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Summary of doctoral dissertation

**The concept of “religio” in western philosophical, legal and theological
thought from Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Times**

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Discussions on the issues of conceptual apparatus of a particular science are necessarily essential for self-determination and proper functioning of this science. Accordingly, for the science of religion it is those discussions are of great importance, that touch upon problems directly or indirectly related to the meaning of the concept of “religion”, which is traditionally used to conceptualize religious phenomena. This applies in particular to the issues related to the historical dynamics of interpretations of the concept of “religio” and its equivalents in the modern European languages in the period ranged from Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Times. They are essential for the science of religion, firstly, in the light of the current discussion concerning validity of the use of the term “religion” in social sciences – the discussion initiated by a number of writers (W. C. Smith, E. Feil, T. Asad, etc.), who driven by their analysis of the historical meanings of the term “religio” and its equivalents in the modern European languages have come to the conclusion that the idea of “religion” (understood, for example, as a “system of observances or beliefs” or as a “historical tradition, institutionalized or susceptible of outside observation”), as well as religion itself appeared only in Modern Times in Western Europe. This conclusion, in turn, was used (and is being used) to support the claim that conceptual apparatus of science of religion is completely inappropriate for describing any realities outside the “western modernity” and, accordingly, that the very concept of “religion” should be removed from social sciences as irrelevant “modern construct”. Consequently, studies related to historical dynamics of interpretations of the concept of “religio” and its equivalents in the modern European languages are important from the perspective of justifying the very existence of science of religion as a

scientific discipline having its own subject, that is, religion. It is quite obvious that if religion is “simply something that looks sort of like modern Protestant Christianity” (B. Nongbri), then science of religion, as far as it pretends to go beyond Western Modernity, studies fictions (probably created by itself), but not real phenomena, and, accordingly, cannot be considered a proper science; on the contrary, if something like religion (for example, like above-mentioned “system of observances or beliefs”) really existed before Modern Times, then science of religion can legitimately be called a scientific discipline (at least until the inadequacy of its conceptual apparatus has been properly shown on the basis of non-Western material, and not on the basis of an analysis of the historical meanings of “religio” and its modern equivalents).

Secondly, the study of the history of interpretations of “religio” and its modern equivalents is important from the perspective of estimation and possible revision of some definitions of religion and religious phenomena used in modern science – those that are genetically related to various historical conceptualizations of religious phenomena, and, accordingly, implicitly or explicitly include historically determined meanings and connotations. For example, the interpretation of religion as a faith (in the supernatural, in God or gods), which is often found in modern literature, stems from the fact that ever since Late Antiquity Christian thinkers firmly (up to identity) connected *religio* and *fides* (faith). Accordingly, the study of the history of the concept of “religio” contributes to the determination of the scope of validity of this and other similar interpretations, thereby opening up opportunities for new approaches to the conceptualization of particular elements of the conceptual apparatus of science of religion.

Finally, the study of the history of the concept of “religio” is important for historical research carried out in the field of science of religion. The deepening and enrichment of our knowledge about the evolution of both the concept of “religio” itself and some other concepts, directly or indirectly related to the historical forms of conceptualization of religion and religious phenomena, contribute to a proper reading of the sources, and also contribute to a number of heated contemporary

debates, such as a discussion of the continuity / discreteness of European intellectual and religious history or a dispute about historically conditioned forms of communication and interaction between different types of thinking – religious (theological), philosophical and scientific.

Issues related to the history and evolution of the concept of “religio” have repeatedly come to the attention of researchers; their works on these issues are divided, more or less exhaustively, into two categories:

1) highly specialized historical works devoted to how the term “religio” was used in certain historical periods, in certain fields of knowledge and by certain authors (as a rule, this category includes works written before the mid-60s of the 20th century, and also later studies (mainly of Antiquities), genetically related to this, let’s put it that way, “classical” tradition);

2) general methodological and sociological studies, where references to the history of the term “religio” and its equivalents in modern European languages occur in the context of general discussions a) about the conceptual apparatus of modern social sciences and b) about socio-political processes (mainly about secularization process), which happened and is happening in the West and, as some participants in these discussions suggest, are directly or indirectly determined by the formation and acceptance of the conceptual apparatus of modern science, as well as by certain changes in the conceptual apparatus of philosophy, theology and law.

For this doctoral dissertation, works belonged to the second category¹ are of greater interest, since they usually claim to create some kind of complete picture of the evolution of the concept of “religio” from Ancient Rome to Modern Europe and to uncover certain processes that are supposed to have caused this evolution or

¹ Among the most important works of this category one can mention the following: Smith W. C., *The Meaning and End of Religion*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1962; Feil E., *Religio. Die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs*, Bände 1–4. Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986–2012; Asad T., *Genealogies of religion: discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam*, Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993; McCutcheon R. T., *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; Fitzgerald T., *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, N.Y., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000; Dubuisson D., *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003; Nongbri B., *Before Religion. A History of a Modern Concept*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013.

accompanied it. It should be noted that although authors belonged of this tradition (W. C. Smith, E. Feil, T. Asad, B. Nongbri, et al.) may differ significantly among themselves as to issues related to the evolution of the meanings of the term “religio”, nevertheless, their ideas are based on a fundamental common intuition, which can be represented as follows. First, the phenomenon called religion (which is usually understood as a distinct sphere, isolated from the spheres of politics, economics, law, etc.), appears only at a certain moment in post-Reformation Europe, and up to that moment it is impossible to talk about any kind of “religion” (and, probably, today it is also impossible to speak of “religion” outside of the Western world); secondly, this phenomenon appears not due to any objective social processes, but as a result of the subjective efforts of a very limited circle of thinkers (philosophers, scientists, theologians and lawyers) who, willingly or unwillingly, destroyed the previous “pre-religious” tradition (in other words, religion is a construct); thirdly, the determination of the stages of construction of religion should be carried out through the analysis of the use of the term “religio” and its modern equivalents in different historical periods, insofar as it is assumed that the “makers of religion” fabricated it by conferring new meanings to this term and by removing the old ones.

This general intuition can conditionally be called the *constructivist hypothesis*. I say “conditionally” because there is a serious doubt that such hypothesis – as a proper scientific hypothesis with all its necessary conditions and elements – really exists. Nevertheless, the discourse associated with the above-described intuition, despite its amorphousness, is quite real, has its own genealogy and, as Richard Crouter notes, “is widely shared today.”² A critical examination of the constructivist hypothesis, as presented above, is important for the formulation and verification of an original author’s hypothesis describing the general vector and key stages in the history of interpretations of the concept of “religio” and its modern equivalents in Western philosophical, legal and theological thought from the 2nd century BC to the beginning of the 18th century AD. Accordingly, in my work I touch upon particular

² Crouter R., “Review: *Religion in History: The Word, the Idea, the Reality / La religion dans l'histoire: Le mot, l'idée, la réalité* by Michel Despland, Gérard Vallée”, in: *The Journal of Religion*, 1994, Vol. 74, № 1, p. 132.

ideas and conceptions of the above-mentioned constructivist authors in order to subject them to critical analysis, the results of which are summarized in the Conclusion of the dissertation.

As for the works belonged to the first (“classical”) category³, it can be said that they more or less fully cover the issues related to the history of interpretations of the concept of “religio”, if we are talking about statics, that is, about what meaning this concept received in a certain period or in a certain source (whereby “more” refers to the pre-Christian ancient Latin tradition and “less” to subsequent ones). However, if we are talking about dynamics, that is, about the *evolution* of interpretations of the concept of “religio” and about the driving forces of this evolution, then we should recognize the existence of gaps that have yet to be filled. First of all, this relates to the dynamics of interpretations of the concept “religio” during the transition from Roman polytheism to Christian exclusivistic monotheism; in addition, it should be noted that there are certain gaps in the study of those processes that led to further changes in this dynamics after the 13th century.

Besides, it seems that the following particular issues have not been fully covered yet: 1) the correlation between changes in the interpretation of “religio” and changes in the interpretation of the sacred (understood in accordance with the ideas of E. Durkheim as “things set apart and forbidden”); 2) naturalness of *religio* as the starting point of the Roman philosophical (Stoic in its origin) discourse about

³ Among the most important works of this category one can mention the following: Warde-Fowler W., “The Latin History of the Word «Religio»”, in: Transactions of the third international congress for the History of Religions, Vol. II, Oxford: Clarendon press, 1908. 169–175; Kobbert M., *De verborum “Religio” atque “Religiosus” usu apud Romanos: quaestiones selectae*, Regimonti: Hartungiana, 1910; Otto W., “Religio und Superstitio”, in: Archiv für Religionswissenschaft, 1909, Bd. 12, 532–554; 1911, Bd. 14, 406–422; Muth R., “Römische religio”, in: Serta philologica Aenipontana (Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft. Bd. 7–8), Innsbruck: Auslieferung durch das Sprachwissenschaftliche Institut der Leopold-Franzens-Universität, 1962. 247–271; Heck E., *Der Begriff religio bei Thomas von Aquin*, München: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1971; Dumézil G., *La religion romaine archaïque*, Paris: Payot, 1974; Biller P., “Words and the Medieval Notion of «Religion»”, in: Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 1985, Issue 3, Vol. 36. 351–369; Petersmann H., “Eusébeia, Threskeía and religio: an ethymological analysis of three disputed terms”, in: Linguistica, 1993, № 1, Vol. 33. 177–186; Rüpke J. “Römische Religion und «Reichsreligion»: Begriffsgeschichtliche und methodische Bemerkungen”, in: Römische Reichsreligion und Provinzialreligion, hg. v. H. Cancik, J. Rüpke, Tübingen, 1997. 3–23; idem, “Religio and Religiones in Roman Thinking”, in: Les Études Classiques, 2007, Vol. 75, 67–78; Scheid J., *Religion et piété dans la Rome antique*, Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2001; Sachot M., “«Religio / superstitio». Historique d’une subversion et d’un retournement”, in: Revue de l’histoire des religions, 1991, № 4, T. 208. 355–394; idem, “Origine et trajectoire d’un mot: religion”, in: Revue de Philosophie Ancienne, 2003, № 2, Vol. 21. 3–32; Chen J., “On the definition of religion in Hobbes’ leviathan”, Bijdragen, 2006, Vol. 67 (2). 180–194; Staudt R. J., *Religion as a virtue: Thomas Aquinas on worship through justice, law, and charity*, Ave Maria University, 2009. Diss.; Leinkauf T., “The concept of religion in early modern philosophy”, in: Problemata: revista internacional de filosofia, 2014, № 1, Vol. 5. 160–181.

religion, as well as the influence of Roman (Cicero) naturalism in the interpretation of religion on the medieval tradition; 3) genesis of the interpretation of “religio” as a special virtue in the perspective of its subjective-objective dialectic; 4) connections between the concept of “religio” and the concepts of “secta”, “lex” and “fides”; 5) genetic link between the Renaissance and Early Modern interpretations of the term “religio” and its equivalents and the interpretations peculiar to the previous periods; 6) correlation between the frequency of use of the term “religio” and its equivalents in the sense of “religion” and the situation of presence / absence of religious pluralism (or at least active and constant cultural contacts with other religious traditions). This dissertation should contribute, as far as possible, to a further elaboration of these topics.

The **aim** of the doctoral dissertation is an integrated reconstruction of the historical dynamics of interpretations of the concept of “religio” and its modern equivalents in Western philosophical, legal and theological thought from the 2nd century BC to the beginning of the 18th century AD.

The **object-matter** of the doctoral dissertation is the historical dynamics of interpretations of the concept “religio” and its modern equivalents in Western philosophical, legal and theological thought from the 2nd century BC to the beginning of the 18th century AD.

The chronological framework of the dissertation is determined by the nature of the current discussions about the conceptual apparatus of science of religion, and, more precisely, by the fact that many advocates of the constructivist intuition hold that the 16–17th centuries were the period when radical changes took place in the interpretations of the concept “religio” and its modern equivalents – changes, connected with the emergence of a “modern” concept of religion as a distinctive sphere, ideally isolated from the sphere of politics, law, economics, etc. A critical evaluation of this idea is one of the main objectives of this work, along with the demonstration of the fact that the interpretations of the concept of “religio” and its equivalents in the 16–17th centuries were, on the contrary, quite similar to traditional

interpretations dating back to Roman Antiquity. To achieve clarity in these issues, it will be necessary to define the main meanings of the term “religio”; to classify these meanings (using M. Cobbert's conception of the subjective-objective dialectic of *religio* as a potentially effective instrument for solving this problem); determine the possible causes for the change in the meanings of the term “religio” in the historical perspective (also in the context of considering changes in interpretations of the sacred – insofar as the phenomena defined as religious are traditionally associated with sacred forces and objects); to find out whether the term “religio” had the meaning of “religion”⁴ before European Modernity, and if so, how much this “religion” differs from the “religion” found in the works of the classics of modern thought; to establish whether in the pre-modern period some other concepts (such as “lex”, “fides” or “secta”) could be used in the meaning of “religion” and in what relation they were at the same time with the term “religio”; to identify possible sources of the idea of the religious nature of man (insofar as this idea is directly related to the concepts of “common religion” and “natural religion”, which, in turn, are often interpreted as modern constructs).

The choice of philosophy, theology and law as the three main fields of study is due to the fact that it is to these fields that the vast majority of available sources, in which the topic of “religio” is touched, belong, and also to the fact that in some cases we can trace the influence of one of these fields to another, which is of scientific interest both in itself and in the context of identifying general vectors of the historical dynamics of interpretations of the concept of “religio” and its modern equivalents.

⁴ There is no universally accepted definition of religion; moreover, if we are talking about the essential definition (the classical Aristotelian *definitio per genus et differentiam specificam*), then there are great doubts that such definition is possible. Nevertheless, some other types of the definition of religion (for example, functional or structural-functional definition) may exist, really exist and are quite widely used. In this dissertation, when speaking about “religion”, I have in mind the definition proposed by J. B. Rives; according to him, religion is “a conception of, reverence for, and desire to please or live in harmony with some superhuman force, as expressed through specific beliefs, principles, and actions.” (Rives J. B., *Religion in the Roman Empire*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. P. 4). Rives’ definition is appropriate for this dissertation also in the context of critics of the constructivist hypothesis, since its advocates either deny that any idea of such religion could have existed before Modern Times (W.C. Smith et al.), or argue that in Modern Times so (or nearly so) understood religion has undergone fundamental changes and become a distinctive sphere, ideally isolated from economics, politics, etc., and due to this transformation a “modern religion” was born (T. Asad et al.).

Since in Western Europe the Latin language was the main language of philosophy, theology and jurisprudence up to the 13th century, most of this dissertation deals precisely with the concept of “religio”. However, due to the fact that since at least the 14th century national languages began to gradually come into use in the aforementioned fields, there are also mentions of modern European (in particular, Italian and English) equivalents of Latin “religio”. Besides, it should be noted, that the word “concept” in the expression “the concept of «religio»” is used in the sense “the form (kind) of thought ... which is the result of generalization of objects of a certain class”⁵. Further, the word “term” in the expression “the term «religio»”, which is also used in this dissertation, means the word as a sign denoting the corresponding concept. Also it is needful to notice, that when talking about concepts and terms, including “religio”, I use quotation marks; when I mean things and phenomena (such as religion itself), I do not use quotation marks.

The **content of the dissertation** is determined by the goals and objectives described above and has the following form.

The **first chapter** “«Religio» and «religiosum» as natural language words and the concepts of Roman divine law” explores the primary meanings of the word “religio” in Latin language and the concept of “religio” in the Latin pre-Christian legal tradition. In the **first paragraph** “Primary meanings of «religio» and the dialectic of the sacred,” it is established that the primary meanings of “religio” form a kind of dialectic, which can also be described as the dialectic of the sacred: on the one (objective) side, “religio” is related to the sacred forces and objects (in particular, by marking prohibitions and taboos connected to them), and on the other (subjective) side, “religio” means the feeling of fear and anxiety generated by these objects and forces, which finds its expression, among other things, in the mentioned prohibitions and taboos. The **second paragraph** “«Control over the sacred» and changes in the interpretation of «religio»”, firstly considers, in the light of the results

⁵ Voyshvillo E. K., *Ponyatiye kak forma myshleniya: logiko-gnoseologicheskiy analiz*, Moskva: Izdatelstvo MGU, 1989, p. 91. See also Shmidt V. V., “O znake i simvole v religii i obshchestve v aspektakh mezhinstitutsionalnogo dialoga”, in: *Religiovedeniye*, 2011, № 3. 69–74.

obtained in the previous paragraph, the specific division of Roman divine law into three domains (“sacrum”, “sanctum”, and “religiosum”). Second, it examines the changes in the meanings of the word “religio” that occurred during the establishment of “control over the sacred” by the state, that is, during the institutionalization of Roman religion. It is concluded that as a result of these changes, the word “religio” in its subjective aspect began to denote piety and reverence, and in its objective aspect – a religious cult.

The **second chapter** “The concept of «religio» in the light of pre-Christian philosophical reflection” examines the question of how the concept of “religio” was interpreted by the Roman philosophers of the pre-Christian era. In the **first paragraph** “Naturalism in the interpretation of «religio»” the interpretation of the concept “religio” in the works of Marcus Tullius Cicero is considered. It is shown, firstly, that the Roman philosopher stands at the origins of the tradition of interpreting *religio* as a special moral virtue associated with “giving due” to God or gods. Secondly, it is shown that he formed a discourse about the social functions of *religio*, considered in its objective aspect, that is, in the aspect of objectification of the aforementioned virtue in an organized cult. It is noted that Cicero’s approach was inspired by naturalism of the Stoic type, and that thanks to him this naturalism became an extremely important element of the Western discourse on *religio*. In the **second paragraph** “The universalization of «religio»”, using the example of the philosophy of Titus Lucretius Carus, the formation of a discourse about *religio* as a kind of universal phenomenon observed “throughout the entire earth” is considered. It is noted that the universalistic concept of *religio*, proposed by Lucretius, is somewhat an explicit addition to those universalistic tendencies, which practically at the same time, but not so explicitly, were manifested in the naturalistic interpretations of *religio* proposed by Cicero.

The **third chapter** “Formation of the Christian interpretation of the concept of «religio»” examines the issue of innovations in the interpretation of the concept of “religio” introduced by Christian apologists and the Church Fathers. The **first paragraph** “Early attempts to conceptualize religious traditions” describes the use

of the concept “*religio*” and the concept of “*secta*” in the works of Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian. It is noted that these concepts are used by Tertullian to conceptualize religious traditions (for example, “Roman religion”, “the religion of the Jews”, “the sect of Christ”, etc.), and this conceptualization (and therein lies the novelty of his approach) is carried out mainly by contrasting Christianity to other religions. It is also noted that at the same time the exclusivistic nature of Christian monotheism has already manifested itself in Tertullian’s works, implicitly suggesting that non-Christian religions are not religions, but “superstitions”; thereby, the dichotomy “the only true religion – superstition” was formed. The **second paragraph**, “The dogmatic (discursive) aspect of «*religio*»”, describes the introduction of the dogmatic (discursive) element (“wisdom”) into the concept of “*religio*” by Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius. It is shown that thanks to him a tradition arises to consider (at least some) religions not only as practices, but also as doctrines containing a certain set of doctrinal propositions. In addition, it is noted that Lactantius, developing the ideas of Cicero, made a special emphasis on the religious nature of man, arguing that human beings differ from animals mainly due to the fact that they have a *religio*. In the **third paragraph** “«*Religio*» and theological virtues”, based on the works of Saint Augustine, the problem of correlation between *religio* and Christian theological virtues – faith, hope and love – is considered. It is shown that, thanks to Augustine, Christianity as a “true religion” came to be firmly linked, on the one hand, with faith (*fides*) as the content of Christian doctrine, and on the other, with special ethical practices, characterized as Christian love (*caritas*).

The **fourth chapter** “The concept of «*religio*» in the medieval scholastic tradition” examines new trends in the interpretation of the concept of “*religio*”, formed in the Middle Ages within the scholastic theology. In the **first paragraph** “Formation of the subject area of scholastic discussions about «*religio*»” the reception of patristic interpretations of “*religio*” in the works of medieval Western thinkers and the formation of three main directions in the interpretation of this concept is considered. In addition, the tendency towards convergence and

subsequent identification between *religio* and *lex* (law) is especially noted. The **second paragraph**, “The theoretical phenomenology of «*religio*»”, examines the Thomas Aquinas’ discourse on *religio*. In his teaching *religio* in its subjective aspect is associated with the “natural instinct” (by which Aquinas means the natural desire of a person to worship the Supreme Being, the dependence on which he (or she) constantly feels). On the other hand, in its objective aspect, *religio* is interpreted as a cult in which this “natural instinct” is realized, and which is formed by specific cult actions (sacrifice, prayer, etc.), arranging special places for worship, manufacture and use of religious objects, etc. The **third paragraph** “Comparative studies of religious traditions: «*religiones*», «*leges*», «*sectae*»” describes the transition from the typical patristic dichotomy “the only true religion – superstition” to the recognition of the plurality of *religiones* (religions), *sectae* (sects) or *leges* (laws) that can (and sometimes need to) be compared with each other. It is noted that the main cause of this transition was the expansion of Western civilization to the East and the general expansion of the intellectual and cultural horizon of Europeans, as well as the need for polemics with non-Christian religious traditions that consequently arose and implied, among other things, in-depth study of these traditions. At the same time, non-Christian religions, of course, were usually not considered as true, but they could be interpreted as the result of a distortion of the true natural law, which somehow retained its presence in them.

In the **fifth chapter** “The concept of «*religio*» in the Renaissance and Early Modern Times” the following interrelated problems are considered: 1) how the conceptualization of religious phenomena took place in the period of the 15th – 17th centuries; 2) what role was played in this conceptualization the concept of “*religio*” or its equivalents in the modern European languages; 3) to what extent the meanings of this concept have changed in comparison with the periods described in the previous chapters. At the same time, a critical analysis of the constructivist hypothesis is carried out – insofar as the advocates of this hypothesis argue that in Modern Times some radical (in comparison to previous periods) changes took place in the methods of conceptualizing religious phenomena, reflecting (or even causing)

the emergence of “modern religion” as a sphere ideally isolated from politics, economics, law, etc. In the **first paragraph** “The concepts of «religio communis» and «religio naturalis»” there is analysis of the concepts of common religion and natural religion, which were formed mainly within the framework of philosophical (natural) theology; the analysis uses the works of Marsilio Ficino, Tommaso Campanella, Edward Herbert of Cherbury, Matthew Tindal and Salomon van Til as main sources. It is shown that the named authors do not propose any radically new interpretations of the concept of “religio” or its equivalents, as well as ideas that may lead us to the conclusion that they have constructed a certain special religious sphere, “ideally isolated” from the spheres of politics, law, economics, etc. The **second paragraph** “The concept of «religio» in the context of social and political thought of the Early Modern Times”, based predominantly on the works of Hugo Grotius, Benedict de Spinoza, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, considers conceptions of religion, formulated in a wide socio-political context. At the same time, it is shown that in the works of the aforementioned authors there are no radically new interpretations of the concept of “religio” or its equivalents, as well as evidences of the construction of a specific sphere of “modern religion”.

The **Conclusion**, firstly, summarizes the results of the previously made critical analysis of the constructivist hypothesis. At this stage, the fundamental intuition underlying this hypothesis, as it was described above, is specified in nine concrete theses of certain representatives of the constructivist tradition (such as W. C. Smith, T. Assad, W. Cavanaugh, E. Feil, et al.). After that, it is demonstrated, on the basis of the results obtained in 1–5 chapters of this dissertation, that these theses and, accordingly, the constructivist hypothesis in its fundamentals are not confirmed by the analysis of historical sources.

Secondly, on the ground of results obtained, author’s original hypothesis is formulated, which contains an alternative (in relation to constructivism) description of general vectors and key points of the historical dynamics of interpretations of the concept of “religio”, as well as the causal explanations of changes in these interpretations. According to this hypothesis, the general vector and key points of

the evolution of interpretations of the *subjective* meaning of “religio” can be represented as follows: “(sacred) fear” → “reverence”, “piety” → “virtue”. On the other hand, the general vector and key points of the evolution of interpretations of the *objective* meaning of “religio” can be described as follows: “cult of certain deity” → “religion” (1) → “the only true religion” → “religion” (2) (where “religion” (1) differs from “religion” (2) due to the latter has a special discursive dimension, acquired through the influence of Christian theology). In turn, changes in meanings along the first (“subjective”) vector are determined by the following: for “reverence”, “piety” – by the establishment of “control over the sacred”; for “virtue” (in the era of Cicero) – by the adaptation of the Greek (Stoic) ethics. On the other hand, changes in meanings along the second (“objective”) vector are determined by the following: for “religion” (1) – by philosophical reflection of the universalistic type (stoicism, epicureanism) in combination with a situation of religious pluralism; for “the only true religion” – by the absence of a situation of religious pluralism in the era of the dominance of Christian medieval exclusivism; for “religion” (2) – by active cultural contacts with other religious traditions (and later also by the presence of a situation of religious pluralism) in combination with the successive adaptation of ancient (and Arabic) philosophical and scientific traditions. Besides, two additional possible vectors of the historical dynamics of interpretations of “religio” can be noted: the first refers to various aspects of the functioning of religion (shift of attention from the social role of religion to dogmatics and back), and the second to the genesis of the concept of natural religion.

Based on the results of the study, the following theses are to be defended:

1) The primary (archaic) meanings of the Latin word “religio” formed a kind of dialectic, which can be described as the dialectic of the sacred (understood in accordance with the ideas of E. Durkheim as “things set apart and forbidden”), including two aspects: subjective (*religio* as a feeling of fear of sacred objects and forces) and objective (*religio* as these sacred objects and forces themselves, as well as taboos, related to them).

2) The institutionalization of the state Roman religion led to changes in attitudes towards the sacred and corresponding changes in the interpretation of “religio”. Now, in its subjective aspect, “religio” began to denote piety and reverence, as well as (at the level of philosophical reflection) virtue, a species of justice associated with “giving due” to the gods. Similarly, in its objective aspect, “religio” acquired the meaning of “cult” and “cult practices.”

3) The dialectic of *religio* as a dialectic of the sacred remained the main tool for conceptualizing and interpreting religious phenomena throughout the Middle Ages and is found even among some modern thinkers (T. Hobbes).

4) The term “religio” acquires the meaning of “religion”, firstly, due to the unification in the concept of “Roman religion” (“*religio Romana*”) of various Roman religions, that is, separate cults and religious practices; secondly, thanks to philosophical reflection on the similarity of religious phenomena among different nations (the concept of “religion” by Titus Lucretius Carus); thirdly, as a result of opposing some religious traditions to others (for example, opposing Christianity to paganism by Church Fathers).

5) In the Christian tradition, the concept of “religio” in the meaning of “religion” has acquired a firm (up to identity) connection with the concepts of “fides” (“faith”) and “lex” (“law”). At the same time, the concept of “faith” usually represented the dogmatic and discursive (“theoretical”) aspect of religion, and the concept of “law” – its statutory (“practical”) aspect.

6) Emerged in the 13th century, thomistic phenomenology of “religio”, which included elements of the naturalistic interpretation of religious phenomena going back to Cicero (in particular, the interpretation of “religio” as a natural virtue and the concept of “natural instinct” that leads a person to worship the Supreme Being), has become one of the main sources of later concepts of “common religion” (*religio communis*) and “natural religion” (*religio naturalis*).

7) The frequency of the use of the term “religio” in the meaning of “religion” correlates with the situation of the presence / absence of religious pluralism (or at

least active and constant cultural contacts with other faith traditions) and in rough outline can be represented as follows:

a) relatively frequent use under the conditions of the polytheism of Antiquity, which assumed a plurality of *religiones*;

b) extremely rare use in the conditions of monotheistic exclusivism of the early Middle Ages;

c) relatively frequent use in the late Middle Ages, associated with the expansion of cultural contacts of Europeans;

d) frequent use in the post-Reformation era, corresponding to the newly emerged situation of religious pluralism.

8) The analysis of historical sources does not confirm the fundamentals of the constructivist hypothesis: the historical dynamics of interpretations of the concept “religio” and its equivalents in the modern European languages had a different vector and different content than those that its advocates speak and write about.

