



PESA INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIAL STUDIES

PESA ULUSLARARASI SOSYAL ARAŞTIRMALAR DERGİSİ

December 2025, Issue:2
e-ISSN: 2149-8385

Aralık 2025, Sayı:2
ISSN: 2528-9950

Journal homepage: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/pesausad>



Kitap Değerlendirme / Book Review

Digital Religion: The Basics

Heidi A. Campbell and Wendi Bellar, Routledge, 2023, 172 pages. ISBN: 978-1-003-05846-5

Sümeyye OFLU

İbn Haldun Üniversitesi, Din Bilimleri Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi. ORCID: 0009-0008-1343-0647. sumeyye.oflu@stu.ihu.edu.tr

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article History:

Received: 31 October 2025

Accepted: 30 December 2025

Publication: 31 December 2025

Reviewers: Editorial decision

Plagiarism: Yes - intihal.net

Conflicts of Interest: The Author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

Grant Support: No funds, grants, or other support was received.

Author Contributions: % 100

© 2025 PESA All rights reserved

This review examines "Digital Religion: The Basics" by Heidi A. Campbell and Wendi Bellar, a book that explores how digital media transforms religious practices and identities. Combining theoretical discussions with empirical examples, the book explains how religion is shaped. Building on Campbell's previous work, it offers a synthesis of concepts such as "networked community" and "shifting authority," with the authors primarily emphasizing the positive aspects of digitalization. Therefore, the book contributes to digital religion studies with an informative and optimistic perspective.

Keywords: Religion, Sociology Of Religion, Digital Religion, Online Religious Rituals

Citation: Oflu, S. (2025). Digital Religion: The Basics. Pesa International Journal Of Social Studies (2), 128-130.

MAKALE BİLGİSİ

ÖZ

Makale Geçmişi:

Geliş: 31 Ekim 2025

Kabul: 30 Aralık 2025

Yayın: 31 Aralık 2025

Değerlendirme: Editör kararı

Etik Beyan: Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde etik ilkelere uyulmuştur.

Benzerlik: Yapıldı - intihal.net

Çıkar Çatışması: Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.

Finansman: Herhangi bir fon, hibe veya başka bir destek alınmamıştır.

Yazar Katkısı: %100

© 2025 PESA Tüm hakları saklıdır

Bu inceleme, dijital medyanın dinî pratikleri ve kimlikleri nasıl dönüştürdüğünü ele alan Heidi A. Campbell ve Wendi Bellar'ın "Digital Religion: The Basics" adlı kitabını incelemektedir. Kitap, teorik tartışmaları ampirik örneklerle birleştirerek dinin nasıl şekillendiğini açıklamaktadır. Campbell'in önceki çalışmalarını temel alan eser, "networked community" ve "shifting authority" gibi kavramların bir sentezini sunmakta ve yazarlar ağırlıklı olarak dijitalleşmenin olumlu yönlerini vurgulamaktadır. Bu nedenle kitap, dijital din çalışmaları alanına bilgilendirici ve iyimser bir bakış açısıyla katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din, Din Sosyolojisi, Dijital Din, Çevrimiçi Dini Ritüeller

Atıf Bilgisi: Oflu, S. (2025). Digital Religion: The Basics. PESA Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi (2), 128-130.

Digital Religion: The Basics

Digital Religion: The Basics by Heidi A. Campbell and Wendi Bellar systematically examines how media and internet platforms brought by the digital age have transformed the nature of religion and forms of belonging. The book offers a framework informed by theoretical and empirical data. Despite being a conceptual compilation, the clear and jargon-free writing provides convenience for the reader. The authors argue that the ways in which religion is experienced are transforming during the digitalization process, reshaping it within a networked structure where online and offline practices are intertwined. The book explains this thesis in eight chapters. The authors support their claims by drawing on the sociology of religion and media studies. They employ a qualitative and synthetic methodology based on theoretical discussion and case studies, particularly on online worship in the COVID-19 era. The book builds on Campbell's previous works, *Exploring Religious Community Online and Digital Religion*, and draws on the important work on digital religion by Helland, Cowan, and Lövheim, providing a contemporary synthesis that bridges online and offline religious practices.

The first chapter, "What is Digital Religion?", explains how religious studies in the digital environment became institutionalized since the 1990s, and how concepts such as cyber religion transformed into digital religion. It particularly focuses on Campbell's term networked religion. Campbell and Bellar view the online space as an extension of life rather than a virtual one. This represents one of the most innovative ideas in the book because it legitimizes individuals' religious identities on digital platforms by challenging the sociological perspective that sees digital religiosity as incomplete.

The second chapter is "Networked Community." The authors argue that modern religious communities are established through relational networks. The examples from the COVID-19 era are timely and compelling. Digital environments offer participation in religious communities and are crucial for fostering a sense of solidarity during these times. The chapter is notable for demonstrating how religion is becoming more accessible through networked communities. However, the authors fail to critique the potential for such networked structures to undermine the authority of religious institutions and the risk of superficiality, and instead take an optimistic approach.

The third chapter, "Convergent Practice," explains how religious rituals intertwine digital and physical spaces. Worship via YouTube, Zoom, or social media has led to questioning the concept of the place of worship, showing that the feeling of worship, not the location, is more important, and offering solutions to the religious needs. However, although Campbell and Bellar note that boundaries between participation and observation have blurred, they do not address the risk that digital rituals can diminish the depth of physical religious rituals.

The fourth chapter, "Multisite Reality," similarly describes how individuals can exist simultaneously in physical communities and digital groups. This approach shows that in the digitalized world, single faith affiliation is giving way to pluralistic religious beliefs, which can lead to religious confusion.

The fifth chapter, "Shifting Authority," explores the redefinition of authority in the digital age. Those who produce religious content on social media are sometimes seen as authorities, with algorithms like follower counts or likes determining authority now. Campbell calls this the democratization of authority. While the authors note that this can lead to misinformation and a crisis of authority, they do not discuss the risk of religious knowledge becoming a tool for popularization.

The sixth and seventh chapters, "Storied Identity" and "Experiential Authenticity," address the psychosocial dimension of digital religiosity. While digital narratives construct individuals' religious identities, this can sometimes become a display. The Experiential Authenticity section discusses how faith is now based on personal experiences and how connection with God is measured by individual

feelings. While this strengthens individual sincerity, it can weaken social bonds by diminishing collective worship.

The final chapter, "The Future of Digital Religion," offers a vision for the field. The chapter assesses that technologies like artificial intelligence and the metaverse will continue to shape religion. While the authors view this as a positive development, the theological implications are not addressed, leaving the section more superficial than the others.

In conclusion, *Digital Religion: The Basics* offers a comprehensive introduction for beginners, facilitating an understanding of the transformation of religion in the digital age. Campbell and Bellar use simple and accessible language, provide examples, and offer a model for the relationship between the sociology of religion and digital culture. However, the negative aspects of the digitalization of religion are limited, and an optimistic approach is adopted. This book is important for rethinking the boundaries of the sacred and is an essential guide for understanding how religion is being reshaped in the digital environment.

NOTE: Use of Artificial Intelligence: No artificial intelligence-based tools or applications were used in the preparation of this study. The entire content of this study was produced by the author(s) in accordance with scientific research methods and academic ethical principles.

REFERENCES

Campbell, H. A., & Bellar, W. (2023). *Digital religion: The basics*. Routledge.