehumanization" or "psychotechnology of indifference" and contributes to the destruction of the dignity of the individual, breaking his unique features (Sukhova, 2017: 125). Modern man is woven into an extremely complex web of relationships: formal and emotional, and most of all "mixed", those that combine the components of the former and the latter.

Tolerance constitutes the official discourse of these relations, V. Gösle calls it the experiences of community, "experience-We" (Giosle, 2003:88). Any person has a desire to create a "We-Community", which is fundamentally different from the "We-Society". If the first is united by common values, then the second – by common interests (Giosle, 2003: 89). Therefore, "We-community" constitutes a unique experience, not available for collectivist forms of sociality, where the difference between I and You does not disappear, but there is a sense of the unity of the crowd; and together with the experience of long-term cooperation, there is a feeling of the border of sincerity and irreversibility of frankness – the correct ratio of proximity and distance (Giosle, 2003:88–92), which lays a solid foundation for long-term interaction. Hence the conclusion that any community, from family to Christian community, built only on the value of tolerance, without love, not only cannot be active, but in general cannot be. Returning to the typology of tolerance, although, from the standpoint of the theory of dialogue, we note that the second and last forms of tolerance are potentially dialogical, the latter is more promising in the aspect of constructive dialogue. But something else is more important: indifference or neglect cannot be its basis. The maximum is possible under such circumstances – "label dialogue" as a means of avoiding "sharp corners" and "hot conflicts", a tribute to good breeding and civilization.

Even more difficult is the situation with understanding the difference between the Other and the Alien. And it's not just the nonlinearity of verification and the ambiguity of the answer to the question: is the Other always the Other; is the Other always the Stranger?

Obviously, this perception is somewhat more complicated, namely: blurring the boundaries between "otherness" and "alienation" as a way of perceiving others and at the same time "property" as a way of self-perception. According to S. Bauman: "Alien" who allegedly disappeared becomes invisible, but the same as it is everywhere, and fear of him becomes irrational, against which the rational value of tolerance does not help (Bauman, 2013:22). Note that nothing is so difficult to be corrected at the level of individual and social consciousness, as what is hidden in the sphere of the unconscious.

The strangeness, which is "in the shadow", seems even more threatening, because, in addition to the objective and imposed qualities attributed to it, it scares the very possibility of coming out "into the light". From the standpoint of the theory of dialogue, the Alien is a locus of comparison, the most effective identifier of identity, which best articulates the value positions of the person himself. The Alien's concealment from himself or the alienation in himself is equivalent in the first case – unwillingness to understand the antagonistic position of another person; in the second – unwillingness to understand the real self.

Both the first and the second cases create a situation of impossibility of dialogue due to the uncertainty of positions, when the distance remains immeasurable, which means it is not clear whether this person is at a distance of distinguishability or separation? The problem is also connected with the previous one: myopia in relation to the Alien is combined with farsightedness in relation to His and even oneself. This refers to the rapid crisis of the institution of family and friendship relations, attested by many sociologists and philosophers.

Without going into detailed analysis about the crisis of the institution of marriage, let us give the argumentation of S. Bauman, who among the reasons for this crisis calls the transfer of competition relations from the outside by the husband and wife to relations in the family. The reasons for the crisis of friendly relations are similar – the consumer attitude towards friends and their transformation into a resource for earnings, career growth, recreation, and the like. These processes of confusion of spheres and roles lead to the destruction of sociality, both at the level of a small social group (community) and society.

As a result, the personality will also suffer moral losses, being in the whirlpool of these perturbations.

The atomization of society is one of the complex "challenges" for Christian dialogism in theory and life. Individualism as a life strategy presupposes the primacy of a person who is free and responsible for his choice. Personality brings personal interest to the fore, even if it conflicts with the interests of the community (Beilin, Zheltoborodov, 2019:24). Of course, individualism is optimally correlated with individualized (one-on-one with God) forms of communication with God. Which, in fact, explains the significant spread of these forms in the modern world. With certain reservations, the individualist worldview does not contradict the Christian social tradition of Protestantism. It is less convergent to the Orthodox social tradition with its communal setting of the conciliar level. An atomized society, consisting of free, autonomous and indifferent people to each other, is being restored on the basis of not even a non-conciliar, but a counter-conciliar paradigm. If collegiality is a dialogical paradigm of collectivity, aimed at achieving completeness of interaction-communication with God and with each other, then it is expedient to characterize the counter-assembly that is emerging today as collective narcissism, rigoristic self-focus, the reason for which is the excessive expansion of the "circles" of the self of each individual person, when "circles", "growing", do not intersect, but overlap each other, forming a "blind spot" of rejection and misunderstanding of the Other; inability to feel and hear the voice of the One who stands behind your "back".

Catherine Hales, describing possible transformations of sociality in the future, considers when an individual person will consider himself a "posthuman community", and "I" turns into "we" (Hales, 2013:27). Hence, the illusion of one's own exclusiveness and the exclusiveness of one's own existence in the world does not correspond to any "human" (trusting, friendly, etc.) forms of community. However, it is important to note that in a postmodern society, individualism and atomization do not appear as "pure types". In premodern, modernist and postmodernist societies, the collectivist, individualistic and pluralistic types of sociality are correlated, respectively (Grechko, Kurmeleva, 2009:232), which allows us to assume the presence of certain syntheses and compromises, mixed forms of social interaction.

The modern era is an era of morality without ethics, it develops along the vector of post-obligations, more precisely, an arbitrary set of duties formed by the person himself, as he himself wishes. More precisely, it should be called an era when no one can force a person to be moral. Moreover, against the background of ever-increasing trends in replacing strategic rationality with communicative, when both in political and personal life, communicative openness can become the only moral norm. It means that any act, even immoral, can be justified when it is not hidden, but made public, that is, moral behavior and communicative openness are considered synonymous (Giosle, 2003:70). This, of course, contradicts common sense, but it acts as a surprisingly convenient, sophistic strategy, when, instead of the still actual moral simulacrum of the conformist sense – "to be moral means to seem", an even more amorphous version of morality is proposed – "to be moral means to communicate communicatively both your morality and your immorality. "

Now the nature of communication between people is changing, laid down in the era of the "Gutenberg galaxy" – a book culture that developed a civilization of gradual reading: from letter to letter; from page to page, with the ability to go back, to the beginning, to the middle; the constant movement of writer's work – from form (thing) – to content (work) – to form (semantic), etc.; communication – from hand to hand, from house to house, with a potential charge of reading (Bibler, 2018:53).

By analogy, the civilization of mass media and Internet culture generates hypertext fragmented, rhizomorphic, inconsistent communication as the embodiment of personal freedom, which can lead both to an intersubjective meeting and to the loneliness of despair and despondency. But, in any case, it calls not so much to "read" and "re-read" relationships, but to move forward – to new meetings, relationships and events (Gazniuk and others, 2019). The famous "death of the author" (R. Barth), in addition to literary discourse – the interpretation of the text outside the author's context, – also has a communicative and even social meaning – the loss of not only the "author", but also the "authority" – someone who could become a model of your life.

In this situation, everyone can freely become an author for himself, deciding his own destiny. But, even going there, a person is free to turn abruptly from this path; go in the opposite direction; stop and not budge, deciding that "your Rome" is right here.

Finally, due to the widespread functioning of the latest communication technologies, a person communicates less "face to face" with other people, which virtualizes the world of communication; turns communication into interactions of "avatars" – personal "icons" on the Web. An "icon" is not an icon, but an image. The image, which can be real or fictional, does not coincide with the real qualities of a person, in fact, broadcasting his desire or hiding his complexes, sets an invisible border between the Other-real and virtual. Hospitality can also be virtual – not an invitation to visit or a friendly tea party, but a "virtual tea ceremony" – not ethical, with a minimum of ethics and etiquette.

Relationship turns into communication, information exchange between communicants. The proportion of interactions is growing – "fast" communicative interactions; the freedom to elect and be elected as a "partner" in communication is increasing, as is the freedom to break off communication. The feeling of lack of time is aggravated, combined with the desire for maximum benefit and pleasure. There is a "taste" for sensory-rich "narratives" before simulating reality, which oversaturated sensuality, which further requires more and more stimulation. The sensory saturation of communication does not provide for the strengthening of its dialogical component.

Rather, on the contrary, it stimulates communication in the "action" style, if watching and listening is not at all the same as seeing and hearing; get an impression or impress another rather than convince. The art of impressing another is presented even more radically, which begins to be equated with the art of his persuasion. It is clear that dynamic communication is more focused on the exchange of information rather than the exchange of meanings. However, given the "openness" of its participants and the simplicity of the problem, it does not exclude dialogical communication. Dialogue is not determined by the duration of communication, but it takes a significant amount of time when it comes to complex issues and problems, in particular concerning religious life.

The orientation of a modern person and communities of people to “fast” communications is further enhanced by the development of mental skills for communication on the Internet. As theorists of the information society note, the growth of freedom and dynamics of communication is one of the positive qualities of this communication, which allows a person not only to communicate, but also to develop in the way he wishes.

Among the negative consequences can be called the lack of depth in such communications and the transformation of a person into a nomad, which, moving forward, does not stop and does not linger anywhere, “sliding” not only on the surface of a computer screen, but also in relations with other people, replacing their depth with variety; the formation of the so-called “Human-telematic”, “homeostasis of a person with a machine”, when not only “the machine does only what the person requires of it, but also the person does what is programmed by the machine (Baudrillard, 2006:83–86), losing real “humanity”.

M. Castells also warns against something like this, speaking about the ability of “real virtuality” to fully embrace a person, immersing him in fictional worlds, replacing the real reality (Castells, 2000). Z. Bauman agrees with him, stating that one of its consequences is the development of the so-called “moral blindness” – a deliberate disrespect for another, a conscious refusal to understand and recognize a different type of person, breaking off relations with those who are alive, real that does and speaks next to us, and all this for the sake of a fictional “friend” on Facebook (Bauman, 2014: 16).

The development of mental habits of self-presentation is associated with communication in social networks. Along with the positive aspects associated with self-development, they reveal the so-called deficit of subjectivity. The essence of this deficit lies in linking one’s own personality with its visual, image “prints” in public space, creating a simulacrum of a person in public life. At the same time, it acts as a form of self-deception, when not being present on social networks means losing… Those who do not declare and do not pay taxes to electronic technologies will face social isolation. Refusal to join Facebook leads to the loss of friends (the madness is that you can have a thousand friends on Facebook), but… a miracle and happiness to find at least one true friend in life) ” (Bauman, 2014: 10).

At the same time, another thing is also important – the already mentioned tendency of replacing depth with activity, quantity, brightness, creates a completely different paradigm of human life compared to the traditional one in modern society. At the same time, be that as it may, thanks to the Internet space, a virtual agora is created – that addition, that alternative to real direct human communication.

However, is the virtual agora always an alternative to any other "live" communication? We think not, because it can become a space of existential sentences, "creative nothing" – a point of bifurcation: on the one hand, fake communication in fictional worlds, and on the other hand, authentic virtual communication. This is what the representatives of the Orthodox Church constantly emphasize, they also note the advantages of instant communication at a distance, suitable for the ever-increasing "inculturation" of Orthodoxy (Basil, 2015:18).

In this context, the question is posed: "Christ on Facebook? Is there Christ on the Internet? "And an affirmative answer follows: yes, He is there (Kovalenko, 2015:348), although, of course, not in its bodily manifestation. If the means of disseminating information in general change, then the means by which the Church must bring the message of Christ to the world change, which, in particular, can contribute to "the development of the conciliarity of the Church, because thanks to these means, communication between people around the world becomes possible. And thus, the realization of the conciliarity of the Church, its universality is possible" (Kovalenko,2012:268). It is difficult to disagree with this, because the latest, virtualized configurations of space – the essence of the civilizational whims of man, can affect the transhistoric nature of communication between the creation and its Creator. The invariability of the "rules" of communion with God, established more than two millennia ago, is limited by the communicative "minimum", which includes three rules. According to the first rule, Christians are members of the people of God, and are actually or virtually called to communion with God; in accordance with the second rule, the intentions of communion with God must be consistent, even simultaneous, as regards their temporal, not spatial characteristics.

The communicative minimum of prayer is not rigidly tied to the locus of space, but dependent on the locus of time. Simply put, communication requires the synchronization of people and time in real or virtual prayer to the Lord. This makes virtual communication possible, in its non-substantial discourse. Internet communication is essential for modern Orthodoxy; there is no need to absolutize or level its cultural or religious significance. The most correct position is that this phenomenon should be reckoned with, recognizing its powerful capabilities of information and communication support for modern Orthodoxy.

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Neo-Religions as Technologies Human Self-Impovement

Abstract: The article outlines the philosophical and religious analysis of anthropological doctrines, concerning the improvement of man and offered by them practices of the spiritual transformation of the human person. It is shown that neo-religious doctrines have clear features of alternative religiosity, namely: the eclectic intertextual nature of sources associated with various ideological traditions of previous eras – from shamanism and magic to Russian cosmism and psychoanalysis. It is revealed, that they all try to synthesize the mystical experience of various religious traditions with the latest concepts of natural sciences and psychology; offer technologies of the transformation of personal consciousness and declare their effectiveness at a clear performance of the specific procedures and rules of life and social behavior. In the above anthropological conceptions it is traced the common desire of the author to write the person in the context of alternative cosmological ontology attempts to present the essence of the human being as energy, interaction guide to the energy structure of the Universe. Thus, in all neo-religious forms anthropological limit is removed, and the person gets the opportunity of limitless improvement and transformation of his spiritual essence, going beyond the boundaries of earthly existence in the universe. The limit of human transformation and the promotion of it in the spirit in the way depends on the person: his level of "personal power" and perfect lifestyle (C. Castaneda), and the level of organization of the energy subtle structure (Roerich), the level of spiritual mastery of technology (R. Hubbard), but in the end – from the degree of aspiration for improvements and perseverance. All considered non – religious forms define a person as a cosmic being, capable of going beyond the boundaries of earthly life into infinity, losing at the same time the "human form", the body, leaving personal consciousness and turning into a subtle energy being that does not need a bodily carrier, gaining access to the infinity of space and time, while remembering all their previous rebirths. It is noted that a person who follows the path of self-improvement receives superpowers, which in non-religious forms are associated, first of all, with mastering the energies of the Universe and the ability to interact with them or operate them. These aspects are interpreted from the standpoint of ontology and epistemology of neo-religious forms considered in the discourse of the philosophy of religion.

Keywords: neo – religious forms, human self-improvement, personal consciousness, mythological thinking, desecularization, religious marginality, religious experience.

The postmodern situation, which arose in the global culture in the middle of the last century, is accompanied by the "process of individualization" autonomization of personality. It is observed the detachment of a person from a network of stable social relationships which on the one hand increases freedom of choice and social mobility, reflexivity, and on the other hand, disorientation, identity crisis and affecting the change of religion of the modern person.

Worldwide globalization processes, attempts to rethink the significance of the development of technogenic civilization, the processes of massification, standardization of the way of life of modern society and dehumanization of the individual, taking place on a global scale, have also become favorable factors for the consolidation of religious marginality.

In the postmodern era, a tendency to realize the significance and partial rehabilitation of mythological thinking has been formed, which is reflected in the phenomenon of " desecularization ", a growing interest in the problems of spirituality. In the field of scientific and philosophical knowledge, this tendency manifests itself in the emergence of concepts that seek to overcome the simplified "materialism" of the worldview of classical modernity, take into account the "spiritual" aspect of reality, and restore the integrity of the worldview that was lost as a result of deep cultural differentiation. At the level of mass consciousness, the tendency to reproduce a holistic worldview is expressed in the emergence of interest in the inner world of the individual, "spiritual growth", the search for ways to realize individual existential meanings. The reaction of the individual to the complication of the social environment, "chaotization" of cultural codes, alienation, loss of the meaning of personal existence and fragmentation of the inner world are transformed into the phenomena of crisis consciousness and alternative spirituality in the form of neoreligions. For a new type of religiosity characterized by individualization of religious experience, the lack of clear religious doctrines and beliefs of a certain archaism, expressed in Magizm, faith in a variety of mythical creatures, weakening moral issues etc. That is why neo-religious movement in contemporary social space has spread in the form of social institutions, as well as in the personal forms of organization (Roerich Society), "classroom" cults (castanedianism) when the individual does not virtually fix organizationally their belonging to a certain spiritual school or direction.

The search for new forms of spirituality and the definition of personal religious identity contributed to the formation of a consumer society that cultivates individualistic moods, creates new individualized styles of consumption and turns "spirituality" into a mass commodity, stimulates demand and interest. Accordingly, the "new spirituality" of a consumer society often has such features as hedonism, hypertrophied individualism, voluntarism, and non-morality. This and the newly appeared forms of spirituality have arisen and function in the modern socio-cultural environment, presenting it as the end of modernity, a new axial time, or postmodernity. As an indicator of more global processes, taking place both in the religious and socio-cultural environment, they at the same time not only vividly embody new trends in society but also contribute to their formation.

The non – religious forms that exist today are classified as transnational global religious institutions, bringing new quality to the development of traditional religious institutions. Anthropological systems Roerich, Castaneda or Hubbard can be regarded as a manifestation of globalization in the religious world.

Religious practices are privatized, there is a shift in emphasis from collective to individual practices, and "invisible religiosity" arises. For neo-religious forms "spiritual" eclectic is a characteristic, religious authorities no longer play an important role, or virtually no, there are ideational trends, the religious pragmatism and world-orientation associated with the consumption of religious goods in the secular order, begin to dominate. A change in religious identity is taking place, which becomes an impetus for the emergence of religious marginality, because of which marginality can be a sign of a crisis worldview and a consequence of a change in identity. Although neo – religious forms do not position themselves as a religious movement, they form, like traditional religions, their own sufficiently structured cosmology, which makes it possible to erase the anthropological border and potentially extend the existence of a person in space and time almost to infinity. It also includes an abstract understanding of God, which each of the branches of the current interprets individually, hence the belief in angels, demons, fairies, spirits, ghosts and spiritual guides who guide a person on the path of spiritual development.

In the absence of an anthropological border neo-religious shape offers the specific prospects of the afterlife like about a life after the transformation of human nature to another, life that is more perfect in terms of cognitive abilities, in fact the cognition of ultimate truth is the main goal of human development. And this knowledge is also not limited to the abstract rationalist framework, as it was before, but transforms and expands in the process of transformation of human ("magical direct vision of the world," Carlos Castaneda, "field -knowledge" Roerich "operating Taetan" R. Hubbard) which happens through spiritual practices.

At the beginning of the XX century an extra-church spiritual culture was formed, a part of which became a special cultural environment, which contributed to the creation of the author's esoteric teachings on the path and purpose of human life, which had an individual character, reflecting personal mystical experience. A feature of esoteric culture is the combination of the historical traditions of the autochthonous "cult environment" and the ideological attitudes of the neo – religious movement. It offers modern society life values and ideals, social orientations and standards of behavior, which, in conditions of extreme social instability and systemic economic crisis, can provide self-determination of the individual and perform worldview, axiological, teleological, compensatory, organizational and architectonic functions at the level of individual being. It is with this that the anthropological doctrines of non-religious forms attract their followers. The second, more powerful wave of neo-religions merged with the currents of the first wave, originating in the West in the midst of the counterculture of the 50s-70s of the XX century, absorbing the ideas of the philosophy of life, existentialism, psychoanalytic philosophy and personalism.

The concept of a new, perfect and free individual, formed within the framework of the counterculture, interpreted Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of the superman in different ways. The researchers associate the understanding of the youth trend of hippies as a new round of the evolutionary process with the analysis of the creative evolution of Henri Bergson. The precondition for the alienation of the counterculture from the prevailing socio-cultural situation was the ideas of French existentialism. The experience of building communes with the idea of "sexual revolution" is based on the idea of classical psychoanalysis and neo-Freudianism about the suppression of human instinctual nature by culture and civilization. The concept of manifesting the creative potential of a person free from social pressure is based on the ideas of Emmanuel Mounier.

However, for the formation of neo-religious forms and related new quasi-religious anthropological projects, the philosophical foundations were not enough. The emerging neo-religious currents necessarily included in their concepts scientific ideas, which they managed, with varying degrees of success, to fit into eclectic doctrinal attitudes. Modern esotericism is based on the ideas of general energy-information exchange, global evolutionism, uses the most modern physical theories of the structure of the Universe. Non – religious forms offer a person not freedom of religious choice, but the opportunity to construct their religiosity with their ideas about the world and their place in it, as well as access to spiritual and social resources. They provide a modern person with alternative ways of adapting to the realities of the world, are permanently transformed, focusing on the spiritual ideal. The use of non-religious forms is facilitated by a number of social factors: the unsatisfactory state of the individual's social ties; bad experiences within traditional religions; the discrepancy between the values of the individual and the social groups in which he functions; inadequacy of the realities of life of the values that were presented in society as dominant; features of status and demographic characteristics.

A fundamental sign of a non-religious worldview is marginality, as a state of a human person when it is on the verge of different value systems, partially accepting each of them. The basis of the religious marginality of non-religious forms is axiological pluralism. Esoteric reality as symbolic reality is built on two dialectically interrelated principles of truth and faith, which, in turn, is "meaning of life" values for esoteric personality, that is self-determined, self-fulfilling, seeking to identify the potential of their own "I".

In conditions of social frustration, reassessment of social values, a person feels the need for adequate self-determination. Esoteric becomes one of the possible self-determination units of Individuals that is performed during the formation of the person-orientated identity of the individual. Esoteric self-determination of a person presupposes the construction of his own value-semantic sphere, and the space of esoteric culture gives a person a content-semantic basis for his formation. In the process of self-determination of such a person, the values of the esoteric tradition and faith begin to play an important role, which makes it possible to reveal the potential and build your own image of "I". The formation of one's own value-semantic sphere occurs on the basis of actualization of the direction of neo-religion and values of esoteric culture inherent in the chosen individual.

The analysis of the most famous religious forms made it possible to summarize the main organizational forms of esoteric movements:

- esoteric spiritual centers, recognized by all religions, as "different way to the one truth" that offer an arbitrary synthesis of modern esoteric teachings, occultism, ideas of theosophical and anthroposophical societies, Eastern spiritual practices, elements of popular psychological and philosophical theories;

- philosophical and esoteric communities, whose members discuss topical issues of a philosophical and religious nature in the form of discussions;
- non – ideological "magic" groups, in which the theoretical foundations of Buddhism and esoteric currents are studied, meditation is practiced, as well as other practices of self-disclosure and self-improvement;
- deep practices related to healing (e.g., reiki, Tibet and Ayurvedic Single medicine, acupuncture, etc.);
- Spiritual practices of the East, within which oriental martial arts are practiced;
- parapsychological schools, which include bioenergetics, psychological trainings, transpersonal psychology;
- the mantle is occult, natural and theurgic magic, shamanism, fortune-telling and predictions of the future, etc.

Within the framework of the neoreligious movement, two levels can be distinguished. The first, whose followers share specific religiously colored worldview positions and are somehow united organizationally, and the second, which is a kind of a special syncretic subculture that unites a set of people belonging to a specific segment of the modern cult environment who share the same worldview positions. Adepts of religious associations, which can reasonably be attributed to neo-religious forms, adhere to ideological positions, which are unconsciously and eclectically supported by people entering the cult environment, the so-called "audience cults" that form subcultures. Characteristic for the present esoterization leads to increased value character of esoteric culture worldwide, actualizes axiological and praxeological aspects.

There is an intensive development of various synthesized teachings and people's acceptance of the values of various esoteric practices. A manifestation of the crisis of secularization can be considered a characteristic feature of neoreligions – their orientation towards transforming society and searching for a new picture of the world (Beylin, Gaznyuk, 2017:602). A striking example of an alternative picture of the world is the "magical description of the world" by C. Castaneda. The founder of Scientology L. Ron Hubbard proposes models of not only personal transformation but also the transformation of all components of social activity, building one's life and business according to the laws of Scientology as a prototype of a perfect social system (Hubbard, 2007a). The model of the future society is, first of all, an attempt to show adherents the historical perspective of the development of non-religious forms and to outline its social ideals. Non – religious forms construct their own model of a man and the world, based on a critical attitude to the socio-political, economic, and cultural situation of our time.

Syncretism of neo-religion is characterized by the indivisibility of the rudiments of the religious and the non-religious, the sacred and the profane, however, unlike syncretism, for example, the initial religiosity, non – religious forms are often reproached for the mechanical artificial combination of these elements. If primary syncretism is a pre-religious formation, then modern eclecticism is a kind of "post-religious". The esoteric culture of non-religious forms offers a person a wide variety of alternative ways of self-improvement, sets life values and social ideals. At the level of personal being, the esoteric culture of an individual performs a number of functions:

- ideological, reflecting the fact that the esoteric system of knowledge is aimed at the formation of a person's worldview, at its spiritual self-determination and understanding of the personal meaning of life and vocation;
- axiological, indicating the need for value self-determination of a person and a social community, a part of which he identifies himself;
- teleological, associated with the definition of the goals and meanings of human life, its activities, and history;
- praxeological, assuming the creative activity of a person, built on the development of esoteric practice, in the direction of a certain spiritual landmark, which is of high importance in the formation of the internal (individual) and external (social and natural) being of an adherent of a non – religious form;
- communicative, manifested in the modern culture of neo religious forms, combining elements of spiritualism, Gnosticism, hypnotism, eastern and Egyptian myths, occult techniques and methods, astrology and esoteric anthropology, as well as elements of eastern religions;
- compensatory, which realizes through esoteric teachings those needs that, for some reason, are not really possible;
- organizational and architectonic, which is realized as a way of social connection of people, a form of organization that inspires a social group to achieve the goals of optimizing its existence.

In conditions of constant social transformations, the space of non – religious forms is increasingly serving as a substantive basis for the formation of a person's worldview. In this regard, the problem of personality self-determination in the space of esoteric culture is actualized. Esoteric self-determination occurs by assigning the innovative capacity of esoteric culture. As the sphere of the ideal, esoteric culture provides an opportunity for self-realization of the human essence, which, as you know, is most fully manifested in the sphere of spirituality, it is here that a person finds that freedom that does not exist in other spheres of social life. So, businessmen often guided in their choice by Scientology; people who see themselves as founders, but do not wish to be personally involved in based activities – a kind of seekers of a secret power – based on the ideas of Carlos Castaneda, and among people with technical education there are those, who are attracted to the spiritual subculture Agni Yoga (Roerich, 2000).

Each of the subcultures today has its own mass media, international relations, organizational structures, ideological concepts and the will to assert itself, which give rise to worldview pluralism, the tension of different-vector spiritual searches, mutual criticism, sometimes self-criticism, and at the same time – the search for ways for dialogue. Thus, they quite clearly acquire an objectively superpersonal character, creating an extraordinary diversity and richness of local, regional, national and continental cultures, which, in turn, also influence the formation of the world of the personality's outlook positions. Esoteric self-determination of a person in the movement of non-religious forms can be considered as a process and a result of assimilation, consolidation and identification of value-semantic personality formations, his life positions and attitudes, criteria of personal attitude to life events and phenomena, behavior strategies in typical and crisis situations.

The radicalism of the attitudes of alternative ways of human improvement in different directions of neo-religious forms is different, some of them preach the spiritual transformation of the earthly world as the ultimate goal of the global historical process, which has now entered a decisive stage of its development. Widespread ascetic and physio – psycho -therapeutic practices, techniques of intellectual development are characterized by socio-anthropological perfectionism. They consider the psychosomatic perfection of man as a panacea for the salvation of modern civilization from impending death. Thus, the concept of human improvement is an integral part of the anthropological doctrines of religious traditions, both monotheistic and polytheistic, both new and with a thousand-year history. They provide for the spiritual movement of man to the world of sacred meanings of a higher order: the Absolute, Tao, God and the Primordial. The goal of a person's life, striving for perfection, is the maximum approximation to the sacred, which involves crossing the anthropological border, marking the achievement of perfection (Gaznyuk, Semenova, 2018:26). The passage of the stages of spiritual growth is impossible in most traditional religions without the will of the Absolute. It is the Absolute that ultimately allows a person to start this process and determines the boundaries and success of his progress along it. In Judaism and partly in Islam, without the will of God, all human efforts will remain within the framework of "righteousness", and the achievement of perfection is possible only for the elect.

Anthropological concepts of non-religious forms have turned out to be relevant for a large number of people in the developed countries of the world since they offer each person the practice of self-improvement, following which he can achieve not only health and happiness but also success in business. Scientology offers a practical man, "religious philosophy", "tools" to improve themselves and their existence using which a person can increase their level of spiritual awareness of self and the world. Scientology offers people the "technology" to help them solve the material and psychological problems, to achieve spiritual goals, as well as to reveal the esoteric knowledge (Hubbard, 2007b).

L. Ron Hubbard considered the first stage of human development is taking care of the body. The book "Clean Body, Clear Mind" notes that during life, harmful chemicals (drugs, medicines, pesticides, dyes, preservatives, etc.) accumulate in the human body, which can interfere with spiritual development. The proposed program "Purification" is a procedure for intensive detoxification of the body and includes physical activity, taking dietary supplements and a long stay in the sauna. A feature of the program is the intake of niacin, which, according to L. Ron Hubbard, is able to remove the deposits of toxins and drugs from the cells and tissues of the body, as well as eliminate the consequences of sunburn and radiation exposure (Christensen, 2009:420–421). This program is one of the introductory services for those who wish to join Scientologists and for the rehabilitation of people with drug addiction or criminal history. According to L. Ron Hubbard, the human mind consists of two parts – the analytical mind and the reactive mind (Hubbard, 2007c). An analytical mind is a rational, perceiving, aware mind that thinks, observes and remembers data, and solves problems. The reactive mind is that part of the mind that works exclusively on an annoyingly appropriate basis. The reactive mind is not subject to the volitional control of a person, it uses force, controlling a person's consciousness, his goals, thoughts, body and actions.

In the book "Science of Survival" L. Ron Hubbard presents a technology similar to the teachings of Freud, which allows freeing a person from pain and potential problems and disagreements, which are determined by the nature of the origin of the component of the reactive mind (Hubbard, 2007c). If the mind negatively affects the body, then this is called a psychosomatic state. Thus, psychosomatic illnesses are physical illnesses caused by mental images.

The reactive mind does not store memories as the individual imagines them. It retains certain types of mind-picture images, down to the last minute detail, recording each perception, at the moment of partial or complete "unconsciousness", which can be caused by the shock of an accident, the use of anesthesia during surgery, pain from trauma or a high fever during illness as fragments of a film strip. During these periods, the analytical mind is partially or completely turned off, and the reactive mind is turned on. A person is not aware of the existence of images of the mind, however, he can activate, impose his contents, cause incomprehensible, unconscious and unwanted fears, emotions, pain and psychosomatic diseases.

According to L.Ron Hubbard, there are eight aspirations (incentives, impulses) in life, which he called "the dynamics of existence" (Hubbard, 2007c). The first dynamic is the dynamics of oneself, the desire to survive as an individual and includes the body and mind of a person. The second dynamic is creativity as creating something for the future, including family and parenting. The third dynamic is the survival of the group as a part of society, including the school, society, city, which are part of the third dynamic, and each of them is itself a third dynamic. The fourth dynamic is the survival of the species, for humans it is the survival of the human race. The fifth dynamic is life forms (flora and fauna). The sixth dynamic is the physical universe, which is made up of four parts: matter, energy, space and time. It is the pursuit of the survival of the physical universe, mediated and assisted by the physical universe and its constituent parts.

The seventh dynamic is the dynamic of the spirit, the drive to survive as spiritual beings, or the drive to survive life itself. It also includes being a person, his ability to be creative, the ability to be the reason for survival, the ability to destroy or the ability to pretend to be destroyed. The seventh dynamic is the source of life, which is separate from the physical universe and is the source of life itself. The eighth dynamic is the urge to exist as infinity and is often called God, the Supreme Being, or the Creator. Thus, it includes the universality of the world.

The concept of the eight dynamics is a key moment for the Scientology doctrine. The religious symbol of Scientology is an eight-pointed cross, symbolizing the eight dynamics discussed above life, by which man tries to survive, as well as the ability to live happily in each of these spheres of existence. Although the dynamics are not of equal importance, an individual's ability to take responsibility for each of the dynamics of being, action, and possession for each of the dynamics is an indicator of his ability to live. It is possible to understand the capabilities and disadvantages of people if we consider their participation in various dynamics and the idea of a higher reality that goes beyond the material world. “Moving up to survival at the highest levels is also an advance toward God” [Saentologicheskaya religiya, 1999:155].

By L.Ron Hubbard, as inherent in this acquisition neo-religion “spiritual technology” and comprehension of Scientological concept come into force and abilities, which acts as an additional meter of human movement up the scale of emotional tones, becomes more cheerful, optimistic, energetic and successful. These character traits are considered in Scientology as proof that the person has successfully promoted to the “complete spiritual freedom” (Hubbard, 2007d). Those actions that contribute to the survival of most of the eight aspects of life there are good and those that destroy or deny these aspects of life are evil. Scientologists tend to make decisions that improve the most dynamic of life. Scientology considers a man as an immortal spiritual being with the natural features that can be improved. Unlike the Abrahamic religions and other religious beliefs, according to which a person has a soul and is a combination of body and soul, Scientology states that man is a spiritual identity. These ideas correlate in a certain way with the Hindu ideas about reincarnation, since the body is only a temporary shell for the existing eternal principle. One of the fundamental postulates of this neo-religion is the idea that every person has existed in this life and will exist forever. According to Scientologists a man, like all things in the universe is not in a state of stability, and is capable of either development, or degradation, “In the universe and in man cannot be a state in which there is neither increase nor decrease, – absolutely stable state” (Hubbard, 2007d:278). L.Ron Hubbard proposed the so-called scale of states of existence, in which he indicated each state with dynamics of statistics and a formula for effective human activity in each of the states he identified. The followers of R. Hubbard believe that the scale he proposed is universal and “applicable to any universe, in any civilization, to any organization, to any structural unit and to any person” (Hubbard, 2007b:71). According to Scientologists, God helps those who help themselves. They believe that everyone knows the answers to the mysteries of life. You just need to realize these answers, and Scientology can help you achieve just that. The man is used to getting ready answers, and Scientology requires individuals to think for themselves on the basis of this neo-religion using special category and logical techniques. The concept of sin according to the fundamental principles of Scientology is based on the fact that a man is basically good; that he seeks to survive; that his survival depends on himself, on his neighbors and on the achievement of brotherhood with the universe (on the degree of coordination of actions among themselves) (Hubbard, 2007c). It is noted that a person often rejects rational thinking and behavior because he has lived many lifetimes in the physical universe, and committed destructive acts. These destructive actions further reduce his awareness of himself as a spiritual being, and also diminish his inherent goodness. Freedom of spirit can only be found on the path to truth. According to Scientology, sin is a lie and concealed actions, and not the truth. Scientologists believe that technology, proposed by them, will help each person to look at their actions, eliminate ignorance and aberrations that are associated with them, and again come to the knowledge and the truth.

While many religions promise salvation after death, Scientology offers its followers the assurance of eternal salvation. "No person will be happy if he has no goal, and no person can be happy if he does not have faith in the possibility and his own ability to achieve this goal" (Hubbard, 2007a). "A person can really find his salvation not just in some future eternity, but here and now" (Saentologicheskaya religiya, 1999:23). Scientologists believe their religion is unique in that it does not require and does not force anyone to believe in anything. In Scientology it declared that every person should think for themselves. Scientology offers the technology of personal perfection that can be tried to apply by anybody, and then decide if it works for him. The broad reach of the church for people regardless of the faith they professed earlier, the peculiarity of the system to achieve spiritual salvation, the use of technical tools etc. and holding religious sacraments, the presence of developed social programs is determined characteristics of this religious concept and attract to it those who are looking for support and understanding, solving their own problems in this world. A well-built organizational structure of the Church of Scientology, successful management unites and coordinates both its religious and missionary, communication, preaching and social activities, contribute to the penetration of L.Ron Hubbard's religious ideas into the field of education, health care, management, attracting representatives of business, intelligentsia and ambitious youth.

Thus, the anthropological doctrine of Scientology like most neo-religious doctrines absorbed some of the ideas of the Vedic teachings, Buddhism, Judaism, Gnosticism, Taoism, ancient philosophy, excerpts Christian dogma, philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, as well as procedures and practices from the arsenal of Carlos Castaneda. However, logically built and constructed in the details 'pseudoscientific' Scientological technology is combined with elements of anthropogenesis. A specific feature of the anthropological concept of this neo – religious movement is its "cosmic component", which takes a person as a spiritual being beyond the bounds of earthly existence into boundless cosmic spaces, thereby paying tribute to the desire of modern man to expand the boundaries of his own world. Working with potential believers emphasizes the “consciousness and rationality” of their free choice of religion as a technology for their own self-improvement.

Thus, all neo-religious doctrines have clear features of alternative religiosity, namely the eclectic intertextual nature of the sources, which refers their followers to different ideological traditions of the previous eras of shamanism and magic, Russian cosmism and psychoanalysis. In all, they are trying to synthesize the mystical experience of various religious traditions with the concepts of natural sciences and psychology, proposing technologies for transforming consciousness, and declare their effectiveness with a clear implementation of specific methods, rules of life and social behavior.

In neo-religious anthropological concepts, there is a desire to fit a person into the cosmological context of an alternative ontology, attempts to present him as an energetic entity, interacting in a directional way with the energetic structures of the Universe. In this way, the anthropological limit is removed, and a person gets the opportunity for unlimited improvement and transformation of his spiritual essence, going beyond the boundaries of earthly existence in the Universe. The limit of a person’s transformation and his advancement on the spiritual path depends only on the person himself: the level of his “personal strength” and the perfection of his lifestyle, the level of organization of the energy subtle structure and the level of mastery of spiritual technologies, and as a result, on the degree of striving for improvement and perseverance. Non – religious forms consider man to be a cosmic being, whose life is not limited by the planet Earth and earthly life and can be infinite. A man is turned into subtle energy essence, which does not require a solid carrier and gain access to unlimited space and time, recalling all his previous rebirths. As in the mystical ways of traditional religions, a person walking through cultivation gets superpower that in these doctrines of neo-religion are connected primarily with the mastery of the energies of the universe and the interaction skills to communicate with them or manipulate them. So, compared with the mystical traditions of previous epochs they lose their status of “miracle” and are interpreted from the perspective of ontology and epistemology of a specific doctrine of neo-religion in pseudoscientific discourse. Superpowers grow in direct proportion to the transformation of all aspects of the individual’s personality, which occurs as he moves along the path of self-improvement.

The role of the concepts of human improvement in non-religious forms, considered in the context of modern anthropological searches of mankind, does not go beyond the framework of bioethics, suggesting to look for ways to transform the biosocial nature of a person on the basis of his spiritual self-improvement, and not to modify a person as a biological species using methods of genetic engineering. Alternative ways to improve a person are based on his spiritual transformation and mental transformation. An alternative to the biotechnological development of human civilization, proposed by neo-religions, gives hope for the possibility of not only technogenic but also spiritual anthropomorphosis. In any case, the choice of means for transforming human nature both by means of science and by means of non – religious forms should be based on the ethical system in which they are implemented.

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Экологическое сознание в контексте поликонфессионального мировоззреченского плюрализма

Аннотация: Статья посвящена исследованию влияния социального учения христианской Церкви о сохранении окружающей среды путём формирования экологического сознания и вытекающих из этого сознания практических мероприятий. Проанализированы теоретические и методологические основы социально-экологического учения католицизма. Раскрыты сущность и морально-этические признаки современного экологического кризиса. Выяснено понятие экологического греха и основные способы экологического обращения человека. Исследована трактовка в Священном Писании сотворения мира и призвания человека ответственно использовать его. Рассмотрены взгляды Отцов Церкви на природу как Божье творение. Представлены мнения богословов об ответственности человека за природную окружающую среду.

Ключевые слова: экологическое сознание, христианство, экологичий кризис, окружающая среда. католицизм.

Современная эпоха характеризуется угрожающим обострением проблем взаимодействия человека с природой. Потребительское отношение человечества к окружающей среде поставило под угрозу дальнейшее существование биосферы, и возможность дальнейшего существования человека на планете подвергается сомнению не только из-за загрязнения окружающей среды, но и вследствие исчерпания природных ресурсов. Различные по экономическому, политическому и социокультурному уровню развития народы, нации и государства столкнулись с экологическими катаклизмами и непрогнозируемыми стихийными миграционными процессами. В украинских реалиях исследование экологической проблематики актуализируется высоким уровнем радиоактивной загрязнённости окружающей среды в результате аварии на ЧАЭС; дефицитом водных ресурсов; неконтролируемой вырубкой лесов и незаконной добычей полезных ископаемых, прежде всего угля и янтаря. Актуальность проблемы обусловлена также новым этапом энергетической революции, в ходе которой имеет место попытка перейти от использования углеводородов к применению возобновляемых источников энергии, литиевых и водородных двигателей, новейших технологий извлечения полезных ископаемых.

Последствия экологического кризиса в современном мире и поиски эффективных путей его преодоления заставляют всё чаще обращаться к интерпретации проблем взаимодействия человека и природы в философско-религиоведческом дискурсе. Поскольку в современной философской парадигме толкование экологических проблем небезосновательно увязывается с духовно-нравственным нигилизмом человека, важным фактором их преодоления становятся христианские ценности. Анализ учения христианской Церкви, которая на протяжении нескольких десятилетий даёт собственное объяснение источников и причин экологических проблем и путей их нивелирования, может способствовать трансформации мировоззренческих ориентаций человека в современном мире.

Необходимость исследования идей социально-экологического учения православной христианской Церкви относительно сохранения окружающей среды обусловлена конкретными изменениями в современном мире: ростом катастрофических последствий использования природной среды, переходом к постиндустриальной стадии развития общества, глобализацией, чётко демонстрирующей всеобщую связь человечества и его ответственности за последствия модели отношения к природе. Наряду с положительными последствиями и преимуществами цивилизационных изменений возникают также опасности, в частности, экологического характера. В современном мире происходят процессы, обусловленные доминированием рыночной модели экономики и трансформацией ценностей западного общества, требующими преобразований во всех сферах социальной жизни (Бейлин,2020). Эти изменения должны основываться на существующих духовных и интеллектуальных традициях общества и полагают решение экологических проблем первоочередной задачей дальнейшего развития общества.

Следует понимать невозможность решения экологических проблем только техническим путём и необходимость мировоззренческих изменений. Ведь проблема экологии и охраны окружающей среды, которая с особой остротой встает сегодня перед человеком, не является следствием техногенного развития и внедрения различных технологий (Бейлин, 2019). Проблема кроется, прежде всего, в человеке, в его понимании сущности жизни и сотворения, в его системе ценностей, а это напрямую связано с духовным измерением жизни. В новейшие времена жизнь человека проникнута выраженным индивидуализмом. Современное потребительское общество, в котором человек пребывает в зоне комфорта, его потребности, стремления и представление о счастье, скрывает опасность потери подлинного достоинства и лишения его фундаментального права – права на реализацию собственной свободы и сохранение жизни. Проблема экологии состоит, прежде всего, в индивидуализме и в эгоизме человека, который провоцирует его видеть и воспринимать себя абсолютным владельцем всего, что его окружает (Сидоренко, 2000). Поэтому он и обращается с природой и окружающим миром как со средствами достижения своих целей, не обращая внимания на то, что природа и мир суть дом как для него, так и для других, но существуют они по своим законам.

Важная роль в решении экологических проблем отводится Церкви, которая одной из первых среди общественных институтов глубоко осознала экологическую проблему и активизирует свои действия в области сохранения Божьего создания – природы, призывая, прежде всего, к глубокому культурному изменению и формированию нового экологического сознания верующих и всего человечества. Современными философами и теологами сделано множество попыток научно осмыслить проблемы социально-экологического учения христианской Церкви, и эти усилия комплексно освещают содержание социально-экологического учения христианства в преодолении экологических проблем человечества. Однако они не дают удовлетворительного ответа на ряд вопросов, требующих решения вследствие чрезмерного потребительского образа жизни человека. Потребительский характер взаимоотношений человека с природой и недостаточная разработанность методологических принципов их реализации проявляются в ходе и характере социальных изменений, приводя к распространению негативных процессов в общественных отношениях.

Одними из основополагающих моральных признаков экологической проблемы является дефицит уважения к жизни и её Творцу, проявляющийся в загрязнении окружающей среды, истощении природных ресурсов, непродуманном развитии науки и техники, направленности только на подчинение природы и желании владеть ею, не думая о последствиях. Человек не хочет осознать, что он есть созданное существо, и всё, что есть вокруг него – это также созданное, данное Богом человеку для ответственного управления (Йонас, 2001). Человек видит и полагает себя абсолютным владельцем всего, до чего он может дотянуться. Так работает потребительский менталитет, заключающийся в желании «иметь», и как можно больше, вместо того, чтобы «быть» (Фромм, URL). Силами только науки экологических проблем не решить, поскольку человеческое сообщество демонстрирует неспособность продуктивно реагировать на острейшие проблемы, легкомыслие, самолюбование и безответственность. Поэтому необходимо устранять внутренние причины, важнейшей из которых является, согласно учению христианской Церкви, кризис человеческой веры, её духовности и нравственности.

Сущность экологического греха берёт начало от первых людей мира. Первое непослушание Богу проявили ещё в раю Адам и Ева, которые съели запретный плод и «заразили» вирусом греха духовную и телесную природу своей личности, восстав против Бога и против Его творения. Именно первородный грех эгоизма наших прародителей обусловил непорядок в творении; именно поэтому человек не может относиться к «с любовью и мудростью», а только с эгоизмом и потребительскими интересами.

Итак, грех – это совершение зла, его конкретное воплощение. В экологическом же измерении экологическим грехом можно считать негативное влияние человека на природную окружающую среду как Божье творение, осуществляемое каждым его мнением, словом или действием, которыми человек сознательно и добровольно противоречит Божьей воле, не признавая доброты и милости Бога-Творца. Этот грех католическая церковь причисляет к перечню «социальных грехов, кричащих к небу».

В христианстве грехи классифицируют по различным признакам, и сквозь экологическую призму они предстают следующим образом: 1) грехи, нарушающие Заповеди Бога – «Не убий» (уничтожая природную окружающую среду, человек нарушает моральные принципы, которые заложены Богом-Творцом, который поручил возделывать и ухаживать»

(Быт. 2, 15) сотворенный мир) и «Не кради» (Господь сделал нас, людей, настоящими царями сотворения, звеном между Ним и остальным миром, а мы, часто забывая об этом, используем Божье творение не по назначению и невосполнимо разрушаем его, не оставляя ничего для будущих поколений), 2) «главные грехи» – гордость, нечистота, зависть, месть, невоздержанность, гнев, лень. Анализируя их, можно отметить, что каждый христианин, осознавая их тяжесть, должен задуматься над тем, насколько он принимает в них активное участие, причиняя вред окружающей среде и угрожая всему Божьему творению, попирая при этом замысел Творца.

Каждый верующий должен увидеть в себе грешника, признать конкретные грехи и обратиться к Богу, поэтому католическая Церковь, чтобы сохранить природу, призывает к экологическому обращению, которое можно определить как изменение образа мышления и поведения человека, его восприятие природной среды как Божьего творения. В этом смысле обязательно формирование экологической ответственности человека, которое определяется как одна из основных задач Церкви.

Под экологической ответственностью следует понимать ответственность человека за поступки, оказывающие влияние на качественное состояние его природной среды (Кисельов, Гардашук, Зарубицький, 2006). Человек должен осознавать, что природная окружающая среда предоставлена ему как важнейший дар Божий для разумного использования, и поэтому экологический вопрос невозможно решить без критической самооценки и обращения личности «в стиле мысли и поведения», которое существенно зависит от воспитания экологических добродетелей.

Несмотря на существование различных трактовок понятия «добродетель», её можно понимать как жизнь человека по заповедям Божим. Определяют семь добродетелей, полярных главным грехам: смирение, щедрость, чистота, доброжелательность, неприхотливость, кротость и усердие, согласно которым каждый христианин призван воплощать ценности Божьего благовестия в своей жизни, а через изменение своего образа мышления и поведения, то есть обращение, должно нести ответственность за природную окружающую среду как Божье творение.

Социально-экологическое учение христианства отмечает взаимосвязь человека с природой, утверждая, что Бог – это творец мира, а человек является его управляющим и т.д. Анализируя Священное Писание, как основополагающий источник христианской Церкви, приходим к выводу, что Господь выступает Творцом всего мира как единого организма, составляющим элементом которого является человек. Последний является звеном между Богом и остальным миром. Именно человек был создан, чтобы служить Богу и любить Его. Поэтому пришло это время, когда общество начинает интересоваться понятием «создание». Это осознание поможет избежать безответственного, нерационального использования природы и разрушения земли.

Эвристически продуктивным является переосмысление произведений святых отцов, необходимых для правильного понимания Священного Писания, руководства в вопросах веры, а также для того, чтобы отличать истинное Предание Церкви от ошибочного и т.д. Поэтому на основе анализа их произведений мы можем констатировать, что в них отражались проблемы взаимоотношений человека и природы. Святые отцы высоко оценивали созданный Господом мир, были единодушны в том, что Всевышний силой своей любви из ничего, сотворившего Его, присутствует в этом мире через божественные слова всех сотворенных им вещей. Их произведения в учении христианской Церкви важны в вопросах веры для правильного понимания Священного Писания, а их труды в будущем стали указателями для дальнейших размышлений мыслителей.

Начиная с середины XX века, социально-экологическое учение христианской Церкви получило широкий оборот, поскольку взаимосвязь человека и природы достигла критического значения. При этом возникли такие болезненные вопросы, как, например, вопросы неправильного использования плодов технического прогресса, а также атомной энергии и неэффективной стратегии развития, которые привели к современному экологическому кризису.

Учительское правительство Церкви в своих разнообразных документах (энциклики, письма, поучения и др.) развивает проблемы человечества, в том числе взаимосвязи человека с природой, и ищет совместно с верующими (и не только) выходы из сложных жизненных ситуаций. По убеждению современных богословов, нынешний экологический кризис вызван в первую очередь неправильным осознанием человеком своей сущности, сущности своей окружающей среды, своего отношения к Богу и природе, а также отношения к Богу через восприятие природы и наоборот. Они (богословы), не ограничиваясь взаимосвязью человека с природой, пытаются выйти за пределы формального видения этой взаимосвязи, что, конечно, очень положительно. Для сохранения природной среды необходима христианская вера в Бога-Творца как моральное требование ответственно обращаться с благами творения, охранять их, ухаживать и справедливо распределять. Ведущей концепцией этого является концепция устойчивого развития, где под устойчивым развитием следует понимать определенное управляемое развитие, в основе которого есть системный подход и современные информационные технологии, позволяющие очень быстро создавать различные варианты направлений развития, с высокой точностью прогнозировать их результаты и выбрать наиболее оптимален.

Таким образом, исторический анализ становления и развития социально-экологического учения христианства в настоящее время даёт нам основания утверждать, что проблемные вопросы такого учения как сотворения мира, взаимосвязь человека с природой и тому подобное ещё со средневековой эпохи не вызывают противоречий среди мыслителей. Все они признают, что человек должен познавать и осознавать замыслы Бога о сотворении, относиться к нему с любовью и ответственностью, разумно использовать и справедливо управлять всеми ресурсами земли, которые ему дал «рать и ухаживать» Творец.

Современная экологическая ситуация, кризисные явления в природе наталкивают ученых на мысль о необходимости требовать новой ценностной ориентации в отношениях человека с природой, пересмотра определенных нравственных норм, регулирующих поведение человека в природе (Skuratov and others). Поэтому экологическое сознание и культура являются необходимыми условиями для преодоления глобального экологического кризиса и предотвращения глобальной экологической катастрофы, угрожающей существованию не только человека, но и других живых существ, созданных Богом.

Сегодня значительная часть человечества унижена экономическими условиями, политическими и идеологическими режимами, терроризмом. Ужасной является угроза массового уничтожения людей современным оружием. Проблема нивелирования человеческих ценностей продолжала обостряться и в период понтификата папы Иоанна Павла II и отражена в персоналистической концепции отчуждения человека в мире. Современному человеку, как отмечает в первой энциклике «Redemptor Hominis», постоянно угрожает то, что является результатом труда его рук, мыслей, его стремления к свободе. Плоды этой разнообразной деятельности человека не только и не столько приводят к отчуждению в том смысле, что товары не принадлежат тому, кто является их непосредственным производителем, сколько, по меньшей мере частично, в том, что косвенно и непосредственно по результатам их использования они направлены против человека (Іван Павло II, 2008:32). При этом папа усматривает основной акт драмы современного существования в том, что человек постоянно живёт в тревоге и страхе, понимая, что некоторые из его изобретений могут привести к гибели их разработчика и производителя. Папа задается вопросом: «на каком пути дана человеку власть, благодаря которой он должен был подчинять себе землю?». Ища ответы на этот вопрос в современном мире и анализируя эти обстоятельства, мы понимаем, что власть над землей оборачивается против человечества угрозой уничтожения и экологическими проблемами. Папа Иоанн Павел II в энциклике подчёркивает то, что «… Церковь в силу Христа и той тайны, которая составляет жизнь самой Церкви, соединяется с каждым человеком, не может остаться в стороне от всего, что служит благу человека, как и не может остаться равнодушным к угрозе» (Іван Павло II,2008 39). Мотив угрозы человечеству и окружающей среде в результате индустриализации также ощутим в энциклике папы Иоанна Павла II. Современный человек уничтожает, эгоистически использует природу, и энциклика «Redemptor Hominis» напоминает, что Создатель желал, чтобы человек общался с природой как её «благородный господин» и «хранитель», а не безоглядный «эксплуататор» (Іван Павло II, 2008: 3). Об отношении человека к земле папа замечает в энциклике «Laboren exercens» (По труду своему): «человек уже тем господствует над землей, что приручает и кормит животных, снабжая себе этим нужную пищу и одежду, различные природные богатства с земли и с моря (Іван Павло IIа, 2008:16). Человек упорядочивает землю, изменяя ее, «мы являемся свидетелями перемен, … которые имели возможность наступить благодаря постепенному и постоянному развитию науки»(Іван Павло IIа, 2008:16).

Папа обращает внимание на библейские слова о «подчинении себе земли», которые следует рассматривать не только по отношению к земле, но и к технике, миру механизмов и машин, являющихся плодами труда человеческого разума и историческим подтверждением господства человека над природой. Всё чаще человек начинает задумываться над тем, что эксплуатация земли, именно той, на которой и благодаря которой мы живём, требует обдуманных действий. Развитие и использование научных достижений требует соблюдения моральных принципов и норм, чтобы напоминать людям об их прямом предназначении – быть человеком, и использование новейших технологий не освобождает человека от ответственности перед Творцом. Каким бы ни был величественным человек в его творении, способно ли развитие, осуществляемое человеком, сделать жизнь более гуманной и более достойной человека?

Папа Иоанн Павел II отмечает, что Церковь должна взять на себя обязанность объяснять человеку все возможные последствия и угрозы современного развития науки. Сохранение достоинства человеческой жизни, по мнению папы Иоанна Павла II, является важнейшей задачей католической Церкви: «… она должна осознавать все угрозы, делать всё то, чтобы человеческая жизнь становилась все более человеческой» (Іван Павло II, 2008:32). Церковь никогда не оставляет человека, потому что человек является ценностью, и «… всегда должен осознавать всё то, что противоречит достоинству человеческой жизни» (Іван Павло II, 2008:30), прежде всего напомнить людям, что покорение Земли не является его конечной целью.

На II Ватиканском соборе подчёркивается «царственность» человека. Как всякий «царь», ищущий для своего государства процветания, он должен заботиться о благосостоянии не только своего, но и подданных. Насколько комфортно будут жить его подданные, настолько же качественной будет жизнь его самого. Так и человек: насколько будет искренне он заботиться о земле, настолько комфортнее будет ему жить. «Своё «царское достоинство» человек может постичь, – пишет в Апостольском письме папа, – только тогда, когда познает и полюбит того, благодаря кому имеет разум и свободу» (Апостольський лист папи Івана Павла II, 2008;17).

Развитие науки христианство связывает не с понятием «больше иметь», а с понятием «больше быть», имея в виду, что главным следствием этого развития должно быть не невероятное количество новейших изобретений и материальных вещей, а развитие личности человека; человек должен ещё больше становиться человеком, и именно это даёт ему необъятные возможности. Самое важное – не стать рабами произведенных вещей, а направить развитие науки во славу Божию и уподобление человека своему Создателю. Зациклившаяся на материальных благах цивилизация, как отмечает папа, делает человека невольником продукции, невольником своих собственных товаров (Іван Павло IIa, 2008:36). Поведение человека в современном мире далеко от требований объективных нравственных постулатов, требований справедливости и ещё больше – от человечности. Безусловно, текущая ситуация для людей в разных странах и континентах неодинакова. В своих потребительских устремлениях жители развитых стран зачастую упорно не хотят видеть проблемы своих соседей, и используют чрезмерное количество благ, что приводит к экологическому кризису. В то же время, голод и низкий уровень жизни обуславливает высокую смертность и низкое качество жизни в странах периферии. Но чем больше человек берёт от природы, тем в большей степени он должен быть ответственен за последствия своих действий. Одним из измерений деятельности христианина является его ответственность за всё созданное Богом – и в том числе за окружающую среду и природные ресурсы. Деятельность христианина как «священника творения» в созданном Богом мире призвана беречь, питать и развивать его» (Екологічне вчення Церкви, 2008:224), то есть человеку ещё с начала сотворения его Богом было назначено развивать мир, не забывая заботиться о нём. Бог наделяет человека свободой выбора, но «в пользовании всякими свободами нужно сохранять моральную основу личной и общественной ответственности» (Бейлин, 2018:382).

Одним из основополагающих факторов возникновения экологического кризиса и эксплуатации природной среды является кризис экологии самого человека, кризис человеческой души, а, следовательно, нарушение экологии культуры, возникающий вследствие нарушения в системе «человек – Бог», когда человек забывает, кем и для чего он создан. Необходимо «проанализировать своё общественное бытие и внимательно присмотреться к экологии своих собственных душ: всё ли там хорошо и всё ли соответствует высокой миссии человека в этом мире» (Іван Павло II, 2021:96). Но понимают ли люди, каково их предназначение на Земле? Прежде всего, отмечает папа, в «царском служении» подобно Христу, а не только в «царском использовании» (Іван Павло II, 2008:59), благодаря своему труду человек становится соучастником дел своего Творца и в меру своих способностей развивается (Іван Павло IIа, 2008:65). В энциклике «Lumen gentium» (Свет народов) так охарактеризовано назначение труда: благодаря своей компетентности и своей деятельности, которая внутренне освящена благодатью Христа, сделать хороший вклад, чтобы созданные вещи, согласно назначению Творца и в свете Его слова, были усовершенствованы человеческим трудом, техникой, цивилизацией и культурой (Бейлин, 2019:83). Человек должен прийти к осознанию того, что и как он творит, помня о своей ответственности.

В своём учении, анализируя причины возникновения экологического кризиса, папа Иоанн Павел II делает вывод, что он является следствием внутреннего кризиса человека – морального и духовного, а также кризиса отношений с Богом. Когда человек отворачивается от плана Создателя, он порождает дисгармонию, которая приводит к неизбежному обратному воздействию на весь созданный Богом порядок. Если человек не живёт в мире с Богом, то и сама земля не может иметь мира (Соціальна доктрина Церкви. Короткий огляд документів, 1998:9). Своевольное и потребительское отношение к природе приведет к её «восстанию». Такое отношение он характеризует как «антропологическую ошибку», являющуюся причиной разрушения Божьего творения, а её исправление зависит от восстановления «экологии человека» (Іван Павло II, 2001:47). Человек, осознавая свою способность преобразовывать мир, забывает, что это возможно только по воле Божией, данной человеку. Развитие науки позволяет почувствовать себя творцом и обладателем, которому всё подвластно, но в конечном итоге это заканчивается тиранией природы со стороны человека.

Экологический вопрос возникает наряду с потребительским отношением человека к окружающему миру и безудержным желанием иметь и получать удовольствий больше, чем быть человеком и развиваться, без меры и недисциплинированно потреблять земные ресурсы и свою жизнь (Іван Павло II, 2001:95). Это отношение спровоцировано «бедностью и ограниченностью мировоззрения».

Безрассудное разрушение природной среды способно разрушить и человеческую среду. Господь даёт человеку в пользование не только землю, но и «человечность», поэтому человек должен уважать заложенный в нём естественный и нравственный порядок (Іван Павло II, 2001:89). Человеческое достоинство, дарованное Богом, дает ему возможность подняться над любым «общественным порядком» в постижении истины и добра. Однако, как отмечает папа Иоанн Павел II, на него влияет та социальная структура, в которой он живет, получает воспитание и соотносится с окружающей средой. Первой и основной структурой «экологии человека» является семья, где личность получает первоначальные важнейшие представления об истине и добре, где он узнаёт, что значит любить и быть любимым, где взаимная преданность мужчины и женщины создает такую жизненную среду, в которой ребёнок может родиться и развивать свои способности, постепенно осознавая своё достоинство и готовиться к встрече со своей неповторимой судьбой (Іван Павло II, 2001:102). Именно в семье закладываются те основы поведения, которыми будет руководствоваться человек на протяжении своей жизни. В энциклике «Sollicitudo rei socialis» (Забота о социальных вещах) акцентировано внимание на уважении к созданиям, формирующим видимую природу, где человечество в своём отношении к природе подчинено не только биологическим, но и нравственным законам, которые нельзя безнаказанно нарушать (Іван Павло II. Енцикліка Sollicitudo rei socialis, URL). Все существа, созданные Богом, нуждаются в соответствующем уважении. Человечеству пора осознать, что нельзя безосновательно, только исключительно по собственному усмотрению и в соответствии с собственными экономическими потребностями, использовать живые и неодушевленные творения: природные элементы, растения, животных. Человечеству следует помнить об ограниченности и конечности некоторых природных богатств, а безответственное их использование папа называет «претензией на абсолютное право распоряжаться ими», представляющей серьёзную опасность для дальнейшего существования не только современного, но и будущих поколений. Вспоминая библейскую историю Адама и Евы, мы видим, что ещё в Раю Господь ограничивает человека: «не есть плода из дерева посреди Рая», делая это для добра самого человека. Подобного мнения человек должен придерживаться и в использовании природных богатств. Невыполнение этих ограничений в раю привело к глобальным последствиям, игнорирование их на Земле может привести к не менее масштабным результатам.

В энциклике «Sollicitudo rei socialis» (Забота о социальных вещах) папа акцентирует внимание на аутентичном призвании каждого человека, а также Церкви в целом спасать нашу природную окружающую среду и всю природу.

Достижения в науке, хоть и являются прекрасным свидетельством разумности и настойчивости человека, не освобождают человечество от долга задумываться над ключевыми религиозными вопросами, а скорее наоборот, побуждают к величайшей и решающей борьбе, происходящей в нашем сердце и нравственном сознании (Іван Павло II, 2008: 2).

Без сомнения, в своих библейских основах христианское нравственное учение подтверждает важность фундаментального выбора, определяющего качество нравственной жизни и побуждающего свободно принять обязательства относительно Бога. Этот вопрос касается решения веры, послушания веры, которым человек целостно и свободно вручает себя откровенному Богу, вручая Ему полную покорность разума и воли. Такая вера, ведомая любовью, вытекает из самой сущности человека, из его сердца, она призвана приносить плоды труда (Іван Павло II, 2008: 27).

Лишь человеческое желание следовать универсальным моральным нормам делает возможным истинный нравственный рост; только разум, вдохновленный Божественным Откровением и верой, способен распознать добро и зло.

Иоанн Павел II подчёркивает присущее человеку «трансцендентное достоинство» и необходимость уважения неотъемлемого достоинства человека как одного из основных столпов человеческой цивилизации. Достоинство человека является проявлением его сверхъестественной составляющей, которая проявляет человека как личность, человек как образа Божьего, призванного возделывать сад Земли и ухаживать за ним. Он особенно ответственен за среду обитания, то есть за всю землю, которая по воле Бога должна «служить достоинству личности и её жизни и ответственна не только перед сущностью, но и перед грядущими поколениями» (Іван Павло II. Енцикліка Evangelium vitae, 2008:60). В этом и состоит экологическая проблема во всех её аспектах: от защиты природных «сфер обитания» разных видов и разнообразных форм жизни до «экологии человека». Путь к её решению понятно и чётко изложен на страницах Библии. По сути, господство, данное Творцом человеку, не означает абсолютной власти; не может быть также речи о свободе «пользования» и злоупотреблении вещами. Человек подвергается опасности, когда «исчезает ощущение Бога». На II Ватиканском соборе было отмечено, что «создание без Творца возвращается в небытие», и когда из понятия человека изымается Божественный контекст, мир всех вещей претерпевает глубокое извращение, и сама природа перестаёт быть матерью и сводится к материалу (Екологічне вчення Церкви. Папа Іван Павло II на тему створіння та екології, 2006:59), что побуждает развитие науки идти в направлении накопления земных благ, уничтожения человеческого достоинства и личности.

Весомой в процессе экологического образования и воспитания является роль Церкви, которая одна из первых среди общественных институтов глубоко осознала экологическую проблему и учит о призвании человека в мире, о его задании уважать Божье творение природу и бережно относиться к окружающей среде. Она осуществляет свою деятельность в трех основополагающих измерениях. Первое, действие, включает в себя прямое распространение Евангелия, катехизацию, обучение, проповедь и т.п. Вторая включает в себя молитву, прославление, поклонение и все литургические богослужения. К третьей относятся свидетельства веры в практике поведения и дела милосердия. Эти три действия органически связаны между собой.

Следовательно, катехиза в воспитании занимает важное место, ведь она есть формирование веры в Бога – Творца. Катехизацию следует осуществлять: для детей (в семье, в дошкольном учреждении, школе, воскресных катехитических школах); молодежи (в высших учебных заведениях, Церкви) и взрослых (по месту работы, в Церкви). Весомый вклад делает священник на проповеди после Литургии.

Следовательно, все ступени образования должны быть пропитаны экологическим воспитанием, нормы морали подняты до высших добродетелей и профессиональной экологической грамотности. Первым инструментом формирования христианской экологической культуры должна стать катехизация, с помощью которой Церковь может добиться больших успехов в улучшении отношения человека к природе, а прежде всего к ней, не только к материи и предмету для эксплуатации, но как к Божьему организму с которым следует творить интегративную целостность.

Кроме того, каждый сознательно должен дать ответ Господу на Его доброту, милость и безграничную любовь, проявляющуюся прежде всего в молитве. Для христианского сообщества особой молитвой является её общая молитва, в которой выразительнее всего выражается и проявляется весь смысл её веры и духовной жизни. Согласно христианской вере, Господь Бог, сотворивший небо и землю, лучше всего знает, как упорядочить и наполнить её жизнью, а чтобы молитвенный ответ Богу, личный и общинный, был искренним и мог развиваться, и чтобы каждый мог приносить плоды Божьей благодати, необходимо прилагать усилия для преодоления различных трудностей и преград, и тогда, согласно христианскому учению, каждый своим неповторимым способом может и имеет постичь самое высокое и тесное соединение с Богом. Христианская Церковь, имея в целом многочисленные ценные теоретические наработки в рамках социально-экологического учения, осуществляет довольно обширный список конкретных практических инициатив, направленных на охрану и сохранение природы.

Практическое свидетельство веры и дела милосердия, – это сочетание средств и методов, используемых всей Церковью, направленное на улучшение жизни людей, а в экологическом контексте – это вид служения Богу – Творцу, исполнение Его заповеди любви к созданию и более рациональное использование даров Божьих. Это свидетельство будет проявляться, когда: служение мирян – каждый отдельно на своем уровне социальной заангажированности, например, на приходском, деканальном уровне приводит всех к участию и организации конференций, ассамблей, семинаров на местном и межрегиональном уровнях; церковная община будет привлекать всех к защите окружающей среды (обустройство церковных территорий во время приходских праздников или во время, что является важным опытом в науке для создания и создания и др.); будет внедряться экологический менеджмент в церквях; будут проводиться различные акции (зелёные насаждения, уборка территорий, «Час Земли» и т.д.). Важную роль в служении играют конференции, семинары, экуменические молитвы и другие общие религиозные мероприятия по сохранению Божьего создания – природы, разнообразные экологические инициативы и т.д.

Таким образом, организационное изменение – назначение ответственных за реализацию экологической ответственности лиц внутри Церкви; духовное возрождение и экологическое обращение «в образе мысли и поведения» – фактически экологическая тематика неразрывно является частью новой евангелизации, такие основы как правды веры о человеке, его происхождении и цели, обо всем созданном мире и Боге-Творце должны занять должное место в понимании современного христианина и стать важной составляющей его веры и ответственного поведения в отношении других людей и всего мира Божьих созданий.

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Ecological Consciousness ih the Context of Polyconfessinal Ideological Pluralism

Abstract: The article is devoted to the study of the influence of the social teaching of Christian Church on the preservation of the environment through the formation of ecological consciousness and practical measures arising from this consciousness. Theoretical and methodological foundations of the socio-ecological doctrine of Catholicism are analyzed. The essence and moral and ethical signs of the modern ecological crisis are revealed. The concept of ecological sin and the main ways of ecological treatment of a person are clarified. The interpretation in Holy Scripture of the creation of the world and the calling of human to use it responsibly has been studied. The views of Church Fathers on nature as God's creation are considered. The opinions of theologians on the responsibility of human for the natural environment are presented. The practical steps of Catholic Church to preserve nature as God's creation are analyzed. Based on the socio-ecological teaching of Catholicism, the following practical proposals have been formulated: organizational change – the appointment of persons responsible for the implementation of environmental responsibility within the Church (for example, in the diocese, exarchates, deans, etc.); spiritual revival and environmental conversion "in the way of thought and behavior" – environmental topics are part of the new evangelization, therefore the religious idea of man, his origin and purpose, of the entire created world and Creator God should take its rightful place in the mind of a modern Christian and become a component his faith and a pledge of responsible behavior towards other people and the whole world of God's creatures.

The influence of the social teaching of Christian Church in the preservation of the environment through the formation of ecological consciousness and practical measures is analyzed. The concept of "environmental sin" is considered, understood as destructive actions of a different nature through imbalance and destruction of ecosystems, as a negative human impact on the natural environment, which in the Christian paradigm is understood as God's creation. Catholic Church, in order to preserve nature, calls for the so-called ecological conversion, which can be defined as a change in the way of thinking and human behavior, including a change in the perception of the natural environment as God's creation and awareness of responsibility for the preservation of nature to future generations.

The analysis of the patristic heritage and later theologians on the preservation of the natural environment has been carried out, which gives us reason to assert that both Church Fathers and the theologians of Middle Ages and the present recognize that a person must know and realize God's plans for the creation of the world and treat him with love and responsibility, it is reasonable to use the resources of our planet as a habitat given to human by the Creator. The practical contribution to the preservation of the environment of Christian Church is determined, which is one of the first among public institutions to deeply understand the environmental problem and teaches to protect and respect nature as God's creation and take care of the environment.

On the basis of the socio-ecological teaching of Christian Church, theoretical provisions are proposed for overcoming the ecological crisis, namely: organizational change – the appointment of persons responsible for the implementation of environmental responsibility within Church; spiritual revival and environmental conversion "in the way of thought and behavior" – in fact, environmental themes are inextricably part of the new evangelization. Such foundations as the postulates of faith about human, his origin and purpose, the created world and Creator God, should take their rightful place in the understanding of the modern Christian and become an important component of his faith and responsible behavior in relation to other people and the whole world of God's creatures.

The meaning of human as God's creation and his responsibility for the created world is clarified, since, according to the social doctrine of Christian Church, the key to solving social and environmental problems is the internal renewal of a person and his life in accordance with God's Law, which is manifested in responsible behavior towards other people and of the whole world created by God – nature. The understanding of the socio-ecological teaching of Christian Church as a part of soteriology and missiology, and not just social doctrine and moral theology, has been further developed.

Keywords: ekological consciousness, ecological crisis, Chistianity, environment, Catholicism

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Little Sisters of Jesus in Belgrade from 1969. until 2019.

Abstract: In the introductory part of the paper, we will give a brief review on the state of the Roman Catholic Church in Serbia, and its Belgrade archdiocese. Considering the latest census, and church statistics, we can notice a decline among their followers. One of the challenges with which this numerous Christian confession faces is the decline of the number of monks and nuns, especially in the secularized Western Europe. One of the orders founded in the 20th century is the Little Sisters of Jesus, an international monastic congregation which was founded in 1939. by the Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus (Madeleine Hutin) following in the spiritual footsteps of the founder of Little Brothers of Jesus – Charles de Foucauld. She founded the Little Sisters of Jesus with the intent of opening up to the Orthodox Church, and wishing there were a deeper understanding, and a deeper connection between the two Churches. Based on the analysis of interviews with several Little Sisters of different ages and ethnical backgrounds, as well as data gathered from their archives, personal photos, and the orders web page, we can reconstruct the reasons for their coming to Serbia, ways their order functioned, and the reasons for disbanding their community in Belgrade between the years of 1969. – 2019. During their fifty year presence in turbulent and trying times, and in a region where the Roman Catholic Church was in the minority, Little sisters managed to fulfil their main mission- to be contemplative in the middle of the world. So, with the help of prayer and simple get-togethers they became, and manage to remain, close friends with many people, believers and nonbelievers alike.

Keywords: Little Sisters of Jesus, Roman Catholic Church, Belgrade archdiocese, ecumenism, Serbia.

1. *Catholics in Serbia and Belgrade*

Catholic Church in Serbia is a part of the numerous[1], most powerful and richest Christian confession in the world. This religious community in Serbia, second only to the Serbian Orthodox Church, has a declining trend according to the census and church statistics.

We should keep in mind that Catholics first appeared in Serbia during its economic upswing with Saxon miners and traders from Dubrovnik, while the Turkish conquest led to a withdrawal of the Catholic population from Serbia.[2]

According to the 1991. census 506.216 people declared themselves as Catholics in Serbia, but do to the conflict in former Yugoslavia that number declined significantly as can be seen in the 2002. census where 410.976 people declared themselves as Catholics in Serbia (without Kosovo and Metohija), with almost 95% living in Vojvodina, and 16.305 in Belgrade alone, so it is clear that the Catholic population in central Serbia is very small (Barišić, 2006:171). According to the 2011. census there were 7.186.862 people living in the Republic of Serbia (without Kosovo and Metohija). Over 94% of them declared that they belong to one of the fallowing denominations: 84,6% (6.079.396) Orthodox; 5% (356.957) Roman Catholic; 1% (71.284) Protestant; 3,1% (222.828) Islamic (quoted in Vukomanović, 2013:324).[3]

Confessional self-identification isn't the same as intrinsic, actual (real), religiousness. Most sociologist of religion agree that since the 1990's there is a stable trend of religious change in Serbia. Number of atheist has dropped significantly, and religious practice has found its way into everyday life (Radisavljević Ćiparizović, 2006).

According to church statistics shortly before World War II Belgrade archdiocese had 90.000 members (quoted in Mlakar, 2001:63). In 1914. a Concordat was singed between the Kingdom of Serbia and the Holy See which established the Belgrade archdiocese and the first archbishop, Rafael Rodić, took office in 1924[4].

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[1] Acording to statistics, there were 1,3 billion Catholics in the World in 2017. Almost half of them are on the American continent, while Asia has little over 11%, Europe 21,8, Africa 17%, Oceania 0,8% https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/vatican-statistics-show-continued--growth-number-catholics-worldwide.

[2] See further in Jović M., *Srbija i rimokatolička crkva u srednjem veku,* Kruševac, 1994.

[3] There are 578 Jews, 1.237 members of Eastern religions- which is far less than 1% of Atheist (80.053) and Agnostic (4.010). Almost a quarter of the population didn't declare a confession (220.735).

[4] After Rafael Rodić Belgrade archdiocese was headed by: Josip Ujčić (1936–1964), Gabrijel Bukatko (1964–1980), Alojzije Turk (1980–1986), Franc Perko (1986–2001) i Stanislav Hočevar (2001-).

Today's archdiocese covers an area of 50.000 km^2 which includes Central Serbia without Vojvodina or Kosovo, and (according to the archdiocese website) has some 40.000 members[5]. Belgrade's ecclesiastical province was established on the 19. of December 1986 by Pope John Paul II's decree and it included Subotica and Zrenjanin archdiocese as suffragan archdioceses. First metropolitan bishop was mons. Franc Perko, who was succeeded by mons Stanislav Hočevar on April 16. 2001. (Barišić 2006:169). Belgrade archdiocese is divided into 18 parishes: six parishes in Belgrade alongside ones in Valjevo, Šabac, Bor, Zaječar, Niš, Aleksinac, Kraljevo, Kragujevac, Smederevo, Jagodina and Ravna Reka. Kragujevac parish includes a chapel in Kruševac, and Ravna Reka parish a chapel in Užice and Vrnjačka Banja. Episcopal conference, as it is today, was established in 2001. as an International episcopal conference of Saints Cyril and Methodius and it is comprised of Serbian, Montenegrin and Macedonian archdiocese.

In 1974 there were 342 nuns in the archdiocese who came from Slovenia and Croatia where they weren't allowed to worship by the communist's after World War II (quoted in Mlakar, 2001:64). Since the beginning of the nineteen seventies, till the end of the nineteen nineties the number of nuns was literary decimated. In S. Barišić's 2006. paper "Catholic Church in Serbia and Belgrade" we can see the following male religious orders: Jesuits, Franciscans, Lazarians and Salesians and female orders: Daughters of Cristian Love (Usmiljenke), Daughters of Charity, Franciscan order, Little Sisters of Jesus and Adorers of the Blood of Christ.

In Belgrade's archdiocese (according to the archdiocese website) only Daughters of Christian Love remain today, while Little Sisters of Jesus and the community of sister-servants of the Holy Virgin Mary left Belgrade a few years ago.[6]

In his paper Mlakar points out the drastic decline in the number of Catholics in the archdiocese, and in Serbia in general, as a result of (pre)war emigrations, mostly by Croatian population[7]. Former archbishop of Belgrade Franc Perko said that the Belgrade archdiocese is *on its way out* because there aren't any autochthonous Catholics, only uprooted immigrants.[8]

[5] http://kc.org.rs/istorijat/.

[6] http://kc.org.rs/istorijat/.

[7] Author is refrencing the nineteen nineties.

[8] „Coexistence is posible", NIN, Belgrade, 29.10.1993.

Same information about the decline of Catholic population can be found in an interview with the former pastor Jovan Vejin made in 2017.[9] He states that, according to statistics, archdiocese had 26.130 baptized people in 2012. from a general population of 5.938.000, which makes out 0,44%. Among those declared Catholics, and using visitation records in the parishes, we see that only 10.000 can be classified as "believers", and only 1.500 of them participate, more or less, in sacrament and pastoral rites of the parishes, that is to say: they regularly attend Mass, confess, participate in parish activities such as: Sunday school, preparation for receiving sacrament, or prayer and bible groups (for example: Work of Mary- The Focolare Movement).

It's a hard and ungrateful task predicting what the future holds, and "sociologist of religion aren't prophets, and their predictions were always wrong" as Jakov Jukić would say (quoted in Radisavljević-Ćiparizović, 2006:107). The title of Mirko Mlakar's 2001. paper on the subject was "Last of the Mohicans of the Belgrade archdiocese?" ending it with a question mark, and with these words: "It seems that the Belgrade archdiocese is sentence to extinction. But wasn't there more reasons for such conclusions after Belgrade, which was then the center of the archdiocese, fell into Turkish hands (1521), when the Catholic population almost completely disappeared" (Mlakar 2001: 68).

2. *Catholic religious orders*

Every religion that's practicing today has some form of monastic tradition or heritage. A characteristic of the Christian orders is basing their practice upon the word of Christ, early Christian community in Jerusalem and life and writings of certain early monks and founders of religious orders. Christian monasticism first appeared in Egypt (in the desert) at the end of the III century A.D. and represented a new form of consecrated life (Swearer; Zinn, 1990:476–477). Monks and nuns are, broadly speaking, individuals who express an urge to become one with God, or to become one with the Christian perfection through faith, hope and love helped by everyday life which is lead in accordance with certain rules, giving promises or vows- usually those of poverty, chastity (i.e. dedicated celibacy) and obedience- by prayer and fasting, charitable work in the community, and also quite often outside the community (Principe, 1990:584).

[9] Father Jovan Vejin was made pastor of the Belgrade Catedral on 15. of august 2016., and was also made judicial vicar, and a vicar for a life devoted to God in the Belgrade archdiocese (https://www.dnevno.hr/vjera/iz-zivota-crkve/beogradski-zupnik-za-dnevno-otkriva-sve-o-stanju-hrvata-katolika-u-srbiji-1055321/).

In the Latin influenced west, Cassian and Benedict of Nursia (around 480–547) defined a monastery as an institution belonging to the Church. Living in a community, so called cenobitic monasticism, became an only possible way of social interaction between monks. Western monasticism started looking for a an balance between contemplative asceticism and apostolic activity early on, which will, according to Stanković, profile social relations in the Catholic West differently than in the East (Stanković, 2017:113–114).

In the XVII century influenced by Mary Ward, founder of the Institute of Holy Virgin Mary, as well as Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, founder of Sisters of Mercy *(Filles de la Charité)*, women were released from strict monastic lifestyle leaving them free to pursue a life of study, charity and medical assistance. This change lead to the creation of a large number of sisterhoods of which approximately *two hundred* are directly connected to the Holy See (Principe, 1990: 585).

Theoreticians agree on one thing, Europe is an area where secularization theories have experienced their empirical verification. However, things aren't so unambiguous in Europe. One dilemma arises: is a famous phrase of G. Davie "believing without belonging" prevailing in Western Europe, or is it "neither belief nor belonging", as Voas and Crocket believe (quoted in Radisavljević- Ćiparizović; Blagojević, 2016:235).

There are grate difficulties facing monastic life, and life in devotion to God, manifested as economic problems, aging members, international challenge and globalization, snares of relativization, marginalization and disenfranchisement in society- as stated by Pope Francis, who proclaimed 2015. as a "Year of Consecrated life."[10]

Merciful sister Enrica Rosanna made an important lecture entitled "Monastic life in Europe- a challenge for the Church and European society" in which she raised a fundamental question: will monasticism find a different hub which won't be European anymore?[11] She writes of a *religious condition* in which many declare themselves as believers, but don't participate actively in Church life. Absence of young people isn't only noticed in attending Mass, but even more in attending the priesthood… On the other hand, even though

[10] Year of consecrated life is a period from 21.11.2014. to 2.2.2016. as decreed by Pope Francis. It's intended for persons who live a consecrated life (monks and nuns), and it is celebrated alongside the 50th anniversary of the decree of the second Vatican council concerning a reformed restoration of monastic life.

[11] http://www.redovnistvo.hr/vijesti-hkvrpp/novosti/redovnicki_zhivot_u_europi_izazov_za_crkvu_i_europsko_drushtvo_enrica_rosan.

the number of Christians is in decline, Europe still has a significant Christian population. Sister Enrica quotes a study "Future of faith in Europe" which was edited by Philip Jenkins. "God's Continent: Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis", Oxford University Press. This author writes, among other things, that the expansion of religious pilgrimages is a sign of European Christianity's vibrancy. Lourdes was visited by approximately a million people in the nineteen fifties, and by now that number has risen to nearly six million visitors. The Polish shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa is visited by millions each year, mostly young people. Fatima is visited by nearly 4 million pilgrims a year. A number of pilgrims to the Spanish Santiago de Compostela has risen by half a million annually. Italy has also seen a large influx of visitors to religious shrines, like the one in Loreto… Author of this paper has come to the same conclusions in her own research of mixed pilgrimages in Serbia conducted in 2007. (Radisavljević-Ćiparizović, 2016).

In 1969. 47,8% of all monks, and 56,1% of nuns came from Europe, while in the same year only 40,1% of Catholics were European.[12] After 38 years in 2007. Europe was still a continent with the highest number of consecrated persons: in the Old Continent lived 40,5% of monks, and 41,5% of nuns. In that time span a decline in consecrated persons was definitely sharp and constant, but still (at least for now) it's being halted by the rise in life expectancy. There's a decline in Europe's participation in the World (Catholic) Church: a number of baptized in Europe in 2007. Was only 24,7% of all people baptized, with a decline in almost 15% in a time period spanning forty years. That decline is being explained either as result of a general demographic decline, or as decline in vibrancy of European Church communities…

3. *Life and spirituality of the founders of Little Sister of Jesus Brother of Jesus Charles de Foucauld (1858–1916)*[13]

Charles de Foucauld was born in Strasbourg (France) in an aristocratic family in 1858. He was orphaned before he turned six so he and his younger sister were left in the care of their grandparents. Although he came from a

[12] European statistic was taken from the lecture of sister Enrice Rosanne, FMA Monastic life in Europe- a challenge for the Church and European society http://www.redovnistvo.hr/statistika/

[13] For his biography see further in: Charles de Foucauld. *Pisma i zapisi*, Split: Symposion, 1987; Wright, C. *Charles de Foucauld: journeu of the spirit*. Pauline Books, 2005.; R. Voillaume, *U što je vjerovao Charles de Foucauld*, Zagreb: KS, 1993.

Christian family he lost his faith, and strayed away from God. He became an officer at the age of 22, and was sent to Algiers[14]. Three years later he left the army and went to Morocco. Observing the Muslim faith a question awoke in him: "Is there a God?" After his return to France he meet father Huvelin, a priest. Even thou he wasn't a believer he started going to church. That was the only place where he felt at ease so he spent hours in church repeating a prayer: "God, if you exist, let me know it!" At the age of 28 returned to the faith with a desire to dedicate his entire life to God. First he spends 7 years in a Trappist monastery, then 4 years in Nazareth as a hermit near the convent of Poor Clares. After he was ordained as a priest in 1901. he went to the Sahara desert, at first to Beni-Abbès, then to Tamanrasset. He wanted to be a friend and brother to the *desert nomads* so he learned their language and became acquainted with their culture. He didn't want to convert them (do missionary work), he wanted to be their Friend, to "emanate the Gospel" with his entire way of life. In that village in the Algiers Sahara, about 150 km from the border with Morocco, he lived in a modest hut which the local population, do to his hospitality and love for one's neighbor, dubbed simply as "The Brotherhood". In his notes from that period he writes that he spends days meeting and talking to the poor, sick, to the soldiers, travelers and inquisitive people. He wanted to form a small brotherhood around him. In January 1904. he went even deeper into the Sahara desert, to the land of the Tuareg people. In the first half of 1916. he was killed (by the rebels) in Hogar because he wanted to stay with his friends until the end. [15]

Jesus's words from the gospel of John "Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12, 24) came true in a special way during Charles de Foucauld's life who today has a big spiritual family inspired by his life and his writings. He wasn't able to establish it during his life, but today that family includes different monastic communities, layman institutes, and priests all around the world inspired by the personality and thought of that "universal brother". Among the numerous communities we single out Little brothers o

[14] He participated in the quelling the rebellion in French colonies in Northern Africa and traveled across the „Dark continent" as an explorer and a geographer. His discoveries and notes helped produce more precise maps of Northern Africa for which he received a golden medal from the French Geographical Society.

[15] Charles de Foucauld (1858–1916) *Odabrane misli.* Belgrade: Lttle sisters of Jesus, 2016. translated to Serbian: nun Teodora. Published on a centennial of blessed brother Charles death (original title: *Il fait de la religion un Amour*, Spiritual family of brother Charles, France, 2006 (for internal use).

Jesus, founded in 1933. by father René Voillaume in Algiers, and their female branch the Little Sisters of Jesus.

Charles de Foucauld was beatified on November the 13. 2005. and in May 2021. Pope Francis confirmed the decision to make him a saint (along with 6 other beatified). The date of his canonization has been postponed due to the current health crisis.[16]

Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus (1898–1989)[17]

Little Sister Magdeleine (Marie Magdelein Hutin) was born on April the 26th 1898. in Paris. She died in Rome on Novemeber the 6th 1989. a few days before the fall of the Berlin wall, who's borders she and her sisters crossed many times.

On September the 8th 1939. in Touggourt (Algiers) she formed the Brotherhood of Little Sisters of Jesus following the spirituality of brother Charles de Foucauld. "The entire history of the brotherhoods foundation (*fraternité*) can be summed up in these couple of words: "God took me by the hand and I have followed him blindly" (Daiker, 2003:33). She believed that God had prepared her from childhood, from her father she "inherited" her love for Africa, as well as her love for the smallest, poorest and most unsuccessful… But she wasn't spared the temptation, on the contrary. She lost much of her family in the First World War (her grandmother was shot as a hostage by the Germans, both brothers were killed, sister died, and soon afterword her father). The only one that remained from a numerus family was her aging mother that needed her care. But there was a small light shining thru this hard period: reading the book "Charles de Foucald, Explorer of Morocco, Hermit of the Sahara" in which she found an ideal of which she dreamt: the living Gospel, absolute poverty, reclusion among the abounded… and above all other love in it's fullest form: JESUS-CARITAS (JESUS-LOVE). In May 1936 after suffering from deforming arthritis a doctor told her that the only way to stop the progression of the illness is to move to a country without a drop of rain… Sahara for example. After a priest, who for seven years tried to refute her calling, found out about this he told her to go as soon as possible (Daiker, 2003: 27).

[16] https://www.vaticannews.va/hr/crkva/news/2020–05/charles-de-foucauld-medju-novim-svecima.html. http://kc.org.rs/papa-charles-de-foucauld-i-drugih-sest-blazenika-bit-ce-novi-svetci-opce-crkve/.

[17] For her biography see further in: Daiker, A. (2003) Prijeđene granice: život u duhovnost Male sestre Magdalene. Zagreb: KS.

The Brotherhood was borne in the desert and soon it spread across all five continents. Today it exists in seventy or so countries with more than 1.000 Little Sisters. Being "witnesses of unity" is an integral part of their mission. They live in small brotherhoods performing simple tasks, depending on the community in which they live: such as factory workers, working in the fields, cleaning ladies…

In the Year of consecrated life Little Sisters singled out a couple of thoughts of their founder written in a 1945. text entitled "My testimony" in which she addresses all current and future Little Sisters:

"This is the essence of our calling: to succeed in in something that isn't a bit obvious, to let every man enter our hearts- as if he's our only friend- allow everybody we meet to enter our hearts, everybody our Lord has placed in our path. That is the Brotherhoods message, and it is my wish that we carry that message across the World, on all continents, to all peoples, were they Christian, Muslim, Jewish or Buddhist, Marxist, polytheist or atheist" (…) "I would like you to believe that there can be a true friendship and a deep devotion among beings who are not of the same faith, race, nor come from a same place" (…) "Do not distance yourself from mankind… I would dare to say this to you: more than a nun you should be a human being and a Christian in the full notion and beauty of that word" (…) "Put brotherly love as a highest rule, above all other rules, because that is our Lord's commandment".[18]

4. Little Sisters in Belgrade 1969–2019.

Little Sister Magdelein founded Little Sisters of Jesus in Belgrade hoping it will lead to better mutual understanding and an open relationship between them and the Orthodox Church.

Analyzing interviews[19] with several Little Sisters of different age and ethnic background, their archive, photographs and official internet presentations we attempted to reconstruct their arrival, modus operandi and the reasons for their departure from Belgrade in which they were present from 1969. to 2019. During this period there were different groups of Little Sisters, but we must point out Little Sisters Claudia Nada[20] (French), Anna Christine (Swiss),

[18] http://malesestre.hr/2015/08/16/vijesti/.

[19] An interview was conducted with l.s. Christine in 2018. Also there were interviews conducted with Little Sisters from Poland: Agatha and Elizabeth who answered the questions via email. An interview was conducted via Skype with l.s. Nada.

[20] Geneviève Claudia changed her name to Claudia Nada (nada-hope) when she was given a Yugoslavian citizenship. We shall call her only l.s. Nada; the same goes with l.s. Anna Christine, who we call by her second name, and Bernadette Marcelle by her first.

Bernadette Marcelle (French), not only they were among the first to arrive, but because they stayed for several decades in Serbia.[21] A second group (after the arrival of l.s. Bernadette and Nada) was made of: s. Christine, s. Blaženka and s. Elizabeth. Sudden departure of s. Blaženka for Zagreb led another sister from Poland to Belgrade.[22] Last of the Belgrade Little Sisters were: s. Christine, s. Elizabeth and s. Agatha. We should point out that many different sisters came to their Belgrade house in different periods in time: s. Marica, s. Vesna, s. Sonja, s. Emmanuel, s. Mira, s. Denise, s. Martin…

Influenced by their founder Little sisters kept a precise journal of sorts during their stay in these parts. Because most of the notes were done in French, often in hand, sometimes by a type writer, l.s. Christine had to read them and translate them, because she could not have been able to remember all of the facts.

We give a detailed account based on their notes which describe the preparation for their arrival and formation of their sisterhood. We shall see that it wasn't at all an easy and simple task. Little Sister Magdeleine loved Eastern Europe and came to Yugoslavia 32 times, 27 of those visits were to Belgrade. She came for the first time in 1956. and she came 1959. with a young nun Sister Claudia Nada. They traveled across Yugoslavia in a type of minibus with a specific name of „Etoile Filante"(the Traveling Star). Between 1959. and 1964. they came annually. They were in contact with father Polgar (a Jesuit), Daughters of Cristian Love and Zora (Đorđević), their first friend who graduated at a boarding school in Switzerland. In 1963. l.s. Nada remained for 3 months with Ana Dimitrijević (until her tourist visa expired), a member of the St. Peter parish. Upon her return to Paris in 1964. she enrolled in a Serbo-Croatian school. In October of 1965. l.s. Nada comes to Belgrade where she formally lives as a student in the student campus (Studentski grad). There she met a lot of young Serbs, Montenegrins, Hungarians, but also students from Africa and Poland. She was there briefly (three months), because at the times there weren't many buses that could have taken her to the city center to Mass. In November of 1965. she enrolls in an intensive course of

[21] Mira Adanja Polak, a famous reporter opens her YouTube video with these words: „And now you can see something I have never encountered- Little Sister of Jesus" in which she talks to l.s. an where we can see their small house with a a chapel in Đevđelijska street no. 51 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utdKDZdkEF4).

[22] L.s. Blaženka came to Belgrade from Zagreb instead of s. Nada and her return to Croatia was unexpected. L.s. Christine „explained" that with the following statement: "She really wanted to work with young people so Croatia can get aquatinted with their charisma…"

Serbo-Croatian language at the Institute for foreign languages in Gospodar Jovanova street. Looking for a room to rent she became acquainted with Belgrade, as well as a lot of friends, people who helped her…that was a difficult time because she changed lodgings three times in 7 months, usually because the rent went up. In May of 1966. she was joined by l.s. Jacqueline Geneviève. They were the first sisters in Yugoslavia, Belgrade. It's important to point out that the founder of their order always wanted to form the first Brotherhood of a country in its capital. She enrolled at the Faculty of Applied Arts, department for textile, because she was granted a French scholarship- which was enough for the support of two Small Sisters. A professor suggested that the best course of action was for her to go to a monastery for 3 months so she can learn how to use a loom. That's how she spent 3 months in Ljubostinja monastery, helped by father Života, an orthodox priest who was a cousin of Varvara, mother superior of the monastery. Blessing for her stay at the monastery was given by the Bishop of Žiča Vasilije[23] and the archbishop Bukatko[24]. Sister Nina was her teacher, and her graduation thesis was the making of a small Pirot carpet. After three years l.s. Magdelein gave them permission to buy a house and to form their brotherhood. Because of that in 1969. they decided to pray for nine days straight. On the ninth day (Sunday) they went to Mass at the church of Saint Ante, where they were invited for lunch by the Franciscans. They went thru ad pages of the paper looking to buy a house because foreign citizens couldn't buy a flat at the time. A house in Đevđelijska 51, near the church of St. Anthony of Padua in Zvezdara, caught their eye, and they bought it soon afterwards. First Mass, and the blessing of their chapel was conducted in December of 1969. By 1970. l.s. Nada had gotten her Yugoslavian citizenship thanks to a men from Aljmaš (near Osijek in Croatia) where she was staying at the time with l.s. Marica. Little Sister Magdelein told her to go back to Belgrade because it was important that at least one sister has a citizenship. The same year saw formation of brotherhoods in Ruski Krstur

[23] From 1961–1978 Bishop of Žiča was Vasilije (Kostić). Until his appointment as a Bishop he finished university, gotten his doctorate degree in Athens, was a clerk of the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, professor of the monastic school in Dečani, also in seminaries in Prizren and Bitolj. Elected and ordained as the Banjaluka Bishop in 1947. He rebuilt the Bishop's palace in Žiča monastery which was destroyed during the war. He worked among his flock tirelessly and bravely and gave incentive for building of new churches. He was a representative of the Serbian Church at a Allorthodox conferences in Rhodes an Geneva http://eparhija-zicka.rs/eparhija/istorijat/.

[24] Mons. dr Gabrijel Bukatko (archbishop 1964–1980) http://kc.org.rs/nadbiskup/.

and in Kosovo. Around 15 sisters were in Yugoslavia at that times in the following brotherhoods: Aljmaš, Ruski Krstur, Belgrade and Priština.[25]

One can plainly see from their notes that it wasn't an easy task to form brotherhoods in these parts during socialism. Since l.s. Magdelein came for the first time with l.s. Nada in 1959. up until the brotherhoods formation in 1969. their struggle lasted for a decade. It was necessary to overcome bureaucratic limitation, change apartments, learn the language, culture, even weaving. On the other hand, they always pointed out how nicely they were welcomed, and that they had a lot of help from people.

Charisma of their order consists in the fact that they are contemplative in the world. Their dally rules prove that this is a praying order.

Daly rules- typikon of the Little Sisters[26]

When they get up in the morning, before their work, they have a collective prayer- morning prayer, reading of the psalms. But before the Morning Prayer they site in silence for a while, at least for half an hour. To see what God wants them to do, what are their plans for that day, to put everything in God's hands. They go to Mass at the parish church every day, then to work. Mass is either in the morning or in the afternoon. During the day they have an hour for Eucharistic adoration, every one of them in front of the open tabernacle, in front of the Almighty. They pray for all people they communicate with, and for all of their worries. They spend their time in the house in silence, speaking only when they have guest and friends over. They spend two days a month in silence and prayer, which they call "the Desert". Its best for them to go outside where they can "listen" what God wants them to do. They have daily orders (poslušanje- obedience) which one of them is responsible and obligated to give. They discuss the Gospels every day, in the evenings. They get up at 6h in the morning and go to bed at 20^{30}h, and they go to Mass at 7^{30}h. Once a week, quite often on Saturdays, they discus and read the Gospels they read on Sunday. Every week a different Little Sister leads them in prayer and prepares the part of the Gospel they will discuss. On Thursdays they have nightly Eucharistic adorations, but they can't all do it all night when they are working, or when they are in a small community so they do it one at the time for an hour or two. Their house used to host the Taizé prayer once a month. They love to

[25] Brotherhood in Zagreb opend in 1975.

[26] From a intreview with l.s. Christine.

be in contact with young people, and often hosted theology students, young people both believers and unbelievers.

We can see their devotion to prayer from the daily rules- typikon. Although the doors of their house-convent are always open for everyone, they also live a serious contemplative life, a life that often remains unseen by their guests and friends. While one sister sips coffee and chats with guests, another is in the chapel praying.

We have chosen only those parts of the interviews that deal with their arrival in Belgrade, and we have divided their 50 year long stay into two segments- period up until the nineteen nineties, and a period after the brake up of Yugoslavia.[27] We were especially interested in the changes in relationship with their neighbors during those years, especially with Orthodox Christians, an Orthodox monks. We also singled out their views on the closing down and selling of the house in Belgrade which came to pass gradually from 2015. to 2019.

L.s. Nada was born 1934. in Rouen as the oldest of seven children. She wanted to be a nun from her childhood, also wishing to live among the workers. She entered the order of Little Sisters in 1956. where she heard that she could devote herself to the people in communist countries so she applied immediately. Considering that the conversation with l.s. Nada takes up most of our interview we will only mention her replies to the questions about the closing of the house.

There were already talks about closing the Belgrade house down. Bernadette had to leave do to health issue, so it was difficult to have only two elderly sisters alone. She asked if a younger sister could replace her, and she was ready to leave. L.s. Elizabeth came in her place because she wanted to go among the Orthodox population. L.s. Nada first went to Zagreb and is now in Toulouse. There she is with a group of 25 elderly sisters, and a group of younger ones who are learning French (from Egypt, Slovakia, Somalia…). They are divided into groups, and the youngest nun in her group is 78 years old, and she is the oldest… one sister comes from Morocco, one from Rwanda, one from Cuba, and they are all French. "I'm very sorry I left, I would return immediately. Yes, immediately. I think of Belgrade every single day, every day, every hour. And all those coming from Morocco they too…it's very hard for me but I know that God still acts through you. I'm trying to understand those that made this decision (because there aren't enough sisters). Maybe the house will reopen again. God willing!"

[27] These questions were given only to the sisters from the so called „first group": Nada and Christine, because the two Polish sisters were in Belgrade for a short time.

L.s. Christine was born in 1943. in Lausanne as a third of four children. “At the time Protestantism was very strong in Lausanne so it was hard to be a Catholic. Today that’s not the case.” She entered the Little Sisters on December the 8th 1966. Discovering that the true poverty lies in not knowing God she decided to go to the communist countries, especially to Russia. At the same time sister Nada was starting her brotherhood in Yugoslavia. The only way to their religious work in Yugoslavia is to do something that hasn’t been done before. So that’s how she came. They usually don’t stay in one place for so long, but do to certain circumstances she stayed here.

Socialist period until the ‘90s

Little Sister Christine points out that her life has always been dedicated to unity, not only among religions but among nations and classes… She was used to smaller communities. She points out that she came across a strong religious feeling in the Catholic Church in Belgrade. Belgrade is a big city, it was possible to go to church. It wasn’t desirable, but it was possible. Their parish Church if Saint Ante was next door to an Orthodox Church of the Shroud of the Holy Mother. They often went to wakes and holidays and they were always greeted nicely by the priests and by the faithful. They wanted to visit Serbian monasteries. So they visited Ljubostinje, Manasija, and especially Žiča. Mother superior was mother Magdalena. It was very important for Christine as a young sister (28) because of the critical patients at radiology. She went to Žiča many times on a Friday, straight from work, there weren’t any phones, but sisters at Žiča knew that she was coming to pray, and they would accept her as one of them.

“We were truly like sisters, a true sisterhood. During the communist era all Christians were like one. We all lived as one, we all wanted the Gospel.”

I consider these testimony by the l.s. Christine as very important. It speaks about a strong faith of the few believers during socialism, when it wasn’t preferable to be a believer, to go to church, no matter what confession you were. It also shows that there were no animosity towards them from Orthodox believers, quite the contrary.

Period from the '90s until now

After the brake up of Yugoslavia, do to so many wounds, scattered families, all the dead, unfortunately relations between the churches have changed. They couldn't go to any Orthodox church they wanted, they couldn't go to mirosanje (anointing with holy oil) to the Church of the Shroud, because some refused to anoint them ("it depended on the priest"). "We felt that we needed to be very small. In no circumstance did we went to cause trouble".

But l.s. Christine is still full of understanding when it comes to these changes. "It's true that we were always in the same place, but all our neighbors, true citizens of Belgrade, have changed", Belgrade was always an open city and there were newer any problems, nor nationalism. But everything that happened from the 1990. in Yugoslavia was very hard, it was a catastrophe. Many of our neighbors couldn't afford to live there any more so they were forced to sell their houses. New neighbors came from other Yugoslav republics and of course they saw us as enemies".

Answering the question "*Did you had any inconveniences?*" she answers: "I think that the children helped in building bridges between us. They saw that the neighborhood children come to us regularly. My job at the hospital also helped a lot, because I was able to help those people who didn't have any papers to get the medical help they needed. And there were always good doctors who would treat everybody… We received so many words of praise from people at the market, or in the tram that even if somebody had something ugly to say others would immediately tell them to let it go".

Those who knew them before didn't change their attitude towards them as we can see in the next quote:

"In time we have gotten to know Rajinovac monastery in Begaljica where we went to work with other sisters, and that monastery was always like a family for us. It's stile like that to this day, first Mother Superior died, but there's Minodora as the new Mother Superior and other sisters. We can go whenever we want, even thou we don't go as often as we'd like due to our week condition, but we always wish happy holidays to each other. It's the same in Žiča, mother Jelena was always welcoming toward us, and still is. Younger sisters Elizabeth and Agatha also went. But still, we should be small and we should never forget that we are the guests."

It's also important to point out that the sisters didn't leave Belgrade even during the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. although they could have left.

“We were here during the bombing. Honestly, those were trying years. Our sisters in administration for the entire World asked us do we want to go, but we decided that as long as people are here we will remain with the people. Because that is our calling, to be a small sign of God’s love wherever we are. Are founder l.s. Magdelein said: “If you can be but a small ray of sunlight in a dark room that would be enough, your life is fulfilled.”

Departure from Belgrade

“We have deep and friendly ties to the Serbian Orthodox Church and with other people, believers and nonbelievers in Belgrade and Serbia. That’s a part of our charisma, to be present there. But unfortunately there’s no calling, no vocation. And because there are so many countries in the world without Christians they (the administration) told us that they can’t send that many young sisters to the Balkans because there’s a lot of Christians in the Balkans now which means that our orders should leva”.

Are you sorry for leaving Belgrade?

“Yes, but are hart remains, not just mine and the sisters who preceded me, but also Elizabeth, younger sister, who is in Lyon at now, she cried when she had gotten the news, but we have dedicated our life to God. Belgrade remains in my heart even when I’m not in Belgrade. My prayer for unity among the people, between different nations and for Serbia remains the same”.[28]

Little Sister Elizabeth was born in 1988, in Warsaw. She grew up with her parents, her grandmother and her younger brother. It was a mixed family: one grandmother was borne in Ukraine, one grandfather in Belarus, among distant relatives there are Hungarians and Muslim Tatars. The words of their founder: *Unity is our mission* was one of the first sings that she belonged there. She entered the order in 2010. and since then has lived in several sisterhoods in five countries in Europe and Africa. Before Serbia she was in Krakow where she made her wows. In preparation for this head of her order asked her to express her wishes for working among the Orthodox population, and for her wish to serve the unified Church. That letter arrived to the main house in Rome where the sisters were discussing sisterhood’s future in Belgrade… She arrived at Belgrade in January 19th 2016. “Neighbors and friends of the

[28] L.s. Christine at first went to a brotherhood in Hungary, and then to Switzerland.

sisterhood in Belgrade greeted me as one of their one, and that really touched me and helped me to immerse myself with vigor in my studies of the language and in getting to know the city". She worked at a kitchen in one of the Belgrade hotels and says that she always felt kindness and benevolence from people that she worked with. Other place for meeting and interacting with the people from Serbia was the Orthodox Church. They often went to Mass to the parish Church of the Shrine where the faithful were used to the presence of the Little Sisters. Besides that she attended liturgy at the Faculty of Theology where she meet a lot of students. She was very close to some of them as they attended ecumenical prayers in the spirit of Taizé, and meet every month. She thinks that the charisma of the community of Little Sisters is quite close to the calling of the Belgrade Catholic Church- become "one of them", embody the Gospel in connections with friends, respect and solidarity.

Departure from Belgrade

After two and a half years of blissful life in Belgrade she had gotten a new assignment, she was to go to France where she was to carry out the theological formation which is required from every sister before she takes her wows. In the meantime it became obvious that the community can't function with only two sisters so the house needed to be shut down. That made it harder for her to leave.

"You ask me if I would like to come back to Belgrade- but that depends on what you have in mind. Certainly it wouldn't be for nostalgia sake- every bound with friends, ever so special, lasts forever, and every good that I received will stay with me. In that case Belgrade is always with me. But if they were to assign me to Serbia again I would go there in a heartbeat- by foot…"

L.s. Agatha was born in 1967. in Poland as the oldest of four children. She entered the order in 1989. Before Belgrade she was in every community in Poland[29], Ukraine and in Kirgizstan for a short while, a month, as a volunteer. She was economist for the region, and started to work with refugees in Warsaw. She wanted to put herself at the disposal of the order where ever she was needed. She loves gardening and wanted to work at the Fontane Abbey in Rome (their main house) because no one else wants to. She didn't expect to go to Belgrade.

[29] Poland has 6 communities with 42 Little Siters (taken from the interview with s. Agatha in 2018.)

How did you received the news that the house in Belgrade is to be shut down? Very hard! I'm handling the shutdown very hard. Our superiors had seen that l.s. Nada has to go… that would only make sense if they were to do something in two years… Ok, there aren't any young sisters, but that's not the reason… It also doesn't make sense to sell the house immediately, it's better to rent it for 2–3 years… If I didn't came to Belgrade perhaps I also wouldn't know, not like that. The community is changing- yes, but to sell the house… In January 2019. I will return to Częstochowa.

Every interviewed sister took the closure of the brotherhood and the selling of the house very hard. It has been most difficult for those sisters who were in Belgrade for decades.

Instead of a conclusion

It is without a doubt that the departure of Little Sisters from Belgrade is due to the lack of younger sister in their order. In the opening paragraph we could see that there is an insufficient number of devoted to God in the entire West Europe. Among many Catholic orders, old and new, this order is truly specific because their founders who devoted themselves to working with Muslims, and with their friendship with everyone no mater wat religion, nation, race or worldview they have. And their gradual departure speaks volumes about their desire to remain in this region. Unfortunately unfavorable circumstance prevailed: "sudden" return to Zagreb of one of the Little Sisters and the departure of another so she can complete her formation. The third unfavorable circumstance was a change in the orders leadership[30] which approached the problem "bureaucratically", which can be seen by a little hastily selling of the house.

On the November of 17th 2018. Ina full church of St. Anthony of Padua in Belgrade, archbishop mons. Stanislav Hočaver led a Mass in thanks for a 50 year presence Little Sisters of Jesus in the Serbian capital. They wanted to thank everybody who was present in prayer and who was with them for all those years because they were closing down the house in 2019. "It's up to us to continue the spread of the charismatic spirit of the Little Sisters".[31]

One thing is certain, Little Sisters have left an indelible mark on the hearts of all the people that had the fortune to meet them. In the 50 years of presence of

[30] Little Sisters had a General Chapter 2017. (a spiritual gathering held every six years) where they changed the leadership of the order, and a new General assembly was elected.

[31] http://kc.org.rs/dan-koji-ce-ostati-zapisan-u-istoriji-nadbiskupije/# accessed on 1.12.2018.

their community in turbulent times an in an area where the Catholic Church is in a minority, Little Sisters of Jesus have achieved their task of being contemplative in the world, and being friends with everyone no mater wat religion, nation, race or worldview they have. So with constant prayer and simple socializing they remained close friends to many, believers and nonbelievers. Making their founder Charles de Foucauld a saint, and with the procedure for beatification[32] of l.s. Magdeleine could lead to the popularization of their order and an increase in the number of sisters.

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[32] Beatification (lat. Beatus- blisful) is a first step in the Roman Catholic church for canonisation.

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Религиозность как ценность в моноконфессиональных православных обществах: Сербии, России, Черногории[1]

Аннотация: Можно говорить о том, что Сербия, Россия и Черногория относятся к группе моноконфессиональных, религиозно-гомогенных обществ, так как в статистических переписях населения и в моделях социально-психологических исследований респонденты называют себя православными более чем в двух третьих случаев. Помимо этого, во всех этих обществах восточное христианство является истерической, традиционной религией, которая веками оказывала влияние не только на формирование национальных особенностей, но и на верования, этические нормы и ритуальное поведение. Цель работы заключается в том, чтобы на базе эмпирического социологического исследования протестировать ценность православия и православной религиозности с помощью трех индикаторов связи людей с религией и церковью: индикатора измерения религиозной идентичности, а также измерения ритуального поведения посредством двух индикаторов: посещения церкви и молитвы. В случае с Сербией и Черногорией, речь идет о результатах, полученных в рамках программы Европейского Социального Исследования (European Social Survey – ESS), проведённого в 2018 году, а в случае с Россией – о данных исследования ESS, которое было проведено в 2016 году. Представленные данные, по крайней мере, частично, позволяют сделать обзор актуального состояния связи с религией и церковью в Сербии, России и Черногории, а также дают возможность определить случайности и различия в упомянутых индикаторах религиозности.

Ключевые слова: религиозность, религиозно-гомогенные общества, Сербия, Россия, Черногория, индикаторы религиозности, социология религии.

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[1] This paper was written under the Institute of Social Sciences Research Program for 2022, supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

Введение

В отличие от весьма эффективного «западного» опыта секуляризации после Второй мировой войны, Сербия, Россия и Черногория в этом периоде сталкиваются с болезненным опытом вынужденной, навязанной государством и насильственной атеизации общества. Это был не спонтанный и органический, а радикальный процесс разрыва с традицией и исторической религией, которая на протяжении веков определяла духовную жизнь и практическое поведение миллионов людей в этих странах. На самом деле, интенсивность и итоговые последствия для религии и церкви в атмосфере такого окружения в данных обществах не были одинаковы, но общий план отношения большевистского социалистического государства к религиям и церквям, а особенно к православию, был определен государственной политикой тотальной маргинализации. В Советском союзе, в своем крайнем проявлении, это определялось и открытым стремлением искоренить религии и церкви из жизни общества, с тем, чтобы их остатки стали артефактами прошлого в виде не системно ориентированных и при этом малочисленных и маргинизированных индивидов. Однако, несмотря на то, что в этих обществах в первую очередь имела место политически поддерживаемая атеизация, в известном смысле ее последствия в результате обусловили и секуляризацию. Такие последствия, как и причины секуляризации на Западе – урбанизация, увеличение образовательного уровня населения, включение женщин в экономическую и политическую жизнь, изменения в семейной структуре, развитие науки – после Второй мировой войны также присутствовали в Сербии, России и Черногории, поэтому в результате сама атеизация повлекла за собой модернизацию. С другой стороны, последствия в религиозной сфере были более чем пагубны, что было особенно очевидно в случае с православием и с православной церковью. Помимо измерения идентичности, самые разрушительные последствия атеизации общества проявлялись в измерении ритуального поведения и объединения верующих. Прежде всего, парадигмой тут является пример Черногории и России. Черногория, по доступным данным исследований 70-х годов прошлого века, была одной из самых атеизованных республик Социалистической Югославии, в то же время на мировом уровне примером парадигмы процесса государственной вынужденной атеизации общества являлся Советский Союз. Ситуация же в Сербии, в соответствии с данными тех же исследований, могла быть охарактеризована как находящаяся между двумя упомянутыми случаями.

Религиозные процессы имеют динамическую природу и по большей части зависят от таких же динамических общественных процессов. Этим, по крайней мере, в некоторой степени, могут быть объяснены изменения в теоретических подходах к феномену религии. Самым очевидным примером тут является Питер Бергер, чьи теоретические взгляды на общественные и религиозные процессы секуляризации в 60-х годах прошлого века до конца того же века радикально эволюционировали в направлении понимания актуальных религиозных процессов в контексте десекуляризации мира (Berger, 1973; Berger, 1999). Предпринятая нами попытка рассмотреть религиозную динамику в Сербии, России и Черногории как в преимущественно «православных» обществах идет в русле современных тенденций отхождения от широкого синтеза и общих выводов, которые бы относились ко всему миру и фокусирования на изучении отдельных случаев или примеров, имеющих сродство на основе какого-либо определяющего признака (Mentus i Jovanović Ajzenhamer, 2020: 75).

Поэтому важно после предшествующих фаз религиозной динамики, которые, прежде всего, можно было определить в контексте атеизации общества, а затем и второй фазы, пришедшейся на начало 90-х годов прошлого века, которая определяется как фаза деатеизации (десекуляризации) сербского, российского и черногорского общества, рассмотреть в части связи с религией и (Православной) церковью тенденции третьей фазы, которая определяется как фаза относительно стабильной связи на фундаменте религиозной ситуации предыдущей второй фазы (Blagojevic, Bakrac, 2020).

Методология

В данном тексте анализ связи с религией и церковью в трех странах опирается на результаты омнибусного, одного из самых теоретически и методологически всеохватных европейских социологических исследований общественного мнения и использует самые высокие методологические стандарты. Данное качественное исследование реализовано на репрезентативной выборке большинства европейских стран с целью получения данных, которые при применении единой методологии взаимосравнимы. Исследование организуют каждые два года, начиная с 2002 года, и его одновременно проводят на выборке граждан старше 15 лет с применением анкеты на национальном языке в каждой из стран.

Данное исследование помогает отслеживать в сравнительной и временной перспективе такие разнообразные общественные процессы в Европе, как секуляризация, взросление, прекаризация рынка и т.д. Данные, полученные в ходе исследования, могут быть использованы и в других областях – отношение к молодёжи, трудоустройство, культура здравоохранение. Данные исследования, которые относятся к связи с религией и церковью, для Сербии и Черногории взяты за 2018 год, а для России – за 2016 год. Новейшее исследование в 2018 году охватило 29 европейских стран и включило в совокупности 47000 респондентов. Поясним, что данное исследование проводится под эгидой Европейского исследовательского консорциума – European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC). Европейское Социальное Исследование для организаций Европейского союза (Европейская комиссия и Парламент Европейского союза) является одним из ключевых источников данных, которые делают возможным измерение и понимание долгосрочных структурных изменений, а также изменений ценностных культурных образцов и практик граждан в европейских обществах.

Определенные ограничения данного исследования, в части касающейся анализа религиозной ситуации, обусловлены омнибусным характером исследования и тем, что исследовательские усилия направлены на использование только нескольких индикаторов, которые при этом наиболее часто употребляются и в целевых и систематических исследованиях религиозности – таких как конфессиональная идентификация, религиозная идентичность, а также двух индикаторов религиозной практики: молитвы и посещения церковных служб и церковных организаций. С другой стороны, принимая во внимание то, что посредством других уже упомянутых целях, а также комплексных исследованиях религиозности была создана фрагментированная база данных о связи людей с религией и церковью, качество данного исследования определяется объемом его охвата большого количества стран и многоконфессиональностью респондентов, что открывает хорошие возможности для сравнения, так как ко всем полученным данным применена единая методология исследования. Безусловно, нет никаких сомнений по поводу целостности качественного анализа религиозной ситуации и связи людей с религией и церковью в любой из целевых групп исследования.

Конфессиональная идентичность

В распоряжении социологов религии и религиоведов находятся многочисленные индикаторы конвенциональной религиозности, которые можно применять в исследованиях религиозности. Ситуацию с определением так называемой институционализированной, классической религии и конвенциональной религиозности в некоторой степени облегчает возможность того, что в данном случае может быть применено более узкое определение религии и религиозности, как и то, что речь идет о научном поле, которое основательно исследовано теоретическим (с примерами еще из периода становления социологии) и опытным путем, особенно после Второй мировой войны. Классическая религия базируется на институционализированной религиозной организации (церкви), это догматический тип религии с развитым теологическим учением и сложным сплетением религиозных ритуалов, в которых участвует верующий и которые чаще всего рассматриваются в качестве основы и условия спасения верующего. Поэтому классическая религиозность подразумевает, по крайней мере, два важных аспекта: идентичность и следование религиозному учению, а также практику набожности в определенных религиозных организациях посредством развития чувства принадлежности к вере и церковной организации. Таким образом, классическим синтезом тут является *религиозное сознание* и *религиозное поведение и объединение*.

Применяемое в исследованиях конвенциональной религиозности большое количество индикаторов этой религиозности мы можем разделить по меньшей мере на три группы. Первую группу составляют индикаторы, которые относятся к идентичности респондента – чаще всего это конфессиональная и религиозная идентичность. Вторая группа включает показатели, которые связаны с определенным взглядом на мир в рамках некой религии или блока религий – как, например, вера в Бога, Святую Троицу, рай и воскресение мертвых и другие догматические положения христианства; или же вера в реинкарнацию, магию, астрологию в других системах идей. К третьей группе относятся индикаторы, которые характеризуют совокупную литургическую практику и образ жизни верующего, который принадлежит к определенной религиозно-культурной традиции или группе таких традиций – это значительный перечень показателей, касающихся христианства: например, факт и интенсивность посещения церкви, молитвы, причастия, исповеди, соблюдения поста, крещения, паломничества и т.д.

Когда речь идет о религиозном сознании, начальной точкой анализа в любом случае будет идентификация верующего, респондента с определенной религиозной организацией. Результаты полученные посредством применения в исследовании данного показателя религиозности ни в каком случае нельзя рассматривать как окончательное и не подлежащее сомнению количество религиозных людей в рамках некого географического или религиозно-конфессионального пространства. Речь идет о так называемом «мягком» индикаторе религиозности, так как он не позволяет достаточно хорошо выявить религиозен или не религиозен респондент. Таким образом в исследованиях количестве верующих указавших свое вероисповедание превосходит количество респондентов назвавших себя религиозными, что значит, что даже те респонденты, которые не считают себя религиозными считают, что они принадлежат к некой конфессии (например, православию). Как это возможно? Единственное объяснение заключается в том, что вероисповедание в перцепции респондентов необязательно связана с личной религиозностью. Религиозная идентичность означает не только выражение имманентно религиозного, но и более широкого социально-исторического контекста, в котором традиционная религия и церковь имели выдающуюся роль и оказывали сильное влияние на общество, социальные группы и индивидов. Поэтому наличие религиозной идентификации включает не только отношение к Богу и церкви, но и отношение к традиции, к нации, к культурному наследию, к вере отцов и дедов. Из-за этого свойства религиозная идентичность – хотя она часто и упоминается в исследованиях – не является надежным индикатором религиозности, а отдельные исследования с помощью факторного анализа показали, что речь идет о «мягком» индикаторе рилигиозности (Flere, Pantić, 1977). Российский социолог религии Филатов для обозначения религиозной идентичности и вероисповедания использует термин *культурная религиозность* (Филатов, Лункин, 2005). Конечно, это не значит, что необходимо отказаться от данного индикатора религиозности. Он является базовым показателем и ориентиром, а всесторонний анализ связи людей с религией и церковью на некоторых территориях требует применения в исследованиях комплексных показателей из других измерений религиозности (Cohen at all, 2017; Kuburić, 2016).

В период атеизации самое устойчивое измерение религиозности относилось к религиозной идентичности – это особенно характерно и для Сербии, и для Черногории. И сегодня, тридцать лет спустя, после падения социализма конфессиональный консенсус в трех рассматриваемых странах остается весьма проблематичным. Данные по Сербии и Черногории из Европейского Социального Исследования (2018 года) и по России (2016 года) показывают, что свыше двух третей респондентов указывают свою принадлежность к какому-либо вероисповеданию.

Таблица 1. Распространенность православия (данные ESS)

Доля принадлежащих к православному вероисповеданию (в %)	Сербия	Россия	Черногория
	90,5	86,9	70,9

В преддверии начала анализа этих данных необходимо напомнить, что речь идет о доле респондентов заявивших о своей принадлежности к православному вероисповеданию относительно общего количества респондентов в выборке, которые дали ответ на поставленный вопрос (valid percent). Особую проблему представляет то, что в российской выборке 44,1 % респондентов не ответило на данный вопрос или ответило, что они не знают (missing percent). В случае с Сербией и Черногорией доля таких респондентов была в два раза меньше. Помимо тех респондентов, которые называли себя православными, в Сербии были респондент, которые заявляли о своей принадлежности к римокатолицизму (5 %), исламу (2,2 %), протестанству (1,1 %), остальные составили менее одного процента. В России в исследованиях религиозных меньшинств выявлены мусульмане (10,6 %), последователи протестантантизма (0,8 %) и римокатолики (0,5 %). В Черногории 24,7 % назвали себя мусульманами, а 3,1 % – римокатоликами.

Религиозная идентичность

Религиозная идентичность часто используется как индикатор религиозности в социально-психологических исследованиях и исследованиях общественного мнения. В отличие от конфессиональной идентификации она дает более достоверные данные о личной религиозности на основе интроспекции респондента (внутренняя религиозность) и представляет собой идентификационный маркер личной религиозности (McAndrew and Voas, 2011: 4). Определение личной религиозности более чувствительный индикатор, чем конфессиональная принадлежность, так как подразумевает интроспекцию и рефлексию (Lebedev, Blagojević i Pokaninova, 2020). Из-за того, что кто-то считает себя религиозной личностью, но не считает, что принадлежит к какой-либо конфессии (субъективная религиозность), мы имеем данные, часто интерпретируемые как парадокс, о том, что в исследованиях регулярно проявляется больше конфессиональной, чем прорелигиозной идентичности. Однако, как и в случае с конфессиональной идентичностью, необходимо сказать, что и этот индикатор как самостоятельный показатель религиозности недостаточен для объяснения ценностной позиции религиозности, потому что как маркер идентификационного характера он не дает ответа на вопрос других измерений религиозности, таких как ритуальное, догматическое, действенно-мотивационное. В продолжении представлены данные о религиозной идентичности в Сербии, России и Черногории:

Таблица 2. Религиозная идентичность (данные ESS)

Не/религиозность (в %)	Сербия	Россия	Черногория
Полностью не религиозен	**8,7**	**13,4**	**9,6**
Ближе к нерелигиозным	16,6	35,2	26,3
Умеренно религиозен	**20,2**	**20,0**	**20,1**
Ближе к религиозным	38,6	28,9	33,0
Весьма религиозен	**15,9**	**2,5**	**10,9**
Религиозен в любом смысле	**74,7**	**51,4**	**64,0**

В ходе анализа необходимо исходить из самого проблемного факта – того, что по всех рассматриваемых нами православных странах точно пятая часть респондентов позиционирует себя как умеренно религиозные. Возможно мы могли бы охарактеризовать такую позицию как водораздельную черту между теми респондентами, которые имеют склонность к не религиозности и теми, кто тяготеет к религиозности. Многие авторы назвали бы эту группу не умеренно или средне религиозными, а *колеблющимися* между религиозностью и не религиозностью. Кроме того, данные позволяют говорить о том, что в Сербии самая большая доля тех, кто называет себя весьма религиозным, а в России таких респондентов меньше всего и, соответственно, в России самая большая доля нерелигиозных, а в Сербии – самая маленькая. Так, и в России, и в Черногории мы наблюдаем значительное количество респондентов, которые склонны к не религиозности, а в Сербии больше всего тех, кто склонен к религиозности. Если принимать в рассмотрение все прорелигиозные позиции (ответ «религиозен в любом смысле»), мы увидим, что на основе самоидентификации респондентов Сербия находится на первом месте со свыше, чем две трети религиозных, затем следует Черногория с около двух третей, и, хотя в России большинство, то есть свыше половины религиозных, относительно Сербии и Черногории их меньше всего.

Одна из форм воцерковленности: посещение церкви

Когда речь идет о христианстве, религиозные обязанности, такие как посещение церкви и участие в воскресных богослужениях, относятся к сильным индикаторам конвенциональной религиозности, так как показывают связь индивида (верующего) с институтом церкви и религиозными обрядами. В эмпирических, социологических исследованиях христианства посещение церкви принималось не только как самый сильный индикатор религиозности, но в при определенных условиях и как самый надежный. Во всяком случае, речь идет об индикаторе, который, без всякого сомнения, относится к самым надежным показателям так называемой институционализированной, церковной религиозности, которые являются предметом анализа в обществах Сербии, России и Черногории. В этом смысле данный индикатор, вместе с некоторыми другими индикаторами (такими, как, например, посещение богослужения, молитва, пост) дает самое достоверное представление о реальной, актуальной религиозности, и из-за этой черты он регулярно и принимался в рассмотрение во всех имевших до сих пор место эмпирических, социологических исследованиях и исследованиях общественного мнения по вопросу религиозности и связи с религией и церковью. В христианстве посещение церкви является обязательным действом, так как это единственный правильный способ установления связи с Богом (ради спасения). Только институционализированная, нерассеянная вера имеет значительное социальную и политическую импликацию. Социальная мощь церкви зависит не только от декларируемых, но прежде всего от активных верующих, которые регулярно участвуют в литургической жизни церкви. Подобное обрядовое поведение верующих не только просто свойственный вид коммуникации с Богом, но и подтверждение и укрепление солидарности и религиозного единства прихожан церкви.

Более ранние исследования на преимущественно православных территориях показали, что данный вид актуальной связи с религией и церковью разделяет судьбу других определений нетрадиционной природы. Расширение регулярной практики (один или два раза в месяц и чаще) данные религиозные нормы, например, в Сербии стремятся к 2 % исследуемой популяции, что подтверждает утверждение об «огромная эрозия этой формы религиозного поведения» (Đorđević, 1984:108).

В данном исследовании этот индикатор дополнительно усилен уточнением о том, что посещение церкви «измеряется» посещениями и помимо так называемых особенных, особенно в православии, традиционных поводов, таких как крещение, венчание и похороны. На самом деле, в православии упомянутые обряды, когда речь вообще идет о посещении церкви верующими, действительно самые посещаемые. Ознакомимся с результатами для Сербии, России и Черногории:

Таблица 3. Частота посещения церкви (данные ESS)

Частота посещения церкви (в %)	Сербия	Россия	Черногория
Ежедневно	**1,7**	**1,2**	**0,9**
Чаще, чем один раз в неделю	2,0	1,4	3,7
По крайней мере, один раз в неделю	5,2	3,8	9,3
По крайней мере, один раз в месяц	13,4	10,2	18,9
Только по особым случаям	**43,1**	**27,2**	**34,7**
Редко	22,4	27,6	18,3
Никогда	**12,2**	**28,6**	**14,1**

Прежде всего, бросаются в глаза данные о том, что во всех рассматриваемых обществах в рамках самоперцепции ежедневно порог церкви переступает исключительно малая часть респондентов. Меньше всего эта доля в Черногории. Также, в то время как в Сербии и Черногории практически на этом же уровне находится доля респондентов, которые никогда не ходят в церковь, в России это значительная часть, составляющая почти 30 %. Если мы рассматриваем данные о том, что от 15 до около 20 % респондентов несколько раз в месяц в рассматриваемых трех странах ходят в церковь сравнить с данными о посещении церкви 30 и больше лет назад, вывод о религиозных переменах, произошедших в этот самый период, свидетельствует о процессе религиозных перемен как очевидном возвращении людей деклассированной религии и своей церкви. Традиционность православия видна и в частом преобладании ответов респондентов о том, что они посещают церковь по особенным поводам: наиболее част такой ответ в Сербии, где таких респондентов свыше 40 %, а меньше всего их в России.

Личная молитва как форма внутренней религиозности

Молитва, как индивидуальная, так и коллективная, является важным сегментом почти во всех мировых религиях, а особенно тех, которые представлены в европейских странах. Это сильный аргумент в пользу утверждения о том, что именно данный индикатор можно использовать для сравнения в различных странах (Billiet, p. 367). Хотя, с канонической точки зрения, коллективная молитва в православии соответствует сути соборности, индивидуальная молитва вне храма также говорит о важности религии для индивида. Молитва реализует непосредственную связь верующего с Богом и как личная молитва происходит на глубоком интимном уровне, поэтому православные придают её большое значение. Самые известные православные молитвы это: Отче наш, Молитвы ко Пресвятой Богородице, чтение Символа веры, а также молитва «Господи, Иисусе Христе, Сыне Божий, помилуй меня (мя) грешнаго (грешную)». Рассмотрим результаты исследования о частоте молитвы в Сербии, России и Черногории:

4. Частота личной молитвы (данные ESS)

Личная молитва (в %)	Сербия	Россия	Черногория
Ежедневно	**21,3**	**9,8**	**17,6**
Несколько раз в неделю	7,9	5,1	7,2
Один раз в неделю	6,4	4,5	8,8
По крайней мере, один раз в месяц	8,6	8,6	16,5
Только по особым случаям	17,0	15,9	17,9
Редко	22,5	19,2	16,4
Никогда	**16,4**	**37,0**	**15,6**

Прежде всего, необходимо констатировать, что регулярность личной молитвы имеет наибольшую частоту в Сербии, а менее всего представлена в России и наоборот: две трети респондентов в России говорят о том, что никогда не молятся, в то время как в Сербии и в Черногории таких респондентов в два раза меньше. Сбалансированность молитвы во всех трех странах находится в режиме особенных ситуационных условий. Если при анализе мы пренебрежем этим обстоятельством, как и экстремальными случаями ежедневной практики молитвы и случаями, когда респондент никогда не молится, в остальном (совокупно) ситуация следующая: в Черногории почти одна треть респондентов молится один раз в неделю или один раз в месяц, а в Сербии и в России – почти одна пятая.

Заключение

Анализ результатов исследования в трёх православных обществах позволил получить ожидаемые подтверждения предположений о рассматриваемых индикаторах религиозности. Данные предположения были основаны на постоянном отслеживании религиозной ситуации в вышеназванных обществах, по крайней мере, на протяжении последних 30 лет, а возможно и больше. Сходства и различия в актуальной религиозности населения в данных странах отвечает как общим, так и специфическим для каждой из них, условиям окружения, в которых религии и церкви, а прежде всего Православная церковь, существует и выживает. Принимая во внимание то, что в бывшем Советском Союзе процесс атеизации протекал наиболее системно и насильственно, можно интерпретировать актуальные результаты так называемой культурной и практической религиозности в сравнении, прежде всего с Сербией, а затем и с Черногорией. Таким образом, сегодня в России совсем немного больше половины респондентов считают себя в какой-либо смысле религиозными, в то время как в Сербии таковых свыше двух третей, а в Черногории почти две трети. В России в церковь никогда не ходит почти 30 % респондентов, тогда как в Сербии и Черногории их значительно меньше. Свыше двух третей респондентов в России никогда не молятся, в то время как в Сербии и Черногории таковых снова значительно меньше. Только лишь идентификация себя как последователя православной веры в России высока и приближается к случаю с Сербией. Также во всех странах отмечается уже обоснованная в многочисленных исследованиях общая тенденция: прорелигиозная идентификация респондента уменьшается по мере движения по идентификационной плоскости к актуальному религиозно-обрядовому поведению. Больше всего тех, кто заявил о своей принадлежности к какой-либо конфессии, уже меньше тех, кто себя считает себя религиозным и намного меньше тех, кто регулярно или часто выполняет ожидаемые религиозные обряды, такие как участие в литургии, посещение церкви, исповедь.

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Religiosity as a Value in Mono-Confessional Orthodox Societies: Serbia, Russia and Montenegro

Abstract: It can be said that Serbia, Russia, and Montenegro belong to the group of mono-confessional, religiously homogeneous societies since in statistical population censuses and socio-psychological research models, respondents identify themselves as Orthodox in more than two-thirds of cases. In addition, in all these societies, Eastern Christianity is a historical, traditional religion that for centuries influenced not only the formation of national characteristics but also beliefs, ethical norms, and ritual behavior. The purpose of the work is to test the value of Orthodoxy and Orthodox religiosity on the basis of empirical sociological research using three indicators of people's connection with religion and the church: an indicator for measuring religious identity, as well as measuring ritual behavior through two indicators: church attendance and prayer. In the cases of Serbia and Montenegro, we are talking about the results obtained in the framework of the European Social Survey (ESS) conducted in 2018, and in the case of Russia, the data of the ESS survey, which was conducted in 2016. The presented data, at least in part, allow an overview of the current state of connection with religion and the church in Serbia, Russia, and Montenegro, and also make it possible to identify similarities and differences in the mentioned indicators of religiosity.

***Keywords**:* religiosity, religiously homogeneous societies, Serbia, Russia, Montenegro, indicators of religiosity, sociology of religion.

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Results of Cualitative Research of Buddhist community in Serbia

Abstract: The paper presents the results of the qualitative research on the Theravada Buddhist Community in Serbia and Triyana Prajñā community, conducted in 2022 for the purpose of writing a master thesis "Theravada Buddhist Community in Serbia: History, Status, Work and Community"[1] in the religious studies course at the University of Belgrade. The focus of the thesis is community ethnography, and at the same time, the same research investigates the reason for "approaching" Buddhism but also the community itself in the context of modern, secular society in which the process of counter-secularization is evident, and the search for new religious experience in modern Serbia. Apart from studying the true members of the community, another target group of research is "seekers", i.e. individuals who are looking for religion and meaning and visit some of the meditation centers, Buddhist monastery, or courses for a short time. Buddhism can be considered a new and alternative religion in Serbia and is studied in that manner, and this is the first research of its kind on Buddhism, as also on some of the Eastern religions in Serbia.

Keywords: Buddhism; Approaching/Conversion; New religion; Religious Seekers; Ethnography.

Before we start with the results, let's just say a few words about the groups that were researched and methodology used. Theravada Buddhist Community of Serbia (later in text – TBCS) is the largest organization gathering Buddhist, especially followers of Theravada tradition[2], relying on the help from Myanmar (mostly Myanmar Embassy in Belgrade) and its main

[1] Sebian: Тхеравада будистичка заједница у Србији: Историја, статус, рад и заједница.
[2] Also forest tradition of Ajahn Chah and S.N. Goenkas Vipassana meditation.

monastery in Oxford, Great Britain – Oxford Buddha Vihara.[3] They gather around their founder, president, and lay teacher Branislav Kovačević, a professional translator and proofreader, who translated more than 20 Buddhist books and 1000 suttas, both from English and Pali language. TBCS started as a website[4] and yahoo group in 2001 for people interested in sharing knowledge and experience in Buddhism and meditation. They gathered for the first time in 2006 to listen to Ajahn Munindos (Aruna Ratanagiri monastery) damma talk in Novi Sad and Belgrade. For the next few years they organized retreats with his student, Ajahn Jayanto. In 2009 they registered as a NGO "Srednji put"[5] and started publishing (mostly books translated by Branislav). They had two failed attempts at registering as a religious community, mostly because of the incompetence and ill-will of office for cooperation with churches and religious communities (Ministry of Justice). Their third and final attempt was in 2018 which was successful because of international involvement (Myanmar embassy and OBV monastery in Britain) and help from other Buddhist communities in Serbia.[6] In 2017, the OBVS monastery was founded, with the help from Venerable Prof. Dr. Khammai Dhammasami, Government of Myanmar and donations from local Buddhists and affiliates. The monastery is located in Čortanovci (National Park Fruška Gora) near Novi Sad, and has at least 2 monks residing (mostly from Myanmar). TBCS has a steady membership of around 30 people and up to 100 with weaker affiliation. They always had a "problem" with religious seekers, but especially since the opening of the monastery when until today, more than a 1000 people came and went (usually, visit only once or twice). On the full moon in May 2022, for the biggest celebration in all Buddhist traditions – Vesak, TBCS gathered 6 Buddhist groups in their monastery. That is the first time that all the groups gathered.[7] The goal of this organization is establishing dharma in Serbia. Their first goal, the foundation of the

[3] The name of the monastery in Serbia, founded in 2017 is Oxford Buddha Vihara Serbia (later in text OBVS)

[4] https://srednjiput.rs/

[5] "Middle way" in Serbian language.

[6] Nichiren Daishonin (Soka Gakkai) is the first registered Buddhist community in Serbia. But they seem inactive and are remote even for other Buddhists in Serbia, so we have scant information about the group attained from one ex-member.

[7] Except Theravada community, there were: Triyana Prajñā, Diamond Way, Bodhi Path, Zen Center and Vipassana group (although they don't consider themselves "Buddhist" they joined the celebration). First gathering was in 2021 in Triyana Prajñās center when TBCS and Zen community came.

monastery, was successful. The second goal, and probably the most important, is Serbian Buddhist monkhood. They had two monks (one Serbian and one Croatian) who left the monkhood after about 6 months.

Triyana Prajñā[8] is a small community gathered around their lay teacher, Zoran Lazović,[9] a well versed Buddhist following Vajrayana tradition (Karma Kagyu lineage). The community is actually a "school of dharma", with a balanced approach in practice and teachings. The goal is to understand what is dharma and what is not dharma, in the sea of false teachings. The school started in 2019 when enough people gathered (around 20 but only 10 finished 6 semesters), they had students from Theravada tradition as well, and also Branislav came a few times to teach. They maintain good relationship with Theravada community. The group has around 15 active members, with that more who are passive. 8 members were formally initiated into Vajrayana Buddhism and received their Tibetan names.

The purpose of including more Buddhist groups in the research was triangulation, to better understand the phenomenon and how it (and different traditions) acts, adapts, and manifests in different groups. The author spent most of the time on the field with two communities mentioned above, but he also visited Bodhi Path and Zen Center (MUK in Ovčar Banja). Diamond way and Nichiren Daishonin (Soka Gakkai) didn't respond and Vipassana group said that they didn't want to participate in the research because they are "not Buddhists". Fieldwork lasted 8 months[10], and 26 people were formally interviewed, but 5 of them were leaders of communities. So, all the data shown below is from 21 participants who are members of the two communities[11]. Interviews were semi-structured. Questions varied but most of them answered to all prepared questions and topics. The goal of the interview was to find who are they, how and why did they find Buddhism, the reasons for joining, how do they practice and perceive Buddhism, how did it affect them, how does the group function, and so forth. There were also a lot of informal interviews with other

[8] http://www.triyanaprajna.com/

[9] He finished his MA degree at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado. He never finished his PhD studies (UC Santa Barbara – Indo-Tibetan studies) but he spent a lot of time teaching and learning about Buddhism in North America and Asia.

[10] During that time, author visited all monthly gatherings at the monastery, weekly meditations and sutta readings in meditation centers (Belgrade and Novi Sad). He also visited TP gatherings about 6 times including one retreat and one 4 week dharma course. One more retreat was visited in Zen's MUK center in Ovčar Banja.

[11] 13 from TBCS, 2 are Theravada followers but not formal members of the community and 6 were TP members.

members who didn't want to formally participate in the research, and with visitors or "seekers" who usually didn't return.

The results

One of the first observations, both from interview analysis and field observations, is that Buddhists in Serbia, no matter the group or tradition, aren't that different from one another. Major difference is between all the groups and Nichiren group, both in practice and tradition, and also in approach. All Vajrayana groups (TP, Bodhi Path and Diamond Way) are in a way similar, following the same Kagyu lineage, but Diamond way with its focus on its guru (Lama Ole Nydahl) deviates a lot from the other two. Also, Theravada and Zen practitioners[12] share a lot, mainly because their secular approach. Although Zen being an anti-intellectual tradition, their practitioners also read a lot about Buddhism. We will now expand a little more on the differences between TBCS and TP members. One of the most important difference is that TP members are more into Buddhism "religiously", meaning, they don't revere rituals like chanting, bowing down in front of Buddhas statue, believing in counterintuitive beings from Buddhist cosmology, having ceremonial initiation and so on. Theravadins have a more secular approach, focusing mainly on meditation and less on suttas. Every third member would chant in Pali and bow.[13] Those members also said that it took them years to start doing that. Although both groups are gathered around their lay teacher, TP members are closer to their teacher and with each other. Also, almost all of their members entered the group through acquaintanceship while TBCS members found and entered the group by themselves. TP is focused only on its own members while TBCS is open to everyone, organizing meditation, sutta and Pali courses and retreats. TP as a school teaches about all 3 traditions while Theravada only teaches Theravada tradition. That being said, Triyana Prajñā seems like a *par excellence* (new) religious group.

[12] Zen group is currently inactive (and disbanded) because its founder and informal but *де фацто* leader, Ohkwang Sunim, a Serbian Zen Buddhist monk, is currently in Shri Lankan Theravada monastery. As one practitioner said, his absence is one of the reasons why the group (of about 20) disbanded but the true reason is probably that he left the Zen tradition. But prior to being a Zen monk for 20 years, he has also been a Theravadin monk for at least 6 years.

[13] That is only in the monastery. In meditation centers there's only meditation. In Novi Sad there would be sutta study after meditation session, but only few would stay for it.

A few words about demography. Last census[14] of population was in 2011 when 1237 people reported belonging to "Eastern religions", an inconvenient category that includes all Eastern traditions like religions from India, Central and East Asia and so on, not distinguishing major differences between them. So we never had any precise data, but maybe the new 2022 census will bring better results. We asked all the groups how many members they have (active and inactive), and if we take into account their reports, there shouldn't be more than 500 "Buddhist", that is, if they all identified themselves that way. Only half (10 out od 21) of interviewed said they would declare themselves as Buddhist if asked. Some that said otherwise made us sure they wouldn't declare even if it was anonymous and/or for the census (and they are deep into the Buddhist practice). One of the main reasons for saying 'no' was "it has nothing to do with Buddhism" or "that would be my ego flexing". Although, most of the interviewed were men (16), predominantly women are interested in Buddhism (around 60%), especially in Vajrayana tradition. Median age is 35. When it comes to education, we confirmed the stereotype that "Buddhism is a religion of **intellectuals** and artists". All of the interviewed had at least a bachelor's degree, two of them had masters, four PhD's and one PhD candidate, and four among them were artists, some being very successful. Buddhism is also an urban religion, almost everyone comes from a city, usually Belgrade or Novi Sad.[15]

First pattern that emerged was the **non-religious** background**.** No one had any religious upbringing and 6 of them stated that they are still atheists/agnostics. 7 participants said they had one (nominally) religious parent or they came from a mixed marriage. A few of them had some connections to Christianity like 'their grandmas would bring them to church' or they attended theology classes in school (younger generations). Seven participants said they 'tried' Christianity at one point in their life, but only because it is part of their tradition. Reasons for ignoring Orthodox Christianity were: hypocrisy (6 said that explicitly), dogmatism, irrationality… both from the institution and its believers. 3 of them said "Christians made me dislike Christianity". Most of participants, independent of questions related to Christianity, said

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[14] 2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia
Book 4: Religion, Mother Tongue and Ethnicity (https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2013/PdfE/G201318004.pdf)

[15] That is the data from official TBCS document of people who signed for registration. As mentioned above, other groups also participated in gathering signatures so we have a clear picture of almost all Buddhist groups.

that the Buddhism is the opposite of that (no dogma, rational, pacifistic and so on), and that is one of the reasons for approaching. Nobody 'hates' Christianity, they are just not interested in it, and they have their reasons. Also, TBCS has good relationship with the local parish where the monastery is located.

Second most notable pattern is that almost no one sees Buddhism as a religion (both groups equally). Only 2 said it is, and 3 had a mild stance, saying that it is but they don't perceive it that way, and those 5 have no problems with rituals and other religious aspects. Usual answer among the participants was that it is a philosophy (of life) or a way of life, a psychology, a method etc. A prevalent comment among the interviewed was that their kind of Buddhism is true Buddhas teaching, striped away from its superstitious baggage.

Having no prior religious affiliation or not seeing Buddhism as one, doesn't mean they didn't have any interests at all. Third pattern is prior practice or interest in some Eastern practices, mostly **yoga**, then martial arts like karate, aikido, and even reiki, and some form of New Age or esoteric practice.[16] Only 5 people didn't report that kind of prior interest and others at least tried one of those 3, practice more than one or still practice some. One reported practicing yoga because of Buddhism.

One pattern that follows this one is '**recognition**'. When talking about their encounter with Buddhism before "conversion", 12 participants said they recognized themselves in Buddhism. "That is me, that's how I think" one said. "I believed in this before, but I didn't know it had a system and that it was Buddhism".

One thing that may be surprising, there's no strong correlation between **crisis** and conversion in this sample. 7 people mentioned through the interview that they had some sort of crisis in their life but only 3 were absolutely sure that their crisis led to Buddhism (and they were already familiar with it). As meditation teachers have reported, usually the religious seekers/visitors are the ones who come with crises. Usually it is a crisis of meaning, problems with anxiety or depression, even some serious psychological problems, and seldom alcohol and drug abuse. All of them sought meditation as a solution. Although the crisis doesn't precede conversion, almost everyone reported that meditation and Buddhism helped them in crises they experienced until today. Also, everyone reported improvement in their overall life quality, mostly in mental health, reported as balance, calm, control and mindfulness.

[16] 4 were from TP, which isn't surprising since Vajrayana Buddhism is also esoteric.

For most of the members (in all groups), main form of practice is **meditation**. 18 said that they meditate daily, 11 said that they don't have problems with chanting and bowing, but those are mostly senior members and all TP members. Almost everyone attended at least one silent meditation retreat, and those who didn't, they plan to attend in the near future. 17 said that they often read books about Buddhism (TBCS members read their published books) but only few read suttas (or sutras). TP members are more prone to reading and learning, but their community **is** "school of dharma". Also, only 2 learn Pali language. One common misconception about Buddhism that we wanted to test was if 'Buddhists are vegetarian'. Only 3 said they are but 2 already were. 4 tried because of Buddhism and 3 said that they eat less meat because of Buddhism. All that aren't vegetarian and all that tried said that 'vegetarianism has nothing to do with Buddhism'. Everyone follows 5 Buddhist precepts with a few exceptions for alcohol consumption. Everyone was asked about Buddhist beliefs and worldview. Almost everyone has problems adapting those beliefs but for the most participants, karma is the most 'logical' one. Vajrayana practitioners, compared to Theravada practitioners, have a more positive attitude about beliefs, and also about adopting the whole practice.

We noticed a pattern that **belief and practice precede conversion**. That is, people are already 'Buddhist' before reaching out to an organization. The internet and social media have a major role. We already mentioned 'recognition' as a pattern. So, people would find themselves in Buddhism and then proactively explore meditation and teachings on the internet, and of course, google for local organizations. 12 said they googled "Buddhism in Serbia" and for 5 of them, the first result or visit was 'Diamond Way', but they weren't satisfied with that option. Some even said that it looks like 'a sect' because its focus on the guru. 7 said that they were primarily interested in Zen Buddhism before they found their current organization and tradition. The role of an organization is only to confirm ones already established spiritual identity. Also, 8 of them said that they stayed in their current community because they liked the people in it. For majority of the current members, even outside this sample of 21, meditation was the main reason for approaching.

Before we finish this part with the seekers, a few words about **reactions** and relations**.** We wanted to know how Buddhism is perceived in Serbian society, so we asked everyone about the reactions from their community. Most reported that reactions are neutral or positive. There were a few negative, and those comments usually came from a religious and/or older relative, as 'concern'. We have to say that we expected vice versa, since even today, there is a strong anti-cult and anti-apostasy rhetoric in Serbian public discourse. One of the reasons why neutral and positive reactions are dominant is probably because Buddhist themselves do not represent Buddhism as a religion, and talk only about meditation and its benefits. Relations among members are good, especially among TP members, who also 'hang out' outside community activities. Also, compared to TBCS, members are closer to each other and especially to their lay teacher. TBCS members, except when meditating together and when gathering at the monastery, do not socialize. Even the roles of the monks are in question, since relations with them are quite weak. This is most noticeable when compared to Theravada Buddhists who live in Serbia, like Myanmar and Thai nationals. Their relation with the monks is mostly almsgiving (*dāna*) and receiving protective incantation (*paritta*). Better interaction was with Caucasian monks or Asian monks who had experience with Westerners, but the interaction was mostly questioning about the meditation. Monks, who are usually from Myanmar, do not really understand Westerners and their English comprehension is very low. Practice of *dāna* didn't take root in Serbian Buddhism and monks mostly get their food because of donations from Myanmar embassy.

None of the Buddhist communities in Serbia have missionary activities (except Nichiren/Soka Gakkai), but they would inform people on social media about their activities, which is a hook for those interested. Branislav said "when founding the community, the goal was to gather people who are already Buddhist." Since their first event in 2006, TBCS has organized many events, such as meditation retreats, damma talks, meditation courses, sutta and Pali studies and so on. For the record, most of members who helped the foundation of the organization, and who were there originally are not members anymore. The community now has a somewhat stable membership but the number of visitors is numerous. Branislav called the community a continuous "flow water heater", since more than a thousand people were "members", some even for a day. Other communities also had 'visitors and seekers' but not in that number. The reason is probably that other communities focus on their lay sangha, but TBCS organizes many events that are an excellent moment for seekers to explore. Zen community had a similar problem and meditation retreats at their MUK meditation center are also a place where seekers (who are same as those to TBCS) attend. Everything is impermanent, Buddhism says, so is their membership, which is quite a normal phenomenon among new religious movements. There's no stable membership, members have weak affiliation, or are there for a short period of time in their religious search, and the organization itself organizes events that do not require membership (Sinani, Kulenović, & Stajić, 2012). The number of visitors has significantly increased since the opening of the monastery in 2017. Majority of the interviewed members have approached the community around that year. Even a 'member' is a tricky category, because there are people who consider themselves Buddhist and/or members of the community but rarely attend events. We developed "a profile" of a religious seeker in Buddhist centers, by observation, informal interviewing and also by asking senior members and meditation teachers who had experience with them. It is "a 35 year old woman, who is a yoga practitioner and has superficial knowledge about Buddhism". We further split the visitors into 3 categories: *1) Spiritual tourists; 2) People experiencing crisis; 3) Curious visitors.* The first category is probably the most frequent one. Those are people who are religious seekers by the book (Stark & Bainbridge, 1996). They frequently attend New Age events,[17] they already tried meditation or some Eastern practice like yoga, tried or consume psychedelics, etc. Our experience on field is that they usually brag about their spirituality and knowledge, which is vague and as senior members said "they miss the point of Buddhism". Maybe a better way to describe them is by referring to Chögyam Trungpa, who had experience with the exact type of people and who coined the word 'spiritual materialists' (Trungpa, Baker, & Casper, 2008). Second category are people who are experiencing some form of life or health crisis and are seeking means to alleviate the problem through meditation techniques. Third category is the least frequent but also, most of current members belonged to it. Curious visitors could either be just curious about the new monastery and Buddhism, or people in search for a community.

The reason why these categories are unstable source of new members is obvious. It is both a problem of seekers themselves, and the community that persistently organizes events for them, instead of focusing only on their community. As senior members said, the main reason why they don't stay is because Buddhism is difficult. Sitting for 45 minutes is difficult, persistency is difficult, looking inward is difficult, but they expect fast results, like insight or deep meditation states from one sitting.[18] Also, for some, "being Buddhist is cool". Most visitors already know something about Buddhism, and have tried meditation at least once. One meditation teacher said, 'they come with

[17] Interesting observation on the field. Some people, both members and visitors, knew each other from various New Age events that they visited.

[18] There were also some people who expected attaining psychic powers, but those are marginal cases.

superficial knowledge but they want to discuss and philosophize, and sometimes ask really stupid questions, like "how many arahants are there", or "can monks levitate". "Those questions are unrelated to what Buddhism really is and what it wants to teach you.' They are convinced that THEY know". That teacher also said that there were no opposites either, like people who are extremely deep into the meditation practice or teachings.

Analysis and comments

Buddhism wasn't present in Serbia (and Yugoslavia) like in the rest of Western Europe in 19th and 20th century.[19] Nevertheless, interest for Buddhism was present before the breakup of Yugoslavia, abolition of communism, and the crisis that ensued in the 90's, but it was secretive. Todays leaders of the groups like Branislav, Ohkwang Sunim (Vladan Velimirović, Zen monk), and Dr. Spomenka Mujović (Vipassana teacher), were among first aficionados who gathered during the 80's to experiment with Buddhism and practice meditation. Groups were informal, gathering only up to 5 people. From 1984 to 1992, there was a magazine called *Cultures of the East*[20]*. It offered the possibility for intellectuals to write freely about the Eastern thought (in a secular manner of course), in a climate of severe religious intolerance. Among them were some of present Buddhists. The first formal group was Dzogchen community (Културе истока*, бр. 29. 1991.[21]), an NGO that promoted Tibetan culture and preservation of this ancient tradition. Dzogchen was in reality a religious group that was hiding from harsh anti-cult society which was, with the breakup of Yugoslavia, becoming more and more conservative and religious.

There are no proper empirical studies in Serbia which discuss about correlation between social circumstances and religious conversion (Sinani, Kulenović, & Stajić, 2012). Without empirical background, we won't make any conclusions in that manner, but it is obvious and kind of a 'tacit agreement' that new religious movements, return of traditional religiosity, and desecularization are

[19] Actually, there were Kalmyk immigrants in Yugoslavia between the World Wars who were Vajrayana Buddhist. They left no significant traces.

[20] Пајин, Душан. „Културе истока – часопис за сва времена". Средњи пут. https://srednjiput.rs/knjige/kulture-istoka/

[21] Link to the online archive: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-vksvWkNw7BbGc4Z3VrNDJERjQ/view?resourcekey=0-tDulDIJft3fdmOUezdnRMQ

reaction to a vacuum left after the fall of communism. It is obvious that all movements and groups, including Buddhist ones, are promoted by irreligious people who had no background in Orthodox Christianity or any other traditional religion in Serbia.

When comparing our situation in Serbia, with the one in the West, we see that there are no major differences, even though Buddhism in Serbia arrived recently. There are two possibilities for this identical development, either Buddhism is being adopted from the West in its new form of 'secular Buddhism', or the circumstances of development and adoption are the same, since post-Yugoslavian countries are experiencing religious crisis. Rawlinson (Rawlinson, 1998) says how Buddhism has completely changed in its process of adaptation that we can consider it a new type of Buddhism. Colin Cambpell (Campbell, 2008) describes in detail how we are experiencing the process of Easternization. The traditional West is in decay and it has nowhere to look except towards the spiritual and enlightened East. He also emphasizes how it is being adopted and assimilated in a consumeristic and post-modern context. Bruce (Bruce, 2008) reached the same conclusion about that interest in Britain, as purely consumeristic and secular, rather than religious. Glock et al. (Glock, Bellah, & Alfred, 2020) said how these religions had to be westernized in order to adapt. In recent decades there has also been a surge of religious beliefs not native to the West and Serbia, as Davie said the 'belief without belonging', which is also evident in our situation. Eileen Barker (cited by Campbell) noticed how 1/5 of Europeans adopted the belief in reincarnation, also the beliefs in impersonal deity and vegetarianism. Reincarnation is for Asians something that is ought to be escaped from (in moksha or nirvana), but for Westerners it is something desirable. Also as Hanegraaff noted, Westerners see reincarnation as something progressive, without possibility to go back to lower life-forms, like a reward rather than a curse (Hanegraaff, 1998). Harvey (Cox, 1979) said how among their Western believers, understanding the teachings of the given Eastern religion are neglected and how the knowledge is superficial. He also said how this kind of religiosity is more 'neo-' than it is 'oriental'. That's why we called Buddhism in Serbia 'neo-traditional', because all groups, as they claim, lean on the traditional Asian Buddhism but are in fact new religions in the West. Western Theravada practitioners, like their Serbian peers, see their practice as more consistent to Buddhas teachings compared to their Asian brethren (Cadge, 2008).

The rate of identifying as "Buddhist" in Europe is a bit higher than in our case. In a study of one German group, Prohl and Rakow said 80% identified, compared to our case sample, which is a bit less than 50% (Prohl & Rakow, 2008). In the same study, they found out how European Buddhism is preoccupied with meditation, rather than with teachings, scriptures, rituals, etc. Also, focus is on ethics without dogma and practical ways how to deal with problems. Same as Cadge, Prohl noticed strong faith in purity of their Buddhism, stripped of idolatry, superstition and focusing on the art of meditation. All these conclusions can also be drawn in our case. The same way Prebish spotted two Buddhisms in Europe, one from Asian immigrants and Western converts, we saw in our case in the monastery when comparing new Buddhists with Asian Buddhists (Prebish, 1993).

If we look at Tiptons conclusion, that life after conversion is just an extension of the previous life[22] (morals and way of living) (Tipton, 2014), we can easily explain our three codes, previous interest in an Eastern practice, recognizing oneself in Buddhism, and not considering Buddhism a religion (since they were irreligious before). But not seeing Buddhism as a religion is also common in Asia. As Maquet found (Maquet, 2003), even Sinhalese in Shri Lanka say that Buddhism isn't a religion (if it means believing in God and the Soul). But the difference here is that in Asia, they don't like the definition of religion while in our case in Europe, they don't like the religion. Although many academics in the field of conversion agree that some sort of crisis precedes conversion (Rambo, 1993), others like Conn suggest that crisis isn't necessary and that desire for self-transcendence is enough (Conn, 1987). We do have a few who experienced some crisis, but the above mentioned self-transcendence, in the form of meditation for enlightenment is truly their motive.[23] Common for New Religious Movements in the West is the "individual religion", meaning, an individual that searches and chooses what to believe, rather than relying on what is given to him by birth. We saw that everyone found Buddhism by themselves, and also that a lot of eclecticism and syncretism is present among Buddhists, and visitors as well. Although most look by themselves, some approached the group by affiliation, which was common for most of the TP members and also common for NRM in general (Stark & Bainbridge, May:1980). Usually the first converts in a society are intellectuals (especially in colonial setting (Rambo, 1993)). Lofland and Skonovd talk about 6 motives of conversion, one of it is intellectual motive which perfectly

[22] Because exploring and testing alternatives is usually costly (Stark & Bainbridge, 1996).

[23] We had asked them what are their motives and goals. Nirvana and enlightenment is the end goal in Buddhism but everyone is also aware that it is not easily attainable. Majority fits in the category of kammatic Buddhism that Spiro talks about (Spiro, 1970).

describes our case – A person seeks knowledge about a given religion through books, seminars, surfing the Internet without seeking contact, and often at the same time looking for alternatives. Faith generally precedes contact and participation (Lofland & Skonovd, 1981). They also talk about experimental motif, which is representative for seekers, and affectional motif which is common to TP members.

Conclusion

It seems that Buddhists in Serbia have their own dynamics of conversion, independent of global or regional circumstances. Except for their previous irreligiosity, which is clearly an aftermath of atheization in the former socialist Yugoslavia, there are no significant correlations. Even crisis is almost absent. The main motive for approaching Buddhism (and meditation) is definitely and primarily an intellectual pastime and as its followers repeat 'a mental hygiene'. Followers adopt certain aspects, choose what and how they are going to practice without radically changing their lifestyle (even though they've reported improvement). Although still on the rise, it closely resembles Buddhism in the West, or shall we say 'Secular Buddhism'. Even Vajrayana Buddhist, who are devoted more religiously, still follow a similar pattern. We would propose a hypothesis that Serbia is becoming a more open society. Three reasons why it is evident: recognition of Buddhist religious groups by the state, neutral or positive reactions to conversion (in urban areas), and rise in the number of religious seekers. Seekers exist in cosmopolitan society where there are no tensions nor retaliation for switching groups (Stark & Bainbridge, 1996). Buddhism grows simultaneously with the New Age movement(s) in Serbia. It is a NRM, because it is more of a 'self-religion' than it is a religion. Despite the fact that all groups tend to hook on the tradition[24], they all started out without the outside influence, as people who were interested in Buddhism and gathered to practice it, later connecting to the traditional organizations. That is why they are all neo-traditional rather than traditional. Also, there are a lot more "Buddhists", who do not belong to any group so it is still a self-religion. The future of Buddhism in Serbia is uncertain since group affiliation is not a strong feature and groups tend to disband easily, because

[24] For example, TBCS is related to Myanmar and British sangha, Vajrayana groups are linked to their Tibetan teachers worldwide, Nichiren is related to Soka Gakkai International and so on.

only a few factors are keeping it together. Zen group fell apart the moment their leader left the country. Triyana Prajñā and Theravada Community also rely heavily on their lay teachers, and its members stated numerously throughout the interviews how their teachers 'keep the group/organization together'. We fear that Branislavs predictions may be on point, that "if there's no sangha made out of Serbian Buddhist monks, the roots of dharma may soon wither away".[25]

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[25] A paraphrase from one of the interviews.

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Christianity and Taoism – Common Horizons: «Path, Truth and Life»

Abstract: This paper aims to point out the common cultural horizons of two great spiritual entities that have developed and are developing in different areas. Christianity and Taoism, which, at first glance, appear contradictory on many issues, are nevertheless connected by common horizons based on the concepts of **Path, Truth and Life**, which in different contexts form existential-ontological concepts, different and yet similar at the level of concept, primal image and «iconicity». Immortality is the resulting point that indicates a common horizon. The path of Christ and the path of the Tao have common horizons but also significant differences. The final paths are the paths of salvation.

Keywords: Christ, Tao, Path, Truth and Life, salvation, person, individual, ethics, righteousness, immortality.

Introduction

Chronologically speaking, **Taoism** appeared before **Christianity**. The place and time of the emergence of Taoism is China in the 6th century BC, although some researchers go back even further into the past (Anton Kjels, Taoism, 1990, 10). Without discussing the problem of Taoist literature[1] and its authorship, although in principle everything is related to the personality and work of

[1] «The Taoist canon (tao-tsang) was printed in 1926 in Shanghai and has a total of 1120 parts. In his book *The parting of the way*, 1957, Holmes Welch counted thirty-six English translations of the Tao-te ching, but not a single synthesis that explained Taoism in any way.» M. Eliade and J. P. Culianu, Guide to World Religions, Narodna knjiga Alfa, Belgrade 1996, 281.

Lao Tzu,[2] I emphasize the terms «Path», «Truth» and «Life» which form the basic structure of the Taoist perception of the world and the resulting way of life[3], and which have found their place or have been fully explained in the later course of history that was shaken by the emergence of the Son of God.

The Incarnation of God can be understood as the comprehension of the entire universe and everything that came as the result of the historical course of civilization until the birth of the Son of God, through whom all the matter is offered to the Creator and can only truly exist in this way.

Along with Judaism, which organically precedes Christianity, a special place in the structure of the Christian concept of existence, in a conceptual sense, is occupied by Taoism, which has been relatively little studied in relation to Christian worldviews and teachings.

Emphasizing the connection between Taoist teachings and Christianity is not unjustified. I shall try to present the basic outlines of the hypothesis that I advocate, which is that there are conceptual and terminological receptions of Taoist teaching in the biblical text in which Jesus Christ speaks of himself as «the path, the truth and the life». Let me point out once again, I do not talk about any identification of Jesus Christ with the Tao, but about possible conceptual – terminological receptions that act in a very similar way to certain elements in Christianity, and all in the context of inculturation and potential archetypes. Also, the research includes certain hypothetical implications of common horizons of Christianity and Taoism that relate to ontological-existential aspects, the relationship between personality and individual in the context of soteriology, the relationship between the Tao and creation, ethics, asceticism, understanding of life and death.

[2] Lao Tzu is most often cited as the founder of Taoism. One of the reasons for this may be that his personality was also the object of a cult. However, for a more complete picture of Taoist thoughts, we must also include Chuang Tzu and Lie Tzu, who further developed the thoughts and teachings of Lao Tzu. A. Kjels, 1990, 28–29. When it comes to the authorship and personality of Lao Tzu, there are at least four different points of view: 1) Lao Tzu and Lao Tan from the 6th century BC are the same person; 2) Lao Tzu lived in the period called «Spring and Autumn» (774–481), but he is not the author of Tao-te qing; 3) he lived in the «Warring Kingdom» period (404–221), but it is not certain that he wrote the Tao-te king; 4) he is not a historical figure. M. Eliade, History of Beliefs and Religious Ideas 2, Prosveta, Belgrade 1991, 27.

[3] The terms «Path, truth and life» are emphasized for research purposes. However, there is another concept that is vital for the correct understanding of Taoism in its original context, and that is «Righteousness». We don't have space here to deal specifically with it, but it will be mentioned occasionally for necessary clarifications.

Taoism has had its developmental stages. Nowadays we even have popular Taoism that has deviated from the original to a certain extent. Due to the changes that occurred over time, our selection includes the texts that relate to the early phase of Taoist learning as a comparative literary corpus with Christian writings, but bearing in mind that the whole of Taoism cannot be reduced to just a few texts. It would be similar to choosing only the Gospels from the entire biblical tradition and extensive Christian writings. This short research is intended as an introduction to a more comprehensive scientific research work of a comparative nature. That is why I have decided to approach the issue partially at first, but keeping in mind the whole.

The Path of Christ and the Path of the Tao

Man is a being who travels or is on a journey – *homo viator*. In what and which ways does a human being move? To begin with, it is important that *it moves*. The movement is twofold: existential and ontological. The latter is not always sanctified, but it occurs. Therefore the questions about the meaning/sense and goal/goals of the movement cannot be avoided. Christians and Taoists are certainly human beings who move, but their paths are not identical, although many might recollect the line from the Bible that the *ways of the Lord are mysterious*. Yes, they are mysterious, that is right. However, it is also true that not all the paths are the same, whether they are spiritual, purely existential or ontological. Naturally, the issue of soteriology arises by itself, which will be discussed later. At the beginning, it is important to discern that the paths are different, but that they also have some common horizons, and to point out several fundamental elements about each path.

The key line that refers to the potential conceptual-terminological connection with Taoism is found in the Gospel of John: «Jesus said to him: I am the path and the truth and the life; no one reaches the Father except through me» (Jn 14, 6). Reaching the Father is the final part of the Christians' journey and has a soterological significance. In the simplest terms, «reaching the Father» means salvation, eternal life. However, that goal is accomplished «through Jesus Christ» who is «the path, the truth and the life».

What do these words of Jesus have to do with unique Taoist concepts and notions? In Lao Tzu's work «The Book of Life and Righteousness» we find lines that refer to possible conceptual and terminological receptions in Christianity, where they are further elaborated on a personal and ecclesiological level. The very title of Lao Tzu's work shows a similarity with Jesus' perception of himself. The content of the work in question indicates even more the implications of Jesus' words about salvation «through Him» who is «the path and the truth and the life».

Given that the pre-Christian civilization did not know God personally, but anticipated a hypostatic epiphany, Taoist writings should be read in the spirit of ***anticipation and potential archetypes***. Thus, in the aforementioned work of Lao Tzu, in chapter 21, we find the following narrative:

> ''***To follow the correct Path is a true virtue.***
> ***The path is like a living being,***
> ***sometimes specified,***
> ***sometimes unspecified,***
> ***sometimes vague.***
> *Although vague and unspecified,*
> *it follows the rules and is consistent.*
> ***Although vague,***
> ***it has a soul that is real.***
> *From ancient times until today,*
> *its properties are passed down from generation to generation.*»[4]

The anticipation of God as a living person can be clearly perceived in the aforementioned views on the Tao. In addition, they emphasize how important it is to follow the true Path, as well as the continuity of the intuition that the Path will be personally embodied at some point in the course of history. Also, it is important to realize that the people of the Church and those who follow the Tao are *travelers*. It is an important common horizon. However, the Church is in a *state of travel* until Christ comes again. Therefore, the Christian path is not a completed process. The church is still occurring and progressing towards its fullness (Zlatko Matić, *Those Who Travel*, 2021, 64). On the other hand, we find it important to comply the individual path with the Tao which is simply always present for the conformity of an individual.

Lao Tzu writes paranetically about the correct attitude towards the Path, and we find this in verse 23: «*When you follow the Path, comply with it… When you are one with the Path, it readily accepts you*».

But the interesting question is whether someone who is in compliance with the Tao can go astray, given that a human being is endowed with freedom. Does ***being on the path of the Tao*** abolish freedom? Compliance with the

[4] Lao Tse, Tao-te ching (djing) (The Book of the Way of Life and Righteousness), translated and adapted by Miloš Vučković, Belgrade 2017, 28.

path leads to harmony with nature, to an order of the world that is in a state of reconciliation of the individual with himself and with the universe.

In addition, Chapter 24 reveals guidelines that point to sidetracks:

«He who is unstable will easily fall,
he who is in a hurry will not prosper.
He who reveals himself will not shine,
who is exclusive will be underestimated.
He who works by force achieves nothing,
he who boasts does not survive.
He who is truly ***on the Path***
does not need self-indulgence.
These are ***sidetracks****,*
therefore such a Path is to be avoided.»[5]

The aforementioned lines indicate the existence of wrong paths that are manifested through certain actions that are perceived as the initial straying from the correct Path. If we look at Christ's way of life, we can find certain similarities, taking into regard that Jesus clearly says that He is the true and only correct path and that **salvation** comes only through Him.

The righteousness of the Path, when we talk about Jesus Christ, is guaranteed by the fact that He is God incarnate, and there is no untruth in God. Christian scholars used all the attributes that contain the prefix super – good, perfect, etc. Generally, Lao Tzu was not far from them in his description of the Tao: *«I do not know his name, I call him the Path, something* ***perfect*** *in a broader sense.»*[6]

The phrase «***to follow the right Path***» is particularly interesting, because it does not simply imply a kind of imitation, acting according to a pattern. There is the underlying idea of ***discipleship*** which is also present in the biblical tradition (Zlatko Matić, *Those Who Travel*, 2021, 74). Does discipleship have the same meaning in Christianity and Taoism?

Taoism insists on «***compliance with the Path***», and a man who complies with the Path is called a «***true man***». If we make a pause at this point and transfer those statements to the relationship between the man and Jesus Christ, it is clear that compliance with Jesus as the God-man, the true and only correct Path, is the right thing to do. In other words, the one who achieves a personal communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Path, the Truth and the

[5] Ibid, 30.
[6] Ibid, 30.

Life (conceptual comparison), is on the right path to be incarnated into the Lord personally and reach salvation by God's grace. The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is at the same time the Path indicates a way of being that can be revealed to anyone who achieves communion with the Lord. The term «Path» is a symbol of infinite improvement, from glory to glory, which Lao Tzu calls «***endless***».[7] Only in communion with the Lord does a person become a «***true man***». Without personal community with Christ, each individual is only the potential of man that reaches his full incarnation, from image to likeness, only in community with God.

It is necessary to point here a significant difference between Taoism and Christianity. Taoists rely on nature and follow the natural flow of events to be in unity with the Tao. Union with another person is almost not important at all. From this approach we can conclude that individualism is the most suitable for conformity with the Tao. On the other hand, Christianity, represented by the Church, cannot conceive a relationship with God impersonally and reach communion with God at an individual level. This is where we come to the key separation of two giant civilizations. ***Christian soteriology is personal*** because God is a person as a union of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

It should be noted that *Jesus never travels alone, that he stops only when someone needs his help, and that Christ is always regarded in the context of the community, which confirms him as its teacher and which, in a certain relational way, reflects and affirms itself in him* (Zlatko Matić, *They Who Travel*, 2021, 84–85).

Taoist soteriology can be described as ***predominantly individualistic***. Attachment to somebody else, to another person, is not common for Taoists because the ***relationship with another person*** is not part of the soteriological path. ***The relationship with-*** is aimed directly towards the Tao, at the level of principles, and one could not go further from ***naturalness*** as a method of conformity with the mysterious Tao. Salvation takes place mystically, imperceptibly. In fact, if someone has managed to attain unity with the One, no one else knows about it.

The diversity of soteriological concepts that depend on God's epiphany can explain the richness of worship, liturgical celebration in the Church and the absence of the same or similar elements in Taoism. Namely, worship in Christianity is possible only because God is a person, essentially active and dynamic.

[7] Chapter 32, ibid, 39.

The Christian God is not simply a distant metaphysical entity that enables the existence of matter. In the course of history he has intervened on a personal level by taking vows and making alliances with specific people. Hence the Old and New Testaments. However, both testaments are extremely prolific in existential – ontological instructions that are fully expressed in the liturgical context. First, it was altars and tables of offerings that were erected throughout the land of Israel as signs of meeting God. Then it was the tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple with the *Holy of Holies* as the most important sacred space (Davor Žabarac, *Reconstruction of sources 1. and 2. Books of Journals*, 2012, 64). Finally, we come to the Church whose bedrock is the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who has been initiating the liturgy for two millennia and who is liturgically present through the bishop. The liturgy begins with the words of Christ and actions from the Last Supper – the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine from one cup in His memory, until He comes again (Mt 26, 26–29).

Taoism is significantly different from the Church in terms of worship. If we disregard that Lao Tzu was the object of a cult for some time, which I mentioned at the beginning, there is no developed religious service. It all comes down to rituals and occasional ceremonies. Certainly, that should not be strange. Unlike the personal God of Christians who actively reveals himself and thus creates experience for people, the Tao is quite serene and imperceptible. The absence of a developed and complex liturgical life in Taoism should be accounted for by the absence of experience with the Tao, which appears to be too distant from the common man. The agreement/testimony that exists in Christianity is the foundation of liturgical life. True existence in the Church is made possible for every man who wants it, and through man, who brings many material elements into the liturgy, matter is offered to the Creator, and matter is embodied in the Kingdom of God, *which will never end*.

Christianity is the way of salvation of the entire universe from death through man who is a priest of creation. On the other hand, Taoism lacks personal experience with the Tao, which is mysterious, unfathomable and not very «willing» to be condescending to people.

Ontological – Existental Aspects

A special mutual horizon of Christianity and Taoism are the ***secrets of the existence of the visible and invisible worlds***. In fact, here we can discuss the existence of horizontal and vertical paths that are intermingled and that we can tentatively label as ***paths of the sacred and the profane*** (Mircea Eliade, Sacred and Profane, 1998, 34).

Christ and the Tao can be seen as special metaphysical connections between the earthly and heavenly worlds. They are perceived as a landmark and a point of support by those people who search for God and salvation. If we accept the concept that both Christ and the Tao connect the earthly and the heavenly enabling the ascent from perishability to imperishability, then we can accept the suggestion offered by M. Eliade, that they are the so-called ***cosmic pillars*** that connect two qualitatively different worlds and ways of being (Mircea Eliade, *The Endless column*, 1996, 46). That would be the vertical aspect of the paths in question that lead ***from death to life***.

We find the concept of a path/journey in the Judeo-Christian tradition at the very beginning of the Bible. The creation of the universe is a *journey from nothing into existence* by the will of God through His active Word. The progenitorial journey that failed its goal. The journey of the Old Testament patriarchs to Egypt. Moses's journey with the people through the desert to the «land of honey and milk.» Numerous sidetracks and the return of Israel to the Path of God (Davor Žabarac, Old Testament Monotheism, 2011, 12). The briefly aforementioned paths were often unclear, interspersed with doubt and deep existential crises, but they prepared the path of the Incarnation of the Son of God into Jesus Christ, who is the *path, truth and life – a journey from death to life*.

The development of civilization represents the journey itself to the Path that has ontological consequences on everyone who steps on the Path and moves along it. The Christian path is the secret of the Church that lives in the profane as a *traveler* sanctifying the profane at the same time, so it becomes evident that even the *profane is on the path, on the way to become holy*. All everyday paths that ultimately lead to Christ are embodied in the Path that leads to the Kingdom of God. Christ is a multifaceted path that incorporates the existential paths of different personalities, the ethical paths of individuals who enter the path of truth and life, the paths of forgiveness, faith, hope and love.

It is important to note here that the Christian path is based on the revelation of God and not on speculation. At the same time, this is a distinctive separation of the starting points of Christianity and Taoism. The Taoist worldview is based on *human insights and conclusions related to the visible and invisible worlds* with the help of ***yin and yang***, which is based on concordance of opposites in order to establish balance in a world of disturbed primordial totality. This is supported by the writings of Lao Tzu:

Half will become the whole,
what is crooked will be made right,
what is empty will be full,
the old will be replaced by the new,
it will increase a little,
overabundance will lead to ruin.
So the true man accepts the whole,
takes all of nature as an example,
he does not stand out, and that is why he will shine;
he does not think he is always right,
and he will be noticed because of that;
he does not force,
that is why he completes the work;
he does not brag, that is why he progresses.
Since he avoids conflicts,
nobody can do anything to him anywhere in the world.
*When the **ancients** say that the half will become the whole,*
these are not empty words!
Thus wholeness is restored.”[8]

The most likely presumption of the fundamental concept of Taoism is that everything that *exists* in the true sense must be complete, whole, it must comprise ***coincidentia oppositorum*** at all levels and in all contexts (Mircea Eliade, Mephistopheles and Androgin, 1996, 59–61; 90–91).

Indeed, in the aforementioned manner Lao Tzu provides an outline of the image of the world through the following lines:

Recognizing beautiful,
you will also see what is not beautiful,
recognizing good,
you will also recognize what is not good.
Thus nothing and something intertwine,
difficult and easy supplement,
The long upgrades the short…”[9]

« All things have
both the dark side and the light side,

[8] Chapter 22, ibid, 29.
[9] Chapter 2, ibid, 8.

concordance of opposites
gives them balance.”[10]

Taoism is manifested as a philosophical system that does not deny the existence of the Creator and considers existence, as such, to be ***secret*** (Vladeta Jerotić, *On Secret*, 2017, 212–214).

In this context, Lao Tzu portrays the Tao as a *potential* Creator that can be reached through *understanding and insight*:

«The path you have taken is not completely mapped out,
the conclusions you draw are not complete.
The root of heaven and earth is infinite,
the pattern of all that exists is finite.
So do not reject the invisible,
aspire toward it to understand the sublimity;
do not reject the visible, strive for it in order to understand the occurrence.

This pair indicates
that one exists in two forms,
unity indicates their mystery.
An even deeper secret of the secret is the ***opening***
through which all miracles come into the world.»[11]

The introductory sentences of the Tao Te Ching outline the limits of understanding the Path, but also emphasize the intellectual moment. If we have understood the introductory part correctly, then it turns out that not everyone can access the Path, nor comply with it if they do not have certain intellectual capacities. But who is capable of understanding the Tao that is incomprehensible? How do we comply with it? It seems that Taoism at its core assumes that not everyone can be in conformity with the Tao.

Christianity does not insist on intellectual predispositions. Everyone who approaches the liturgical celebration is already one with Christ who is the Path, the Truth and the Life. The Church is open to everyone, no matter who they are, and does not set any kind of epistemological determinism as a prerequisite for following the Path of Christ. In a broader context, the Church does not set any soteriological preconditions.

Bearing in mind the importance of *cognition and insight* for Taoists, it follows that their «theological» insight is at the level, conditionally speaking, *of natural theology* and, viewed in a European, discursive manner, of a deistic

[10] Chapter, 42.
[11] Chapter 1, ibid, 7.

character. On the other hand, considering the insistence on naturalness as the path to the Tao, it gives the whole concept of existence a pantheistic tone. The Tao is not identified with a god, but it is clearly indicated that it ***precedes the gods***[12], which may indicate the polytheistic connotations of the Tao which is, at best, *the one principle* according to which everything that exists is governed. *Naturalness,* as a concept that leads to the Path, leads us to the patterns of behavior of a *true man*, and that is the path of ethics and asceticism that is closely related to Taoist salvation. On the other hand, the Church is deeply aware of the ethical imperfections of human beings and that is why repentance and forgiveness find a special place in Christianity.

Tao and Creation

It is not necessary to elaborate the Christian understanding of the creation of the universe – ***the universe was created out of nothing***. It seems that creation *ex nihilo* was unknown or unacceptable to the Taoist scholars, at least not in the way it is presumed in Christianity, so they described the existence as a ***secret of secrets***, a miracle in itself. In terms of analogy and meaning, the ***opening***, which is discussed at the very beginning of the Tao-te king, refers to the creation (of the universe) that has no rational explanation and therefore remains unfathomable to the human mind. Nevertheless, creation *ex nihilo* is mentioned in one place, but without any further explanations: *«Everything that exists was created from something, and that something from nothing»*.[13]

In chapter 23, Lao Tzu writes the following: *"From the Tao,* ***on****e is born; From one,* ***two****; from two,* ***three****; from three, the entire created universe."* The Taoist tradition interprets that statement to mean that the Tao produced one, great primordial beginning called ***t´ai chi.*** One produced two: heaven and earth. Two produced three: the three jewels, ***ching, qi*** and ***sheng***, from which ten thousand beings arose. This kind of exegetical approach belongs to the field of inner alchemy, and is related to the cosmic image of man in Taoism. It can also be viewed from a general cosmological aspect and **two** can be interpreted as ***yin*** and ***yang***, **three** as the traditional trinity of ***heaven, earth and man***, ***and ten thousand beings as a multiplicity of manifestations***. In a metaphysical sense, this would mean that all things contain some of the all-encompassing ***One*** (Anton Kjells, Taoism, 1990, 34).

[12] Chapter 4. ibid, 10.
[13] Chapter 40, ibid, 51.

In chapter 34 of the Tao-te ching we find that the Tao is a life-giving creative force on which everything that exists essentially depends:

«The Great Path goes everywhere,
both left and right.
All things owe their life to it,
and it does not explain anything,
does its thing and does not ask for a medal,
clothes and feeds all the beings
and yet it does not brag.
It never has any wishes
so they call it humble,
everything that exists comes from it
and it does not act like a master,
therefore it is superior.
Since it does not reveal its greatness,
It is really superior."[14]

What appears to be the common thread of the Christian and Taoist concepts of creation is action without any moments of violence. The act of creation proceeds peacefully, without cosmic struggles. One gets the impression that Tao has no obstacles or opponents to act creatively and create the universe. Creation turns out to be a simple act, without any special effort. In Christianity, God also performed the creation simply: *he said and it was so.*

Ethical – Ascetic Horizons

Christian morality springs from the life of the Church. Coming to the liturgy is a feat in itself. No one expects a person to become ethically superior outside the church context and only then to approach the liturgical community as «sinless». It is a misconception that has become rooted over time. A Christian always makes mistakes, but his personality, consciousness and conscience are generated in the Church. The awareness of sinfulness as a failure to reach the goal affects the distinction between good and evil among Christians, but this is not of ontological importance for a Christian who, aware of his ethical shortcomings and failures, enters the liturgical community, approaches the ***Holy Communion*** as an imperfect man whom God forgives and takes him under his wing.

[14] Chapter 34, ibid, 41.

Being a moral man in the Taoist view should be understood as a special way to reach unity with the Tao. However, it is not easy to achieve and a great ***effort*** is required to reach the ***righteousness*** without which the Taoist world-view is impossible.

The state of righteousness is achieved through living life in a simple way with as few desires as possible. Of course, the role model is the Tao, which has already been said to ***never have desires*** and is therefore ***called modest***.

Lao Tzu clearly states that ***desires*** are one of the main problems on the path to righteousness and he considers them the greatest sins that stray a person away from the Path.

> «*There is no greater sin than succumbing to desires,*
> *there is no greater evil than intemperance,*
> *there is no greater flaw than wanting more,*
> *Therefore be content with what you have,*
> *so you will always be satisfied.*»[15]
> *Naturalness frees from desires,*
> *freedom from desires brings peace,*
> *and the universe is settled by itself.*»[16]

In a simplified presentation of the concept of righteousness, we can say that any complication in life is an obstacle to reaching modesty, and subsequently to reaching righteousness that leads to the Tao.

> «***Ancient wise men***
> *who knew the Path*
> *did not convert the others,*
> *but they would return them to simplicity.*"[17]

Simplicity is an ideal, and to achieve it, abstinence from numerous life passions is necessary. It is the path of asceticism. The Taoists opt for a special technique of ***non-action***, which is known as ***wu-vei***[18], which has as its model the Tao «*which never does anything, but does whatever is necessary*». Also, «*heavenly Tao wins without a fight*», therefore the wu-wei technique and non-violence are the most suitable ways to reach simplicity, and in a broader sense, the path to the Tao (M. Eliade, History of Beliefs and Religious Ideas 2,

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[15] Chapter 46, ibid, 58.

[16] Chapter 37, ibid, 44.

[17] Chapter 65, ibid, 77.

[18] Details on specific terms: D. Pajin, A. Marinković, The Way of the Dragon – Dictionary of Taoism, Belgrade 2004.

1991, 27). However, that process should, according to the Tao-te ching, be natural. Otherwise, everything looks like a kind of agreement or bargain, which leads to hypocrisy, and that is not typical of the Path.

«Whoever is full of virtue,
he is not aware of it
therefore he is correct;
a hypocrite tries to be good,
therefore he is not correct.
A virtuous man always works without intention,
a hypocrite always has ulterior motives.
The greatest humanity has no motives,
the highest virtue as well."[19]

It is obvious that the emphasis is on a certain ***principle of naturalness*** that represents the foundation of Taoist ethics. A true benefactor is one who does it without a motive. As if one insists on a kind of neutrality of the subject when evaluating good and evil in one's own activity. To a certain extent, we can draw a comparison with the words of Christ on doing alms: «*And when you do alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does. So let your alms be done in secret, and your father who sees it secretly will reward you openly» (Mt 6, 3–4).*

If the aforementioned lines can be interpreted as a certain type of **Christian naturalness**, then we find new potential points of contact in the relationship between Christianity and Taoism. However, morality is not a goal in itself for Christians. It is only a part of the Christian life, a part of the Church whose services are performed by imperfect people. The Taoist understanding of ethics is inextricably linked with conformity with the Tao.

Straying from the Path has its consequences, which Lao Tzu writes about later in the chapter 38:

«*When you lose the Path,
soon virtue will follow,
if virtue disappears,
soon so will humanity,
when there is no humanity,
then the righteousness will also disappear,
when righteousness evaporates,
customs are next in line.»*[20]

[19] Chapter 37, ibid, 44.
[20] Chapter 38, ibid, 44.

It is interesting that Lao Tzu associates ***righteousness and morality*** with the ruling classes of society. One gets the impression that at times he acts as an advisor to the rulers and that he tries to place the issue of righteousness, through the leadership of the state, into all the existing institutions. It is as if he expects that in this way *righteousness* will spread to all social strata and provide a kind of universal well-being or paradise on earth.

«Be just when you rule the country,
be cunning when conducting a war;
rule the world
without unnecessary interference.
How do I know it is true?
The more prohibitions,
The poorer people get.
The more weapons,
The more home and country decay.
The more skilled people are,
The more widespread crime is.
The more laws there are
The more robbers there are.
*That is why the **Right Man** says:*
"if I do not interfere
people will mature,
if I stand still
people will learn on their own,
if I do not try
everyone will prosper,
if I have no desires
others will become natural as well."[21]

For Lao Tzu, the Right Man, who follows the principle of naturalness, is ideal for the position of the ruler of a country. The probable reason is that the ruler/***Right Man*** would be a role model for the people living in the state. Apparently, it was extremely important for Lao Tzu to have wise people at the head of the government, which can be compared to Plato's views in *The Republic*. Therefore, the following lines indicate the consequences that may arise when the state is not governed by a Right Man surrounded by equally right people.

[21] Ibid.

«A ruler who has a serene and unobtrusive government
will have an honorable and honest people,
a ruler who has a cunning and strict government
will have a treacherous and dishonest people…
The rules are abused,
honor turns into depravity.
They have been deceiving people for centuries.
A right man leads by example
not by putting others down,
he is conscientious but does not poke,
he is direct but not insulting,
he shines but does not dazzle.»[22]

Why did Lao Tzu attach so much importance to the state and rulers? Is it because of personal aspirations towards high government positions or because of the general improvement of the social order or the conformity of the majority of society to the Tao? There are many potential answers and we shall not deal with them here. What is certain is that Lao Tzu was concerned about the state, and about the general state of society to the extent that he labeled capable individuals as a threatening factor to the functioning of a society. Therefore, in chapter 65 we find several interesting lines that should perhaps be read in the context of ***conformity*** – if not with the Path, then with the state:

«People are difficult to rule
because they are too smart,
the one who rules intelligently
undermines the state,
the one who does not rule intelligently
is a treasure for the state.
This kind of morality
needs understanding,
it is so deep and distant
but it helps
the ***circulation*** *to take place*
in the natural order."[23]

[22] Chapter 57, ibid, 69.
[23] Chapter 58, ibid, 70.

Understanding Life and Death

It should not come as a surprise that life and death in Taoism can be interpreted as the concordance of opposites and one and only way of being. However, several sequences from the Tao-te Ching and the later aspirations of the Taoist tradition to achieve worldly immortality indicate that there was a fear of death and confusion about what happens to a person when he dies.

«If people are not afraid of death,
what is the point of
scaring them with the death penalty?
If they were afraid of death,
and were engaged in crime,
they would be caught and killed;
who would accept that?»[24]

Certain sociological implications of the absence of fear of death can also be observed in these lines. The origins of the absence of fear of death should be pursued in that segment of Taoist teaching according to which true death – *a non-being* – generally does not exist.

«He who understands constancy will be noble,
nobility leads to sublimity,
sublimity to Heaven,
Heaven leads the Path,
The Path continues on its way,
so ***death is not the end of man.****»*[25]

Although it is briefly mentioned, and seems like an insufficiently elaborated teaching (perhaps only as an idea), it is most likely that it had an impact on the understanding of the social order at that time. A kind of eschatological undertone can also be detected due to the connection with the Tao in the sense of conformity to the Path that bestows immortality. In support of the idea that the absence of fear of death was widespread, we can use the words of Lao Tzu from almost the very end of the Tao-te ching: *let the people fear death.*[26]

On the other hand, there is a legitimate opinion that Taoists are seriously afraid of death. The later Taoist tradition, which attempted to achieve *bodily immortality*, supports that position. It enters the esoteric world of alchemy

[24] Chapter 65, ibid, 77.
[25] Chapter 74, ibid, 86.
[26] Chapter 80, ibid., 92.

and the multitude of «experiments» that gave birth to numerous techniques and methods used to come up with various resources whose main goal was to achieve immortality in this world (M. Eliade, *History of Beliefs and Religious Ideas 2*, 1991, 30–31; Anton Kjels, Taoism, 1990, 165–176; M. Eliade and J.P. Culiano, *Guide to World Religions,* 1996, 286).

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CIP – Каталогизација у публикацији
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316.74:2(082)
316.322:2(082)
2-67(082)

RELIGION in late modern society : (a thematic collection of papers of international significance) / [edited by Dragan Todorović, Zlatko Matić, Mirko Blagojević]. - Niš : Yugoslav Association for the Scientific Study of Religion (YSSSR) ; Požarevac : Committee of education and culture of the Diocese of Požarevac and Braničevo, 2022 (Užice : Grafičar). - 183 str. : ilustr. ; 22 cm

Radovi na engl. i rus. jeziku. - Tiraž 100. - Information for authors: str. 177-182. - Notes on the editors: str. 183. - Napomene i bibliografske reference uz radove. - Bibliografija uz svaki rad.

ISBN 978-86-86957-23-8 (YSSSR)
ISBN 978-86-82200-01-7 (CECDPB)
а) Социологија религије -- Зборници
б) Религија -- Друштво -- Зборници
в) Глобализација -- Религија -- Зборници

COBISS.SR-ID 80805641