

Innocent Gisel – Theorist of Moral Theology of the Postmodern Era

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ABSTRACT

The historical figure of Innocent Gisel is viewed through the prism of the postmodern era and represents a representative of the cohort of influential Ukrainian cultural and church figures of the mid-seventeenth century. Innocent Gisel is one of the most active participants in the Council of the Kyiv Orthodox Metropolis in 1640, within the framework of which the “Catechism” of the Orthodox Church was adopted, and several decisive steps were implemented in the context of further reforming the church and the religious sphere of life. Being a famous theologian, Innocent Gisel was one of the first scholars to begin teaching the subject of philosophy at the Kyiv-Mohyla Collegium. For a rather long time, the theologian performed the duties of the abbot of the Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery. At this time, Innocent Gisel continued the course initiated by Metropolitan Petro Mohyla, aimed at improving church life in the Kyiv Orthodox Metropolis. With the blessing of the theologian and under his personal guidance, several significant church and religious publications were published in the printing house of the Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery, which comprehensively contributed to the improvement of certain aspects of church life. In particular, among them, it is necessary to single out a voluminous treatise on the problems of moral theology entitled “Peace with God to Man”, which was published in 1669. The mentioned edition became the first treatise in the Orthodox Church of the early modern period, which opened up various aspects of the interpretation of issues of religious morality, taking into account the peculiarities of the development of society at that time. “Peace with God to Man” had a significant impact on the progress of the Ukrainian theological space and the national culture of the turn of the 17th – 18th centuries. Despite the fact that “Peace with God to Man” appeared more than 350 years ago, its narratives have not lost their relevance and can be successfully used by modern Orthodox theologians in the process of considering religious, moral and social issues. Evidence of the lasting significance of the influence of the theological practice of Innocent Gisel is the reprinting of “Peace with God to Man” in 2012 in Ukrainian.



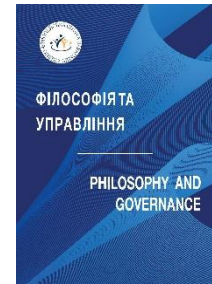
KEYWORDS

axiology, spirituality, Innocent Gisel, moral theology, religious faith, holiness, conformism, postmodern.




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Інокентій Гізель – теоретик морального богослов'я доби постмодерну

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| СТАТТЯ | АНОТАЦІЯ |
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| <p>Дослідницька</p> <p>DOI: 10.70651/3041-248X/2026.2.08</p> <p>Отримана: 06.01.2026 р.</p> <p>Прийнята: 08.02.2026 р.</p> <p>Опублікована: 12.02.2026 р.</p> <p>Авторське право © 2026 автора</p>  <p>Цей твір ліцензовано на умовах Ліцензії Creative Commons «Із Зазначенням Авторства – Некомерційна 4.0 Міжнародна» (CC BY-NC 4.0).</p> | <p>Історична постать Інокентія Гізеля розглядається через призму доби постмодерну та репрезентує представника когорти впливових українських культурних і церковних діячів середини сімнадцятого століття. Інокентій Гізель – один із найбільш активних учасників собору Київської православної митрополії 1640 р., у рамках якого було прийнято «Катехізис» Православної Церкви, а також реалізовано низку визначальних кроків для подальшого реформування церковно-релігійної життя Київської Митрополії. Будучи відомим богословом, Інокентій Гізель одним із перших учених розпочав викладання предмету філософії у Києво-Могилянському колегіумі, а також тривалий час виконував обов'язки настоятеля Києво-Печерського монастиря, системно продовжуючи започаткований митрополитом Петром Могилою курс удосконалення внутрішнього життя та устрою церкви. За його благословенням та під його особистим керівництвом у друкарні Києво-Печерського монастиря вдалося видати багато значущих книг церковно-релігійного змісту, серед яких особливе місце належить об'ємному трактату «Мир з Богом чоловіку». Праця побачила світ 1669 р., ставши першим фундаментальним виданням в лоні Православної Церкви ранньомодерного періоду. Книга містила системний виклад основних проблем морального богослов'я, богословське тлумачення релігійної віри та моралі, враховуючи при цьому особливості розвитку тодішнього суспільства. Поява трактату «Мир з Богом чоловіку» здійснила неабиякий вплив на духовно-інтелектуальний поступ українського богословського простору та істотно скоригувала траєкторію розвитку національної соціокультурної парадигми наприкінці XVII – на початку XVIII століть. Попри те, що «Мир з Богом чоловіку» видрукували 350 років тому, його наративи не втратили своєї актуальності і в наш час. Їх можна й потрібно використовувати для переосмислення та переоцінки духовно-моральних ціннісних орієнтирів сучасного розвитку людства, для обґрунтування ідеології стійкості, формування механізмів протистояння та боротьби за власну національну духовно-культурну, релігійну й політичну ідентичність. Свідченням тривалого й неперехідного значення богословської практики, слова та подвижницького чину мислителя є перевидання його «Миру з Богом чоловіку» в 2012 році українською мовою.</p> |



КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

аксіологія, духовність, Інокентій Гізель, моральне богослов'я, релігійна віра, святість, конформізм, постмодерн, український соціум, ідентичність.

1. Introduction

A review of generalized interpretations and modern branch scientific research in the field of religious conceptualization of the theological teaching of Innocent Gisel about religious morality gives grounds to assert that the level of study and public reception of the thinker's work requires a closer acquaintance, but also the substantiation of new ideological and semantic, value and theoretical and methodological approaches.

Modern philosophical thought undergoes constant dynamics in its development, causes changes in the religious and ecclesiastical sphere, and therefore the necessity and legitimacy of a complex religious objectification of the influence of the theological hamartological concept of Innocent Gisel on the formation of moral theology of the postmodern era, and on intellectual activity, becomes quite natural of modern Orthodox theologians, aimed at systematization and new theological interpretation of important issues of religious and moral content and socio-legal nature.

2. Literature Review

In literary discourse, one of the first works, where an extensive review of the activities of Innocent Gisel was presented, was the publication of a thorough study of ancient Ukrainian writing, carried out by Mykola Sumtsov – “Innocent Gisel”. Although the publication was not voluminous and similar to a comprehensive analysis of the writer's work, it nevertheless became significant in the context of the representation of the figure and intellectual heritage of Innocent Gisel as one of the brightest representatives of the traditionalist hesykhats and exponents of the Kyiv community of scientists and theologians of the middle of the XVII century. His activities are closely connected with the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and the monastic life of the Pechersk Lavra.

Representatives of the scientific, historical and theological discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. saw in this scholarship a scholastic tradition, sometimes completely detached from the realities of life at that time. These narratives formed a rather negative, somewhat skeptical perception of the intellectual achievements of Ukrainian thinkers of the modern era, in particular, Innocent Gisel. One of the first to make such a statement was Mykola Sumtsov.

Certain specific steps to restore the perception and “rehabilitation” of ancient Kyiv scholarship were taken by Dmytro Chyzhevsky, although modern researchers have an ambiguous and sometimes quite skeptical attitude to his generalizations, in particular, Professor Petro Kraliuk.

The fact is that D. Chyzhevsky developed his scientific Ukrainian studies, being largely detached from the environment about which he wrote. And he did it under the influence of Western ideologies. He wrote “Ukrainian Literary Baroque. Essays”, in which the key narratives are the comprehension of the leading trends in the development of literary life of the 18th century, in which the work of Innocent Gisel was easily integrated into the phenomenon of the Ukrainian Baroque, but for some reason, D. Chyzhevsky did not pay enough attention to this fact.

In another work “Essays on the History of Philosophy in Ukraine”, the scientist also bypasses the figure of Innocent Gisel, even though he has long received well-deserved recognition as one of the most talented teachers-pioneers of philosophical knowledge at the Kyiv Collegium, as well as the author of several important philosophical works.

A rather interesting fact is that the “rehabilitation” of philosophical teaching at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy took place during the Soviet period. Thus, in the sixties, within the framework of the activities of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, an initiative research center was formed, which made the main efforts to translate lectures by teachers of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy from Latin. The result of such activity was the publication of the works of Stefan Yavorsky, Feofan Prokopovich, Sylvester Kulyabka, Heorhiy Konyskyi, Manuylo Kozachynskyi, Joseph Kononovych-Gorbatsky, Stefan Kalinovsky and other prominent figures of that time. In addition, some works of Ukrainian philosophers of the turn of the XVI-XVII centuries were published. The main platforms for the regular publication of the results of research work were the periodical “Philosophical Thought”, within which there was a special section “Philosophy at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy”.

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of the study is to position a comprehensive analysis of the conceptual religious studies activity of the theorist of moral theology of the postmodern era Innocent Gisel.

4. Methods and Materials

The methodological and theoretical basis of the work was formed taking into account the priority principles of the implementation of system research, based on an integrated approach. In order to fully disclose the problem, several theoretical research methods were used, in particular, historical-philosophical and philosophical-cultural methods, holistic and systematic analysis, synthesis, methods of comparison, generalization and some others.

Holistic and systemic analysis, as well as synthesis, were used to isolate the most significant aspects and basic concepts of the phenomenon under study. The dialectical method, comparison and generalization were used in order to detail the system of definitions, identify basic categories and theoretical generalizations, and form the concept of an integral process.

The historical-philosophical method provided for an effective combination of theoretical-logical and empirical-historical scientific methods, while the main principle was the unity of subject-content and methodological aspects of philosophical knowledge.

The philosophical-culturological method provided for the use of initial categories in the context of the initial categories. At the same time, the basis was an approach to the phenomenon under study, based on the concepts of integrity and generality, as well as the interdependence of individual elements.

5. Results and Discussion

The figure of Innocent Gisel, the defining theorist of moral theology of the postmodern era, has a significant role in the formation of the religious and cultural vector of the development of Ukrainian lands in the period of the mid-seventeenth century. However, despite the significance of the influence of the philosopher-theologian on the dynamics of religious, ecclesiastical and social life, aspects of his life and creative path were out of the attention of scientists for a long period. A similar trend is characteristic of the writer's fundamental works, in particular, the treatise "Peace with God to Man", which was once published under the guidance and with the blessing of Innocent Gisel.

Analyzing the key narratives of the treatise "Peace with God to Man", it should be noted that this work is actually positioned as the first example of systematic work in the field of moral theology within the framework of the development of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The key goal of the philosopher is to transfer to the reader the main aspects of the essence of the Christian ethical teaching, which is presented on the basis of clarifying the attitude of man to God, society and his own soul [1, pp. 103–132]. In these aspects, the phenomenon of morality is closely associated with piety and piety, while being considered inseparably from the criticism of unworthy patterns of behavior, unworthy customs of participants and other "abnormalities" of society.

It is expedient to position Innocent Gisel's treatise "Peace with God to Man" as a summary statement of Christian dogmas and basic religious and moral principles determined by the religious worldview [12, pp. 168–170]. The philosopher presents religious morality as a phenomenon endowed with divine origin. At the same time, its norms are influenced by socio-cultural dynamics and complement it to a certain extent. The justification of such a position in the treatise "Peace with God to Man" takes place in the format of representation in the text of the norms of religious morality, which are based not only on the biblical commandments, works of the Christian tradition, the teachings of the Church Fathers, but are also largely regulated by the realities of Ukrainian society at that time [2, pp. 163–165].

The specificity of the presentation of the thoughts of the moral theologian Innocent Gisel, which is clearly visible in the work "Peace with God to Man", is that religious and moral aspects are considered through the prism of the phenomenon of sin and its atonement. The lion's share of the theologian's attention is paid to the confrontation between good and evil, the opposition of moral virtues and sinfulness, and the phenomenon of moral duty in the life of a Christian. Such an orientation of philosophical thought was aimed at expanding the range of cultural achievements that could be used by the Orthodox in practical life.

In scientific discourse, it is customary to consider both “Peace with God to Man” and the activities of Innocent Gisel as a whole in the context of the cultural specifics of the Ukrainian Baroque period. The theorist of moral theology was one of the brightest and most original figures of the Orthodox Church of the period of confessionalization. The historical figure of Innocent Gisel is considered in the context of an intellectual figure who made significant efforts to establish the Baroque culture in the Ukrainian lands, which contributed to the synthesis of Western and Eastern religious-philosophical thinking paradigms [4, pp. 257–266].

The activities of Innocent Gisel in several directions were a continuation of the work of the Kyiv Metropolitan Petro Mohyla [8]. As a theorist of moral theology, Gisel made efforts to achieve greater orderliness of church life, strengthening the main church structures in Ukrainian society in the middle of the seventeenth century. During this period, there was a fierce struggle for Ukrainian territories between the Catholic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Orthodox Muscovy and Muslim Turkey and the Crimean Khanate. Against the background of this struggle, the philosopher Innocent Gisel defended the interests of the Kyiv Metropolis, primarily the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra [14]. The figure was focused on practical support for Orthodox Muscovy, because Left-Bank Ukraine was under its control. It is this fact that explains some of the narratives of Innocent Gisel’s Muscophilia, which found direct expression in his work – in particular, in the work “Synopsis” and the above-mentioned treatise “Peace with God to Man”, which were published under the personal leadership of Gisel [13, pp. 176–190].

At the same time, ardently defending the interests of the Kyiv Metropolis, the theologian made efforts to preserve its autonomy as much as possible and supported opponents of mandatory subordination to the Moscow Patriarchate. In his work “Peace with God to Man”, the figure proposed a broad classification of sin as a moral defect to be interpreted in a theological context. Innocent Gisel brings sins of a purely religious or ecclesiastical nature to the fore. Next, the philosopher positions sins that are related to secular life, for example, family relationships, professional activity and other aspects of social life [10, pp. 183–193].

It should be noted that it is quite problematic to achieve a clear distinction between the above-mentioned secular and religious components in the system of interpretation of sins in Gisel’s work “Peace with God to Man”. In their interpretation, in addition to the primary reference to the Bible and the works of the Church Fathers, the theologian relies on the realities of the life of Ukrainians at that time. At the same time, in the context of the analysis of common (universal) sins, the author appeals to the current church tradition and focuses on religious aspects.

Separately, it should be noted that Innocent Gisel was not inclined to absolutize the concept of sin as a moral violation. The theologian noted that quite often social circumstances actually force a person to act sinfully or make sinful decisions. The philosopher was convinced that such acts would not be considered a sin or would significantly mitigate their consequences. The author noted that the “removal” of sin is possible through repentance, confession and penance.

Interpreting the issues of penance and confession, Innocent Gisel focuses considerable attention on psychological issues. The theologian emphasizes that the process of repentance presupposes a person’s awareness that the root cause of sin lies in himself [7, pp. 420–275]. A clergyman who listens to confession and imposes penance must note key psychological aspects, identify the level of sincerity of the individual, and determine the likelihood of confession under duress. When imposing penance, the priest must find the optimal “golden mean”, i.e. not give penance excessive heaviness, or vice versa – lightness, to avoid rejection or depreciation of such a way of combating sin in the individual [6, pp. 281–283]. The priest must be able to focus the penitent’s thoughts in the vector of the search for the right path of correction.

Repentance in the context of Innocent Gisel’s interpretation is understood not as a traditional confession, but as a deep awareness of one’s own sinful act, the fallacy of such a path, as well as stimulation of the penitent’s desire not to repeat such sinful actions in the future.

The theorist of moral theology in his work “Peace with God to Man” refers to sins against the Ten Commandments (the commandments of Moses), the Ten Commandments of the Church, sins against the Holy Spirit, theological virtues, as well as sins that are possible during the performance of church sacraments. Despite their primarily religious character, according to Innocent Gisel, they are endowed with a fragmentary general (universal) character, because they are directly related to both clergy and secular people. The theorist refers to purely ecclesiastical sins, primarily sins that occur during the performance of church sacraments. Many “universal” aspects are present in the Ten Commandments of the Church (the Decalogue of Moses). Among them is the prohibition of murder, theft, perjury, etc.

A thorough description of the list of sins of a religious and ecclesiastical nature, and most of all sins against the Ten Commandments of the Church, as well as practical instructions for their resolution, performed by Innocent Gisel, were aimed primarily at confessionalization, increasing the involvement of broad social strata of the population in church life, as well as intensifying the role of the Orthodox Church in social development [11].

Innocent Gisel in his treatise "Peace with God to Man" refers to universal sins as a manifestation of moral violations (gluttony, pride, covetousness, impurity, envy, anger and laziness), as well as sins against works of mercy and those that cry out to heaven. The theologian pays maximum attention to the seven deadly sins, analyzing in detail their potential manifestations, as well as the main fruits (consequences).

It is worth noting that in the process of interpreting the so-called universal sins, Innocent Gisel refers primarily to biblical texts, as well as the leading works of the Church Fathers. Appearing as a socially responsible theorist, the author also refers to the key Ukrainian realities of that time, notes current events and phenomena, shows personal sympathy for the poor, and also directly makes it clear that most sins are characteristic primarily of rich and proud self-confident people [3, pp. 227–266; 14, pp. 176–190]. Innocent Gisel describes the sins of secular people in a differentiated way for each state. The theologian focuses on the primary need for those in power to treat their subjects humanely, and calls on representatives of the social lower classes to respect the authorities and their masters, not to raise riots or uprisings [5, pp. 167–193].

In fact, it can be argued that in the treatise "Peace with God to Man" the theologian carefully reflects the life picture of Ukrainian society in the postmodern era. The philosophical vision of Innocent Gisel is based on the belief that the institution of the family is the basis of social relations. Thus, in the above treatise, considerable attention is focused on family sins [13; 15]. Giving a logical advantage to the patriarchal family of that time, the author demonstrates a fervent conviction in the need to develop harmonious moral relations and a humane attitude of men toward women. Innocent Gisel paid considerable attention to children, their upbringing, instilling in them faith in God, good, deep moral customs [9, pp. 195–262].

However, the theologian positions the Orthodox clergy as the main social force, considering it as a structured phenomenon divided into bishops, monks, and white parish clergy. An important role in Gisel's theoretical developments is assigned to the urban environment – the author talks about different categories of citizens (artisans, merchants, judges, court clerks, doctors, etc.). The philosopher singled out the category of warriors in a separate group, which was relevant for Ukraine at that time, where continuous wars were fought.

Innocent Gisel was well aware of the specifics of the life of the Ukrainian Orthodox clergy, as well as the tangential defects and violations inherent in this environment. Even when describing the sins of clergy, the theorist relied on contemporary realities. Moreover, the theologian realized that the clergy, being influenced by the development of trade and market relations, increasingly began to "serve mammon".

It should be summarized that, as a theorist of moral theology of the postmodern era, Innocent Gisel focused on the model of a socially structured, stable society. The theologian realized that the Ukrainian society of that time was far from ideal, and representatives of various social classes, including the clergy, often committed deliberately immoral acts. The theorist was convinced that people endowed with power and wealth do so on a larger scale and more often. Gisel attributed to the church the functionality of correcting such a situation, promoting greater morality in societies. At the same time, clergy must be deeply aware of the nature of sin, its classification, to instruct people accordingly, confess and impose penance on them. Such an approach, according to Innocent Gisel, should have a positive impact on the process of regulating social relations.

6. Conclusions

The theorist of moral theology of the postmodern era, Innocent Gisel, sought to improve the church life of that time. His broad analytical view synergized the theoretical foundations of religious and ecclesiastical activity, the specifics of the social development of contemporaries, and the most noticeable moral dilemmas. The theologian was able to identify a number of moral violations in the activities of the higher clergy, the elimination of which, according to Gisel, would increase the effectiveness of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. The theoretician fervently insisted on the need for the responsible

performance of their duties by the clergy and made significant efforts to direct the activities of confessors, monks and preachers in the proper direction.

The implementation of the basic requirements proposed by Innocent Gisel for the Orthodox clergy fully corresponded to the spirit of confessionalization. At the same time, the moral guidelines presented in the treatise “Peace with God to Man” created an orientation vector towards the achievement of a certain social ideal, which may seem, at first glance, somewhat utopian. However, it is in this social utopia of Innocent Gisel that the theologian’s desire to normalize social relations, to give them greater perfection, is represented.

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