

In her book *Natural Symbols* (1970), the British anthropologist Mary Douglas discussed the question of why and how are certain trans-cultural religious phenomena combined into different systems of understanding the world. She sought the answer in various types of social situations in which the systems of ideas are formulated, and tried to analyze them using two variables, “group” (the amount in which certain group’s borders are defined in contrast with the rest of the society) and “grid” (the amount in which the role of an individual in society is determined and in which the individual’s system of classification is shared by others or determined by them). These two variables enable us to sort different religious cosmologies depending on what ideals they paint in these respects and what demands they make of an individual. Mary Douglas compares this theoretical concept with existing cultures, assesses how similar their cosmologies are in respect of these two points of view, and examines whether there are matching social arrangements, norms of action and the like. On one hand, she enables us to put otherwise isolated cultural phenomena in an overall frame of meaning, on the other hand the application of this approach to religious ideas opens many possibilities of finding connections between religions in the areas where we wouldn’t have looked for them otherwise.

However, in developing this method, Mary Douglas concentrated on different topics. For that reason, I shall in this thesis focus on the application of her approach by other academics. This method has reached popularity mainly among biblical scholars, and that is why I plan to turn my attention in that direction too. Using the examples of the authors which used the grid-group analysis on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, I attempt to gain an idea about the possibilities and limitations of this method and about the ways this application opens for understanding remote societies and their religious ideas.