

REVIEW ARTICLE

Christianity and Social Media

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في عالم اليوم، أصبحت توجد هناك زيادة ملحوظة في عدد الأفراد الذين يشعرون بالحاجة إلى نشر كل تفاصيل حياتهم على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. هذا السلوك بات يشكل نطاقاً واسعاً حيث أصبح السعي إلى تحقيق المصادقية الافتراضية لشخصياتهم من خلال جمع أكبر عدد من الأصدقاء أو المتابعين سمة مميزة للمجتمع الحديث. وبينما أنه من الضروري الاعتراف بقيمة المعلومات المتاحة عبر هذه المنصات، فإنه من الضروري أيضاً توخي الحذر من أثارها السلبية المحتملة مع استمرار التقدم التكنولوجي وتحول وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي إلى جزء لا يتجزأ من روتين الحياة اليومية. تستخدم الكنائس والمؤسسات الدينية هذه المنصات بشكل متزايد لتعزيز القيم المسيحية، ولتوجيه وإرشاد الأفراد نحو النمو الروحي

Dutch: Er is in de hedendaagse wereld een observeerbare toename in het aantal individuen die de noodzaak voelen om elk detail van hun leven op sociale media te publiceren. Dit gedrag reflecteert een bredere trend waarbij de zoektocht naar virtuele erkenning, door middel van het vergaren van het grootste aantal vrienden of volgers, een karakteristiek eigenschap is geworden van de moderne maatschappij. Hoewel het cruciaal is om de waardevolle informatie te erkennen die toegankelijk is via sociale media -zoals onderzoek, leeromgevingen en communicatie- is het eveneens belangrijk bewust te zijn van diens potentiële negatieve effecten. Terwijl technologie verder ontwikkelt en sociale media een wezenlijk onderdeel wordt van het dagelijks leven, gebruiken kerken en religieuze instituten deze platforms om christelijke normen te promoten en individuen richting spirituele groei te begeleiden.

English: In today's world, there is an observable increase in the number of individuals who feel the need to publicize every detail of their lives on social media. This behaviour reflects a broader trend where the quest for virtual validation through accumulating the largest number of friends or followers has become a defining characteristic of modern society. While it is crucial to acknowledge the valuable information accessible via social media—such as research, learning, and communication—it is equally important to remain cautious of its potential negative effects. As technology continues to advance, and social media becomes an integral part of daily life, churches and religious institutions are increasingly using these platforms to promote Christian values and guide individuals towards spiritual growth.

French: Dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, on observe une importante augmentation du nombre de personnes qui ressentent le besoin de publier chaque détail de leur vie sur les réseaux sociaux.

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Ce comportement reflète une tendance plus large selon laquelle la quête de validation virtuelle par l'accumulation du plus grand nombre d'amis ou d'abonnés est devenue une caractéristique déterminante de la société moderne. S'il est important de reconnaître que les informations très utiles accessibles via les réseaux sociaux (comme la recherche, l'apprentissage et la communication), il est tout aussi important de rester prudent quant à leurs potentiels effets négatifs. Comme la technologie continue de progresser et que les réseaux sociaux font partie intégrante de la vie quotidienne, les églises et les institutions religieuses utilisent de plus en plus ces plateformes pour promouvoir les valeurs chrétiennes et guider les individus vers la croissance spirituelle.

Greek: Στον σημερινό κόσμο, υπάρχει μια αξιοσημείωτη αύξηση του αριθμού των ανθρώπων που αισθάνονται την ανάγκη να δημοσιεύσουν κάθε λεπτομέρεια της ζωής τους στα μέσα κοινωνικής δικτύωσης. Αυτή η συμπεριφορά αντικατοπτρίζει μια ευρύτερη τάση όπου η αναζήτηση εικονικής αναγνώρισης μέσω της συσσώρευσης του μεγαλύτερου αριθμού φίλων ή οπαδών έχει γίνει ένα καθοριστικό χαρακτηριστικό της σύγχρονης κοινωνίας. Παρόλο που είναι σημαντικό να αναγνωρίσουμε πολύτιμες πληροφορίες προσβάσιμες μέσω των κοινωνικών μέσων - όπως η έρευνα, η μάθηση και η επικοινωνία - είναι εξίσου σημαντικό να παραμείνουμε προσεκτικοί σχετικά με τις πιθανές αρνητικές επιπτώσεις τους. Καθώς η τεχνολογία συνεχίζει να προχωρά και τα μέσα κοινωνικής δικτύωσης αποτελούν αναπόσπαστο μέρος της καθημερινής ζωής, οι εκκλησίες και οι θρησκευτικές οργανώσεις χρησιμοποιούν όλο και περισσότερο αυτές τις πλατφόρμες για να προωθήσουν τις Χριστιανικές αξίες και να καθοδηγήσουν τα άτομα στην πνευματική ανάπτυξη.

German: In der heutigen Welt ist ein deutlicher Anstieg der Anzahl von Menschen zu beobachten, die das Bedürfnis verspüren, jedes Detail ihres Lebens in den sozialen Medien zu veröffentlichen. Dieses Verhalten spiegelt einen breiteren Trend wider, bei dem das Streben nach virtueller Bestätigung durch das Sammeln der größtmöglichen Anzahl von Freunden oder Followern zu einem prägenden Merkmal der modernen Gesellschaft geworden ist. Während es wichtig ist, den nützlichen Zugang zu Informationen über soziale Medien—wie Forschung, Lernen und Kommunikation—anzuerkennen, so ist es ebenso wichtig, sich der potenziell negativen Auswirkungen bewusst zu sein. Da die Technologie sich weiterentwickelt und soziale Medien ein fester Bestandteil des täglichen Lebens sind, nutzen Kirchen und religiöse Institutionen zunehmend diese Plattformen, um christliche Werte zu vermitteln und Menschen auf ihrem spirituellen Weg zu begleiten.

Italian: Nel mondo di oggi, si osserva un aumento del numero di persone che sentono il bisogno di pubblicizzare ogni dettaglio della propria vita sui social media. Questo comportamento riflette una tendenza più ampia, in cui la ricerca di una conferma virtuale attraverso l'accumulo del maggior numero possibile di amici o follower è diventata una caratteristica distintiva della società moderna. Sebbene sia fondamentale riconoscere le preziose informazioni accessibili tramite i social media—come la ricerca, l'apprendimento e la comunicazione—è altrettanto importante rimanere cauti riguardo ai loro potenziali effetti negativi. Con l'avanzare della tecnologia e l'integrazione sempre maggiore dei social media nella vita quotidiana, le chiese e le istituzioni religiose stanno sempre più utilizzando queste piattaforme per promuovere i valori cristiani e guidare le persone verso la crescita spirituale.

Swedish: I dagens värld kan en märkbar ökning observeras i antalet individer som uppvisar ett behov av att exponera detaljerade aspekter av sina liv på sociala medier. Detta beteende återspeglar en bredare sociokulturell trend, där strävan efter virtuell bekräftelse—ofta operationaliserad genom ackumuleringen av maximalt antal vänner eller följare—har blivit en framträdande karakteristika i den digitala eran. Samtidigt som sociala medier möjliggör tillgång till värdefull information inom exempelvis forskning, utbildning och kommunikation, är det avgörande att kritiskt analysera dess potentiella negativa implikationer. I takt med att teknologin genomgår exponentiell utveckling och sociala plattformar integreras allt djupare i det dagliga livet, kan en ökande användning av dessa medier observeras inom kyrkor och religiösa institutioner, där de fungerar som verktyg för att främja kristna värderingar och understödja individens andliga tillväxt.

The positive and negative aspects of social media

Positive aspects of social media

Social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Email, provide convenient means to maintain connections with family, friends, and colleagues. They also offer immediate access to a wealth of information, which can be valuable for academic research and personal learning. These platforms transcend geographic boundaries, enabling individuals to participate in religious activities, such as viewing Holy Masses or spiritual ceremonies, regardless of their location.

Benefits for Christian teachings

Christian-focused social media pages and websites significantly impact Christian teachings and ecclesiastical studies, providing explanations of various aspects of the faith. For instance, they offer insights into:

- **The Coptic Calendar**, also known as the Martyrs' Calendar, and its historical origins.
- The **Great Holy Lent** in the Coptic Church, including the specific Sundays leading up to **Palm Sunday** and **Easter Sunday**.
- The **symbolic meaning** of the letters (**I N R I**) found on depictions of the Cross.
- The **“Only Begotten Son”** chant (Ω μονογενής γιος), recited during the Sixth Hour Prayer on Good Friday.
- The reason the **Coptic Church celebrates Christmas** on January 7, in contrast to Western Christian observances on December 25.
- The titles and roles of clergy within the Coptic Church, such as the **Pope Patriarch, Metropolitans, Bishops, and Priests**.
- An overview of Christian wedding ceremonies, and why they are conducted according to the Church's principles.

In addition, social media allows for a variety of activities, including learning, listening to music, watching movies, and engaging in global news. The breadth of information available through social media platforms is virtually limitless.

Negative aspects of social media

Despite its advantages, social media has several drawbacks. It can spread **misleading or false information**, reduce self-motivation, invade privacy, exacerbate mental health issues, decrease productivity, and disrupt sleep patterns. As we move forward, it is essential to critically analyse these potential risks, especially with regard to younger generations, who may be more susceptible to the negative consequences of social media. The spread of **misleading information**—often referred to as **fake news**—has become a widespread issue on various social media platforms. This misinformation can lead to harmful, unavoidable consequences, influencing beliefs and actions in damaging ways. Many individuals, driven by the desire to gain likes and attention, post superficial or irrelevant content, without considering the impact their words or images may have on others. Such **mindless copying and pasting** of content, without any thoughtful consideration, can significantly harm individuals' critical thinking abilities.

Furthermore, **cyberbullying** has become more common as social media use has proliferated. Many people use these platforms to harass others or violate basic moral principles. In an ironic twist, some individuals immediately reach for their phones upon waking, spending precious time mindlessly scrolling through apps like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. This not only leads to the wasting of valuable time but also negatively affects one's focus, leading to **social isolation** and a false sense of connection. A recent report by U.S. Surgeon General

Vivek Murthy [1] underscores the growing evidence linking **social media** to **mental health issues** among youth. According to Dr. Murthy, further research is required to fully understand the implications, but he emphasizes the potential harm that excessive social media use can cause to young people's mental health.

Misuse and ethical concerns

Another concern is the rise of individuals who interpret **biblical verses** or **Christian doctrines** based solely on their personal opinions, without regard for established theological interpretations. Posts that encourage followers to disregard the fundamental principles of Christianity are especially troubling, as they may be influenced by harmful or **evil** forces.

Additionally, **artificial intelligence (AI)** and **technological innovation** within social media platforms represent a double-edged sword. While they can enhance convenience and access to real-time information, they may also lead to a decline in the value of spiritual life. As technology continues to develop, there is an increasing risk of it replacing meaningful human interaction, even in religious and spiritual contexts.

Moreover, the **data collection** practices employed by social media platforms raise significant **ethical concerns** regarding privacy, security, and transparency. Users are often unaware of how their personal data is utilized, and many social media platforms lack clear, enforceable consent policies. This lack of transparency can leave users vulnerable to exploitation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we must recognize both the positive and negative aspects of social media in our lives, particularly in relation to our Christian faith. While social media offers immense potential for learning, connection, and the spread of Christian teachings, it also brings significant risks, including the spread of misinformation, mental health issues, and diminished real-life interaction. As Christians, we must approach social media with discernment, ensuring that we align our online behaviours with our values and the teachings of the Bible. The Bible reminds us to avoid being led astray by worldly wisdom and the temptations of modern technology. As stated in Deuteronomy 30:15, 17: "See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil... But if your heart turn away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them." [2] In 1 Corinthians 10:23, Paul writes: "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable." [3] Finally, 1 John 5:19 reminds us: "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness." [4] Ultimately, it is up to each of us to choose wisely how to engage with social media, exercising caution and responsibility in its use.

References

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