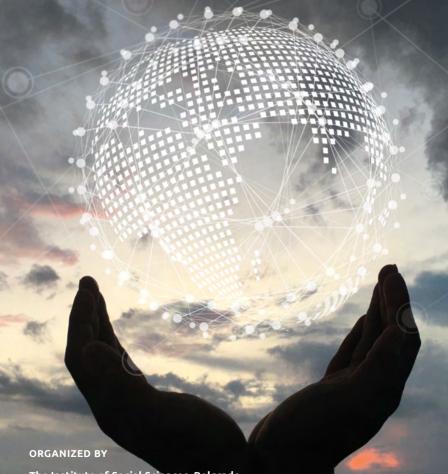THE 10TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CONFERENCE

# CHALLENGES FACING RELIGION AND THE CHURCH IN POSTMODERN DIGITAL SOCIETY

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CHALLENGES FACING RELIGION AND THE CHURCH
IN POSTMODERN DIGITAL SOCIETY

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## TECHNOLOGY, (DE)SECULARIZATION AND NEW SPRITIRUALITY: A SYSTEM THEORY AND CYBERNETIC ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN INTERACTIONS BETWEEN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND BELIEVERS

This study investigates the dual role of technology in shaping secularization and fostering new spiritual paradigms, with a focus on challenges faced by traditional religious institutions. Drawing on sociological systems theory and social cybernetics, the research analyzes how digital platforms, artificial intelligence (AI), and virtual communities in particular, reconfigure religious authority, participation, and creation of meaning in late modern societies. While technology accelerates secularization by displacing institutional control over moral narratives, it simultaneously revitalizes spirituality through decentralized, algorithmically mediated practices such as virtual worship, AI-driven spiritual guidance, and hybrid religious identities.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this paper combines quantitative analysis of digital engagement metrics (e.g., social media interactions, online religious participation rates) with systems-theoretical modeling, to map feedback loops between technological adoption and institutional adaptation. Key questions include: How do algorithmic systems influence the dissemination of religious content? What systemic tensions arise between traditional hierarchies and decentralized digital spirituality? We suggest that digital platforms create "cybernetic spirals", where institutional rigidity clashes with adaptive, user-driven spiritual ecosystems, leading to both fragmentation and innovation.

The study aims to contribute a framework for understanding religiosity in the information age, emphasizing the interdependence of technological affordances, cultural secularization, and emergent spiritual practices. Findings will inform debates on institutional resilience, the ethics of AI in religious contexts, and the redefinition of community in virtual spaces.

**Key words**: digital religion, secularization theory, systems theory, algorithmic governance, social cybernetics