

UDC 141.7:21(477)+119

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## THE RELIGIOUS LIFE REPRESENTATION IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE OF MODERN SOCIETY

*The article is dedicated to the virtualization as a phenomenon in the religious life of modern society, which is caused the convergence of religion as a social and spiritual sphere with computer technologies. The increasing role of infocommunication technologies (primarily computer technology and the global computer network Internet) is causing certain changes both in the practical activities of religious organizations and in the perception of religion as a social institution. The features of the interaction of religious organizations with the media – radio, print media, television, are shown, and the advantages of the Internet as a means of disseminating religious information are highlighted. These include, first of all, the provision of equal information rights to all religious organizations, regardless of their size and status, the possibility of prompt operational notification of current events related to religion and the availability of the Internet as a tool for disseminating information in technical and material aspects for religious organizations.*

**The aim** of the this article is to provide a socio-philosophical understanding of the manifestations of the religious life virtualization in the virtual space of modern society.

**Research's methods.** *The research was carried out by using of the next scientific methods: specifically historical, which made it possible to examine virtualization in modern religious life in combination with other processes currently existing in it and to analyze the peculiarities of virtual religions; due to the socio-cultural method the changes in the realm of religion occurring under the influence of mass introduction of information technologies were revealed; comparative method allowed to distinguish those processes in religious life which had been characteristic to all religious directions existing in modern society, and virtualization as a distinctive tendency of religious life.*

**Results.** *The process of adaptation of religious organizations to technological progress and their further use of the latest technologies causes a change in some of the most important mechanisms for the functioning of religion in the modern world as a social institution and a form of social consciousness. First of all, we are talking about the emergence of virtual religions, whose activities are primarily focused on Internet users. Compared to traditional religions, they provide an opportunity to modernize cult practices in accordance with the needs of a particular believer.*

**The conclusions** summarize the theoretical generalization of the reviewed material.

1. *The emergence of an information society causes complex innovations in various spheres of the modern society as the intensification of information exchange through the newest technologies, such as the Internet, has a significant impact on the life of social institutions, in particular religion.*

2. *The impact of virtualization on the religious life of modern society is, first of all, that the Internet has become an integral part of modern religious life – practically all religious beliefs, regardless of their numerosity and legal status, use the space of the global computer network in their activities.*

3. *Filling the information space of the Internet, religious communities take into account the specificity of the Internet audience by age, gender, educational and other characteristics.*

4. *The status of religious information in the press, radio and television does not satisfy the information needs of religious associations and as result it is logical to refer to the Internet as a priority means of overspreading of religious information.*

5. *The peculiarities of religious movements, which operate mainly in the virtual space, are, first of all oriented on target audience, i.e. users of the global computer network of the Internet, less regulated rules of behavior during religious actions, resulting in a certain change in the traditional understanding of socio-cultural and sacral concept of religion. Most adherents of virtual religions are*

*believers who use information technologies and under different circumstances they neglect the most common religious beliefs and traditional forms of cult practices.*

**Key words:** *virtualization, religion, convergence, mass media, virtual space, virtual religions, cyber believers*

**Introduction.** The actuality of the topic is determined by the development of information and communication technologies (primarily computer technologies and the Internet) in all spheres of modern society, including the religious life. The number of personal Internet connections has been recently increased and this process has a significant impact on the ability of users to provide and consume religious information, as well as to encourage the use of the World Wide Web information field by religious associations. The process of adapting of religious associations to technological progress and further using of new technologies is one of the actual research problems, as the emergence of an information society leads to a change in some important mechanisms of functioning of religion in the modern world as a social institution and a form of social consciousness. The aim of the article is to analyze virtualization as a global process which is specific to the religious life of modern society.

**The aim** of the this article is to provide a socio-philosophical understanding of the manifestations of the religious life virtualization in the virtual space of modern society.

**Research's methods.** The research was carried out by using of the following scientific methods: specifically historical, which made it possible to examine virtualization in modern religious life in combination with other processes currently existing in it and to analyze the peculiarities of virtual religions; due to the socio-cultural method the changes in the realm of religion occurring under the influence of mass introduction of information technologies were revealed; comparative method allowed to distinguish those processes in religious life which had been characteristic to all religious directions existing in modern society, and virtualization as a distinctive tendency of religious life.

Virtualization is an integral part of the global information awareness of the society. In the context of this work, an examination of this process allows to identify the basis of the changes occurring in religion on global and local levels. In worldwide the globalization stimulates not only supranational capital and the integration of economic systems, but also leads to a new phenomenon, which can be defined as «a virtual restriction of world civilization» [6, p. 28]. Virtualization as a global process is indicated by increasing the numbers of personal computers users. It contains both the activities of social institutions in the virtual space and the emergence of some elements of social life which have no analogues in social life. Replacing the stage of technologies development and the accumulation of mass of information, «the new stage appears when the optimization of opportunities is main element which is provided by computers and information networks, access to the virtual space and its development» [15, p. 108]. Virtualization promotes the emergence of a new kind of reality – virtual, that is, potential reality.

It is difficult to overestimate the role of religion in any society, so in the context of socio-philosophical issues it is impossible to exclude the religious sphere. As it was mentioned above, religion, as one of the largest social institutions, is subjected to the transformations which are inherent in modern society, so it is logical that society is influenced by virtualization as a global process. Special attention is paid not so much to the technological, but to the socio-cultural aspect of the virtualization of religious life, namely: what kinds of transformations the cult practice is subjected, in what way the religious consciousness among the visitors of the religious segment of the Internet is changed, what conditions the virtual and religious influences are formed under and in what way this process influences the dynamics of religious life.

Religious life can be determined as the reproduction of religious ideology in the complex of all activities of religious communities. Accordingly, the religious life of believers is subjected to the practical implementation of religious ideas, where they act as the repeaters of a particular religious ideology. In religious life virtualization can be defined, on the one hand, as a phenomenon which is caused by the formation of the information society, and on the other hand, it must be taken into account the changes occurring in religious life. Among the theories which analyze the condition of religion in

the modern world, the author considers it appropriate to refer to the concept of convergent processes in religion, because it allows to describe the changes occurring in modern religious life in better way.

To examine religious phenomena Frick G. used the term «convergence» the first. Having based on the tradition which was founded by Schleiermacher D., Frick G. used this term to refer to parallel phenomena which was similar to processes in different religions. In modern Ukrainian scientific thought nowadays convergent processes are considered to be characteristic of more than one religion and also indicative of directions in convergence of social, doctrinal and organizational positions between religions and defines virtualization as a process of increasing of the role of cybernetic means in modern religious life. Examination of convergent processes allows deepening the analysis of such complex social phenomenon as religion. The concept of convergent processes in many ways makes it possible to understand the changes which are taking place in modern religious life under the influence of information progress.

As for virtualization, it is one of the most dominant processes in world society, it is necessary to describe some aspects which can help to analyze the current state of religious life in modern society. First of all, it is necessary to determine what place Internet resources have in religious activities and if religions can ignore a global computer network as one of the main means of communication in modern society. It is also necessary to examine a specificity of religious segment of the Internet and the setting of motives encouraging the representatives of religious directions to refer to cyberspace; the determination of the Internet as one of the means of religious information distribution and its difference from various sources of media; the revealing of confessions which are the most active in the Internet information field; the existence of religious phenomena which are specific for it and the influence on everyday religious consciousness, it means the feedback which is revealed in the necessity of increasing of virtual cultures and their diversity.

The development of the information sphere has led to the modernization of the media, but the mass culture that forms the demand-side society sharply reduces the quality of the information product, as the vast majority of the information field is filled with commercially profitable materials. This leads to significant changes in the media context: priority is given to materials which are aimed to the higher income groups of population. For other categories of the population, the largest block of the information field is filled with entertainment programs and news resulting in a decrease in the number of information-analytical, cultural, religious and other types of programs. The financial dependence on the given materials arise the priority economic stimulus for the functioning of media. This has a significant impact on the quality of the information product, which is reflected, first of all, in the lack of information of the audience about the activities of the most important social institutions (including religious ones): «The media creates and programs ... our reality. It forms public opinion and ideological illusions. Information producers become a caste of priests and it directs and manipulates reality» [8, p. 38].

The term «media culture» was introduced into science to refer to a specific type of society, which can be defined as a set of information and communication means, material and intellectual values which were produced by mankind in the process of cultural and historical development, which contribute to the formation of social consciousness and socialization of personality. Media culture contains mechanisms, rules of transmission and perception of information allowing it to act as one of the constituents which form the ideology of personality and its development, namely, the ability to perceive, analyze, and evaluate media text that is the information which a person receives through the media.

In the modern world, where the importance of information and the means of its transmission are increasing, religions are not only apart from the development of the modern information industry, but they also actively use it to increase the effectiveness of certain areas of their activity: missionary, educational, and others. It is possible to distinguish two levels of determination of religious subjects by social media. The most widespread journalism for a mass audience it is the journalism that publishes material on a religious topic in case if it is related to actual resonant events, regardless of the positive or negative conceptual filling. It is at this level the average recipient receives basic information

about religion and forms the perceptions of religious life in modern society. The social media also publishes analytical materials on religious content, which are published in general or specialized (including scientific) media. The main aim in elucidation of the events of religious life for such media is the most objective view of events. Religion is reviewed there as a socio-political institute, the level of its review is higher than in the previous group of publications on this topic, as their main aim is to give an objective assessment of the events of religious life, to determine socio-cultural factors which significantly affect the course of events.

Information about religious life is conceded in quantitative and qualitative terms to politics, economy, sport, show business – these topics are presented in much more detailed and versatile media, however, as we understand it, it does not diminish the role of the religious factor in society. A review of decisive moments in the history of the twentieth century shows that religion is now one of the main reasons of resonant events, including events which are not always directly related to it. Most conflicts which continued at the end of the twentieth century and passed into the new century had a religious component. Religious organizations do not practically have analytical publications and the thematic range of materials of printed issues is very limited. For comparison it should be noted, in social publications, which are devoted to religious topics.

Obviously, in the process of the globalization and dynamics of the development of modern society, religions should optimize their interaction with the media in order to enable the consumer in the media space to become acquainted with the religious information spectrum in such context that would suit social and religious consumers of information. The problematic aspects in the interaction between religious organizations and the media arise, first of all, because the media, according to the opinion of most researchers, acts as a one-sided process which is aimed to meet the needs of the mass audience [Hanson, Eric O., 2006., p. 29]. They function as means of review and reflection of the life of modern society, and in particular, in such an important sphere as the religious one. In this perspective, the cooperation of the media and religious organizations is almost ineffective for the religious organizations, but the media is reviewed by the representatives of religious directions as «spiritual and practical activity, which has the function of introducing into the mass consciousness of a certain system of values» [7, p. 94].

Religious organizations are often dissatisfied with the coverage of religious issues by the media due to the lack of a clearly formulated information policy. The legislative framework of the Ukrainian state regulates the sphere of interaction of religious directions and mass media, but does not determine the level of reliability of published information, which promotes the false data. Submitting religious material, the mass media often distorts some aspects of religious life and worship, as well as the essence of religious doctrine. There are many examples where incompetent or deliberately incorrect publications contributed to the incitement of inter-religious animosity and the undermining of the reputation of religious associations.

The increasing of spheres of use of information technologies in modern society are reflected in the activity of all social institutions, including religious life, as it also necessitates optimization of existence in the virtual space and in turn it affects the dynamics of activities of religious organizations. Almost all religious organizations overspread the information about their activities on the Internet using not only informational but also other Internet resources (as an example interactive and multimedia resources) and make a great effort for the most effective filling of the virtual information space. Virtual religions which exist only within the virtual space are appeared. Some religious rituals are performed through the global computer network and they acquire some transformation. Nowadays, all actual religious processes, both in confessional and social interpretation, are reflected in the virtual space (i.e. non-confessional sites covering religious issues). Some religious internet projects have a multifunctional purpose (for example, internet projects of inter-religious cooperation which are created for inter-religious dialogue and cooperation of different religious associations).

In the virtual space, there is a large number of religious web resources which are difficult and sometimes impossible to obtain in another way, that is, in the virtual space religious information takes on a global dimension in relation to any audience. Various religious information covering

religious topics on confessional and social sites is available for user who is interested in religious topics. The distinctive features of the global computer network of the Internet as an information medium can be distinguished as follows:

- there is no time barrier – interested information can be viewed at any time of the day;
- there is no space barrier – the information is accessible from any place of the planet where there is access to the Internet, there are no geographical restrictions;
- there is no quantitative barrier – the World Wide Web provides an unlimited information array, the familiarization with it has convenient order and volume for the user.

The formation of the religious segment of the Internet occurred in 2000-2001, it can be defined as a set of resources which appear as a result of the reproduction of certain spheres of religious life in the virtual space. There is an unexpected increase in the growth of this segment of the Internet, it is proved by the growing in the number of official sites of religious confessions and analytical social sites which contain material on religious topics; growing the thematic spectrum of provided information (thematic web sites for youth, children, parents, businessmen, military personnel, etc.); inter-confessional and inter-religious web conferences; active use of interactive and multimedia resources; religious directions whose activities are limited only by virtual space; joint internet projects of different religious directions and others. From the beginning of inception of the religious Internet, the interactive component has been excluded from use by almost all religious associations, whereas now it is used despite on confessional affiliation in the form of chats, forums, web conferences, spiritual issues and others. Nowadays it is possible to note not only the numerical increase, but also the qualitative improvement in the technical implementation of sites on religious topics. The tendencies of increasing of the use of Internet resources in the activities of religious associations are also connected with the fact that the Internet allows in a short time and with a more complete amount of information to form a full and objective representation of the dynamics of religious life.

One of the leading features of the Internet in our researched field can be characterized as «religious pluralism» [10, p. 33], which is confirmed by the existence of the sites of practically all known religious directions, world religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism) and also new religious movements and directions in the information field of the Internet. Religious organizations are currently actively using the Internet and this process is proved by the quantitative indicators of filling the Internet space and the range of resources which is used in their practical activity. On the official sites of the most common religious organizations (i.e. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism) users can get acquainted with the basics of doctrine, sacred texts, libraries, sermon texts, guest books, mailing lists, contacts, thematic materials which are given by one or another religious associations (in more detailed review of the official sites of religious associations, the most of their content will not be characterized by the fact that they all have approximately the same information spectrum). Such sites are classified as «representative» because they allow to make the presentation or overview of the doctrine and activities of the religious community. Religious associations also make announcements on the Internet and publish a schedule of events, a list of educational, charitable and missionary programs. There are electronic analogues of confessional newspapers and magazines on the Internet, as well as those confessional editions which do not have analogues in print.

The necessity to analyze the religious segment of the Internet is also determined by the fact that it has its peculiarities as means of overspreading of the information of religious content, which can be distinguished as follows:

- in the Internet media field, all religious directions receive equal information rights regardless of the number of followers, financial and other opportunities. It is necessary to remind that we are discussing such a convergent process as the unification of exteriorization. This allows the user to get acquainted with all the religious directions which operate in the virtual space, and gives opportunity religious associations to form their own conceptual content of websites;
- nowadays the Internet is the most technically and materially accessible means of placing the religious information;

– the Internet allows for the most reliable coverage of the events of religious life, but for the confessional media it is much more difficult to do this because of a number of factors which have been mentioned in the previous section;

– religious information that is placed in a virtual space has the widest range of information. In addition, the absence of restrictions on the spiritual and religious needs of the state and internet-providers allows the users of religious websites to become acquainted with the full range of material which is available on the Web on religious topics;

– each religious community and individual believer is able to become a full participant in the global information space;

– in the modern world, the most effective activity of religious organizations is possible only with the use of Internet resources.

Considering all mentioned above, as well as some of the problematic aspects of presenting religious topics in the mass media, it is logical to refer religions to the Internet to optimize their activities in the global information space.

Virtual religions deserve a detailed analysis because they are examples of the impact of virtualization on religious life. This allows to identify some of the tendencies which characterize the further possible change of religion as a social institution and as a spiritual phenomenon. The virtualization of religious life has contributed not only to the development of a global information space by pre-existing religions and also the religious movements which appeared in it, whose activity is entirely limited to virtual space and is aimed exclusively at users of the global computer network. This requires an additional classification of religions in the modern world.

A number of means of classifying religions have been developed in scientific thought. For example, Bellach R. identifies five types of religions: primitive, archaic, historical, early modern and modern [5, c. 71]; Weber M. classifies religions according to their views on the salvation of the soul; Confucius emphasizes the salvation of the soul in the real world as well as in the other world.

Analyzing virtual religions, it is necessary to take into account their peculiarities, as well as the specifics of the socio-cultural space in which they function, so it is appropriate to divide virtual religions according to the following classification in accordance with the criterion for motivating their access to the Internet:

1) Internet religions are virtual religious organizations which are based on the dogmas of traditional religions and aimed at users of the global computer network. They provide an opportunity to meet religious needs, both for those who do not recognize the traditional forms of cult practices in various circumstances, as well as for persons who do not identify with a particular religious belief;

2) Cyber-religions are religious beliefs which are based on the adoration of technological progress and the sacralization of the Internet. This type of virtual religious movements attempts to form an idea of the human soul in the form of a functional structure of a biological computer;

3) Marginal virtual movements which appear on the global computer network as a reaction of protest to some social phenomena, or whose activities are contrary to current legislation. In this case, the Internet is the only means of spreading the doctrine and uniting the followers. The growth of this particular group of virtual religions can also be illustrated by the example of observation of Frankl B.: «There is a tendency to move away from traditional beliefs, not from religion. We are approaching the personal, most deeply personalized religiosity by means of it everyone is able to communicate with God in own, intimate language» [9, p. 336].

The emergence of these virtual projects is determined first of all by the change in motivation in the self-identification of believers. Secondly, in the conditions of becoming an information society, the basis of traditional religiosity – the integrity of ethno-cultural being, the ethno-psychological unity of large human communities is destroyed. Traditional means of overspreading socially meaningful information lose the significance. In the information society this connection is minimal as virtual communities are the connecting factors. Accordingly, religiosity in the system of global information exchange does not lose its significance, but acquires a new quality: «Human being always aspires for

the limits of itself, always aspires for the meaning» [9, p. 335], so religion can be examined not only as belief in God, as well as belief in the meaning of own being, which correlates with the supernatural. If we review the diversity of virtual religions according to Frankl's view, then it can be concluded that some of these religions try to give potential followers a belief in a meaning which is different from the meaning in traditional religions.

It should be noted that the degree of further modernization of forms of representation of religion in some case depends on the further expansion of the global computer network Internet and the extent to which social groups and institutions deepen into it: «religion depends on the level of knowledge. Knowledge has changed – so the religion has changed too... if you want to change religion – give knowledge, everything else will work. This form of thought is not incorporeal but it is expressed in one form or another» [3, p. 28].

As a result of the active distribution of personal computers connecting to the global computer network, a new social group is formed – cyber-believers. This community of people is characterized by satisfaction of religious needs mainly due to the Internet. Virtual space allows to gain a religious experience which cannot be reproduced by other means. A new kind of religious consciousness is formed under this influence – cyber-religiosity. In the context of the psychology of religion, the question of the study of virtual religious experience, its relation with existing forms of religious experiences is urgent. The emergence of this type of virtual religious consciousness, such as cyber-religiosity, is predetermined by the impact on society of computer technologies, as the specificity of the virtual space brings to life a new form of expression of own spiritual and religious views. Therefore, the religious beliefs which exist in the virtual space can be reviewed not only as a marginalization of religion, but also as means of adapting a person to the conditions of current life.

In terms of the anthropology of religion the problem of the believing person arises in a new way: in the virtual space the person is able to form own sacred world: «In a post-industrial society the separation of culture and social structure is able to develop ... one of the deepest human powers is the desire to sanctify social institutions and belief systems, which informs the meaning of life and denies the meaninglessness of death. ... The absence of a stable moral basis is a cultural contradiction of this society, the greatest challenge» [4, p. 651-652].

**Results.** The process of adaptation of religious organizations to technological progress and their further use of the latest technologies causes a change in some of the most important mechanisms for the functioning of religion in the modern world as a social institution and a form of social consciousness. First of all, we are talking about the emergence of virtual religions, whose activities are primarily focused on Internet users. Compared to traditional religions, they provide an opportunity to modernize cult practices in accordance with the needs of a particular believer.

The convergence of religion into the virtual space is realized at least in two aspects: social and spiritual. The social aspect is characterized by the fact that religion uses a virtual space with other social institutions. In this case, as it has been mentioned above, the Internet is more technically advanced from the point of view of communicative space. Religion in the network as means of spiritual communication is in special interest, and that is why it is appropriate to raise the question of the limits of the permissibility of technological innovation in the realm of religion, because in the virtual space, at least now, it does not acquire the whole set of characteristics which are specific for it in real society. This actualizes the issue of transforming the conceptual content of the sacred context of religion in cyberspace. Existing religious directions have denied the possibility of completely replacing the real worship with virtual one, but the degree of virtualization of cult practices depends on the further development of technological progress, the level of informatization of the society and a number of other factors, including the addictive of users to the Internet recourses, which have already been provided by religious associations. It is too early to talk about the radical transformation of religion as a spiritual institution in the virtual space, but the impact of virtualization on religious life is quite significant. However, in terms of further development and widespread of computer technologies, such a transformation of religious activity is likely to result in a further change in religion as a social institution.

The **conclusions** summarize the theoretical generalization of the reviewed material.

The emergence of an information society causes complex innovations in various spheres of the modern society as the intensification of information exchange through the newest technologies, such as the Internet, has a significant impact on the life of social institutions, in particular religion. The analysis of the prospects of using the resources of the virtual space by religious institutions makes it possible to ascertain: firstly, even at a sufficiently low level of informatization of the society (for example, in Ukraine) the Internet has already occupied one of the priority places in the activity of religious organizations; secondly, in terms of the dynamics of personal connections to the global computer network, the further optimization of religious communities in the virtual space can be predicted. Thus, in the modern world, religion becomes one of the resources of the information society.

The impact of virtualization on the religious life of modern society is, first of all, that the Internet has become an integral part of modern religious life – practically all religious beliefs, regardless of their numerosity and legal status, use the space of the global computer network in their activities. There is also a steady tendency to increase the resources of the religious segment of the Ukrainian Internet and those spheres of religious life which are reproduced in the virtual space: if initially the global computer network is used as a more sophisticated communication tool which is able to increase the effectiveness of practical activity of the religious communities, now there is also a transformation of cult activities into the virtual space. Filling the information space of the Internet, religious communities take into account the specificity of the Internet audience by age, gender, educational and other characteristics.

Interpretation of religious life events in the media space of current mass media usually has a negative impact on the activities of religious associations, creating some conflicts between members of religious communities and journalists as a result of incorrect publications. It also encourages religious organizations to seek adequate means of reflecting their religious situation in the information field of the global computer network. Without the use of media, religion loses its relevance, so representatives of religious organizations are interested in optimizing their cooperation with the media. The status of religious information in the press, radio and television does not satisfy the information needs of religious associations and as result it is logical to refer to the Internet as a priority means of overspreading of religious information.

The peculiarities of religious movements, which operate mainly in the virtual space, are, first of all oriented on target audience, i.e. users of the global computer network of the Internet, less regulated rules of behavior during religious actions, resulting in a certain change in the traditional understanding of socio-cultural and sacral concept of religion. Most adherents of virtual religions are believers who use information technologies and under different circumstances they neglect the most common religious beliefs and traditional forms of cult practices. Nowadays the virtual religions are in most cases reproduced as a simplified version of existing religious beliefs and make a great effort to maximize the use of interactive Internet resources to attract the attention of online audiences through the communication capabilities.

Under the influence of virtual religions, a new social group is being formed in today's society – «cyber-believers», who are characterized by satisfying their needs entirely through the global computer network. Further study of this phenomenon may reveal the peculiarities of the dynamics of this group, as well as the detailed analysis of the content of such concepts as «cyber-religiosity», which characterizes the form of public religious consciousness in the virtual space.

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## РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЯ РЕЛІГІЙНОГО ЖИТТЯ У ВІРТУАЛЬНОМУ ПРОСТОРІ СУЧАСНОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА

**Актуальність.** *Стаття присвячена віртуалізації як явищу у релігійному житті сучасного суспільства, що спричинене конвергенцією релігії як соціальної та духовної сфери із комп'ютерними технологіями. Зростаюча роль інфокомунікаційних технологій (насамперед комп'ютерних технологій та глобальної комп'ютерної мережі Інтернет) викликає певні зміни як у практичній діяльності релігійних організацій, так і у сприйнятті релігії як соціального інституту. Показано особливості взаємодії релігійних організацій із засобами масової інформації – радіо, друкованими виданнями, телебаченням, а також виділено переваги Інтернету як засоби поширення релігійної інформації. До них належать передусім забезпечення рівних інформаційних прав усім релігійним організаціям незалежно від їх розміру та статусу, можливість оперативного оповіщення про поточні події, пов'язані з релігією, а також наявність мережі Інтернет як інструменту поширення інформації у технічному та матеріальному аспектах для релігійних організацій.*

**Мета** цієї статті – дати соціально-філософське осмислення проявів віртуалізації релігійного життя у віртуальному просторі сучасного суспільства.

**Методи дослідження.** *Дослідження проводилося із використанням наступних наукових методів: конкретно-історичного, який дозволив розглянути віртуалізацію у сучасному релігійному житті у поєднанні з іншими існуючими в ній процесами та проаналізувати особливості віртуальних релігій; завдяки соціокультурному методу виявлено зміни у сфері релігії, які відбуваються під впливом масового впровадження інформаційних технологій; порівняльний метод дозволив виділити ті процеси в релігійному житті, які були характерні для всіх релігійних напрямів, що існують у суспільстві, і віртуалізацію як специфічну тенденцію сучасного релігійного життя.*

**Результати дослідження.** *Процес адаптації релігійних організацій до технологічного прогресу та подальше використання ними новітніх технологій викликає зміну деяких найважливіших механізмів функціонування релігії у світі як соціального інституту та форми суспільної свідомості. Насамперед, йдеться про появу віртуальних релігій, діяльність яких орієнтована, в першу чергу, на користувачів глобальних комп'ютерних мереж. Порівняно з традиційними релігіями, вони дають можливість модернізувати культові практики відповідно до потреб конкретного віруючого.*

*У висновках підведено теоретичне узагальнення розглянутого матеріалу.*

1. *Поява інформаційного суспільства викликає комплексні інновації у різних сферах сучасного суспільства, оскільки інтенсифікація інформаційного обміну за допомогою новітніх технологій, таких як Інтернет, істотно впливає на життя соціальних інститутів, зокрема релігії.*

2. *Вплив віртуалізації на релігійне життя сучасного суспільства полягає насамперед у тому, що Інтернет став невід'ємною частиною сучасного релігійного життя – практично всі релігійні вірування, незалежно від їхньої чисельності та правового статусу, використовують простір глобальної комп'ютерної мережі у своїй діяльності.*

3. *Наповнюючи інформаційний простір Інтернету, релігійні спільноти враховують специфіку інтернет-аудиторії за віковими, статевими, освітніми та іншими характеристиками.*

4. Положення релігійної інформації у пресі, радіо та телебаченні не задовольняє інформаційні потреби релігійних об'єднань, внаслідок чого логічно віднести до Інтернету пріоритетний засіб розповсюдження релігійної інформації.

5. Особливості релігійних рухів, які діють переважно у віртуальному просторі, спрямовані, передусім, на цільову аудиторію, тобто. користувачів глобальної комп'ютерної мережі Інтернет, менш регламентовані правила поведінки під час релігійних дій, що призводить до певної зміни традиційного розуміння соціокультурної та сакральної концепції релігії. Більшість прихильників віртуальних релігій – це віруючі, які використовують інформаційні технології та за різних обставин нехтують найпоширенішими релігійними переконаннями та традиційними формами культової практики.

**Ключові слова:** віртуалізація, релігія, засоби масової інформації, віртуальний простір, віртуальні релігії, кібервіруючі.