

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION AND PAPERS
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE
THE HOLY LAND: RELIGION, HISTORY, IDENTITY AND PEACE
Sacred Places as Spaces of Encounter between Religions, Cultures and Peoples
Belgrade, Serbia 15–17 May 2027
ORGANIZER: Center for Empirical Research on Religion (CEIR), Novi Sad, Serbia

Dear Colleagues,

The **Centre for Empirical Research on Religion (CEIR), Novi Sad**, is pleased to invite you to participate in the International Scientific Conference “**The Holy Land: Religion, History, Identity and Peace**,” to be held on **15–17 May 2027 in Belgrade, Serbia**. Participation in the conference will be possible both in person in Belgrade and online.

The Holy Land represents a unique space where religions, cultures, peoples, and civilizations have encountered one another for thousands of years. It holds a special place in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and is a region of exceptional theological, historical, cultural, and social significance.

Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Galilee, and other sacred places are not merely witnesses to the past. They are living spaces of contemporary religious experience, pilgrimage, cultural heritage, encounters between different identities and traditions, as well as complex social challenges.

The conference aims to bring together researchers, university professors, theologians, sociologists, historians, philosophers, educators, psychologists, anthropologists, scholars of religion and peace, representatives of religious communities, and other experts from Serbia, the region, and around the world.

Special attention will be devoted to encounters between theological perspectives and the social sciences and humanities, dialogue among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the potential contribution of religion to education, mutual understanding, psychological and spiritual well-being, reconciliation, and peacebuilding.

The central question of the conference is:

How can a land sacred to different religious traditions become a space of encounter, dialogue, education, healing, reconciliation, and peace?

PROPOSED THEMATIC AREAS

1. Theology of the Holy Land - Sacredness of land and space; the Promised Land; covenant, promise and belonging; the Chosen People and the universality of salvation; theology of the land in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

2. The Holy Land in Sacred Texts - The Holy Land in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, New Testament, and Qur'an; Jerusalem and Zion; the prophets; the Psalms; messianic expectations and interpretations of sacred places.

3. Jerusalem – The Earthly and Heavenly City -Jerusalem in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the Jerusalem Temple; the Heavenly Jerusalem; eschatological understandings; Jerusalem as a shared religious heritage.

4. Jesus Christ and the Holy Land - Bethlehem and the Incarnation; Galilee and the ministry of Jesus; Jerusalem, the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection; Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre; the theology of places associated with the life of Christ.

5. Judaism, Christianity and Islam – Encounters and Differences - Abraham and the prophets as a shared heritage; converging and divergent theological traditions; Jewish-Christian and Christian-Muslim dialogue; theology of the Other; religious pluralism.

6. Christianity in the Holy Land – Past, Present and Future - Early Christianity and the Church Fathers; Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and ancient Eastern Christian traditions; contemporary Christian communities; Palestinian Christianity; preservation of Christian heritage.

7. Sacred Places, Pilgrimage and Religious Tourism - The theology and experience of pilgrimage; prayer at sacred places; religious tourism; pilgrims and local communities; protection of sacred places and cultural heritage.

8. Religious, Ethnic and National Identity - Formation and transmission of identity; collective memory; religion, peoplehood and nation; perceptions of the Other; family, women, and intergenerational transmission of religious identity.

9. Religion, Conflict, Justice and Reconciliation - Religion as a factor in conflict and as a resource for peace; instrumentalization of religion; discrimination and hate speech; forgiveness, justice and reconciliation; prevention of religiously motivated violence.

10. Interreligious Dialogue and Peacebuilding - Dialogue among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the role of religious leaders and communities; shared responsibility for peace; initiatives of cooperation and models of coexistence.

11. Religion, Education and Youth - Religious education; education about other religions; representations of the Other in textbooks and curricula; stereotypes and prejudice; religious identity among children and young people.

12. Peace Education and Violence Prevention - Education for tolerance, dialogue, and nonviolence; interreligious education; the role of schools, families, and religious communities; prevention of violence based on religious identity.

13. Therapeutic and Healing Potential of Religion and Spirituality - Religion, spirituality and psychological well-being; faith, hope and meaning in life; prayer, meditation and contemplation; religious coping with stress, loss and suffering; pastoral counselling and spiritual care; religious communities as sources of support; resilience and post-traumatic growth.

14. Sacred Places as Spaces of Spiritual Healing and Transformation --Pilgrimage, prayer, hope and transformative experiences; experiences of sacred space; spiritual and psychological well-being; interdisciplinary approaches to pilgrims' experiences.

15. Everyday Life in the Holy Land - Everyday life among different religious and ethnic communities; daily encounters; family and religious practice; local communities; living alongside places considered sacred by millions of people.

16. The Holy Land and the Balkans – Comparative Perspectives - Experiences of multireligious societies; the Holy Land, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and the Balkans; religious identity, education, conflict, reconciliation, and a culture of peace.

The listed themes are not restrictive. Contributions addressing other topics directly related to the general theme of the conference are also welcome.

IMPORTANT DATES

Abstract submission deadline: 15 February 2027

Notification of acceptance: by 1 March 2027

Final programme announcement: by 1 April 2027

Conference dates: 15–17 May 2027

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Submissions should include: title of the paper; author's full name; academic title/position; institutional affiliation and country; e-mail address; abstract of up to 300 words; 3–5 keywords.

Conference languages: Serbian and English. Submissions in Serbian should also include the title and abstract in English.

PRESENTATIONS

Individual presentations will be allocated **15 minutes**, followed by discussion within the thematic sessions.

PUBLICATION

The organizer will provide for the publication of the conference materials.

Accepted abstracts will be published in the **Book of Abstracts of the International Scientific Conference “The Holy Land: Religion, History, Identity and Peace.”**

Authors of accepted presentations will have the opportunity to submit their full papers. Following an appropriate peer-review process and fulfilment of editorial requirements, the papers will be published in the **Conference Proceedings**.

CONFERENCE FEE

There is no conference fee. Participation is free of charge.

The organizer will provide the venue and facilities necessary for the working sessions of the conference, as well as the publication of the **Book of Abstracts** and the **Conference Proceedings**. Applications and abstracts should be sent to: **ceirbalkan@gmail.com**

The conference seeks not only to contribute to a deeper academic understanding of the Holy Land, but also to address one of the fundamental questions facing the contemporary world:

How can we live together while respecting different religious, cultural, and national identities, and how can religion become a resource for dialogue, human dignity, reconciliation, and peace?

We look forward to your participation and contribution to this international, interdisciplinary, and interreligious dialogue.

Prof. dr Zorica Kuburić