



DEATH AND RELIGION

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DESCRIPTION

Open Theology invites submissions for the topical issue "Death and Religion"

Death and religion share an interdependent relation. Where death is an event or state that threatens to disintegrate worlds and meaning, religion can be seen as a practice that categorizes, consoles and makes sense of this kind of disintegration. According to Oxford dictionary, death is defined as "end of life", but behind this simple definition, there is a web of complex ideas that could be understood from not just biological but also religious or cultural perspectives. Death has been conceptualized differently in different religious traditions as their texts and practices demonstrate. According to Lifton, religion is 'life power' and dominates death. Similarly, Davies put forth rituals as culture's 'words against death'.

The relationship between death and religion should be seen as a broad scholarly query, which includes philosophical and theological questions, as well as more applied perspectives such as social work. Although death is a clinical process of organs that cease to function, dying and death are events that are surrounded by various sense-making practices, ranging from intricate traditional ceremonies as part of established religious repertoires, to more personal, individualized rituals. Social-cultural context, therefore, is of utmost importance to understand how we interact with dying persons and dead bodies, and why we do it in that particular way.

In theology we see how faith traditions historically account for the reality of death, reflecting upon its existential meaning and thus trying to understand how to deal with the event of death. As such, a theology of death raises both practical (e.g. in spiritual care) and systematical (e.g. in ethics) questions regarding death and dying.

In psychology death anxiety or fear of death invited a great deal of interest starting in the late 1950s with Fiefel's work on death anxiety and religion. Different studies pointed at different relationships between death anxiety and religiousness; some studies found a positive relationship between the two while others found an inverse relationship. Some research argued for a curvilinear relationship between death anxiety and religiousness, explaining that moderately religious participants have more death anxiety than those who are extremely religious or not religious at all. The relationship between religion and death anxiety has been an inconclusive one because of the multidimensional nature of both religion and death anxiety. There is, however, a lack of scholarship on death anxiety and religion in non-western cultures.

In cultural anthropology, death studies have developed into a substantial research niche. There has been ample attention for practices pertaining to e.g. the process of dying, death as transition, as well as to the interaction with the dead body. Important here, too, is the global perspective on death, also in the sense of engaging with ontologies of life and death outside of the established scientific-medical spectrum.

This special issue encourages scholars from different disciplines, not just restricted to the ones we mentioned, to contribute to this debate. Of special interest are situations in which religion becomes overbearing and a burden to carry forward in times of death, or if religious practices are obstructed, for example, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. How do these crisis situations affect the relationship between religion and death? This special issue aims at invoking curiosity, enquiry and interest in looking at the different facets of this topic.

The special issue on 'Death and Religion' invites empirical (qualitative and quantitative), review/conceptual and analytical papers focusing on the different facets of this relationship from scholars in different disciplines such as: Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Theology, Philosophy, Cultural Studies, Thanatology, Health Humanities, Social Care and Social Work. Among others, topics or areas of focus might include:

- ▶ Death anxiety and religiosity in non-western cultures
- ▶ The different perspectives to 'Extrinsic Religiosity'
- ▶ Is 'Intrinsic Religiosity' really the reliever of anxiety?
- ▶ Psychological/sociological/psychosocial significance of death rituals
- ▶ The changing nature of death rituals
- ▶ Personal religious beliefs and ideas about death
- ▶ Belief in afterlife and death anxiety
- ▶ The changing relationship between death and religion due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- ▶ The non-religious traditions and death
- ▶ Autoethnographic accounts of performing/witnessing death rituals
- ▶ Death as latent and religion as evident in Freudian texts
- ▶ Religious Literacy and the end of life care
- ▶ Extinction as ultimate death and other morbid anxieties of the Anthropocene

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- ▶ transparent, comprehensive and efficient peer review,
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HOW TO SUBMIT

Submissions will be collected from **September 1 to October 31, 2021**, via the on-line submission system at <http://www.editorialmanager.com/openth/>

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Before submission the authors should carefully read over the Instruction for Authors, available at: degruyter.com/publication/journal_key/OPTH/downloadAsset/OPTH_Instruction%20for%20Authors.pdf

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