

**RELIGIOUS RATIONALITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY: FROM THE  
THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF ABU MANSUR AL-MATURIDI TO  
THE PHILOSOPHICAL MODEL OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES BY  
ALEXANDER IGNOTENKO**

**Kholmuminov Jafar Muhammadiyevich**

Doctor of Philosophical sciences (DSc),

Professor of the “INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF FINANCE  
TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE” INSTITUTE

(Tashkent, Uzbekistan)

+998909409498

[jafarkholmomi@gmail.com](mailto:jafarkholmomi@gmail.com)

**Komilov Daler Rustamovich,**

Candidate of Philosophical Sciences,

Associate Professor, Head of the Department of History and Intercultural  
Relations of the International University of Foreign Languages of Tajikistan named  
after S. Ulughzoda, Sh. Dushanbe, street. F. Muhamadiev 170/6.

Tel: +992304404040. [www.daler.komilzoda@gmail.com](mailto:www.daler.komilzoda@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT**

*This article presents a philosophical analysis of the relationship between religious subjectivity (conscious faith) and civil society. The authors, drawing on the theological teachings of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and the contemporary religious philosophy of Alexander Ignatenko, argue that a rational and ethical understanding of religion can serve as a foundational basis for the development of civil society. The study offers a comparative analysis of the concepts of “conscience,” “freedom,” “responsibility,” and “coexistence” within the framework of modern secular theories.*

**Keywords:** *Maturidi, Ignatenko, civil society, philosophy of religion, Islamic kalam, conscience, will, modern religious studies.*

**АННОТАЦИЯ**

*Мақолаи мазкур ба таҳлили ғалсафии таносуби байни соҳибназарии динӣ ва ҷомеаи шаҳравандӣ бахшида шудааст. Муаллифон бо таъки ба таълимоти каломии Абӯмансур Мотуридӣ ва дарки муносири динишинсии Александр Игнотенко нишон медиҳад, ки дарки оқилона ва ахлоқии дин метавонад заминаи бунёдии рушди ҷомеаи шаҳравандӣ бошад. Дар таҳқиқ назарияи*

муқоисавии миёни мафҳуми “виҷдон”, “озодӣ”, “масъулият” ва “ҳамзистӣ” дар равишҳои назарияҳои муосири дунявӣ матраҳ мешавад.

**Калидвожаҳо:** Матуридӣ, Игнотенко, ҷомеаи шахрвандӣ, фалсафаи дин, каломии исломӣ, виҷдон, ирода, динишиносии муосир.

### **АННОТАЦИЯ**

Данная статья посвящена философскому анализу соотношения между религиозной субъектностью (сознательной верой) и гражданским обществом. Авторы, опираясь на каламическое учение Абу Мансура Матуриди и современные представления о религии в работах Александра Игнотенко, показывают, что рациональное и этическое понимание религии может служить основой для развития гражданского общества. В исследовании проводится сравнительный анализ понятий «совесть», «свобода», «ответственность» и «существование» в рамках современных светских теорий.

**Ключевые слова:** Матуриди, Игнотенко, гражданское общество, философия религии, исламский калам, совесть, воля, современное религиоведение.

The issue of the relationship between religion and society—especially in connection with the model of civil society—is among the most critical and debated questions in modern philosophy and rational theology. In the context of globalization and growing socio-cultural pressures, this issue is not only of theoretical importance but also has practical implications for regulating the coexistence of multi-religious and secular societies. Therefore, exploring the connection between religious rationality and the civil society model is not merely an academic inquiry, but a strategic necessity for strengthening the modern ethical and social foundations of humanity.

In this context, **Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (870–944)**, one of the central theologians of Sunni orthodoxy, offers in his seminal work *Kitab al-Tawhid* a framework for understanding religion grounded in reason and morality – one that remains relevant for today’s secular world. Relying on the power of reason, the role of conscience, and the freedom of the human will, Maturidi presents a philosophical and theological model in which religion is harmonized with human nature and social structures. For him, **Sharia** is not a rigid legalistic code, but a system of wisdom (*hikmah*), mysticism (*irfan*), and ethics (*akhlaq*) that actively seeks compatibility with reason and the surrounding society.

On the other hand, **Alexander Leonidovich Ignatenko**, one of the prominent contemporary theorists of the philosophy of religion and religious policy, uses **postsecular methodology** and social analysis of religion to propose a redefined model of the coexistence between religion and secular society. In his works, particularly in *Islam and Secularism*, he identifies religion as a source of **identity and morality** within a multicultural and law-based society. In this view, the role of religion is to reinforce moral values and promote social reconciliation [2].

The **theoretical dialogue** between Maturidi and Ignatenko is not merely a comparison of two intellectual traditions—one rooted in classical Islamic theology and the other in contemporary secular philosophy—but also a striking example of how religion can transition from a **tool of domination** to a **medium of humanism, ethical reasoning, and intercultural coexistence**.

herefore, this article seeks—through philosophical and comparative analysis—to investigate the concept of religious rationality within the Maturidi school in relation to modern civil society, using the ideas of Alexander Ignatenko as a framework. The goal is to demonstrate that the theological school of Maturidi, founded on reason and conscience, can offer a viable and acceptable model for the modern global community through the lens of contemporary religious philosophy.

**Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (870–944)**, one of the leading theologians of the Hanafi tradition, constructed his understanding of religion on the foundations of reason, conscience, and human responsibility, in direct opposition to the fatalistic and literalist interpretations of other theological schools. In Maturidi's view, religious understanding is not grounded in compulsion or imitation, but in the agency of a rational and morally aware individual—someone who acts with intellect, will, and ethical motivation. Unlike some other theological traditions, Maturidi emphasizes that it is the duty of the intellect to recognize God and distinguish truth from falsehood, even in the absence of a visible prophet:

“It has become clear that it is obligatory upon a person to recognize God through reason alone and to discern the proof of His existence and oneness...” [1:37]

The **key concept in Maturidi's theology is "kasb" (acquisition)**, which serves as the philosophical foundation for understanding human will and moral responsibility. Unlike the determinists who deny human agency, Maturidi defines "kasb" as a human act carried out with free will, yet within the boundaries of divine law and governance.

Here, the human being, as a “rational agent” (*sahibnazr*), evaluates, chooses, and executes their actions. This standpoint lays the foundation for both **ethical**

**philosophy** and the **moral basis of civil society**: only a rational and responsible individual can contribute to the development of a just and stable ethical-legal order.

In Maturidi's theology, **reason and conscience are not separate forces**, but **complementary aspects of human knowledge and moral cognition**. Reason enables the comprehension of existence and divine truth; conscience serves as the moral compass and the source of accountability. Thus, in Maturidi's framework, Islam is understood as a system for regulating human freedom within the bounds of morality and reason.

His vision of religion rests upon **three fundamental philosophical principles**:

1. **Rational recognition** – religion must be understood through critical thought and evidence.
2. **Free will** – human actions are performed by choice and volition.
3. **Moral responsibility** – every action is subject to moral evaluation through conscience.

From this perspective, **religious rationality** in Maturidi's thought is deeply tied to independent reasoning, ethical experience, and social coexistence. It produces a model of the human being who is capable of living a moral and spiritual life in a contemporary civil society while respecting reason, Sharia, and conscience.

Amid the transformation of social structures and identity values in the modern world, the role of religion in civil society emerges as a **central theme in both religious studies and social philosophy**. **Alexander Leonidovich Ignatenko**, a prominent scholar of the philosophy of religion and religious political theory, reinterprets the concept of civil society from a modern philosophical standpoint in his works, including [2] and [3]. He defines the role of religion not as a formal legislative power, but as a **source of identity and moral meaning** within society.

According to Alexander Ignatenko, civil society should serve as a legal and pluralistic environment that fosters the coexistence of diverse values, cultural dialogues, and interreligious understanding. In this context, religion should not function as a centralized political or coercive structure but rather as a personal and social experience of conscience within society. He emphasizes that traditional models of religion, grounded in reason and tolerance, can adapt to modern secular societies.

Ignatenko views civil society as a culturally and religiously pluralistic environment where the relationship between religion and the state is balanced: the state does not impose on religion, and religion does not seek to replace the state. Instead, religion has a moral and ethical role: nurturing individual character and strengthening conscience and responsibility. In this space, individuals act not only as social beings but also as "religious personalities" who respect the rights of others.

This understanding of humans as moral agents with conscience and judgment aligns with the philosophy of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi.

One of the profound aspects of Ignatenko's philosophy of religion is his proposal to adapt religions to the modern social environment through humanism and tolerance. This approach is not merely a theological reform but a philosophical renewal of the moral activity of religion in society. He believes that this process is impossible without traditional sources.

In this regard, the Maturidi school of theology, which developed in the 10th century in Transoxiana, serves as a rational and ethical Islamic foundation applicable in the modern social context. Rather than opposing religion to secularism, it can contribute to moral and social harmony.

Ignatenko advocates for a dialogical model in regulating the relationship between religion and society. He writes that only through dialogue of values, cognitive understanding, and respect for individual identity can a stable relationship between religion and democratic society be established. In this context, Maturidi's understanding is not a set of commands but an embodiment of wisdom and ethical philosophy.

The concept of civil society, according to Ignatenko, becomes stable only when religion is not a system of coercion but a source of moral and intellectual development in the formation of individual character and society. Religion should integrate with the philosophy of purpose and humanistic values rather than oppose secularism.

Therefore, it can be said that the theological teachings of Maturidi, based on reason, conscience, will, and responsibility, align with modern philosophy of religion, particularly Ignatenko's perspective. In both, religion is not a threat to secular society but a partner in shaping social morality and individual tolerance.

One of the deep issues in Islamic philosophy and modern religious studies, directly related to the understanding of society, state, and human personality, is the matter of will, conscience, and responsibility. The teachings of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and the modern religious philosophy of Alexander Ignatenko both focus on this aspect, despite arising from different philosophical backgrounds and languages.

Maturidi, in contrast to the determinism of the Jabriyya and fatalism of the Ash'arites, proposes the theory of "kasb," which provides the basis for understanding moral responsibility in theological philosophy. In the theological sense, "kasb" means that a person does not create (khalq) an action but acquires it (kasb) and is accountable for it. This approach has significance not only in theology but also in



moral and social philosophy. It recognizes humans as beings with free will, freeing them from practical irresponsibility.

In Maturidi's theological understanding, conscience is expressed through the terms "fitrah" and "reason." For him, reason is not only a means to recognize God but also a restraining force, a reviver of values, and the core of Islamic ethics. He defines reason as the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood: "Reason is a guide for humans towards Sharia and the revival of knowledge." This implies that reason and conscience in Maturidi's view are two interconnected aspects of moral and social responsibility. Here, conscience acts as an internal examiner and a driver of self-regulation, aligning with the modern religious philosophical understanding of humans as subjects of responsibility.

Alexander Ignatenko approaches the concepts of will and conscience not merely as psychological phenomena but as foundational elements of social identity and moral agency. He asserts that only through the integration of reason and conscience can an individual maintain an active religious identity within a secular society. In his view, religion should function based on personal self-determination and internal moral regulation, rather than as an instrument of state coercion. This perspective aligns with the ethical theology of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, who emphasized that conscience and will together constitute the basis of moral responsibility. In Islamic theology, this is reflected in the concepts of "taklīf" (moral obligation) and "mukallaf" (morally responsible individual), which correspond to the modern philosophical notions of autonomy and ethical accountability.

Both Maturidi and Ignatenko converge on several key principles:

- The individual, as a "mukallaf," bears responsibility not only before God but also within the societal context.
- Conscience serves as a moral compass, guiding and restraining social behavior.
- Free will is not merely a symbol of liberty but a marker of ethical maturity and the capacity to accept responsibility.

This shared model of a conscientious, autonomous, and responsible individual forms a philosophical foundation for the development of a moral and tolerant civil society.

The relationship between religion and civil society, as explored in the teachings of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and the contemporary religious philosophy of Alexander Ignatenko, raises a fundamental question: Can religion and secular society coexist within a shared framework of values and legal norms, or are they inherently in conflict?

Maturidi perceives the Sharia not as a tool for political coercion but as a moral framework that regulates communal life. For him, religion is a moral reality that should align with social conditions and rational foundations. Therefore, Maturidi's theological model can be seen as a basis for a moral secular society that embraces both religious and modern legal values.

Ignatenko interprets this relationship not as a conflict but as a mutual role in regulation and value formation. He suggests that civil society can accept religion as a moral entity that contributes to citizen education and the revival of values, provided that religion does not seek coercive power or dominance. He states, "Secularism does not mean excluding religion from society. It means preserving a legal space for all religions and worldviews." In other words, secular society opposes exclusivism and compulsion, not religion itself. If religion is not only a divine reality but also a social system that reinforces morality and identity, it does not threaten civil society but enriches it.

The perceived conflict between religion and secular society often stems not from genuine philosophical issues but from one-sided interpretations, politicization, and methodological distortions. The misconception that religion cannot function within a free civil space arises more from political interpretations of religion than from its ethical essence.

A correct understanding of religion, as taught by Maturidi, demonstrates that reason, responsibility, and dialogue can serve as common foundations for both religion and society. In this context, theology becomes sociology, and Sharia transforms into civil law.

Philosophical analysis leads to the conclusion that religion and civil society are not inherently contradictory, provided each operates within its moral and social objectives. Maturidi's theological model, emphasizing reason, freedom, and responsibility, offers a suitable foundation for value dialogue and the coexistence of religion and society. Contemporary religious philosophy, exemplified by Ignatenko's model, seeks to transform religion from a political directive into a form of personal and social enlightenment, utilizing secular legal and moral frameworks. Therefore, the need is not for conflict but for a new understanding, language, and dialogue to strengthen the relationship between religion and society in a stable and progressive manner.

A comparative analysis of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi's theological teachings and Alexander Ignatenko's philosophical-religious theory reveals that two seemingly different approaches – traditional Islamic theology and modern secular philosophy – can converge on moral, rational, and social foundations. The central theme of this

convergence is the concept of the religiously conscious individual, characterized as a free, rational, and responsible being.

Maturidi's teachings describe religion as a system of knowledge and ethics, developed through reason, conscience, and personal will. This approach, favoring freedom over compulsion and reflection over imitation, provides a fundamental basis for the coexistence of religion with modern secular society. This very idea lies at the heart of Ignatenko's religious philosophy, which views religion not as a legal system but as a source of personal moral development.

The presumed conflict between religion and secularism – which has often been constructed artificially – is critically questioned through the philosophical analysis presented in this study. What truly exists is not an essential contradiction, but rather a need for dialogue among values, a re-interpretation of free will and conscience, and the harmonization of moral and social aims. In this framework, religion is not an antagonist but a moral partner of civil society.

The model of "religious rationality," as described in Maturidi's teachings through the concepts of *kasb* (acquisition), *reason*, and *conscience*, aligns with the core objectives of a modern civil society – freedom, responsibility, and tolerance. In this model, both Maturidi and Ignatenko view the free individual not only as a religious, moral, and social subject but as the foundation of a healthy society.

Thus, in a world where tolerance, freedom, and social consciousness face increasing threats, a return to the rational and ethical legacy of great thinkers like Abu Mansur al-Maturidi may serve not merely as an academic pursuit, but as a moral responsibility of humanity. Maturidi and Ignatenko, each in their own language, affirm that it is only through conscience and reason that the human being can be liberated from intellectual and social coercion – and this is the true wisdom of religion in the modern age.

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