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# Religiosity in Slovakia: Structure, Dynamics, and Spatial Diversification

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**Abstrakt:** Religiozita je časovo a priestorovo podmienený kľúčový sociálny fenomén s veľkou vnútornou variabilitou. V článku sa zameriavame na výber najvýznamnejších ukazovateľov prejavov tohto javu v slovenskej spoločnosti. Prostredníctvom časových štatistických údajov s náznakmi niektorých štruktúrnych rozdielov v súčasnosti, poukazujeme na dynamiku a veľkú priestorovú diverzifikáciu konfesionálnych pomerov na Slovensku. Výrazným formujúcim faktorom boli aj politické rámce regulujúce náboženský život – vzťahy štátu a cirkvi, ktorých variabilita v kontexte spoločensko-politických zmien bola nezanedbateľným determinantom vývoja religiozity a náboženského života. V analýze religiozity naznačujeme aj vnútorné aspekty religiozity meranej výberovými zisťovaniami poukazujúcimi na pestrosť vnútorných prejavov viery a jej odlišnosti v porovnaní s meraním konfesionality v sčítaniach obyvateľstva.

**Kľúčová slova:** religiozita; Slovensko; diverzita; konfesionálnosť; sekularizácia; vzťah štátu a cirkvi

**Abstract:** Religiosity represents a key temporal- and spatial-based social phenomenon with great internal variability. In this paper, we focus on a selection of the most important indicators of this factor in Slovakian society. With the aid of temporal statistical data with some structural differences (such as age) in current society, we attempt to concentrate on the dynamics and great spatial diversification of denominational division in Slovakia. The Church and state relationship is another politically important factor which influences this social phenomenon. The variability of relationships within the social and political context and its transformations was a significant determinant influencing the religiosity and development of religious life. Moreover, even in today's mostly secularizing society, this relationship maintains its importance for the society. In the analysis of societal religiosity, we have to focus on the internal aspects of faith, measured by representative surveys that portray varieties of internal aspects of faith and their divergence from the censal measurement of denominational affiliation.

**Keywords:** religiosity; Slovakia; diversity; denominations; secularization; church-state relation

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## 1. Historical overview

Slovakia counts among many Eastern and Central European countries, in which Religious Studies, i.e. an academic approach to the study of religion was established relatively late. The reason for this was not merely the unfavourable ideological milieu under the Communist regime (1948–1989), but also the rather complicated history of Slovakia over the past two centuries and the associated process of the emergence of a modern Slovak nation.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 From the mid-19th century until 1918

From the 11th century up to 1918, ‘Slovaks’ lived mainly in a part of the Hungarian realm, politically referred to as Upper Hungary due to its geographical position. Stretching from the Early Middle Ages to the High Modern Era, the Slovak region lived under what in many aspects resembled a true political and cultural hegemony.<sup>2</sup> We do not have relevant documents from this era on the religiosity of Upper Hungary; however, relevant data on religiosity can be obtained from one of the oldest official lexicons of settlements from 1773 (*Lexicon universorum regni Hungariae ...*).<sup>3</sup> In February 1867, the monarchy of the Danube region was split into two parts: Austria and Hungary. This was the result and success of Hungarian ethno-national movements, but for Slovaks this political act resulted in an era of forced Hungarisation.<sup>4</sup> The legal act from 1867 concerning the ethnic issues of the newly constituted state anticipated a single unified nation – the Hungarian one. Based on this premise, Hungarian became the only official language. However, it was allowed to use the languages of ethnic minorities in primary and secondary education, in administration, during court hearings, and in religious life. Religiosity was not the focus of any of administrative or ‘scientific’ scrutiny until the first censuses appeared in the mid-19th century. Using the *Atlas of Religiosity of Slovakia*<sup>5</sup> and the cartographic compilation of data concerning confessional belonging (based on censuses from the mid-19th century up to the last census in the Hungarian state in 1910), we can follow the dynamics of religious life in Slovakia (in terms of “confessional religiosity”) (see Table 1).

The first modern census also covering the territory of present-day Slovakia in 1857 showed that despite the new act that made all confessions in Hungary equal with the Catholic Church (1848), more than 65% of its inhabitants claimed this confession, thus making Slovakia a predominantly Catholic region. Catholics were dominant in

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. S. J. KIRSCHBAUM, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 1995, passim.

<sup>2</sup> R. HOLEC, “Slovenskí katolíci medzi národom a štátom”, In T. IVANTYŠYNOVÁ (ed.), *Národ – cirkev – štát*, Bratislava: Spoločnosť pre dejiny a kultúru strednej a východnej Európy, Centrum pre európsku politiku, Historický ústav SAV 2007, p. 57–75.

<sup>3</sup> B. ŠPROCHA and P. TIŠLIAR, *Lexikóny obcí pre územie Slovenska I.: Vybrané úradné lexikóny z rokov 1920–2002*, Bratislava: Infostat 2009, p. 8; J. MAJO, D. KUSENDOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, Bratislava: DAJAMA 2015, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> HOLEC, “Slovenskí katolíci medzi národom a štátom”, p. 57–75.

<sup>5</sup> MAJO and KUSENDOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 9–21.

**Table 1:** Data on religious affiliation according to the 1857–1910 Censuses.<sup>6</sup>

	Census 1857	Census 1869	Census 1880	Census 1890	Census 1900	Census 1910
<b>Total number of inhabitants (million)</b>	2.47	2.46	2.4	2.57	2.7	2.92
Catholic Church	65.1%	65.6%	66.3%	67.2%	68.3%	69.9%
(million)	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.9	>2.0
Lutheran Evangelical Church	15.5%	15.9%	15.3%	14.8%	14.2%	13.5%
	382,000	391,000	377,000	382,000	394,000	395,000
Greek Catholic Church	7.3%	7.6%	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%	6.8%
	182,000	186,000	175,000	183,000	197,000	197,000
Reformed Church	6.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.4%	5.3%	5.2%
	161,000	134,000	134,000	140,000	148,000	153,000
Jews	5.5%	5.5%	5.7%	5.4%	5.0%	4.8%
	136,000	134,000	140,000	138,000	140,000	139,000
Other confessions	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
	554	400	1,700	766	>1,000	>2,000
NONES	–	–	–	–	–	–
	–	–	–	–	–	–

almost all regions of today's Slovakia (except for the Uh and Zemplín regions in the eastern part of Slovakia and towns like Modra – in 1857, 57% of citizens declared to be Lutherans). Strong Jewish communities could be found in Nitra (32%), Trenčín (27%) and Bratislava (14%).<sup>7</sup>

By the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the proportion of believers affiliated to the Catholic Church increased by 17%. The strongest bastions of Catholicism were in the Trenčín region (more than 87%).<sup>8</sup> Lutherans faced stagnation in terms of numbers. The Greek Catholic Church reported an internal increase of 5%. The strongest influence of this confession was observed in the Zemplin (41%), Uh (40%) and Šariš (31%) regions.<sup>9</sup> The Reformed Church grew rapidly in this period, with an 11% increase in believers. The Orthodox Church counted only 1,000 individuals; there was, however, a significant trend of growth.

## 1.2 Religiosity, Church, and State (1918–1989)

The birth of the Czechoslovak Republic was not only due to a success of ethno-national ambitions and more than 60 years of political struggle, but it was also an im-

<sup>6</sup> Compiled by T. Zachar Podolinská, based on MAJO and KUSEDOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 8–19. The Census of 1869 (at the level of villages) was published after the revision of L. Sebők in 2005, but some of the data from the Abov region is incomplete. MAJO and KUSEDOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> MAJO and KUSEDOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> MAJO and KUSEDOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 36–37.

<sup>9</sup> MAJO and KUSEDOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 37.

portant breaking point in terms of the postulation of religious freedom and a new order of negotiation between the Church and the State. Not surprisingly, because of the strong visibility of the conservative Catholic Church on the side of the Habsburg dynasty under the former regime, many political parties included the separation of Church and State into their electoral programme. The first draft of the new constitution included such a paragraph. Yet, due to the complicated and different situation on the Slovak and Czech sides, the requirement for separation of Church and State in the first republic of Czechs and Slovaks was not included in the text of the new Constitution, as approved in 1920.<sup>10</sup> Religious issues were so complicated to negotiate that finally there was no single paragraph concerning or moderating Church and State relations. The key Article 124 of the Constitution made all confessions equal before the law. Article 121 of the Constitution guaranteed not only religious freedom but also the freedom to have no church affiliation or confession, which means the freedom of one's religiosity or irreligiosity. According to the Census in 1921, there were 725,000 people without confession in Czechoslovakia.

In 1926, the Congruation Act was passed (Act No. 122/1926). This act distinguished between the so-called *congruated* and *subsidised* churches and religious communities. Within the territory of the Czech Republic and Moravia, only the Catholic Church (all three rites) and the Orthodox churches were 'congruated'. In Slovakia and Ruthenia, the Catholic Church (all three rites), the Lutheran Evangelical Church, the Reformed Church, the Orthodox Church, and the Jewish religious communities were 'reciped' ('recognized'). The minimum 'congruas' (i.e. state contributions) were 9,000 Czechoslovak crowns per year. In sum, 'recognised churches' received 130–150 million Czechoslovak crowns per year from the state; two thirds of this sum were granted to the Catholic Church.<sup>11</sup> Negotiations between the newly constituted republic and the Vatican were launched in 1920. In 1928, the document *Modus Vivendi* was initialled.

As far as the religious situation in the Czechoslovak Republic is concerned, the atmosphere and the public discourse were very different. The importance of the Catholic Church in the Czech part of the Republic visibly and notably decreased. The Slovak part faced a completely opposite trend – the Catholic Church reported an internal increase in the number of believers by almost 25%, with a 72% share in the general population. In some regions of Slovakia, the proportion of Catholic believers exceeded 90% (Kysucké Nové Mesto 99%). In 1930, the least Catholic region of Slovakia was the Medzilaborce district (9%).<sup>12</sup> As for nationality, 76% of Catholic believers declared Slovak ethnicity, 17% the Hungarian one and only 5% declared German ethnicity in 1930.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> L. HUBENÁK, "Církev a náboženské společnosti v Československu 1918–1938", *Prometheus – Časopis pro občiansku spoločnosť a humanizmus* III (4, 2007): p. 23–25.

<sup>11</sup> HUBENÁK, "Církev a náboženské společnosti v Československu 1918–1938", p. 23–25.

<sup>12</sup> MAJO and KUSEDOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> MAJO and KUSEDOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 37.

**Table 2:** Data on religious affiliation according to the 1921–1950 Censuses.<sup>14</sup>

	Census 1921	Census 1930	Census 1940	Census 1950
<b>Total number of inhabitants (million)</b>	>3.0	3.3	2.6	3.4
Catholic Church	71.0%	71.8%	74.1%	76.2%
(million)	2.1	2.3	1.9	2.6
Lutheran Evangelical Church	12.8%	12.1%	14.3%	12.9%
	383,000	400,000	388,000	443,000
Greek Catholic Church	6.4%	6.4%	6.9%	6.6%
	190,000	211,000	183,000	225,000
Reformed Church	4.7%	4.3%	0.5%	3.2%
	140,000	141,000	12,000	111,000
Jews	4.5%	4.1%	3.2%	0.2%
	135,000	135,000	86,000	>7,000
Orthodox Church			0.3%	0.2%
				<8,000
Other confessions	0.6%	1.5%	0.2%	0.3%
	17,000	48,000		
NONES	0.2%	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%
	<7,000	16,000		>9,000
Sin data/no answer				0.1%

In 1921, Czechoslovakia had 13.5 million of inhabitants (3 million in Slovakia); 724 thousand of them declared to be ‘without confession’ (hereinafter referred to as ‘*nones*’). In the Czech part, it was 5.32%, whereas in Slovakia only 0.23%. In 1930, the total population reached 14.7 million inhabitants, 854 thousand of them being *nones*. The distribution of *nones* was remarkably different: 5.8% in the Czech part, and only 0.51% in the Slovak one. After 1945, the situation changed dramatically; 2.9 million Czech Germans were evicted and Czechoslovakia lost Ruthenia. As a consequence, the total number of inhabitants fell to 12.7 million; 766 thousand of whom were ‘*nones*’.

Between 1940 and 1950, the religious development of the Catholic Church was positive and stable. In terms of the number of believers, the proportion of Catholics in the Slovak population reached 74%.<sup>15</sup> There was a 10% internal increase of believers in the Catholic Church in Slovakia in 1930–1950. As far as Lutherans are concerned, only 3% of them resided outside the new borders after the Vienna arbi-

<sup>14</sup> Compiled by T. Zachar Podolinská, based on MAJO and KUSENOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 20–27. Due to the Vienna Arbitration, the total number of inhabitants decreased dramatically in 1940. There were approximately 901,000 people within the territory occupied by Hungary (70% of them were affiliated to the Catholic Church, followed by the Reformed Church, Greek Catholics, Jews and Lutherans). MAJO and KUSENOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> MAJO and KUSENOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 38.

tration. The proportion of Lutherans in Slovak population increased to 15%.<sup>16</sup> The Greek Catholic Church reported a 7% increase in Slovakia (1940 to 1930). In 1950, before its abolition, it faced a 6% internal increase and its share in the Slovak population reached 6.6%. The strongest Greek Catholic districts were Medzilaborce (86%) and Svidník (83%).

The change of the border had a dramatic effect on the Reformed Church. Ten years after 1938, the number of the Reformed decreased by 91% to 0.5% with a total number of believers of 13,000. Trebišov and Michalovce, and Bratislava with 1,000 believers remained the strongest districts. The most dramatic change, however, was observed among Jews. Due to the Vienna arbitrations, deportations and emigration of Jews during and after WWII, there was a 95% decline (1950 against 1940). In 1950, only 7,500 Jews lived in Slovakia compared to 87,000 in 1940 and 89% of settlements in Slovakia had no Jewish population. The Orthodox Church faced a 18% internal decline. In 1950, their total number increased and reached 8,000 believers residing mostly in the Eastern part of Slovakia.<sup>17</sup>

During the first phase of the creation of the post-war Czechoslovak republic, under the reign of the National Front coalition government, the representatives of the Catholic Church perceived the Church and State relations positively and wished this to continue in the future. For example, on 15 November 1945, led by Archbishop of Prague Josef Beran, they claimed to be a part of the 'building of our State' in the Czech part of the republic. 'The Church is willing to collaborate in the construction of the Republic'. On 13 May 1946, the diplomatic contacts between the Vatican and the Czechoslovak Republic were restored. Internunciatus Xáber Rither, known for his negative attitudes towards fascism and Nazism, returned as the representative of the Holy See. Doctor Josef Beran, who was detained by the secret police during the Protectorate period and deported to Dachau, was appointed as the new archbishop.

The situation in Slovakia was different from Czech lands for many reasons. After World War II was over, the tensions in the relations between the Catholic Church and the Czechoslovak State culminated in Slovakia. Back during the Uprising (1944), there were many cases of open confrontation between insurgents and Church representatives. Because of its support provided to the Hlinka Slovak People's Party, the Catholic Church was also blamed for supporting fascism.

The Slovak National Council (SNC), which had no Catholic representatives, nationalised all schools in Slovakia through its Fifth Regulation, from childcare centres and shelters to universities. This regulation entered into effect on 06 September 1944, i.e. less than a week after the SNC came out from the underground in the areas controlled by partisans. The SNC re-approved this resolution on 16 May 1945.<sup>18</sup>

Before the May elections in 1946, the Slovak Catholics made an agreement with the predominantly Protestant-oriented leadership of the Democratic Party. This party

<sup>16</sup> MAJO and KUSEDOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> MAJO and KUSEDOVÁ, *Náboženský atlas Slovenska*, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup> The protests by Slovak bishops against this decision resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of, for example, Bishop Ján Vojtaššák.

won 62% of the votes in the elections, while the Communists less than 30%, which was radically different picture than in Czech lands where Communists won the elections.<sup>19</sup>

The situation in Slovakia radically changed after the Communists came into power in February 1948. At the beginning, the leading Communist functionaries sought to bring the Catholic Church under their control through an agreement with the bishops or to obtain the co-operation of some of them. On the outside, the government was willing to negotiate, but the state authorities were constantly restricting the Church activities. For example, the National Front's Action Committee (NFAC) issued a declaration on the freedom of religion and, at the same time, it appointed a church secretary for each action committee. In March 1948, most Catholic magazines were discontinued, which was justified by a shortage of paper. This was shortly followed by a regulation ordering the removal of crosses from schools and a dismissal of all teachers who were members of religious orders. Religious education at secondary schools was cancelled or radically reduced. The Church was also affected by Act No. 44/1948 Coll. on Land Reform and Government Regulation No. 1/1948 Coll. on the Revised First Land Reform under which the Church lost all its agricultural assets. Even more damage was caused by Act No. 95/1948 on the Single School of 21 April 1948 which curtailed the activities of church schools. After the May elections, the Bishops' Assembly hoped to save church schools, provided that the bishops showed their loyalty to the new President of the Republic, Klement Gottwald. The Archbishop of Prague, Doctor Josef Beran, held a *Te Deum* ceremony in the St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague on 14 June 1948 in honour of the President in the presence of the CSR Government.

The next period of 1949–50 was crucial when it comes to the future of the Church in Czechoslovakia. This period laid the fundamentals of the state control of Churches. This was followed by a series of significant interventions against the Church; the publishing of Christian magazines was banned, and publishing houses were nationalised. In the Declaration of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia of 25 April 1949, the Church was clearly defined as an 'enemy' which must be brought under the legal control of the state apparatus. This Declaration also demanded the 'separation of the Church from Rome' and the creation of a 'national Church'. On 10 June 1949, the 'Catholic Action' was founded under the leadership of priest Jozef Plojhar. Only 67 priests and an unidentified number of lay persons participated at the founding congress. The Bishops' Assembly condemned its establishment by a pastoral letter which was expected to be read in all churches on Sunday, 19 June. This 'action' was officially condemned by the Vatican's excommunication decree on 20 June 1949.

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<sup>19</sup> In the Czech lands, the Communist Party achieved the best results in the districts from which the original German population was displaced (the highest proportion of displaced persons was 70.45% in the Tachov district). Despite the fact that in Slovakia, the Democratic Party won the elections with the majority of votes (61.43%), the victory of the Communist Party in the Czech lands meant the Democratic Party was abolished and the Communist Party gained power throughout the whole of Czechoslovakia (source: <https://www.fronta.cz/dotaz/volby-1946-vitezstvi-ksc-a-odsun-nemcu>, accessed on August 26, 2019).

### 1.3 1950–1989 Period

The census of 31 March 1950, at the very beginning of the socialist era in Slovakia, was the last one for a long time to collect answers concerning confession. According to this census, Czechoslovakia had 12,338,450 of inhabitants; 3,442,317 of whom lived in the Slovak part of the republic. The Catholic Church claimed 74.42% of affiliates in the Czech part of the country and 76.2% in Slovakia.

In 1951, according to the report from the Ministry of the Interior, the Czechoslovak Republic had 9 million Catholics; 400,000 Evangelicals (Lutherans); 100,000 Calvinists; 10,000 Adventists; 8,000 Methodists; 8,000 members of the Unity of Brethren; 2,000 Unitarians; 8,000 Baptists; 900,000 members of the Czechoslovak Church; and 250,000 members of the Orthodox Church. The Greek-Catholic Church was banned in Czechoslovakia on 28 April 1950.

By Government Regulation No. 112/1950 of 14 July, the Communist government abolished all diocesan seminars and religious theological universities and founded the only theological university in Slovakia – the *Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology of Cyril and Methodius in Bratislava* under the supervision of the State Authority for Church Matters. The number of seminarists decreased by 90%.

The next period was characterised by arrests of leading church representatives. On 2–15 January, the State Court in Bratislava sentenced the 74-year-old bishop Ján Vojtaššák to 24 years in prison and a fine of 500,000 crowns; and the 66-year old bishop Doctor Michal Buzalka and 63-year bishop Pavel Gojdič, OSBM, were given a life sentence. This political atmosphere resulted in Vatican diplomats leaving and many church representatives moving abroad.

On 11 July 1960, a *new Constitution* was adopted, calling the country the *Czechoslovak Socialist Republic*. According to the 1961 census, the population of Czechoslovakia was 13,745,577 as of 1 March. Slovakia had 4,174,046 inhabitants, of which 3,560,000 claimed the Slovak ethnicity (519,000 the Hungarian one).

## 2. The Post-Communist Era and Recent Trends in Religiosity in Slovakia

The socialist period did not favour the collection, analysis, and publishing of data about religious affinity and this topic became taboo for several decades after the 1950 census. Historical data about churches was partly published in the *Atlas of Czechoslovak History*<sup>20</sup> in the form of a map of the Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Evangelical of Augsburg Confession, Reformed Christian, and Jewish Church administration in 1848. The revised version of this atlas concerning the Slovak territory was published in the *Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia*<sup>21</sup> of 1990 and a major part of it was produced back during the socialist period. The data on the religious structure of the

<sup>20</sup> *Atlas československých dějin*, 1965, Praha: Ústředí správy geodézie a kartografie.

<sup>21</sup> *Etnografický Atlas Slovenska*, B. Filová, S. Kovačevićová (eds.) (1990), Bratislava: Národopisný ústav Bratislava a Slovenská kartografia.



population remained unpublished in a comprehensive cartographic form until the end of the millennium.

In 2000, a team of authors led by geographer Štefan Poláčik published a unique *Atlas of Churches, Religious Communities and Religiosity in Slovakia* (Ecumenical Atlas).<sup>22</sup> Besides a basic description of the registered churches and religious communities, the atlas contains maps of the territorial administration and figures based on the 1991 census. A new national atlas – *The Atlas of the Landscape of the Slovak Republic* – was published in the beginning of the new millennium, in 2002.<sup>23</sup> The chapter on population includes maps of the confessional structure of towns and municipalities in 1991 and districts in 1880. In addition, the atlas shows the results of the 2001 census and data on the religious structure of the population per district. The tradition of publishing religious atlases continued in 2005 with the *Atlas of the Catholic Church in Slovakia* under the guidance of Viliam Judák and Štefan Poláčik.<sup>24</sup> Besides detailed information on the life of both Catholic Churches in Slovakia, as depicted on maps, the atlas also contains basic maps for other more numerous churches and religious communities according to the census conducted in 2001. The so-far last comprehensive work among religious maps is the mono-confessional *Historical Atlas of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia*, published in 2011 under the guidance of Dagmar Kusendová and Mojmír Benža.<sup>25</sup> The authors of the *Demographic Atlas of the Slovak Republic* from 2014, which mainly reflects the data obtained from the 2011 census, present the basic results concerning the most numerous churches, religious communities and people claiming no confession.<sup>26</sup>

According to the representative international survey *European Values Study* (EVS) conducted also in Slovakia in 1991 and 1999, there was a rapid rise in the number of believers in Slovakia in the first decade after the fall of Communism; from around 63.5% in the early 1990s (EVS 1991) to around 76% in the late 1990s (EVS 1999).<sup>27</sup> This ‘religious turn’ can be interpreted as a result of the post-Communist climate. The old institutional framework was completely dismantled, including all its ‘securities’. The civil society was in its ‘embryonic’ state with a virtual absence of an intermediary layer of NGOs; the nuclear family and its values were in a deep crisis. Another very important limitation was economic: it was a period of extreme material hardship

<sup>22</sup> POLÁČIK, Š., *Atlas cirkví, náboženských spoločností a religiozity Slovenska*, Bratislava: Chronos 2000.

<sup>23</sup> *Atlas krajiny Slovenskej republiky*, 2002, Bratislava: Ministerstvo životného prostredia.

<sup>24</sup> JUDÁK, V., POLÁČIK, Š. (eds.), *Atlas Katolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku*, Bratislava: Lúč 2005.

<sup>25</sup> KUSENDOVÁ, D., BENŽA, M. (eds.), *Historický atlas Evanjelickej cirkvi augsburského vyznania na Slovensku*, Liptovský Mikuláš: Tranoscius 2011.

<sup>26</sup> BLEHA, B., VAŇO, B., BAČÍK, V. (eds.), *Demografický atlas Slovenskej republiky*. Bratislava: Geografika 2014.

<sup>27</sup> In this regard, however, it is necessary to comment on the data from 1991: the number of believers was slightly underestimated because a different method of measurement was employed. *EVS – Výskum európskych hodnôt 1991* [*EVS – European Values Study 1991*], [online], SASD, EVS 1991, accessed July 10, 2019, available online at [http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data\\_katalog\\_abs.php?id=sasd\\_1991001](http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data_katalog_abs.php?id=sasd_1991001) as in 1999 “*EVS – Výskum európskych hodnôt 1999*” [*“EVS – European Values Study 1999”*], [online], SASD, EVS 1999, accessed July 10, 2019, available online at [http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data\\_katalog\\_abs.php?id=sasd\\_1999002](http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data_katalog_abs.php?id=sasd_1999002).

after the downfall of the socialist planned economy. Unsurprisingly, the period of 'inflated expectations' and 'freedom of self' was followed by a period of 'normative confusion'. To get through these turbulent times, people were searching for their lost 'security' and a new 'protective umbrella'. Under these conditions, the historically attested tradition of religion and a credible institutional representative as embodied by the traditional church became the 'majority option'. Our case showed another very important trend. In Slovakia, the traditional Church adopted the position of a 'Communist martyr' and (at least in the first post-Communist decade) profited very much from the social capital of this position. In addition, the Church privatised the role of the 'housekeeper' of the national tradition.

The concept of 'traditional' religion that has its historical merits and privileges became a common device for structuring religious policy and the legislative debate. This turbulent development and the flexible strategy of the Roman Catholic Church resulted (at least) in a 'numeral' re-birth of traditional Catholicism in Slovakia. Consequently, Slovakia (together with Poland) is frequently referred to as one of the most traditional 'bastions' of Catholicism in Europe.<sup>28</sup>

According to the interim analysis of the first and second waves of the EVS (EVS 1991 and EVS 1999), the first post-Communist decade was indeed a decade of religious turn in Slovakia. Religious faith was strengthened along with the church-attendance rate and general confidence in the Church.<sup>29</sup> In 1991, 'prevailing confidence' in the Church was reported to be 49% for Slovak respondents. In 1999, there was a 16% increase and the number reached 64.8%. Nevertheless, hand in hand with these pro-Church attitudes, people began to declare that the Church should focus more (or merely) on religious and spiritual issues. Hence, religious influence was endorsed 'only' in those cases where it was kept within the pressure limits and did not interfere directly into the sphere of politics. According both waves of EVS tolerance towards the co-existence of people of various religions or without religion was higher than it was in the early 1990s.

Based on the figures from the latest surveys, we can follow the religious dynamics of the second post-Communist decade in comparison with the first one. Both the EVS 2008<sup>30</sup> and ISSP 2008<sup>31</sup> results indicate that the Church's responses to spiritual, moral, and family issues in Slovakia were seen as adequate in numbers exceeding the European average. In 2004, the national survey *Collective Identities in Contemporary Slovakia*<sup>32</sup> revealed that 34% of respondents explicitly support decreasing the power

<sup>28</sup> For a clarification of the context, see Part 4 of the study.

<sup>29</sup> V. KRIVÝ, "Hodnotové orientácie a náboženské prejavy slovenskej verejnosti v 90. rokoch", *Sociológia* 33 (1, 2001), p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> "EVS – Výskum európskych hodnôt 2008" [EVS – European Values Study 2008] [online], SASD, EVS 2008, accessed [10. 7. 2019], available online at [http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data\\_katalog\\_abs.php?id=sasd\\_2008001](http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data_katalog_abs.php?id=sasd_2008001).

<sup>31</sup> "ISSP Náboženstvo 1998" [ISSP Religion 1998] [online], SASD, ISSP 1998, accessed [10. 7. 2019], available online at [http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data\\_katalog\\_abs.php?id=sasd\\_1998001](http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data_katalog_abs.php?id=sasd_1998001).

<sup>32</sup> "Kolektívne identity na súčasnom Slovensku 2003" [Collective Identities in Contemporary Slovakia 2003] [online], SASD, accessed [10. 7. 2019], available online at [http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data\\_katalog\\_abs.php?id=sasd\\_2003001](http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data_katalog_abs.php?id=sasd_2003001).

of the Roman Catholic Church in the public space and perceive the rising influence of the Church negatively. Among higher-educated respondents, this figure reached up to 45.8%.<sup>33</sup> In the same survey, 72.6% of respondents agreed with the statement that ‘Christian values should be interpreted in a more modern way than the Church in Slovakia used to do’.

If we follow the dynamic of religiosity in Slovakia through the lens of the last three censuses, the religious situation seems to be very stable, almost untouched by the dramatic political and economic changes in society during the transition era (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Data on religious affiliation according to the 1991–2011 Censuses.<sup>34</sup>

	Census 1991	Census 2001	Census 2011
<b>Total number of inhabitants (million)</b>	5.2	5.35	5.39
Catholic Church	60.4%	68.9%	62.0%
(million)	3.1	3.7	3.3
Lutheran Evangelical Church	6.2%	6.9%	5.9%
	326,000	372,000	316,000
Greek Catholic Church	3.4%	4.1%	3.8%
	178,000	219,000	206,000
Reformed Church	1.6%	2.0%	1.8%
	82,000	107,000	98,000
Orthodox Church	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%
	34,000	50,000	49,000
Other confessions	0.6%	1.1%	1.5%
	30,000	50,000	79,000
NONES	9.8%	13.0%	1.4%
	515,000	697,000	725,000
Sin data/no answer	17.4%	3.0%	10.6%
	917,000	160,000	571,000

For a better understanding of the present state of religiosity in Slovakia, it is important to describe the political and historical context of the changes, mostly after 1989. We can subsequently launch a deeper investigation into the various types of religiosity in Slovakia.

The situation in which the Slovak Republic found itself in 1993 can be characterised as a struggle with three traditions. The first problem was the way we deal with and find an attitude towards the period of the last 40 years of the state-socialism (Communist regime), which declared itself a materialist order. The fall of the rule of the Communist party was one of the issues related to the legitimisation of the new

<sup>33</sup> V. KRIVÝ, *Kolektívne identity na súčasnom Slovensku*, Bratislava: ÚEt SAV, SÚ SAV 2004, p. 37, 67.

<sup>34</sup> Compiled by T. Podolinská, based on the MAJO and KUSENOVÁ, *Atlas of Religiosity of Slovakia*, 28–33.

order. As a result, the official rhetoric of the new Slovak Republic rejected continuity with this era.<sup>35</sup> The second problem in the discussions about the character of the new state was the separation of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, causing a rupture in the shared Czechoslovak tradition and self-definition outside the heritage of the united federative republic and against the Czech Republic became prevalent. The third important factor in the search for legitimacy of the new state and new regime was the very specific temporality of Slovak citizens. Historian Ľ. Lipták called it a ‘new temporality’.<sup>36</sup> According to his hypothesis, the generation that reached the retirement age in 1993 had experienced five political regimes throughout their lives, with revolutions, territorial, state, and political changes, as well as new economic systems. Of the five regimes that this generation experienced, only two can be considered democratic.

Not only in the European context; at the beginning of the 21st century Slovakia can be considered one of moderately religious countries – countries with a high level of declarative religiosity and an average level of church attendance – together with the United States and Spain.<sup>37</sup> The 25-year period of transformation of the relationship between religion and the state in Slovakia since 1989 can be divided into five phases.<sup>38</sup>

The first period refers to the years of the common Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (1990–1992). This period can be called the period of creating an independent religious field in Slovakia (religious field as defined by Bourdieu),<sup>39</sup> during which religious freedom was one of the most crucial issues. But it was still in the frame of a united Czechoslovakia with some small differences between Czechs and Slovaks, due to Czechoslovakia’s federal character. In addition, religious freedom and the economic and legal independence of religion from the state were guaranteed.

The second phase (1993–2000) is characterised by the creation of state authorities in the new Slovak Republic. The social importance of religion in the symbolic character of the state increased, and the basic rules of the religious field were strengthened. The religious field as a symbolic space of the State was Christianised, and Christianity became a nation-forming and state-forming principle. In this phase, the positions of the Catholic and Lutheran Churches became dominant.

The third phase (2000–2004) began with the adoption of the Basic Treaty between the Slovak Republic and the Holy See in 2000. Roman Catholicism, as the *doxa*

<sup>35</sup> M. TÍŽIK, “Out of Civil Religion in Slovakia after 1993”, In E. RÉVAY and M. TOMKA (eds.), *Church and Religious Life in Post-Communist Societies*, Pázmány Társadalomtudomány 7, Budapest: Pilis-csaba 2007, p. 183–207.

<sup>36</sup> Ľ. LIPTÁK, *Changes of Changes: Society and Politics in Slovakia in the 20th Century*, Bratislava: Historical Institute of Slovak Academy of Sciences 2002, *passim*.

<sup>37</sup> M. TÍŽIK, “Religion and National Identity in an Enlarging Europe”, In FRANZ HÖLLINGER and MARKUS HADLER (eds.), *Crossing Borders, Shifting Boundaries: National and Transnational Identities in Europe and Beyond*, Frankfurt-on-Main: Campus Verlag 2012, p. 101–123.

<sup>38</sup> M. TÍŽIK, “Religion and the State after the Fall of State Socialism in Central and Eastern Europe”, In *Religious Diversity Today: Experiencing Religion in the Contemporary World*, vol. 3: *Religion Transforming Societies and Social Lives*, Santa Barbara: Praeger 2015, p. 169–202.

<sup>39</sup> P. BOURDIEU, “Genèse et structure du champ religieux”, *Revue française de sociologie* 12 (3, 1971), p. 295–334.

of the religious field, was strengthened, and the presence of dominant actors of the religious field in terms of power was stabilised.

The fourth phase (2004–2009) was marked by Slovakia's accession to the European Union in 2004, bringing about a halt to the increasing influence and power of the Catholic Church in the field of power and within the symbolic space in Slovakia. This was manifested openly in 2005 through a governmental crisis, which resulted in early elections. This crisis related to disputes over issues promoted by the Catholic Church, which was seeking a treaty with the Holy See on the Right to Conscientious Objection, meant to guarantee the right of public actors not to engage in activities that run counter to the teachings of the Church. On the one hand, this highlighted the presence of the Catholic Church within the power segments of the state; on the other hand, it also demonstrated the Church's inability to enforce an agreement unilaterally advantageous to it against the interests of the state, which protected its existing (restricted) monopoly over symbolic violence and respected several international obligations toward the European Union and other international actors.

The fifth and latest well-defined phase began with the introduction of the euro as a currency in 2009. This phase overlaps with the advent of the economic and financial crisis, which has made Europe-wide issues less important and strengthened nation states as actors in international politics. In terms of the relations between the State and religion in Slovakia, this period brought enforcement of religious institutions as important public actors in multiple spheres of political life in the country. In 2012, there were certain indications suggesting the potential beginning of a new, sixth phase in the relations between the State and Churches, as the largest Churches have begun to be integrated in the power field in new ways. For example, some parts of the Churches, including the Catholic Church, became a part of the Eurosceptic camp and supported the initiatives to leave the European Union in the summer of 2016.

All these changes in Church and State relations took place in a society whose religious structure can be considered stable, with a long history and in which the majority of the population belonged to the Catholic Church alongside a significant minority of non-Catholic Churches.

The newly emerging state placed an increased symbolic importance on religion, and specifically on the Christian religion as a source of symbolic capital and constituent power. Apart from that, the two dominant actors, the Catholic and Lutheran Churches, were granted special privileges within the religious field through a number of measures that led to the formation of *the Catholic-Lutheran asymmetrical dualism*, with the Catholic Church serving as the dominant actor of the two within the emerging field of power.<sup>40</sup> Still, all registered churches in Slovakia (there were 15 in 1993 and 18 in 2016) were part of the religious field and the core included all those churches that received state subsidies and participated in discussions regarding the conditions for this subsidy (this included 12 of the 15 registered churches in 1993).

<sup>40</sup> M. TÍŽIK, *Náboženstvo vo verejnom živote na Slovensku: Zápasy o ideový charakter štátu a spoločnosti*, Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV 2011, p. 339.

## 2.1 Data on religiosity

Various data can be used in the investigation of religiosity:

### A) Censuses

Data from censuses have been helping us understand the changes in the religious structure of Slovakia for more than 100 years. For the moment, the data on religious affiliation from the censuses conducted in 1940, 1960, 1970 and 1980 is missing. But in general, censuses can show a general trend in religious changes in Slovakia. More information on Slovakia's religious structure based on census data is available in tables 1, 2, 3.

### B) Surveys

Except for the census data that is already available, there have been many surveys that have been in some way related to the measurement of religiosity. The first survey in Slovakia was conducted in 1998 and the last one in 2016. Most of them are freely accessible online through the *Slovak Archive of Social Data (SASD)*<sup>41</sup>

There are various kinds of surveys, which are useful for understanding religiosity in Slovakia:

- National surveys (carried out only in Slovakia):
  - *Word View Attitudes in Slovakia 1968 (SPOS 1968)*
  - *Equality and Minorities in Slovakia 2008*
  - *Democracy and Citizens in Slovakia (DOS 2014)*
- International comparative surveys (most of them comparable within V4 countries):
  - *European Values Study – EVS (1991, 1999, 2008, 2017)*
  - *World Values Survey – WVS (1990, 1998, 2017 together with EVS)*
  - *International Social Survey Programme – ISSP (Religion 1998, 2008 and National Identity 1995, 2003, 2015, Citizenship and others)*
  - *European Social Survey – ESS*
  - *Aufbruch 1997, 2007*<sup>42</sup>

For a basic overview of religious changes in Slovakia, a comparison between the years 1968 and 2014 can be useful. The survey on religiosity conducted in 1968 was the first one in the history of Slovakia, and the survey of 2014 replicated all the questions used in 1968, which offers a unique comparison for the purposes of an analysis of changes in religiosity.

## 2.2 Changes in religiosity in Slovakia

For further characteristics, a comparison of the data from two surveys will be used as a case study of the dynamics of religiosity in Slovakia. The surveys carried out in

<sup>41</sup> *Slovenský archív sociálnych dát (SASD)* [online] [Slovak Archive of Social Data], accessed [10. 7. 2019], available online at <http://sasd.sav.sk/sk>.

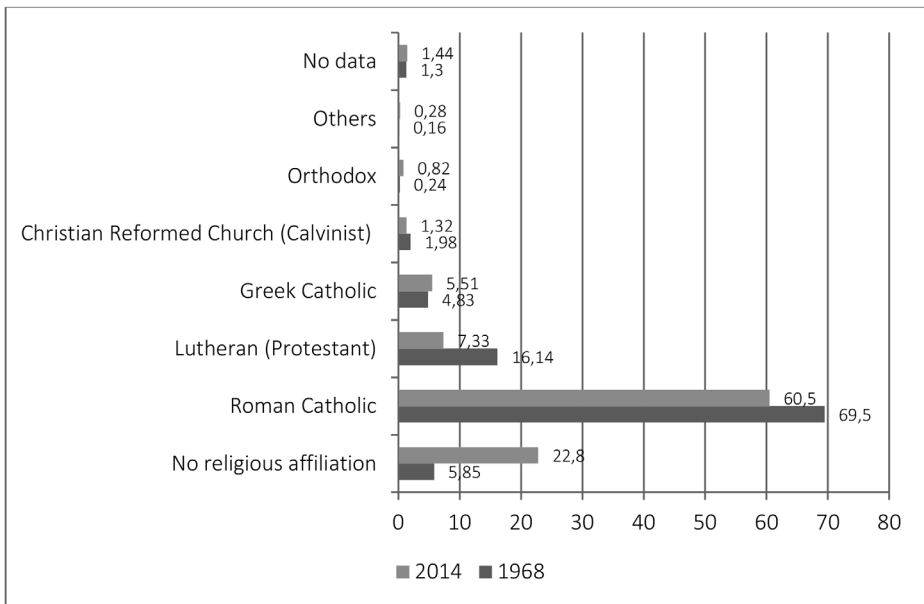
<sup>42</sup> The results from all participating countries are available on-line at their specific web pages.

1968<sup>43</sup> and 2014<sup>44</sup> can help provide a deeper description of the multi-dimensional character of religiosity and show basic trends in religious change. Three basic dimensions of religiosity, used in most surveys (not only in SPOS 1968 and DOS 2014), can be distinguished: 1. religious affiliation (with or without religion), 2. religious practice (church attendance, frequency of prayer, reading of religious books, pilgrimages, etc.), 3. religious beliefs (belief in God, in church teaching, spiritual entities, etc.).

Both surveys (SPOS 1968 and DOS 2014) also investigated the attitudes of respondents towards other religious beliefs and towards the relation of religion and churches in the public space.

### 2.2.1 Religious affiliation in Slovakia

The survey data from SPOS 1968 and DOS 2014 show similar tendencies as the census data. A kind of stability of religious landscape can be observed in the last half of the century, with a growing group of people without religious affiliation and a more significant decline in the number of people affiliated with Protestant churches (Fig. 1).



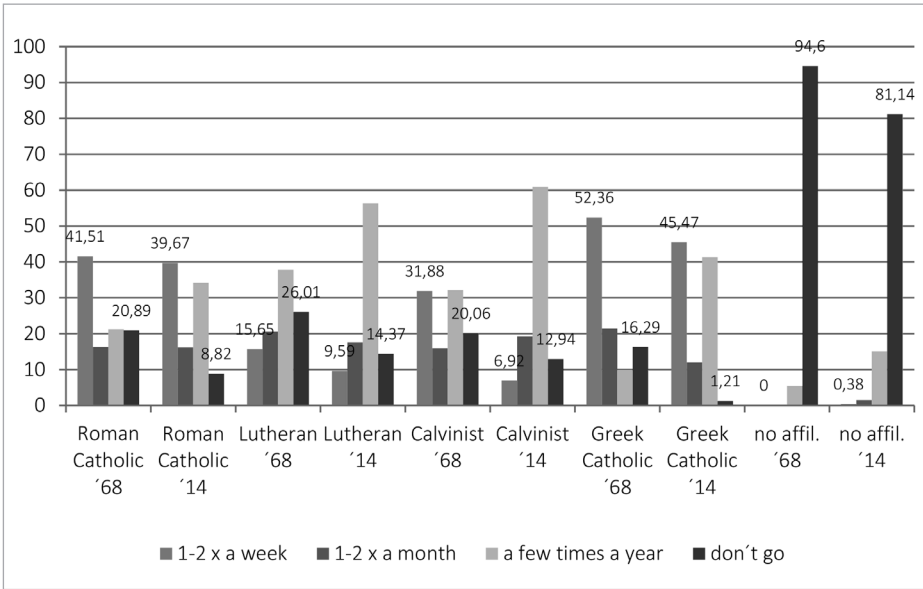
**Figure 1:** What is your religious affiliation?

Compiled by M. Tížik 2017, SPOS 1968, DOS 2014.

<sup>43</sup> "O svetonázorových postojoch obyvateľov Slovenska 1968" [Word View Attitudes in Slovakia 1968] [online], SASD, SPOS 1968, accessed [10.7. 2019], available online at [http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data\\_katalog\\_abs.php?id=sasd\\_1968002](http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data_katalog_abs.php?id=sasd_1968002). SPOS 1968.

<sup>44</sup> "Demokratickosť a občania na Slovensku" [Democracy and Citizens in Slovakia], SASD, published 2014, accessed [10.7. 2019], available online at [http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data\\_katalog\\_abs.php?id=sasd\\_2014003](http://sasd.sav.sk/sk/data_katalog_abs.php?id=sasd_2014003). DOS 2014.

### 2.2.2 Religious practices



**Figure 2:** How often do you take part in religious ceremonies (such as mass or other church services)?

Compiled by M. Tižik 2017; SPOS 1968; DOS 2014.

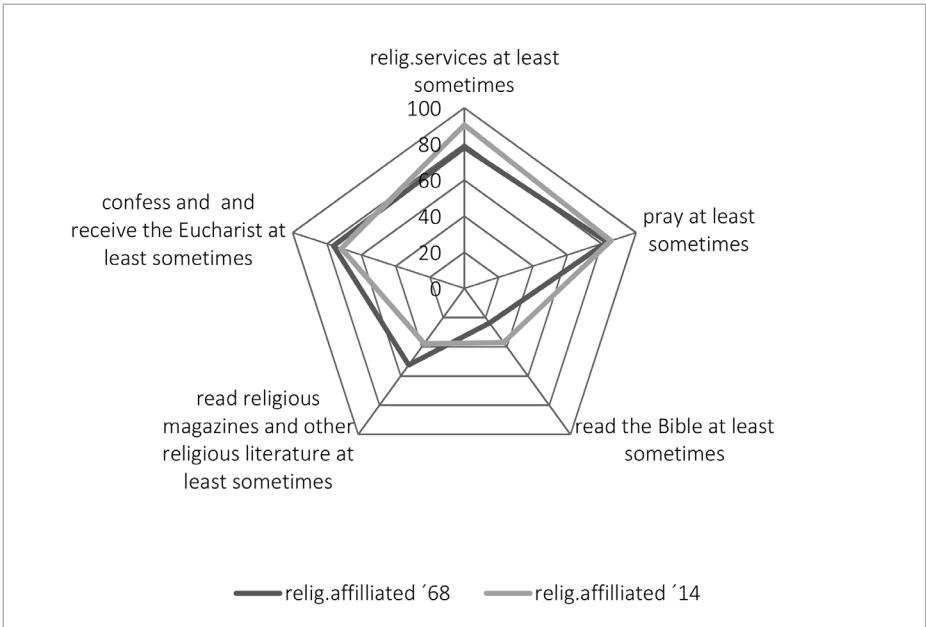
From Fig. 2, it is evident that there was a significant decrease in regular church attendance mostly among Protestant churches (Lutherans and Calvinists); at the same time, there was a decline in the number of non-affiliated people who never go to church. The half-century comparison shows that members of the Greek Catholic Church still attend religious ceremonies most frequently.

When comparing various religious practices (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4), some trends are evident. Among persons who declared affiliation to religion, we can observe an increase in church-going and Bible-reading. Among those who declared not be affiliated to any religion, there has been a significant increase in church-going and other practices, except for reading religious magazines or newspapers.

### 2.2.3 Religious beliefs

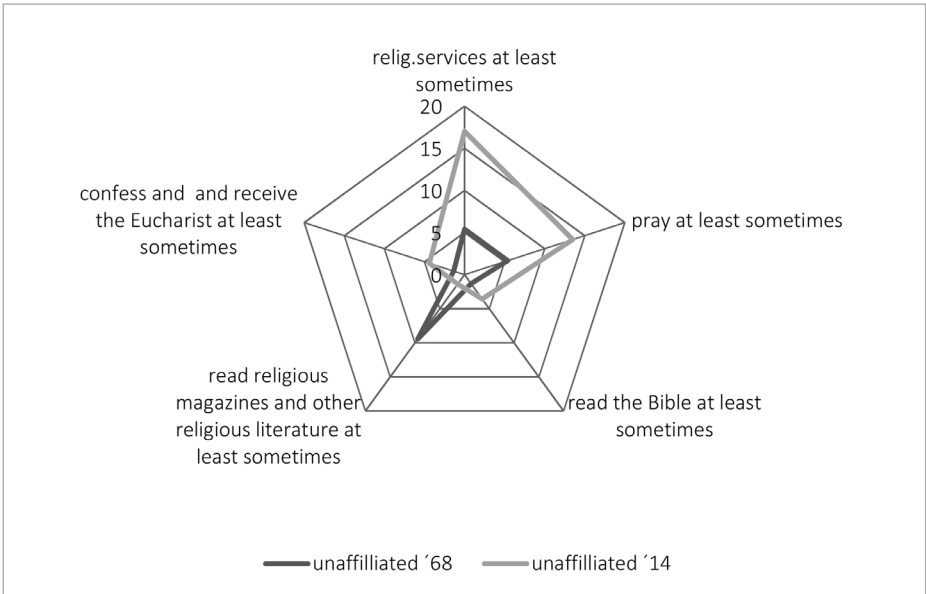
‘Imagine this situation: Two young people, Peter and Joseph, discuss the world today. Peter says that God does not exist, because if God existed, he would not allow things that have occurred and are occurring in the world today. Joseph disagrees with Peter and says that God exists and that people will account for their deeds before God. Peter: God does not exist, because he wouldn’t allow what is happening to take place. Joseph: God exists and people will account for their deeds before God.’





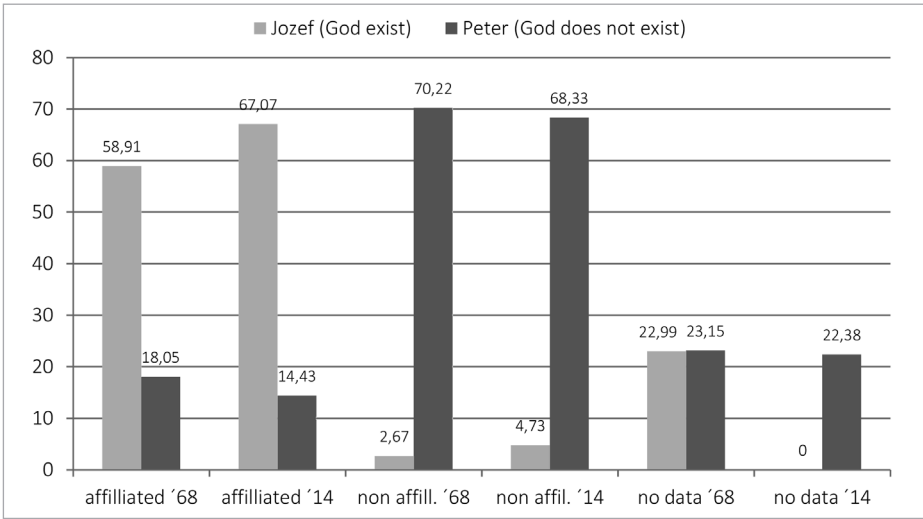
**Figure 3:** Comparison of basic religious practices of persons affiliated to religion.

Compiled by M. Tížik 2017; SPOS 1968; DOS 2014.



**Figure 4:** Comparison of basic religious practices of persons not affiliated to religion.

Compiled by M. Tížik 2017; SPOS 1968; DOS 2014.



**Figure 5:** Belief in the existence of God.

Compiled by M. Tižik 2017; SPOS 1968; DOS 2014.

The increase in traditional religious beliefs is also confirmed by additional data from the surveys conducted in 1968 and 2014. Although there was a decrease in the number of people who declared to be affiliated to a church (and, at the same time, an increase in the number of respondents who don't believe in God), there was an increase of people who declared belief in traditional Christian principles.



**Figure 6:** Comparison of basic religious beliefs in 1968 and 2014.

Compiled by M. Tižik 2017; SPOS 1968; DOS 2014.

### 3. Some Demographic Aspects of the Non-Affiliated Population in Slovakia

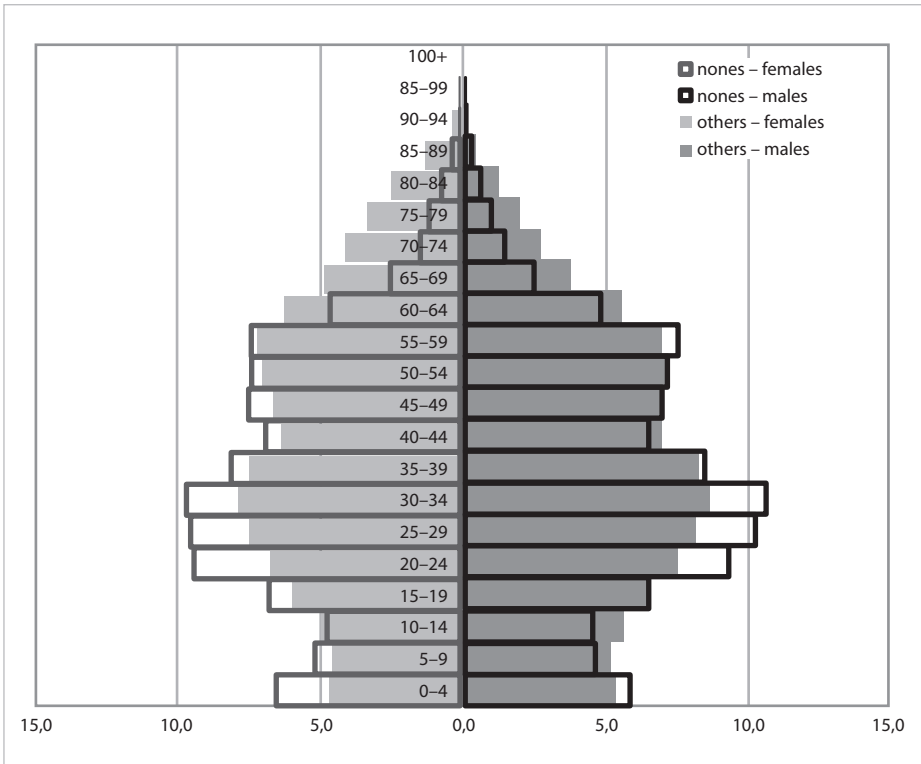
Increasing proportions of religious non-affiliation are typical not only for Slovakia (it is the second most numerous segment of the population); in fact, the majority of Western societies are facing the same trend, although the periods over which these increases have occurred and the speed in which they happen do vary. Consequently, some nations now have larger unaffiliated groups, while others have much smaller ones. The recent survey revealed that, in areas where unaffiliated groups are larger, the religious ‘nones’ have become more distinct from the actively religious in their attitudes and behaviour. In the context of advanced secularisation, there is a greater gap between the actively religious and the non-religious when it comes to their views on family life and reproduction, with the unaffiliated being more liberal in their attitudes and less religious in their private life. Based on the analysing data from over 200 North American, European, and Oceanic country sub-regions included in the 2008 *International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)*, with hierarchical linear models, the sociologists of religion find that, in areas where the unaffiliated form a larger proportion of the population, the differences between the actively religious and the unaffiliated in family values and personal religiosity tend to be greater.<sup>45</sup>

#### 3.1 Nones in Slovakia – Age composition

As there is no data on religious affiliation for several decades, thorough demographic analyses can only be conducted for the period starting in 1991 or 2001. The census data provide quite a solid source of information, although not fully exhaustive. One of the most interesting comparisons is the age breakdown of *nones* compared to the rest of the population. The proportion of those aged 0–14 in the population of *nones* is only 2% higher than in the whole population. It is interesting that in many – mostly rural – areas, the proportion is even lower (in many eastern Slovak districts, the proportion of 0–14 years old in the population of *nones* was more than 30% lower in 2001). Only in the Bratislava City and adjacent districts was the population of *nones*, generally speaking, younger than the entire population. The best way of depicting the age characteristics of society is by using the age pyramid method. In general, the population of *nones* does not differ from other populations in overall age characteristics. There are, however, differences in the relative size of the individual age groups or generations. The first notable difference is a smaller proportion of *nones* aged 60+. The divergence is especially visible among women. The research outcomes of Dana Hamplová<sup>46</sup> proved that in Czech society, religious women form the majority in all

<sup>45</sup> S. WILKINS-LAFLAMME, “Secularization and the Wider Gap in Values and Personal Religiosity between the Religious and Nonreligious”, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 55 (4, 2016): p. 717–736.

<sup>46</sup> D. HAMPLOVÁ, “Náboženství a pohlaví: Proč jsou ženy zbožnější než muži?”, *Sociologický časopis / Czech Sociological Review* 47 (2, 2011): p. 297–323.



**Figure 7:** Age pyramid of the population of *nones* in Slovakia and the rest of the population.<sup>47</sup>

Source: Census 2011; compiled by J. Majo 2017.

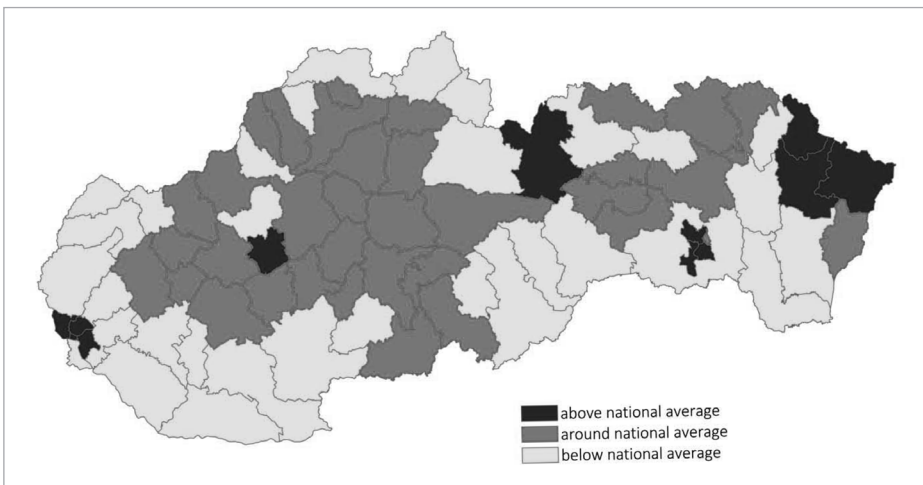
age categories (307) and we presume that this tendency is similar in Slovak society, as well. If we take the spatial approach into account, we can see that the majority of 'older' nones live in districts covering the biggest cities (Bratislava in the west, and Košice in the east), and in north-eastern regions. These eastern Slovak regions are regions with a strong Orthodox and Greek Catholic background and, historically, with strong left-wing (especially Communists) electorate.<sup>48</sup> If we compare the proportion of people aged 60+ among nones against the proportion of this demographic in the rest of the population, it is always lower (-64%), but in eastern Slovakia it is somewhat 'less' low (North-Eastern Slovakia has around -25 and -30%). It is not clear how to identify this group. One of the hypotheses could be the cohort of those who reacted to the forced introduction of the Orthodox Church in the disbanded Greek Catholic Church parishes. In their description of the groups of former Greek Catholic believers and their reaction to the church being disbanded, Barnovský and

<sup>47</sup> Source: data calculated from *Sčítanie obyvateľov, domov a bytov 2011* [Census 2011].

<sup>48</sup> See e.g. V. KRIVÝ, V. FEGLOVÁ and D. BALKO, *Slovensko a jeho regióny: Sociokultúrne súvislosti volebného správania*, Bratislava: Nadácia Médiá 1996, *passim*.

Pešek<sup>49</sup> identified the “indifferent” as the largest group. These people were full of uncertainty at the time of the disbanding, had little information and interest, and, after all, they were the ones with a lower level of religious experience. One of the reactions and strategies of the members of this group could have been their withdrawal from church life. Another salient difference in the age structure is vivid among the 20–35-year olds. These individuals were born on the brink of the old regime and seem to be influenced mainly by secular worldviews (needs to be verified whether this is due to Socialism and their parents mostly living in it, or general societal trends towards secularisation as they work elsewhere in Europe). The proportion of this generation at the level of nones is 27% higher than the proportion of similar generations in the rest of the population. A very high proportion of young nones can be found mostly in western Slovakian districts (Bratislava I, Komárno, Myjava, Nové Mesto nad Váhom), where it is almost 50% higher.

Most of the nones are therefore grouped in productive age groups. It is then slightly surprising that nones are not very dominant in the age group 0–14 (only 3% higher than in the rest of the population). In a set of 43 districts out of 80, the proportion of nones among the youngest generation is even lower than in the rest. These are, for example, regions in north-eastern Slovakia (Medzilaborce), which on one hand, had a proportion of old nones above Slovakian average, but the proportion of nones among youngsters was 56% smaller. The highest divergence can be found mainly in the districts of Bratislava City (the proportion is 60% higher).

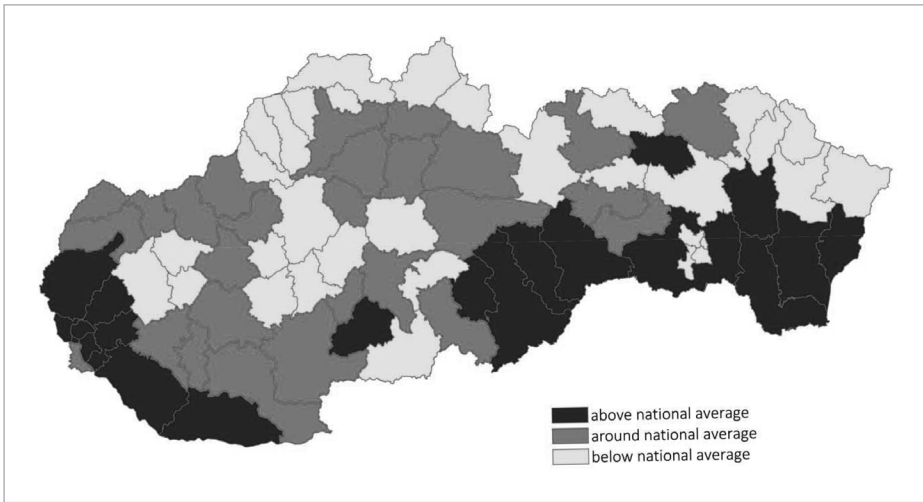


**Figure 8:** Proportion of *nones* 60+ in districts of Slovakia in 2011.<sup>50</sup>

Source: Census 2011; compiled by J. Majo 2017.

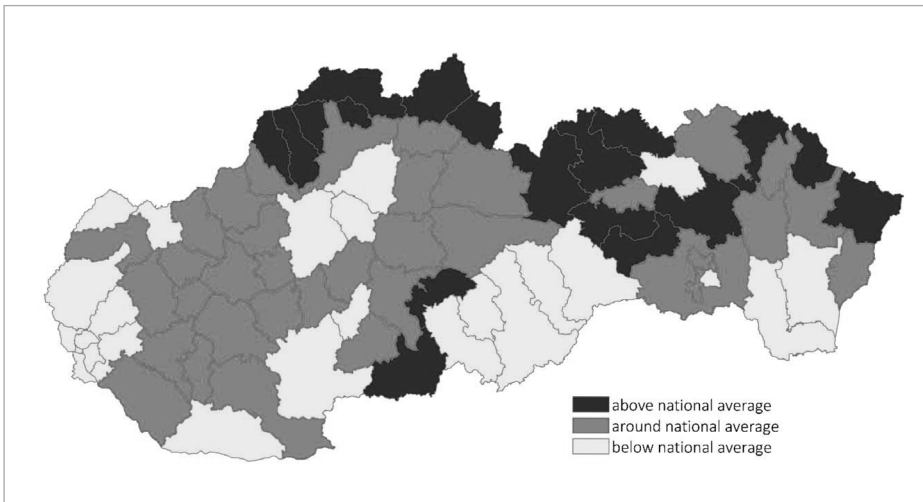
<sup>49</sup> M. BARNOVSKÝ and J. PEŠEK, *Štátna moc a cirkvi na Slovensku 1948–1953*, Bratislava: VEDA SAV 1997, p. 249.

<sup>50</sup> Source: data calculated from *Sčítanie obyvateľov, domov a bytov 2011* [Census 2011].



**Figure 9:** Proportion of *nones* 0–14 in districts of Slovakia in 2011.<sup>51</sup>

Source: Census 2011; compiled by J. Majo 2017.



**Figure 10:** Nones with university education in Slovakia in 2011 (%).<sup>52</sup>

Source: Census 2011; compiled by J. Majo 2017.

<sup>51</sup> Source: data calculated from *Sčítanie obyvateľov, domov a bytov 2011* [Census 2011].

<sup>52</sup> Source: data calculated from *Sčítanie obyvateľov, domov a bytov 2011* [Census 2011].

### 3.2 Education level

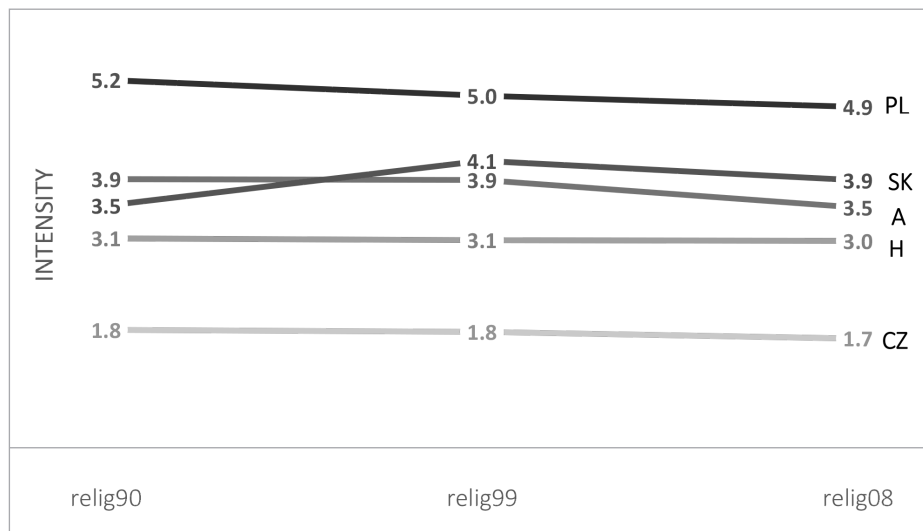
There is a general belief that nones or even atheists are found among the highest educated people<sup>53</sup> and, on the other hand, religious people are more likely to have no formal education. However, educational attainment in correlation with religion in the US did not prove, for example, that nones have the highest level of education.<sup>54</sup> Here, the survey results proved certain positive correlations between congregational attachment and the level of education (283). The findings for Slovakian society can be easily explained by several adjacent variables – such as the rural/urban dichotomy and different concentration of nones in different regions, different age distribution within those sub-populations, employment, and so on. The distribution of the most educated people has similar spatial patterns to the distribution of people who declare themselves as nones. This is also the case in Slovakia – the proportion of nones with a university degree is almost 100% higher than in the rest of the population and, as expected, the proportion of individuals with elementary education is 44% smaller than in the rest of the population. It is interesting that the biggest gap between two sub-populations can be found not in the most secular regions (such as the urban and suburban areas of Bratislava and Košice cities), but in regions where the number of nones is not very high (especially in mostly rural and Catholic regions in northern Slovakia). The proportion of university educated nones is almost 200% higher in this case. In addition, two of the five districts of Bratislava City with quite a new immigration profile, mostly in large housing estates, have an even lower proportion of university educated nones than the rest of the population. In general, these regions have a very high share of university educated individuals, but this might mean that either the young educated generations are anchored in any of the denominations to a larger extent than their parents, or that there is just a higher proportion of those who did not declare anything (neither non-confessionalism, nor a religious affiliation).

## 4. Slovakia – a Comparative Perspective

At the very end, for the purposes of contextualising the data from censuses, surveys, and cartographic and demographic studies conducted in connection with religiosity in Slovakia during the last decades, we will briefly introduce a comparative perspective of religiosity of Slovakia, using the framework of the representative surveys carried out in Slovakia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Austria, and Poland (EVS 1990, 1999, 2008). Using these international comparative researches, we have conducted an analysis of the extent of religiosity across three *dimensions* – belief, membership,

<sup>53</sup> A. KEYSAR, “Religious/Nonreligious Demography and Religion versus Science: A Global Perspective”, In P. ZUCKERMAN and J. R. SHOOK (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2017, p. 44–45.

<sup>54</sup> B. A. KOSMIN and A. KEYSAR, *Religion in a Free Market*, Ithaca: Paramount Market Publishing 2006, p. 152–153.



**Figure 11:** Religiosity level.<sup>55</sup>

Source: Podolinská, Krivý, Bahna 2013: 213; compiled by Vladimír Krivý in 2013.

and practising.<sup>56</sup> The analyses showed that, among the analysed countries, **Slovakia** is the **only** country where **religiosity became stronger** when comparing 1991 and 2008 (Fig. 11).

In Poland and Austria, religiosity weakened considerably in the given period, and in Hungary and the Czech Republic it declined slightly. Yet, all these trends developed at significantly different *levels of religiosity*. Poland is a country with by far the highest level of religiosity, while the Czech Republic is known for its low degree of religiosity. The third group of countries, the ‘group in the middle’, is represented by Slovakia, Austria, and Hungary. The closest country to Slovakia in terms of the average level of religiosity is Austria, followed by Hungary. Following the same criterion, the most distant country is the Czech Republic.

During the past almost 20 years, the share of fully religious people (people with the highest level of religiosity) decreased in three countries: there was a dramatic decline in Poland, and a slight decrease in Austria and Hungary. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, these shares were identical at the beginning and at the end of the given period – though in a different way in both countries. The shares of fully secular people and people with a very low degree of religiosity are the highest in the Czech Republic, followed by Hungary and Slovakia (Table 4).

<sup>55</sup> Compiled by Vladimír Krivý in 2013. T. PODOLINSKÁ, V. KRIVÝ and M. BAHNA, “Religiozita: Slovensko a jeho susedia”, In V. Krivý (ed.), *Ako sa mení slovenská spoločnosť*, Sociologický ústav 2013, p. 213.

<sup>56</sup> See T. PODOLINSKÁ, KRIVÝ and BAHNA, “Religiozita: Slovensko a jeho susedia”, p. 181–256.



**Table 4:** Religiosity level.<sup>57</sup>

Country	Level/intensity of religiosity in		
	1991	1999	2008
Poland (PL)	5.2	5.0	4.9
Slovakia (SK)	3.5	4.1	3.9
Austria (A)	3.9	3.9	3.5
Hungary (H)	3.1	3.1	3.0
Czech Rep. (CZ)	1.8	1.8	1.7

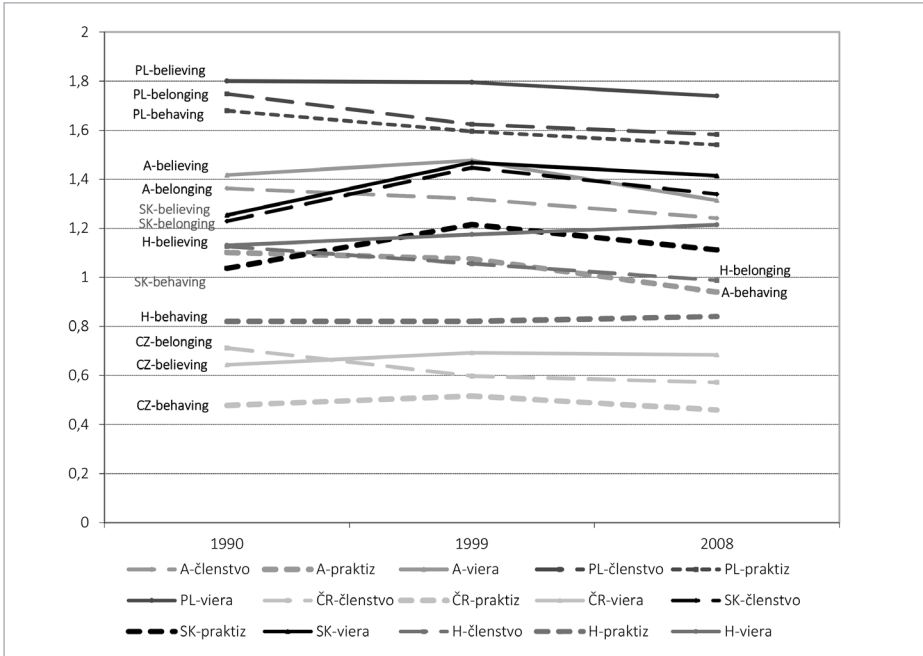
In each of these five countries, the inter-dimensional differences (belief, membership, practising) diverged in the period 1991–2008. The general pattern is the following: belief as the strongest dimension, membership in the middle, and practising as the weakest dimension. While all three dimensions weakened in Poland and Austria in the given period, Slovakia saw an opposite tendency – the strengthening of all three dimensions. **Overall, religiosity increased with regard to the belief dimension in three countries, declined with regard to the membership dimension in four countries, and again declined with regard to the practising dimension in three countries** (Fig. 12).

*Practising* turned to be clearly the *weakest point of religiosity*. In all five countries, private (individual) practice of religiosity is present to a much greater extent than public (collective) practice. Poland is an exception in this respect, as the level of public practice in this country is greater than the occurrence of private practice in all four other countries. Overall, the phenomenon of smaller practice can lead to stronger religiosity based on belief and private practising in future generations, but it can also continue weakening private practising and belief as such.

As far as religious *rituals* are concerned, the norm has become increasingly accepted among young people and less and less accepted among older people throughout the past almost 20 years. In general, there has been an inter-generational convergence in the acceptance of baptism, church marriage and church funeral (Fig. 13).

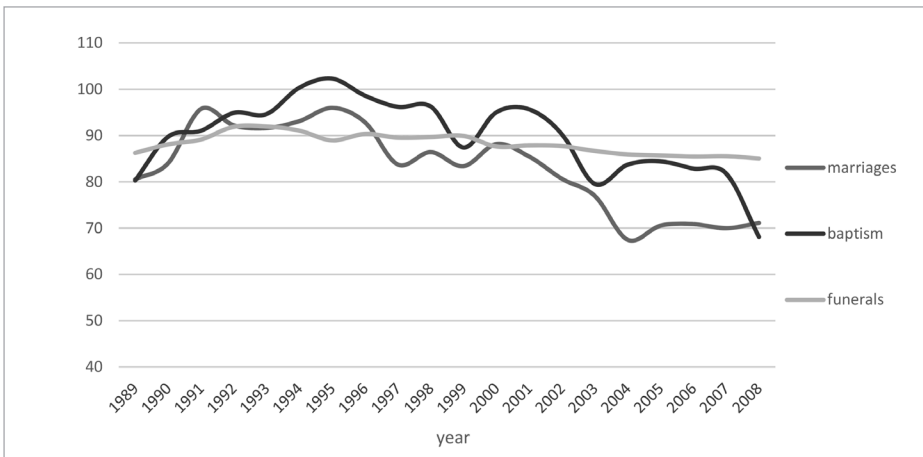
Finally, the proportion of consumption of non-Christian ideas and so-called alternative spirituality with regard to the level of religiosity was surveyed as well. In Slovakia, non-Christian and non-conformist ideas (corresponding to ‘alternative spirituality’ to a certain extent) are more frequent among people with a higher degree of religiosity. Instead of seeking an ‘alternative’ to traditional religiosity, we can rather speak about an acceptance of an ‘alternative’ in the framework of traditional religiosity. At the level of the individual, this can be seen as detraditionalization or even individualisation of (personal) religiosity.

<sup>57</sup> Compiled by Tatiana Zachar Podolinská in 2017, based on calculations by Vladimír Krivý in 2013. PODOLINSKÁ, KRIVÝ and BAHNA, “Religiozita: Slovensko a jeho susedia”, p. 181–256.



**Figure 12:** Dimensions of religiosity: believing, practising, behaving.<sup>58</sup>

Source: Podolinská, Krivý, Bahna 2013: 217; compiled by Vladimír Krivý in 2013.



**Figure 13:** Religious rituals 1989–2008.<sup>59</sup>

Source: Podolinská, Krivý, Bahna 2013: 235; compiled by Vladimír Krivý in 2013.

<sup>58</sup> Compiled by Vladimír Krivý in 2013. PODOLINSKÁ, KRIVÝ and BAHNA, “Religiozita: Slovensko a jeho susedia”, p. 181–256.

<sup>59</sup> Compiled by Vladimír Krivý in 2013. PODOLINSKÁ, KRIVÝ and BAHNA, “Religiozita: Slovensko a jeho susedia”, p. 235.

## Conclusions

The societal, political, and international changes during more than 20 years of the Slovak Republic suggest several basic conclusions. Religion can in some situations be an important component for the mobilisation of collective identity. As the effect of the integration of religion into the symbolical character of the State, there has been an increase in the spreading of traditional Christian beliefs. In this sense, religion serves as a kind of compensatory legitimizing tool in cases where few other symbolic sources of national identity are available in the collective memory or in the principles of institutional functioning. Nevertheless, even though religion helps preserve the homogeneity of society in “critical” situations, this does not manifest itself as increased in religious affiliation. There is a certain increase in the activity of the Slovak population, but only in some basic religious practices.

In the case of the Slovak Republic, the State’s symbolic and legislative privileging of Christian actors, particularly the Catholic Church and partly also the Lutheran Church, and the integration of these actors into the symbolic character of the State, has increased throughout the last two decades. Representatives of the Catholic Church have become important actors in political and public debates. In addition, the Catholic Church has become a hegemonic leader in establishing the basic principles of the regulation and functioning of religious life in Slovakia. The strengthening of their economic positions and the symbolic favouring of traditional Churches are strong factors that enable reproduction of the principles of dominant Churches but also of the field of power, which dates back to the formation of the Slovak Republic.

However, the ‘traditional’ religiosity landscape in Slovakia has also faced a rapid increase in the number of non-affiliated persons and persons not willing to respond to questions concerning their religiosity over the past decades. The population of nones in the Slovak Republic has many specificities, although the differences compared to the rest of the population are not as significantly different, as one would have expected. The age profile follows general trends in society with the highest percentage on nones among the productive age group, especially around the age of 30 and younger. The age groups around 30 are very strong in the western part of the country and in Bratislava. On the other hand, older age groups are present slightly above the national average in eastern Slovakia, and mostly rural districts, possibly reflecting its past evolution. Attained education seems to be relevant mainly through the higher proportion of college/university degree holders among nones, and the small proportion of individuals with elementary school education. The concentration of nones with higher education is significantly higher in regions with low imprints of secularisation.

Alongside the process of “visible secularisation” of Slovak society, we are experiencing a process of transformation and adaptation of traditional Christianity. Current Christianity in Slovakia is a multi-coloured mixture of traditional, post-traditional, and non-traditional religiosity. Nevertheless, when comparing the overall level of

religiosity in Slovakia with its neighbours (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Austria), Slovakia belongs to the “group in the middle”, represented by Slovakia, Austria, and Hungary. The closest country to Slovakia in terms of the average level of religiosity is Austria, followed by Hungary. Following the same criterion, the most distant country is the Czech Republic. Among these, Slovakia is the only country where overall religiosity increased (1991–2008) in all its dimensions – believing, belonging and practising.

*Practising* clearly turned out to be the *weakest point of religiosity*. Private (individual) practising of religiosity is present to a much greater extent than public (collective) practising in Slovakia. Overall, the phenomenon of smaller practice can lead to stronger religiosity based on belief and private practising in future generations, but it can also continue weakening private practising and belief as such.

In Slovakia, non-Christian and non-conformist ideas (corresponding to “alternative spirituality” to a certain degree) are more frequent among people with a higher degree of religiosity. Instead of seeking an “alternative” to traditional religiosity, we can rather speak about an acceptance of the “alternative” in the framework of traditional religiosity. At the level of the individual, this can be considered detraditionalization or even individualisation of (personal) religiosity.

In general, we can conclude that churches and other religious or faith-based institutions in Slovakia should be aware of the multi-coloured landscape of modern believers and modify the dialogue according to the specific traits of the respective strata of believers. In this regard, the flexible and non-orthodox approach of “non-traditional” churches is sometimes more fitting the needs of post-traditional and non-traditional believers. Two options are available in this respect: 1) to develop a kind of experiment and promote an intensive dialogue on the “margins” of “orthodoxy” and “normativity” (sometimes called post-Christianity), or 2) to guard the door and get rid of all “free passengers” (even more orthodox Christianity).

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# Religion and Religiosity in Contemporary Poland

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**Abstrakt:** Článek se věnuje problematice změn, které se odehrávají v současném Polsku v oblasti náboženské víry, náboženských zvyků a obecně role náboženství i katolické církve. Autor předkládá vybraná data získaná během nedávných sociologických výzkumů, které jasně ukazují trend oslabování náboženské angažovanosti, nárůstu náboženského pluralismu, individualizace a privatizace náboženství i oslabování významu institucionalizované církve. Vzdor tomu, že článek sleduje jisté tendence, kterými se vývoj ubírá, nelze doopravdy odhadnout, zda a jak se tyto trendy zrealizují v budoucnu. Ve světle prezentovaných výsledků je však jasné, že katolická církev v Polsku musí hledat nové formy pastorální péče a nový způsob existence v životě polské společnosti.

**Klíčová slova:** náboženství; náboženská; sekularizace; Polsko; sociologie náboženství

**Abstract:** The article addresses the problem of changes that are currently taking place in the field of religious beliefs, religious customs and the role of religion and the Catholic Church in Polish society. The author presents selected data from sociological research conducted in recent years, which quite clearly show trends of weakening religious engagement, increase in religious pluralism, individualization and privatization of religion, as well as weakening the importance of the institutional Church. Although certain tendencies are outlined, it is unpredictable what their further course will be. In the light of the presented research results, it is clear that the Catholic Church in Poland must look for new forms of pastoral care and new forms of presence in the life of Polish society.

**Keywords:** religion; religiosity; secularization; Poland; sociology of religion

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## Historical outline

Poland adopted Christianity in 966 and this date marks the foundation of Polish statehood. The baptism of the contemporary ruler of the tribes inhabiting part of the contemporary Polish territory was conducted through an intermediary of the Czech state and signified the country's entrance into the sphere of influence of the western Latin division of Christianity. Since the very beginning, the Catholic Church, through its institutions – its dioceses, parishes, and religious orders, actively contributed to forming the institutional structures of the state and its civilizational and cultural development.

Medieval times meant building close connections with the centres of Christianity in Western and Southern Europe. Towards the end of the medieval era, the Polish state, under the rule of the Jagiellons, became one of the largest European monarchies. Along with its territorial expansion it became a multi-ethnic and multi-religious organism, with the following religions thriving within its borders: the eastern Orthodox Church, Judaism, and Islam. The Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, though it encompassed a considerable share of the contemporary population of the Nobility Commonwealth citizens, did not cause any deep social divisions or conflicts stemming from religious attitudes.

Polish rulers adopted a concept of regulating interreligious relations, which differed from that of Western Europe where bloody religious wars broke out, by basing it on the principle of freedom of conscience. The influence of Protestant reformers was quite effectively curbed, undoubtedly due to the threat posed by neighbouring countries representing creeds and confessions other than Catholicism (Islamic Turkey, eastern Orthodox Russia, Protestant Sweden). The 17th century saw the rise of an unprecedented union between the Catholic Church and a part of the Orthodox Church, with the purpose to erase the divide between the eastern Orthodox Church and Catholicism. The newly founded Greek Catholic Church (Uniate) developed mainly in the east of the Polish Commonwealth of that time (these are predominantly territories lying now within Ukraine and Belarus).

At the end of the 18th century Poland was partitioned between three invaders: Russia, Prussia, and Austria, with the first two representing religions different from Roman Catholicism, dominant in the Polish Commonwealth. During the partitioning period, Polish national identity became very strongly fused with the Catholic religion, resulting in the formation of the stereotype of a Pole-Catholic. After Poland regained independence in 1918, the Roman Catholic creed was decidedly the dominant one in all social strata, and especially so amongst the most numerous worker and peasant class. World War II, which commenced on the 1st of September 1939, with Hitler's Germany attacking Poland, brought extensive human and material losses to the Church in Poland. A large part of the clergy was exterminated in German death camps and concentration camps. One of the better-known heroes of these times was the Polish Franciscan monk Friar Maksymilian Maria Kolbe, who sacrificed his life for a fellow prisoner in the Auschwitz Camp.

After 1944, when the Communists came into power in Poland, religion became one of the main enemies of the state. Persecution and organised laicisation, especially of youth, did not have marked effects. The contemporary cardinal of Poland, Stefan Wyszyński, arrested for a period of time by the Communist government, adopted the strategy of resistance to Communism, resorting to folk religiosity and widespread ministry. In 1978, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope and assumed the name of John Paul II. This was an event of enormous importance, both for the Polish Church and the entire Polish society suffering the hardships of Communist oppression.

The Pope's pilgrimage to Poland in 1979 mobilised great numbers of participants, not only from among orthodox Catholics, and is nowadays commonly regarded as the impulse that laid the foundations for the Solidarity movement, which emerged a year later. This exceptional mass movement emphasized many religious symbols, notions, and other elements, closely tied to national themes. The political changes of 1989 reinstated democracy in Poland and also meant the Catholic Church regained its former position. The church used its representatives, the broad involvement of its institutional structures, and intensive ministry activities, and thus actively participated in building Polish national identity and defended it in difficult moments.

With the Catholic Church assuming the role of the primary resistance factor in the totalitarian state, it is usually pointed out that the strategies it relied on during the Communist regime and in the period that followed differed.<sup>1</sup> In Communist times the main focus was simply on the survival of the Church as an institution, on supporting the believers in face of repression, and on retaining them against the state's atheism. During the following period, the actions of the Church were generally aimed on rebuilding and reformulating the national identity in accordance with the ideals of democracy and civic empowerment. Presently, with a rise of pluralism, globalist tendencies, market economy, and commercialism, alongside liberalism and moral relativism, its goal is to retain believers in the sphere of religious orthodoxy and to prevent secularisation.

## Outcomes of research in the field of religion and religiosity

The presented study used mainly research by the CBOS (Public Opinion Research Center), which has several advantages. Firstly, these are surveys conducted on Polish nationwide representative samples, which means their outcomes can be extrapolated onto the whole of Polish society. Sample groups commonly include ca. 1000 Polish adults. Secondly, the studies are conducted using the same or very similar method over many years, thus making it possible to compare and observe changes over time. The second source were the results of the World Value Survey from 1989, 1997, 2005,

<sup>1</sup> M. TOMKA, "Catholics and Protestants in Post-Communist Europe", in I. BOROWIK (ed.), *Religious Churches and Religiosity in Post-Communist Europe*, Kraków: Instytut Wydawniczy "Nomos" 2006, p. 37–51.

and 2012, also based on representative samples and offering the possibility to draw comparison with other countries included in the research. Not all European countries participated in those surveys, so complete comparisons are impossible. The third main source were the official statistics of the Catholic Church, compiled annually by the Institute of the Catholic Church Statistics SAC in Warsaw. Moreover, a number of works by sociologists of religion were used, offering inspiring interpretations of the present situation of religion and religiosity in Poland.

### **Mono-religious Polish society**

According to the last General Census in Poland (2011), 96.0% of respondents answering the question on their religious affiliation declared that they belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, 0.4% to the Eastern Orthodox Church, 0.4% to the Jehovah's Witnesses, 0.2% to the Augsburg Evangelical Church, and 0.1% to the Greek Catholic Church (Catholic Church of Byzantine-Ukrainian Rite). No affiliation to any religion was declared by 2.6%. The religious structure of Polish society is therefore by and large monolithic. The representatives of religions and cults other than Christianity constitute less than a thousandth of the total population and persons without any religious affiliation constitute a small percentage. It is worth noting that the representatives of Christian denominations other than the Catholic one are very unevenly distributed within the country: the Eastern Orthodox Church believers and Greek Catholics inhabit mainly the east of Poland, while Protestants generally live in the west and north-west.

The number of Catholics within the entire Polish society is more or less stable, although in recent years a small decrease has been noted. In the World Value Survey data from 2012, 92.3% of respondents perceived themselves as Catholics, in 2005 it was 94.4%, and in 1997 93.5%. The proportions of people declaring non-religious status were as follows: 4.7%, 2.0% and 3.1% (WVS'97, WVS'05, WVS'15 respectively). It can therefore be formally accepted that 90% of Polish population are Catholics. This means Poland has the highest proportion of Catholics from all the countries subject to WVS research in 2012. For example, in Germany Catholics account for 26.6%, in Spain for 72.3%, while in the Netherlands they take 17.6%.

In a Polish nationwide survey conducted by CBOS in 2014, 89.3% of adult respondents declared themselves as Roman Catholics, 4.9% declared Christianity (in general), 1.6% atheism and the same number said they were simply non-religious, 0.7% stated that they did not belong to any religious denomination and 0.2% that they were agnostics. Agnosticism, atheism, or religious indifference is relatively rare among Poles.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> R. BOGUSZEWSKI (ed.), *Lokalna parafia – jest społeczne znaczenie i funkcje*, CBOS Report 158 (2014), p. 1.

## Religious auto-declaration

In case of religious auto-declarations considering obedience of the Church's recommendations, fairly significant changes are visible. The number of those considering themselves to be believers and compliant with the recommendations of the Church fell from 66% to 39% between 2005 and 2014, while the number of those who perceive themselves as religious people in their own way grew (from 32% to 52%), as did the number of non-religious people (from 1% to 5%).

**Table 1:** Religious auto-declaration of the Polish between 2000–2012 (%).<sup>3</sup>

Response categories	2000	2003	2005 (02)	2005 (05)	2006	2007	2009	2010	2012
I am religious and I comply with Church recommendations	56.7	53.9	57.6	65.9	62.9	55.0	53.2	45.5	45.9
I am religious in my own way	39.6	42.8	39.0	31.5	31.8	39.3	41.1	46.1	47.3
I can't say whether I'm religious or not	1.3	1.0	0.6	0.8	1.7	2.4	1.6	3.2	2.2
I'm not religious and I'm not interested in it	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.4	1.7	1.4	2.0	2.3	1.7
I'm not religious because the teachings of the Church are mistaken	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.8	0.4	1.1	1.5	1.5

Data from CBOS research indicate that since the nineties, the basic indicators of the declared faith have remained at a more or less identical level, although in this scope one could observe certain tendencies for change. The percentage of people declaring themselves as deeply religious in the period of 1997–2014 was contained within the range of 8%–12%; as religious people moved in the range of 83%–87%; and non-religious people were within the range of 3%–8%. The decrease in the proportion of deeply religious people (between 2005 and 2014, the number declined by 4%) is noticeable, as is the increase of the number of non-religious people (during the period of 2005–2014 by 3%). While these shifts are not considerable, the tendency is clear and stable.

WVS research indicates that religion is an important value for Polish people. Almost half the respondents in 2012 considered it to be very important, and further 33.9% rather important in their life. This is one of the highest results in Europe. The percentage of respondents who state that religion plays a significant role in their life has stayed on a similar level since at least the end of the nineties, although there has been a slight increase in the number of respondents for whom religion is not important – from 16.2% in 1997 to 19.0% in 2012.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> R. BOGUSZEWSKI (ed.), *Zmiany w zakresie wiary i religijności Polaków po śmierci Jana Pawła II*. CBOS Report BS/49 (2012), p. 12. The categories: 'other' and 'difficult to say' were omitted.

<sup>4</sup> R. INGLEHART, C. HAERPFER, A. MORENO, C. WELZEL, K. KIZILOVA, J. DIEZ-MEDRANO, M. LAGOS, P. NORRIS, E. PONARIN & B. PURANEN et al. (eds.), *World Values Survey: Round Three – Coun-*

**Table 2:** Importance of religion in selected European countries (%).<sup>5</sup>

Importance of religion in life	Belarus	Estonia	Germany	Netherlands	Romania	Spain	Sweden	Ukraine	Poland
Very important and rather important	48.0	25.3	38.0	25.2	83.8	32.1	26.2	60.8	79.6
Not very important and not at all important	50.8	73.1	61.7	72.7	15.9	67.1	72.8	39.3	19.9

The cited WVS survey also contained questions on what religion means to the respondents in general. The surveyed Poles most often saw the essence of religion in good deeds unto other people (70.5%), followed by imparting the purpose of life in this world (62.6%), giving purpose to life after death (25.8%), and finally observance of religious norms and ceremonies (23.5%).<sup>6</sup> In the light of this, one can state that the Polish appreciate the ethical dimension of religion more than the eschatological one.

## Religious practices

The indicators of participation in religious practices are high as well, although there have been noticeable changes. The percentage of people practising regularly (several times a week and once a week) was between 50% and 58% in 1997–2014; for those practising irregularly (once or twice a month and several times a year) it is between 33% and 37%, and for not practising it is between 9% and 13%. There has been a noticeable decrease in the number of people practising regularly (by 8% during 2005–2014), and an increase of the number of people practising irregularly (by 4% during 2005–2014) and not practising at all (by 4% during 2005–2014).<sup>7</sup> After combining both variables (religious auto-declaration and participation in religious practices), it appears that the number of religious people who practise regularly fell from 58% to 50% in 2005–2014, while there was an increase in the number of religious people who practise irregularly (from 32% to 35%), the number of religious people who do not practise (from 6% to 7%), and the number of non-religious people who do not practise (from 3% to 6%).

*try-Pooled Datafile Version:* [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV3.jsp](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV3.jsp). Madrid: JD Systems Institute (2014), p. 6, V9; R. INGLEHART, C. HAERPFER, A. MORENO, C. WELZEL, K. KIZILOVA, J. DIEZ-MEDRANO, M. LAGOS, P. NORRIS, E. PONARIN & B. PURANEN et al. (eds.), *World Values Survey: Round Five – Country-Pooled Datafile Version:* [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV5.jsp](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV5.jsp). Madrid: JD Systems Institute (2014), p. 11, V9; R. INGLEHART, C. HAERPFER, A. MORENO, C. WELZEL, K. KIZILOVA, J. DIEZ-MEDRANO, M. LAGOS, P. NORRIS, E. PONARIN and B. PURANEN et al. (eds.), *World Values Survey: Round Six – Country-Pooled Datafile Version:* [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp). Madrid: JD Systems Institute (2014), p. 11, V9.

<sup>5</sup> INGLEHART et al., *World Values Survey: Round Six*, p. 11 V9.

<sup>6</sup> INGLEHART et al., *World Values Survey: Round Six*, p. 344 V150, p. 346 V151.

<sup>7</sup> R. BOGUSZEWSKI (ed.), *Zmiany w zakresie podstawowych wskaźników religijności Polaków po śmierci Jana Pawła II*, CBOS Report 26 (2015), p. 5.



An important indicator of religiosity is the frequency of prayer. In 2015, it was recorded that 43% of Poles, surveyed by CBOS, prayed every day, 15% more than once a week, 8% once a week, 12% at least once a month, and 7% never. Compared to 2005, the percentage of people praying every day decreased (by 13%), with a rise in the number those who do not pray at all (by 2%) and those who pray more often than once a week (by 4%).<sup>8</sup>

Taking into account the category of young people, treated as one particularly affected by secularisation tendencies, one can notice the trends which are found in the whole society are somewhat stronger. In 2005–2014 the proportion of people perceiving themselves as non-religious among respondents aged 18–24 rose (from 6% to 15%), while the number of religious people decreased (from 86% to 77%), as did the number of regularly practising people (from 51% to 44%), while the number of non-religious people in general increased (from 10% to 18%). The proportion of people declaring themselves as religious and compliant with the recommendations of the Church (from 51% to 43%) and the proportion of non-practising and non-religious people rose (from 4% to 11%). In case of people from large cities, who are considered a category subject to faster secularisation, these tendencies are more conspicuous than in the population as a whole. During 2005–2014, the percentage of people describing themselves as deeply religious fell (from 12% to 8%), as did the percentage of religious people (from 80% to 75%), while the percentage of non-religious people increased percentage (from 8% to 17%). The number of non-practising people also grew (rise from 17% to 23%), while the number of religious and regularly practising people fell (fall from 43% to 36%).<sup>9</sup>

The cited research shows certain fairly clear-cut tendencies, but it ought to be emphasised here that they are neither very far-reaching nor evenly distributed. In some cases the changes seem to be inhibited, and they may even move in the opposite direction. It is also noticeable that the dynamics of these changes are not very fast; they develop slowly over a longer period of time.

The World Values Survey showed that in 2012, 67.2% respondents said they were going to church at least once a month; in 2005 it was 75.0%; and in 1997 73.1%. On the other hand the number of respondents who perceived themselves as religious reached, in the respective surveys: 90.9% in 1997, 92.0% in 2005, and 86.2% in 2012. The decrease of the number of respondents who reported regularly attending church and declared themselves religious people is therefore confirmed here. Nonetheless, compared to other European countries, the level of auto-declaration as religious is still high. For example, the number of people declaring themselves as religious in 2012 reached 49.5% in Germany, 49.9% in Spain, 68.3% in Ukraine, and 43.8% in the Netherlands.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Zmiany w zakresie podstawowych wskaźników...*, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Zmiany w zakresie podstawowych wskaźników...*, p. 7–11.

<sup>10</sup> INGLEHART et al., *World Values Survey: Round Three*, p. 258 V181, p. 259 V182; INGLEHART et al., *World Values Survey: Round Five*, p. 405 V186, p. 407 V187; INGLEHART et al., *World Values Survey: Round Six*, p. 336 V145, p. 340 V147.

The official data of the Catholic Church, which conducts annual counts of the faithful attending the holy Sunday mass and receiving holy communion, shows that in 2014, 39.1% of the faithful (*dominicanos*) attended mass, with 16.3% receiving holy communion (*comunicantes*). It is also possible to observe considerable territorial variation among the regions of Poland. The highest level of participation of the faithful in mass services was recorded in the following dioceses: Tarnów (70.1%), Rzeszów (64.6%), Przemyśl (59.6%) and Kraków (50.7%), while the lowest level of participation was found in the following dioceses: Sosnowiec (27.5%), Koszalin-Kołobrzeg (25.8%), Szczecin-Kamień (24.9%) and Łódź (24.8%). The highest percentage of the faithful received holy communion in these dioceses: Tarnów (24.3%), Opole (21.1%), Zamość-Lubaczów (21.1%), Pelplin (21.1%), and the lowest in these dioceses: Szczecin-Kamień (11.3%), Łódź (11.3%), Sosnowiec (11.0%) and Koszalin-Kołobrzeg (10.8%). As can be seen, the differences between dioceses are sometimes as high as 100%. Moreover, high participation of the faithful in the holy mass does not always indicate high numbers of people receiving holy communion – the differences between *dominicanos* and *comunicantes* sometimes exceed 40%, and on average they reach just above 20% in the whole of Poland, which denotes that more or less the same percentage of people go to church but do not receive holy communion.<sup>11</sup>

In comparison with previous years, one can notice that the percentage figures for the holy mass attendees have been systematically in decline, while the percentages of people receiving holy communion have been growing at the same time. These data can be interpreted as an expression of a greater harmonisation of the Catholics' religious identity and their wish to realise their religious involvement more fully.

**Table 3:** The numbers of the faithful attending the holy Sunday mass and receiving holy communion 1980–2014 (%).<sup>12</sup>

Indicator	2014	2010	2005	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980
Dominicanos	39.1	41.0	45.0	47.5	46.8	50.3	49.9	51.0
Comunicantes	16.3	16.4	16.5	19.4	15.4	10.7	9.1	7.8

Polish people themselves have noticed the changes in the level of religiosity. In CBOS research, conducted 20 years after the democratic transformations in the newly independent Poland, 48% of respondents claimed that religiosity had declined, and twice fewer (22%) claimed that it had grown throughout these years.<sup>13</sup>

While considering the issues of religion and religiosity amongst Poles, an important question is what the inhabitants of Poland actually believe in, what the contents and structure of their belief are, and what importance is assigned to transcendence in their faith.

<sup>11</sup> *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia AD 2015*, Warszawa: Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego SAC 2015, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> *Annuario 2015*, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> R. BOGUSZEWSKI (ed.), *Od końca lat osiemdziesiątych do dziś – oceny zmian w różnych wymiarach życia społecznego i politycznego w Polsce*, CBOS Report BS/28 (2009), p. 2.

Over half of the respondents questioned by CBOS in 2015 (56%) stated that they definitely believed in God and had no doubts about His existence; 27% declared believing in God, although sometimes with moments of doubts; 5% stated that sometimes it seemed to them that they believed in God, sometimes not; and 5% said that they did not believe in a personal God, but they believed in some sort of higher force; 4% stated that they did not know if God existed and did not believe in the possibility of verifying it; and finally 3% said they did not believe in God at all. In comparison to previous years when similar research was conducted, it turns out that the percentage of people definitely believing in God decreased slightly (in 1997 – 61%), while there was an increase in the percentage of those who sometimes had doubts (in 1997 – 25%) and those who did not believe in God at all (1997 – 1%).<sup>14</sup>

Interesting information is gained by juxtaposing these data with the declarations of participation in religious practices. It turns out, for example, that amongst the people participating in religious practices several times a week 83% definitely believe in God. Amongst those participating once a week the number is 72%, and amongst those participating once or twice a month it is 56%. It is not, therefore, the case that all the church attendees have no doubts as to whether God exists and definitely believe in Him. The data clearly show that participation in religious practices is strongly correlated with belief in God: Religious people go to church more often while non-religious ones do not take part in religious practices.

In the international research of World Value Survey in 2012, 92.2% of the surveyed Poles declared that they believed in God, while 56.8% declared that they believed in Hell.<sup>15</sup> Believing in God is thus more common than believing in hell. The level of believing in God in Poland is similar to that in Romania (92.3%), and higher than in Germany (62.9%), the Netherlands (71.1%) or Sweden (40.9%). The results show that Poland is not affected by secularisation trends to the same extent as Western European countries.

The World Value Survey data indicate that for the Polish, God is important. The average level of the importance of God in personal life, declared by Poles in 2012, was 7.95 (on a scale from 1 to 10). In 2005 it was 8.73 and in 1989 it was 8.78. Thus, we encounter a certain decrease of the importance of God in the life of Poles. For comparison regarding the importance of God in personal life: In the Netherlands this indicator was 4.37, in Germany 5.28, in Spain 5.0, in Sweden 3.65, and in Russia 6.68 (for 2012). The importance of God in life is higher among women than among men, and higher amongst older people than amongst younger ones.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> R. BOGUSZEWSKI (ed.), *Kanon wiary Polaków*, CBOS Report 29 (2015), p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> INGLEHART et al., *World Values Survey: Round Six*, p. 342 V148, p. 343 V149.

<sup>16</sup> INGLEHART et al., *World Values Survey: Round Six*, p. 349 V152; WV6\_Results, Study # Poland 2012\_v20180912, p. 72 V152; INGLEHART et al., *World Values Survey: Round Five*, p. 414 V192; R. INGLEHART, C. HAERPFER, A. MORENO, C. WELZEL, K. KIZILOVA, J. DIEZ-MEDRANO, M. LAGOS, P. NORRIS, E. PONARIN and B. PURANEN et al. (eds.), *World Values Survey: Round Two – Country-Pooled Datafile Version*: [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV2.jsp](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV2.jsp). Madrid: JD Systems Institute (2014), p. 174 V176.

In the CBOS research in 2015, respondents were also questioned about their belief in life after death. What followed was that 36% of respondents think that after death we go to heaven, hell, or purgatory, 31% stated that there is something after death, yet no one knows what, 14% that after death there is nothing, it is the definitive end, 4% that we all go to Heaven, and 3% that we undergo reincarnation. Similarly to the previous case, the belief in Heaven or Purgatory after death is not common, even amongst those who practise regularly – it was declared by 57% of the people practising several times a week and 55% of those practising once a week. Those who do not practise are most often in favour of the thesis that after death there is nothing (55%).

In spite of the fact that many people do not possess clear-cut convictions about life after death, most Polish people taking part in the discussed research stated that everyone could be delivered (61%). Opinions that only religious people may be delivered (8%) and definite declaration of disbelief in deliverance (15%) were encountered relatively rarely. The faith in deliverance is also stronger than the convictions about life after death, and it is particularly ingrained amongst the regularly practising people.

In the cited research, there were also questions asked about other dogmas and religious ideas, of which most belong to the orthodox canon of Christian faith. 82% of respondents declared belief in God hearing prayers, 70% in the last judgment, 70% in heaven, 69% that man has an immortal soul, 62% in the resurrection of the dead, 59% in the original sin, 56% in Hell, 36% that animals have an immortal soul, and 30% in reincarnation. The presented data show that the faith of Polish people is to a certain extent syncretic, and combines elements originating in various, not necessarily Christian, religious traditions.

Still, the study mostly showed belief in dogmas and religious ideas pertaining to Christian orthodoxy. Using the global indicator of faith orthodoxy, based on all 12 categories applied in the cited study, it was concluded that it reached 7.33 on average (on a scale from 0 to 12), with the highest figures for the people practising several times a week (9.74) and, in comparison to other age groups, for young people (7.97). It shows that dogmas are absorbed most by those who go to church services often and those who recently attended religious education classes at school.<sup>17</sup>

## Parish and participation in parochial life

The most important centre of religious life is the parish. CBOS research from 2014 indicates that for 66% of its participants it is the primary place of religious practices. The others either visit other parishes or only sporadically participate in religious practices. There is also a typical correlation between the size of the municipality in which people live and their frequency of practice in their parish: The larger the place of residence is, the more rarely people practise in their parish.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Kanon wiary Polaków*, CBOS Report 29 (2015), p. 4–9.

<sup>18</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Lokalna parafia...*, p. 4.

The research allows also for establishing that the parish is not only a centre of religious life, but it meets other needs as well: It organises pilgrimages, holiday trips, and cultural, recreational, or sports events, it runs libraries, and provides material aid for the poorest people. In total, it was noted that 40% of respondents were beneficiaries of various parochial activities and initiatives. The respondents, however, are not fully knowledgeable with regards to the functioning of their parish. They perceive it primarily as an institution organising pilgrimages (86%), administering aid for the poorest (67%), and running its own website (61%) and parochial newspaper (60%). The image of the parish as a travel agency/pilgrimage operator, cultural organiser, and charitable aid manager is still the most frequent. Fewer than half of the people taking part in the research notice the functioning of the parochial council (45%), and only slightly more than half of them perceive it as a place where prayer communities exist (58%).<sup>19</sup>

Awareness of activities contributing to the parish is not very high, although they stretch out into other areas of social involvement. Such activities were mentioned by nearly one third of CBOS respondents. Most often they involve sporadic initiatives in the form of cleaning, renovating, fund raising, participation in organising and setting the scene for religious celebrations.

The subjective feeling of a bond with a parish is declared by two thirds of CBOS respondents (66%). It ought to be noted, however, that in recent years the power of identification with a parish has been in decline: E.g. in 2005, a bond with the parish was declared by 80% of respondents. The given motivation for non-identification with the parish (such attitude was declared by 33% of respondents in the last survey) took most frequently the form of statements that it stems from not belonging to the Church, lack of faith, or because of specific reservations against the parish, e.g. that nothing is going on or that the parson is not liked very much.

Polish Catholics generally do not feel their impact on parochial matters is very significant, or that they have a say in the parish's functioning: 81% think that they have no such influence, with 44% definitely thinking so. It is also characteristic that, when asked whether they wish they had such influence, they usually responded that they have no such need (82%). This testifies to the fact that the Polish treat parishes more like service-providing institutions, and they feel no need to strongly engage in their affairs and functioning.<sup>20</sup>

## General image of the Church in Poland

In general, Poles think that the situation in the Polish Church is good, with 68% of those polled by CBOS in 2015 saying so (including 10% recognizing it as very good). In comparison to 2013, the number of people thinking that it is good has increased

<sup>19</sup> N. HIPSZ (ed.), *Spółeczna percepcja rzeczywistości parafialnej*, CBOS Report 163 (2014), p. 2–4.

<sup>20</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Lokalna parafia...*, p. 19.

(from 62%). The situation in the Polish Church is, according to respondents, better than in the rest of Europe and worldwide. In relation to both Europe and the rest of the World, 58% of those surveyed recognized the situation as good.<sup>21</sup>

In 2013, CBOS conducted a survey which showed the image of the Polish Church in a different light. The respondents were asked what the main problems were that the Polish Catholic Church was facing. The most common answers were: pedophilia among clergy (43%), homosexuality among clergy (29%), Church's involvement in politics (28%), loss of churchgoers, drop in religiousness (26%), high living standards among clergy (23%), and too high charges for sacraments (22%). The image is therefore not as positive as it might seem. The next question concerned the main problems in the respondents' parishes. Here the most common answers were: too high charges for sacraments (18%), loss of churchgoers, drop in religiousness (16%), high living standards among clergy (10%), Church's involvement in politics (8%), expressing political sympathies during sermons (7%).<sup>22</sup> One can see that Poles see fewer problems on the parish level and that the pressure is conceived elsewhere. Therefore, one can assume that the views on the Polish Church in the Polish society are shaped strongly by the content presented in the media.

## Confidence in the Church

The level of confidence in the Church can be an indicator of strong identification with the institution, but it can also show a weakness of this identification and, instead, a more widespread individualization of faith.<sup>23</sup>

The 2016 CBOS survey reports that 70% of the surveyed Poles had confidence in the Roman Catholic Church, including 24% who declared a great deal of confidence. This is a high index, as the Church is ranked 7th among the 24 surveyed institutions. What is even more interesting is that Poles have more trust towards Caritas, the largest charitable organization run by the Church (83%), than to the Church in general. Taking into account the long-term perspective, it appears that the level of trust towards the Church is relatively stable, although it has slightly decreased: In 2002 it was 76%, in 2006 81%, and in 2010 78%. Poles have slightly lower trust towards their parish parson – 67% in 2016. It can also be noted that this level of trust has slightly decreased when we take into account previous studies: In 2008 it was 72%, and in 2010 69%.<sup>24</sup>

Changes in the level of confidence in the Church as an institution are also illustrated by another study, *The World Values Survey*. In 1989 it had reported that 50.5%

<sup>21</sup> B. RAGUSKA (ed.), *Oczekiwane zmiany w nauczaniu Kościoła*, CBOS Report 32 (2015), p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> K. PANKOWSKI (ed.), *O problemach Kościoła w Polsce*, CBOS Report BS/145 (2013), p. 2–4.

<sup>23</sup> M. LIBISZOWSKA-ŻÓŁTKOWSKA, „Religia jako determinanta tożsamości studentów i konwertytów”, in M. LIBISZOWSKA-ŻÓŁTKOWSKA (ed.), *Tożsamości religijne w społeczeństwie polskim: Socjologiczne studium przypadków*, Warszawa: Difin 2009, p. 62.

<sup>24</sup> M. OMYŁA-RUDZKA (ed.), *Zaufanie społeczne*, CBOS Report 18 (2016), p. 14–16.

of Poles had a great deal of confidence in the Church, and a further 31.9% of them had quite a lot of confidence. In turn, in 2012 it had been stated that the Church was 'strongly trusted' by 19.9%, while 38.4% 'rather trusted' it. The overall decline in those who trust the Church was thus almost 25%. Meanwhile, the percentage of those who did not have trust in the Church had increased: from 1.9% ('do not trust') in 1989 to 9.0% in 2012.<sup>25</sup> In 1989 the Church was the most trustworthy institution in Poland, which is no longer the case today.

### **Political involvement of the Church and its place in public life**

According to the provisions of the Polish constitution, "public authorities in the Republic of Polish shall be impartial in matters of personal conviction, whether religious or philosophical, or in relation to outlooks on life, and shall ensure their freedom of expression within public life". Every once in a while, more or less heated debates take place regarding the presence of religion and the Church in social life, the role carried out by them, and potential restrictions in this matter. These debates relate primarily to whether the broadly understood public sphere should be completely free from religious influences, remain in isolation against the Church, religion and world views by leaving these matters to individual choices of citizens, or whether it should be open and an accessible space for the expression of ideas and religious beliefs, the display of symbols, and the expression of values which are important to community life.

According to the respondents surveyed by CBOS in 2015, Poland is a country where religious freedom is generally respected – this is what 85% of the surveyed stated. However, a less common belief is the general conviction of the ideological neutrality of the state – an opinion expressed by 64%. Reservations regarding both principles are put forward primarily by people who are not involved in religious practices and who are non-believers.<sup>26</sup>

The CBOS 2013 survey examined attitudes towards the presence of religious symbols in public spaces. Respondents mostly tolerated quite a large presence of religious elements and the Church itself in the public sphere. For example, 88% of respondents said that they were not offended by the presence of the cross in offices or schools, 85% were not offended by the religious nature of the military oath, 82% by religious education classes in schools, 80% by the participation of priests and bishops in state rites and ceremonies and 76% by priests blessing sites and public buildings. Slightly bigger doubts were presented towards the tendency of priests to make statements about how to vote in the elections (82% were offended by this practice), to make statements on the position of the Church on laws passed by the

<sup>25</sup> INGLEHART et al., *World Values Survey: Round Two*, p. 270 V272; INGLEHART et al., *World Values Survey: Round Six*, p. 223 V108.

<sup>26</sup> B. ROGUSKA (ed.), *Katolik w życiu publicznym – potencjalne konflikty norm i wartości*, CBOS Report 45 (2015), p. 5–6.

parliament (55% were offended), and the statements of the Church on moral issues and customs (33% were offended). Taking into account the longer period of time since the research was carried out on this subject (since 1995), it can be noticed that despite small fluctuations between certain years, the overall trends are similar. Thus, it is possible to say that Poles have a relatively high acceptance for different, although not all, forms of the Church's presence in public life. Mirosława Grabowska affirms that 'crosses and priests are simply a Polish cultural landscape'.<sup>27</sup> The significant majority of Poles approve of this model, while the discussions and disputes relate to more specific issues.

Debates on the subject of presence of religious symbols in public spaces took place in 2011. Similar discussions, although carried out a bit earlier, took place in other European countries as well (e.g. Italy, 2009). A CBOS survey conducted at the time confirmed that for the vast majority of respondents (88%), the cross is nothing offensive in a public building like a school or office. Slightly fewer respondents felt that the cross should hang in the Chamber of Parliament (60%). However, some stated that, since the parliament includes representatives of different faiths, there should not be any religious symbols there (36%), while others claimed that there should also be symbols of different religions (19%). Most Poles (56%) also deem that the presence of the crucifix in public places can not be considered a violation of the rights of non-believers.<sup>28</sup>

The high stability of the Poles' opinion on these subjects, also confirmed during surveys in 2015, is noteworthy.<sup>29</sup>

A CBOS survey from 2014 showed that, when it comes to specific parishes that respondents belong to, there are not many cases of political engagement of priests: 61% of respondents stated that in their parish political agitation by the priests or them declaring their political views never happened, and a further 17% that it only happened occasionally.<sup>30</sup> Allegations in terms of the Church influencing political life or being directly involved in it concern the Church rather generally and only a few of its representatives.

These cases, however, are usually heavily publicized by the media, which is why the Church is often seen as interfering in many spheres which are totally independent from faith. Examples of when an attempt to influence public affairs is attributed to the Church are often not related as directly to political, but rather to moral issues. The Church speaks on these matters in accordance with its doctrine or addresses politicians for preferred solutions. Usually, this is seen as 'unauthorized interfering in political affairs'.

<sup>27</sup> M. GRABOWSKA (ed.), *Religia i Kościół w przestrzeni publicznej*, CBOS Report BS/170 (2013), p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> B. ROGUSKA (ed.), *Obecność krzyża w przestrzeni publicznej*, CBOS Report BS/153 (2011), p. 2–6.

<sup>29</sup> M. GRABOWSKA (ed.), *Boskie i cesarskie. O stosunkach między państwem i Kościołem(ami)*, CBOS Report 48 (2015), p. 5–6.

<sup>30</sup> HIPSZ, *Spoleczna percepcja...*, p. 10.



## Religion and morality

Many diagnoses concerning Polish religiousness indicate a growing distance between the teachings of the Catholic Church and the views of Poles concerning morality.<sup>31</sup> According to sociologists, this is not the result of a rejection of the religious world view, but rather of the increasing selectivity and subjectivity of the moral sphere. Poles more frequently acknowledge that they can decide for themselves in regard to what is permitted or not, not necessarily following the indications of the Church and pastors.

In the CBOS studies mentioned earlier, concerning the involvement of the Church in public affairs, it was noted that 33% of respondents were discouraged by the outspoken positions of representatives of this institution on moral issues and moral customs.<sup>32</sup> Grabowska interprets this fact as the specific discomfort that people feel towards an authoritative and non-empathetic style of Church statements. The distance of Poles towards accepting the moral guidance of the Church is quite clear however.

The results of research carried out by CBOS in 2013 report that 22% of Poles think that 'you should have clear moral principles and never depart from them', 42% that 'you should have clear moral principles, but in certain situations you depart from them', 19% that 'you must have some moral principles, but there is nothing wrong with abandoning them due to the requirements of various situations in life', and 12% that 'your behavior should not be linked to predetermined moral principles, but you should, depending on the situation at hand, find appropriate ways of proceeding.' A large part of the respondents accept the rule of adapting behavior without having to take into account moral principles.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, answering the question of who should make judgements of good and evil, 19% replied that it should be decided by the law of God, 20% by the public, and 57% by each person individually within their own conscience. It is also worth noting that the percentage of those who believe that every person is the source of their own morality increased by 11 percentage points since 2005, while those referring to the laws of God declined by 8 percentage points.<sup>34</sup>

The subjectivity of moral principles is also visible when respondents comment on the issue of justification for these rules. 16% said that only religion can provide justifications for their correctness, 33% that essentially religion justifies moral principles, but you might find other reasons, and 41% that they do not feel the need for any justification of moral principles other than their own conscience. Furthermore, only 14% of the surveyed felt that the moral principles of Catholicism are the best and constitute sufficient morality. More often, the respondents accepted the view that 'all principles of Catholicism are right, but in regard to the complexity of life they need to be complemented by other principles' (27%) and that 'most moral principles of

<sup>31</sup> J. MARIAŃSKI, *Religijność społeczeństwa polskiego w perspektywie europejskiej: Próba syntezy socjologicznej*, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy "Nomos" 2004, p. 321–382.

<sup>32</sup> GRABOWSKA, *Religia i Kościół...*, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> R. BOGUSZEWSKI (ed.), *Religijność a zasady moralne*, CBOS Report 15 (2014), p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Religijność a zasady moralne*, p. 3.

Catholicism are right, however, they do not agree with everything’, moreover ‘those that are correct, are not sufficient for people’ (45%).<sup>35</sup> These figures quite clearly confirm the thesis of the partial rejection of moral principles associated with Catholicism and that Poles increasingly look elsewhere for the justification of their morality.

There is more data concerning Poles’ attitude towards chosen moral norms that show the concrete consequences of this individualized approach. In 2013, 77% of surveyed Poles favored the acceptance of the use of contraceptives, 74% of sexual intercourse before marriage, 63% of divorce, and 27% of the termination of pregnancy.<sup>36</sup>

This last issue is a bit more complicated, because there are large discrepancies when it comes to different hypothetical reasons for abortion. An opinion poll from 2016 showed that 70% of respondents would allow for abortion when the life of the mother is in danger, 71% when her health is endangered, 73% when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, 53% when it is known that a child will be born handicapped, 14% when a woman is in a difficult financial situation, 13% when she faces a difficult personal situation, and 13% when she simply does not want to have a baby. The possibility of abortion is thus accepted in a situation of danger to the mother or the baby or when the pregnancy results from rape, but is rather not permitted for the so-called social reasons or when it is the result of individual choice.<sup>37</sup>

What impact the Catholic Church has on the Poles’ views in the area of morality is shown by the results of research carried out by CBOS, when heated discussions about the exacerbation of abortion law by the Parliament took place. The Polish Episcopate delivered its statement in the form of a letter which was to be read out to the faithful during Sunday Masses. It presented a clear and consistent position of the Church. The aforementioned studies were all performed twice: before the publication of the letter and after its publication. As it turned out, this letter essentially had no impact on the views of the respondents.<sup>38</sup>

## Religious relativism

One of the factors that can significantly influence the shape of religiousness in Poland is religious relativism.<sup>39</sup> It is one of the leading ideas characteristic for the New Age, which is sometimes called “religious universalism”. However, it constitutes a threat to religious orthodoxy.

A CBOS survey from 2011 shows that 87% of respondents approved of the statement that ‘every religion is equally good, if it helps a person live their life the best they can’, 70% agreed with the statement that ‘God is worshiped in different religions

<sup>35</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Religijność a zasady moralne*, p. 7–9.

<sup>36</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Religijność a zasady moralne*, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> M. BOŻEWICZ (ed.), *Dopuszczalność aborcji w różnych sytuacjach*, CBOS Report 71 (2016), p. 2–8.

<sup>38</sup> BOŻEWICZ, *Dopuszczalność aborcji w różnych sytuacjach*, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> J. MARIAŃSKI, *Kościół katolicki w Polsce a życie społeczne. Studium socjologiczno-pastoralne*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Gaudium 2005, p. 289.

regardless of what we call Him – Yahweh, Allah, etc., and He is really the same God’, and 67% of the surveyed recognized that ‘all religions lead to the same goal’.<sup>40</sup> The measure of relativism has essentially remained at the same level since the end of the 90s, even though in comparison to similar surveys conducted in 1997 and 2006, the percentage of those agreeing with the second and third statement slightly decreased in the 2011 edition of the study.

On the other hand, the World Value Survey of 2012 shows that 37.3% of responding Poles accepted the statement that ‘the only correct religion is my religion’, while 53.2% agreed with the opposite statement. In comparison: In Germany, 28.8% believe only their own religion to be the correct one, in the Netherlands 13.3%, in Romania 43.3%, in Russia 30.1%, in Ukraine 33.1%, and 21.2% in the USA, while in Qatar this opinion was stated by 97.6%, in Libya by 95%, and in Jordan by 93.7%. High rates of religious exclusivity exist in Islamic countries, while in Europe the legitimacy of other faiths and religions is mostly not denied. The index for Poland is slightly higher than in most European countries included in this study, but definitely closer to the pan-European level.

Nevertheless, 88.1% of respondents in Poland agreed with the statement ‘people belonging to other faiths are probably just as moral as those belonging to my religion’, whereas 4.2% did not agree with it. In Germany, this statement is accepted by 53.8%, in the Netherlands by 60.6%, in Romania by 71.7%, in Russia by 64.5%, in Spain by 66.3%, and in the USA by 79.8%.<sup>41</sup> The ratio in Poland is extremely high compared to other countries in the world, and Poland is comparable only to Australia (85.6%) in this respect. It also shows the previously mentioned tendency that Poles usually separate morality and religion.

## The New Age and superstitions

Detlef Pollack and Olaf Müller who had analyzed the results of studies concerning the popularity of the New Age in Central and Western European countries came to the conclusion that ideas associated with this new religious current covered only a minor part of the population of Poland. In view of the strong Church, faith in the ideas and values of New Age should be considered as an alternative form, and not as complementing the dominant religion.<sup>42</sup> Representative polls show, however, that in Poland there is a fairly high level of acceptance of some elements of the New Age, which are sometimes combined with an orthodox Catholic faith.

<sup>40</sup> R. BOGUSZEWSKI (ed.), *Polacy wobec niektórych poglądów z kręgu New Age*, CBOS Report BS/135 (2011), p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> INGLEHART et al., *World Values Survey: Round Six*, p. 353 V154, p. 357 V156.

<sup>42</sup> D. POLLACK and O. MÜLLER, “Religiousness in Central and Eastern Europe: Towards Individualization?”, in I. Borowik (ed.), *Religious Churches and Religiosity in Post-Communist Europe*, Kraków: Instytut Wydawniczy “Nomos” 2006, p. 22–36.

Previously cited data of CBOS from 2011 show that Poles do not treat their own religion exclusively, seeing it as the only path towards salvation.<sup>43</sup> Poles also resort to divination and refer to traditional superstitions. In CBOS studies, respondents were presented with a set of claims. As it turned out, 59% of respondents believed that some people had the ability of clairvoyance, 48% that some people had the ability to predict the future, 39% that there was another intelligent civilization somewhere in the universe, 39% that telepathy was possible, 34% that it was possible to cast an evil spell on someone, 33% that talismans brought luck, and 29% that the sign under which a person is born had a strong influence on the development of their character. What is characteristic is the fact that people defining themselves as deeply religious showed higher rates of acceptance for these statements than non-believers, and that the highest acceptance rate was recorded among the believers in 'one's own way'. A high acceptance was also noted among those who practice religion several times a week.<sup>44</sup>

The belief in superstitions is also quite popular in Poland, including things such as keeping your fingers crossed for someone's success, the belief in a chimney sweeper bringing good luck, the magical power of talismans, the luck of numbers 7 or 13, or bad luck brought by a black cat crossing the road. The most popular superstition is keeping your fingers crossed, meeting a chimney sweeper, or smashing a mirror. This was declared by more than 25% of respondents. Although the number of those declaring their belief in superstitions was not very high, it turned out that 56% of respondents had at least sometimes kept their fingers crossed, 45% of them knocked on wood, and 45% huffed on a coin they had found. The practice of superstitions is therefore more frequent than the faith in them. In this case it was also noted that the depth of the declared religious faith and regular religious practices have only minor effects on the belief in superstitions and the acts according to them. They are just some features of Polish culture which are absorbed in the process of socialization, and religious teachings do not invalidate them.<sup>45</sup>

## Religious customs during the holidays

Polish Catholicism is very strongly associated with the customs of religious holidays. During the holidays, the importance of religion is shown publicly and religious practices have a mass character. Although during celebrations the importance of religious elements is not always dominant, the holidays are a way of upholding and passing on elements of religion and religiosity to the next generations. Moreover, during religious holidays the interconnected nature of religious and national traditions is perfectly visible.

The regularly conducted survey of Poles by CBOS shows that for almost half of the respondents (46%) Easter is a religious experience. Most Poles, however, treat

<sup>43</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Polacy wobec niektórych poglądów z kręgu New Age*, p. 5–6.

<sup>44</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Polacy wobec niektórych poglądów z kręgu New Age*, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> R. BOGUSZEWSKI (ed.), *Przeszły wciąż żywe*, CBOS Report BS/130 (2011), p. 6.

Easter as a family celebration (70%). This type of research has been conducted since 1994, and we can observe that both the hierarchy of importance of the various ways of understanding Easter and the percentage of indications have been similar (though slightly fluctuating). However, there is a noticeable decrease in the number of those who see Easter as a religious holiday. The proportion of those who see it only as a secular holiday or purely focus on the practical aspect of the holidays is lower – about a quarter.<sup>46</sup>

Generally, Poles do prepare for Easter in some spiritual way: 84% fast on Good Friday, 68% go to the Easter confession, 65% have their head sprinkled with ash on Ash Wednesday, 59% participate in the celebrations of the Easter Triduum, 57% take part in Easter retreats, 52% in the Way of the Cross or Bitter Grievances and 48% participate in the Resurrection Mass on Easter Sunday. In general, Easter holidays are celebrated mostly religiously, even by those people not notably connected with the Church. This tendency is stable, and the only larger changes can be seen in the case of the number of people going to the Easter confession (a decrease of 11 percentage points between 2006 and 2016) and participating in the Resurrection Mass (a decrease by 12 percentage points). These two categories are closely related to spiritual life and have a strictly religious character, without as much of a relation to tradition. Consequently, the changes are rather important. A similar change in figures can be observed when it comes to the time of silencing yourself during Lent. Approximately 50% of respondents declare this practice, while back in 2010 it was over 60%. This is where we can see the influence of consumer culture.

When it comes to the Christmas holidays, we can also see a similar tendency to combine the religious and family dimensions. In 2015, 23% of the CBOS respondents acknowledged Christmas as a religious holiday, whereas 54% saw it as a family holiday. Poles obey common customs associated with these holidays: 99% give each other Christmas greetings and wishes, 98% consume the special dishes during Christmas Eve, 98% share the Christmas wafer (a specific Polish custom), 86% retain the fasting during the Vigil (Christmas Eve, prior to the supper), 79% sing Christmas carols, and 69% participate in the Midnight Mass. 69% of respondents go to confession and 67% say a prayer or read the relevant Bible passage before supper.<sup>47</sup> Strictly religious customs are a little less common, but the religious component is present in all of the aforementioned, though not always fully realized. In the customs of Christmas, the growing influence of secular culture can also be seen for instance in the use of new technology to send Christmas wishes and in spending these holidays outside the family home, for example on holiday trips.

Religious customs still play an important role in the life of Poles, and the majority of them cannot imagine the important moments of life without religious ceremonies. 83% of the surveyed by CBOS in 2005 answered that the ceremony of their child's baptism was important, 81% that a religious wedding ceremony was import-

<sup>46</sup> M. GWIAZDA (ed.), *Wielkanoc*, CBOS Report, 47 (2016), p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> R. BOGUSZEWSKI (ed.), *Boże Narodzenie 2015 – przygotowania do świąt i ich obchodzenie*, CBOS Report 175 (2015), p. 3, 7.

ant, and 85% that a religious funeral ceremony was important. While throughout the recent years the percentage of those who do not attach importance to the aforementioned rites has increased, there is a clear tendency that the most important moments in life should be accompanied by religious rites.<sup>48</sup>

## The significance of Pope John Paul II

John Paul II is a person who has had a particular impact on the Polish society and the Polish Church at the end of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century. In a study conducted by CBOS in 2011, 80% of respondents stated that the life and teachings of John Paul II contributed to the transformation of the lives of most Poles and 58% believed that he had also helped to transform their own lives. During these studies, prior to the beatification of John Paul II, respondents were asked about the meaning of this celebration. 95% considered it an important event for all Poles, 83% considered it important for themselves personally, 71% considered it important for Europe, and 70% considered the beatification important for the whole world.<sup>49</sup>

The impact of John Paul II has many dimensions, including a religious dimension. The death of John Paul II in 2005 was considered a quite important moment. The surveys conducted then showed an increase in the basic indicators of religiosity which had reversed the former long-term downward trends. This increase, however, was short-lived, and in later years the trends have returned towards that downward direction. The level of declared faith and frequency of religious practices in Poland had declined since the death of Pope John Paul II in 2005. In the years 2005–2014, the number of people declaring themselves as believers and deeply religious decreased from 97% to 93%, whereas the number of those practicing at least once a week fell from 58% to 50%. The number of Catholics declaring themselves as believers and who follow to the indications of the Church fell from 66% to 39% and was accompanied by an increase in the number of those who consider themselves ‘believers in their own way’ (from 32% to 52%).<sup>50</sup>

John Paul II continues to be at the top as a personal model and authority. In 2009, he was mentioned as a personal authority by 17% of those surveyed by CBOS, and 59% considered him to be the main authority in public life by placing him on the first spot.<sup>51</sup>

Respondents surveyed in 2015 most frequently believed that despite the passage of 10 years since the death of the “Polish Pope” his memory still lives on among the general public (94%) and that his teachings are generally known (71%). Less frequently do they recognize that Poles follow the rules in life which were indicated by John Paul II (45%). Speaking about themselves personally, they declared that they

<sup>48</sup> K. KOWALCZUK (ed.), *Sfery sacrum i profanum w życiu społecznym*, CBOS Report 31 (2015), p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> N. HIPSZ (ed.), *Czekając na beatyfikację Jana Pawła II*, CBOS Report BS/49 (2011), p. 2–3, 11.

<sup>50</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Lokalna parafia...*, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> M. HERMANN (ed.), *Wzory i autorytety Polaków*, CBOS Report BS/134 (2009), p. 5.

were aware of the content of his teachings (70%), and stressed that in their lives they follow those rules (68%). Thus, Poles slightly more often declare themselves to be familiar with the teachings of John Paul II and follow them, rather than declare such an attitude among the general public.<sup>52</sup>

The cited studies may lead to the conclusion that for most Poles John Paul II is a moral authority – 95% of respondents admitted that (including 65% who chose the option ‘strongly’). This is a higher percentage than in the case of Pope Francis as a moral authority (84%, including 43% who chose ‘strongly’). Poles often mention John Paul II in their prayers and conversations (declared by 43% of respondents, including 11% as ‘very often’), but the prayers asking for intercession on various issues is less common (34%).<sup>53</sup>

These nationwide systematic studies indicate that the importance of John Paul II is slowly falling with the increasing length of time that has passed since his death. This is not a radical decrease, but it is taking place.

## Anticipated changes in the Church

Attention is often paid to the problem of adapting the Church’s teachings to the requirements of modern society and contemporary culture, as well as the needs and problems of believers. Discussions devoted to that have not left out Poland. Some communities formulate postulates towards the Catholic Church and other churches, sometimes far-reaching demands of greater openness to new problems and issues and adjustment in some of the contents of those teachings.

The results of research conducted in 2015, when in many countries and communities discussions were held on possible changes in relation to the Church’s teaching concerning the family in connection with the ongoing 24th Synod of Bishops, suggest that Poles also expressed some expectations in this regard. According to 80% of the respondents the Church should allow individuals who are divorced and living in open relationships the ability to have the Holy Communion, 79% were in favour of allowing the possibility of the use of in vitro fertilisation, 73% of allowing the possibility to have an abortion in some cases, and 72% of allowing the use of contraceptives. 60% supported the idea of replacing individual confession with a collective one, and 59% were in favour of abolishing celibacy. Less frequently, the respondents demanded the admission of women to the priesthood (37%), to enable people living in homosexual relationships to receive the Holy Communion (32%), and the admission of such people to the sacrament of marriage (16%). This data show quite a serious rift between the Church’s teaching and the views of the believers in Poland.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> R. BOGUSZEWSKI (ed.), *Jan Paweł II w pamięci Polaków po dziesięciu latach od śmierci*, CBOS Report 46 (2015), p. 1–4.

<sup>53</sup> BOGUSZEWSKI, *Jan Paweł II w pamięci Polaków...*, p. 6–9.

<sup>54</sup> ROGUSKA, *Oczekiwane zmiany...*, p. 6.

## Certain issues defining the context of Polish religiousness

### 1. Emigration

One of the most serious problems for the contemporary Polish society, which also has consequences in the area of religion, is mass economic emigration. Currently it is estimated that several million Poles reside abroad permanently or temporarily, mainly in Western Europe: in Great Britain, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, and in Scandinavian countries. Official figures coming from the Catholic Church parish records talk about 2.7 million parishioners being abroad, which is approx. 8% of the total registered people in Catholic parishes.<sup>55</sup> Emigrants leaving for work and to pursue a better standard of living often lose their religious roots. Many of them focus primarily on making and saving money and often stay in regions where access to churches and Catholic communities is difficult, where there is no possibility of having or using pastoral support in Polish, and as a consequence they quickly lose their religious tendencies. In some environments, migrants are also subject to serious loosening of moral standards, especially those relating to marriage and family life. An example of this may be temporary partnerships commonly established while abroad, arising either out of the need to share the rent for an apartment, or from attempts to compensate for experienced social isolation and loneliness. People with their own families in their homeland also tend to enter into such relationships, and the dramatic effects are visible upon their return from their economic emigration. For a large part of these emigrants, the only means and opportunity to maintain a connection with their religion are holidays and vacation periods, when they return to their homes. Prior to the larger religious holidays, airplanes and highways are usually full of Poles returning from Western Europe to celebrate with their families. Despite the fact that Poles treat holidays primarily as an opportunity to meet with the family, during the stay in their homeland, they massively participate in religious activities and practices that nurture religious traditions.

### 2. Anti-religious and anti-Catholic trends

Just like after obtaining sovereignty in 1989, till this very day, we have had to deal with rather strong anti-religious trends, especially against Catholicism. This is no doubt a result of the fact that Catholicism is the predominant religion and, in many cases, expansive, and that it publicly resists secular trends.

Many examples of such anti-religious activities can be found. In the 90s a weekly newspaper, founded by the former advocate of the communist government during the martial law period, was considered very popular. Nowadays, some artists and cultural activists openly distance themselves from religion and express this position in their works, giving rise to many controversies among believers. During discussions about the abortion law, which come up again every once in a while, those in favor of making access to abortion easier by legal means usually consider the Catholic Church and its believers as their main opponent, regardless of what role they have during

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<sup>55</sup> *Annuario* 2015, p. 8.



those discussions. Street demonstrations which took place in the fall of 2016, directed against the civil project of tightening the anti-abortion law and against the conservative government coalition which was currently in power, very strongly referred to the anti-religious and anti-Church rhetoric.

They usually take the form of ridiculing ideals and moral norms with religious underpinnings in a vulgar way, as well as sharp criticisms of actions of the Church hierarchy referring both to the traditional anti-clericalism arguments taken from some Enlightenment rationalism and from some positivistic trends. Arguments indicating the backwardness and parochialism of Poland in comparison to the more developed European countries are also common.

These cases are often broadly covered and widely publicized by the media. They appear both on the more liberal side, where they are usually more or less accepted, and in the more conservative media, where they are the subject of condemnation and indignation. Some liberal newspaper covers, which show the Church and clergy in very negative light, have caused major controversies throughout the entire population, especially among Christians.

The place where the most heated discussions take place, while at the same time being the place where it is the most difficult for opponents to find common ground, is the Internet. News or posts on the Internet concerning the life of the Church or generally related to issues connected with religion are usually accompanied by many anonymous comments, most of which are expressed aggressively. Commentators mostly cite many anti-religious stereotypes referring to the wealth of priests and the Church, of paedophilia among the clergy, irrationality and lack of novelty in religious beliefs, etc. Religious spokespersons rarely engage in these types of dialogues or even polemic discussions. For this reason, the most popular Internet news portals are quite largely controlled by anti-Christian rhetoric.

From time to time, some atheistic or anti-religious organizations engage in social campaigns which are aimed at promoting secular views and fighting off religion. One of these campaigns was titled 'You have a right to not believe', another had the slogan 'Atheists are divine'. These organizations oppose the teaching of religion in schools, the organization of nativity scene plays and Christmas meetings in schools and kindergartens, the presence of religious content in school textbooks and encourage apostasy.

Anti-religious and anti-Catholic trends are present in Poland, but they operate on the margins of mainstream society in a systematic way. There are numerous cases of direct aggression directed against symbols of religion, places of worship, religious representatives, and forms of manifestation of religious identity. It would be difficult to interpret them as having a mass character, since they usually do not have the power to give rise to society-wide anti-religious attitudes. The official data of the Catholic Church states that during the years 2012–2014, many forms of discrimination (e.g. offensive comments, beatings, etc.) were conducted on priests. 12.1% of the clergy was harmed, and in 8.7% of parishes there was some kind of desecration of holy places.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Annuarium* 2015, p. 23.

## Internal variation of Polish Catholicism

Polish Catholicism is not homogenous and varies internally with regard to many different criteria. Sociological studies in Polish religiosity usually indicate the existence of significant differences between age categories, gender representatives, inhabitants of various environments (countryside – large cities) and regions of the country, followers of particular political parties, etc. Inside the all-encompassing current of Catholicism, discussions and disputes continue with regard to various components of ecclesial teaching, its position in public life, the manner of conducting ministry or the degree of the lay people's influence upon the life of the Church. Catholicism is an internally dynamic reality, with complicated relations between its elements and segments, subject to the impact of internal contexts while simultaneously exerting influence on the very same contexts. Without any doubt, it is not the monolith that it might seem to be.

For this reason, the sociologists of religion draw up certain typologies, facilitating a global insight into the state of religion and religiosity in Poland. One of such typologies, focusing primarily on Catholic religiosity, has been proposed by Janusz Mariański, who distinguishes seven basic categories of Catholics:<sup>57</sup>

1) Catholics with commitment, ecclesiastic and prayer activity, belonging to communities and movements participating in various forms of ecclesial teaching; aware of their faith, active in prayer and developing their life in a religious way. Mariański estimates their number at 10% of adults belonging to the Catholic Church.

2) People bound to the Church with formal ties, agreements, and fulfilling various functions in it working for the benefit of Church institutions (ca. 1%).

3) Traditional and orthodox Catholics, practising ones, recognising dogmas of the faith and respecting the moral teachings of the Church, involved in the functioning of the parish, with attachment to national traditions and religious ceremonials. This category shows strong internal variation in many respects and the orthodoxy of its followers is variously motivated. It constitutes about 30% of Polish Catholics.

4) Selective Catholics, partially identifying with the dogmas of the faith and the moral doctrine of the Church, selecting elements suitable for them, practising sporadically and irregularly, consciously adopting the attitude of keeping a distance from the institutional dimension of religion and placing religion and religiosity fairly low in their hierarchy of values. According to estimates they account for about 30%.

5) Open, progressive, liberal Catholics; fairly removed from orthodoxy, keeping distance from the association of Catholicism with the Polish national identity; often anticlerical and reforming in attitude, undertaking critical reflexion over the elements of Catholic culture and doctrine. They account for about 15%.

<sup>57</sup> J. MARIAŃSKI, "Tendencje rozwojowe religijności katolickiej w Polsce", in E. FIRLIT, M. HAINZ, M. LIBISZOWSKA-ŻÓŁTKOWSKA, G. PICKEL, and D. POLLACK (ed.), *Pomiędzy sekularyzacją i religijnym ożywieniem. Podobieństwa i różnice w przemianach religijnych w Polsce i w Niemczech*, Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum, Wydawnictwo WAM 2012, p. 38–40.

6) Nominal, marginal Catholics; baptised but practising only in special circumstances (holidays, religious celebrations), accepting religious education of their children at a basic level, but not identifying themselves with multiple components of the teachings of the Church and not deepening their religious awareness. They may account for about 15%.

7) Borderline Catholics; distanced from God and the Church; actual atheists connected with the Christian tradition, not involved in the life of the Church and maintaining distance from faith, religion and moral teachings; yet formally they do not leave the Church. They account for about 2–3%.

Perhaps the quantitative estimates referring to particular categories of Catholics are disputable, and for sure these categories are open-ended, without strictly limited boundaries, but still they show that Catholics in Poland do not constitute a homogenous and internally cohesive group. Further divisions may appear within particular categories, as Polish Catholicism is undergoing dynamic pluralisation. Among the reasons for this internal variation, one may point to reasons of more subjective nature (biographical particulars, consciously made decisions, character features), as well as to more objective ones (ministry activities of the Church, cultural tendencies, impact of the media). It is nonetheless clearly visible that ecclesial religiosity, remaining under institutional control, is only one of the forms of Polish Catholicism.

A slightly different typology is proposed by Christopher Grabowski after John Allen.<sup>58</sup> Here, stronger emphasis is put on the public dimension of Catholicism, the participation of Catholics in public debates and political life. This typology is an attempt at answering the question of how Polish Catholics seek an answer to the challenges of modernisation. Garbowski distinguishes three categories of Catholics: liberal, evangelical, and Pentecostal. The first are open to everything which modernisation brings, and reject strict affiliation of religion with national identity; they talk about the necessity of adjusting the language and the contents of ecclesial teaching (especially any moral one) to the requirements of modernity, as well as about the necessity of more democracy in the Church and greater independence of the faithful. Evangelical Catholics are in turn more orthodox; they attempt to make the awareness of Catholics deeper; they demand greater personal commitment (also in missions); they are inspired by various elements of the tradition, and yet it is difficult to consider them conservative, since they actively seek new forms of propagating the evangelical message. Both of these categories of Catholics are relatively numerous and contain many groups, centres of ministry and associations, they are expressing their views in public debates loudly and clearly, using various means of social communication. Garbowski, however, draws attention to the fact that they make use of different discourse, which makes mutual understanding and cooperation difficult. Of the lowest importance in the public space are Pentecostal Catholics, who view Christianity in the category of apocalypse and the approaching end of all time.

<sup>58</sup> CH. GRABOWSKI, *Religious Life in Poland, History, Diversity, and Modern Issues*, Jefferson: McFarland & Company 2014, p. 198–207; J. ALLEN, *The Future Church: How Ten Trends are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church*, New York: Doubleday 2009, *passim*.

The transformations of Polish religiousness in the first several years of the 21st century may be interpreted by using different theoretical categories such as: ‘the individualization of religion and religiousness’,<sup>59</sup> ‘faith without affiliation’ and ‘affiliation without faith’,<sup>60</sup> shifts towards ‘the invisible religion’,<sup>61</sup> ‘collective identity’,<sup>62</sup> ‘post-secularism’,<sup>63</sup> ‘secularization connected with modernization’,<sup>64</sup> religion as ‘remembrance and reversion towards tradition’.<sup>65</sup> As it may seem, none of the aforementioned theoretical interpretations entirely exhaust the complication of the issue, nor constitute the whole picture. Thus, Mariański duly recognizes that any definitive statements in this domain are impossible, and further directions of changes are uncertain.<sup>66</sup> Although certain tendencies are outlined, it is unpredictable what their further course will be. Various currents of secular trends which are connected to globalization and growing cultural pluralism, as well as the diffusion of secular elements from Western Europe, the secularized pop-culture commercialism and cosmopolitan market areas collide with the lively trend of Church evangelization, innovative forms of pastoral activities, activities of orthodox-Catholic groups or communities, Church and beyond-Church institutions, or new methods of Christian influencing and upbringing. Furthermore, religion in Poland and the religiousness of Poles cannot be detached from other elements of national culture and transformations which take place in its capacity.<sup>67</sup> This study is merely a fragmentary outline of certain phenomena and processes which may be observed to this extent, and requires further thorough research.

<sup>59</sup> POLLACK and MÜLLER, “Religiousness in Central and Eastern Europe”, p. 22–36; MARIAŃSKI, “Tendencje rozwojowe religijności katolickiej w Polsce”, p. 31–48.

<sup>60</sup> G. DAVIE, *Socjologia religii [The Sociology of Religion]*, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy “Nomos” 2010.

<sup>61</sup> T. LUCKMANN, *Niewidzialna religia: Problem religii we współczesnym społeczeństwie [The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society]*, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy “Nomos” 1996, *passim*.

<sup>62</sup> S. JAKELIĆ, “Secularization, European Identity, and ‘The End of the West’”, *The Hedgehog Review* 8 (1–2, 2006), p. 133–139.

<sup>63</sup> U. PEKALA, “Post-secular religious practices entering traditional religion”, in T. AHLBÄCK and B. DAHLA (ed.), *Post-Secular Religious Practices: Based on papers read at the symposium on Post-Secular Religious Practices held at Åbo/Turku, on 15-17 June 2011, Åbo/Turku*: Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History 2012, p. 274–288.

<sup>64</sup> F.-X. KAUFMANN, *Czy chrześcijaństwo przetrwa? [Wie überlebt das Christentum?]*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM 2004; J. CASANOVA, J., “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective”, *The Hedgehog Review* 8 (1–2, 2006), p. 7–22.

<sup>65</sup> D. HERVIEU-LÉGER, *Religia jako pamięć [La Religion pour memoire]*, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy “Nomos” 1999, *passim*.

<sup>66</sup> J. MARIAŃSKI, “The Religiosity of Polish Society from the Perspective of Secularized Europe”, in I. Borowik (ed.), *Religious Churches and Religiosity in Post-Communist Europe*, Kraków: Instytut Wydawniczy “Nomos” 2006, p. 81–91.

<sup>67</sup> L. DYCZEWSKI, *Kultura polska w procesie przemian [Polish culture in transition]*, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL 1995, p. 259–276; L. DYCZEWSKI (ED.), *Polish Philosophical Studies III: Values in the Polish Cultural Tradition*, Washington: The Council for the Research in Values and Philosophy 2002, *passim*.

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## The Maya Religion (Review)

Helena Dyndová

*The Maya religion* is a comprehensive and high-quality introductory monograph to the religious life of Ancient Mayas. It can be used as an extremely useful guide, not only by the academic community, to which it has been dedicated in the first place, but thanks to its readable and fluent style, it will be beneficial even for laymen or enthusiasts. At the same time, this book is useful not only for those interested in the area of Mesoamerica, but for a variety of experts on ancient cultures and on a wider scale, with regard to its remarkable meta-methodological scope, for religious studies scholars in general as well.

Even only a brief look on the table of contents indicates that the author focuses on Maya religious life in accordance with detailed and conscientiously written introductory handbooks: from history and geography, to the categorization of available archaeological and literary sources, the social organization and city architecture, and finally to the role of the king, nobility, and other religious specialists. A great part of this book is naturally dedicated to deities, myths and rites, and inseparably related topics such as the importance of astronomy and astrology for calendar feasts, the Maya concept of the soul, and Maya cosmology.

We could probably end the book review at this point and evaluate the book based on its relationship to the current scientific knowledge, stylistic skills, etc. However, this book is not as linear or shallow. Besides its unquestionably erudite range, the reader, no later than after the second chapter, enters the jungle of interpretations and pre-understandings of how the study of the Maya has been approached. Step by step, the reader is slowly immersed in the universe of motivations and ulterior motives, with which these interpretations were created. After all, the nature of the sources and history of Maya studies calls for this approach.

The author systematically guides the reader through all the topics, introducing relevant approaches to these issues. And simultaneously, in the background of the discussed aspects of Maya religion, the reader will begin to follow the methodological questions that go beyond the given area of study and which sometimes overtake and form the chapter. This leads to continuous reasoning about the availability and credibility of sources, to which the author shows great respect. Thus, the reader learns to ask, over every aspect of Maya religion: does the primary material possess this quality or is it our secondary interpretation? (p. 170) And this skill is both helpful and much needed in the lack or absence of empirical evidence.

In this way, the interpretations of the post-colonial Christian administration, as well as romanticizing (an inspiring chapter about human sacrifice, p. 246) or hyper-critical postmodern approaches (the Maya had no gods) gradually begin to be considered. The famous theories of the pioneers of Maya studies are discussed alongside the undisputed influence of the historian of religion Mircea Eliade and the generation of his followers. The author provides a fair reassessment of the limits, pitfalls and benefits of comparative and synthesizing theories on the one hand, and the specific and highly specialized approaches on the other hand and tries to walk the line. To the credit of her research, she manages this uneasy task sensitively, without unnecessary mocking, irony or an implacably critical tone, which can be sometimes observed in academic polemics, when the expert disagrees with another interpretative tradition.

Moreover, the reasoning goes beyond scholarly analysis. In the same way as all sources are necessarily interpreted or explained by scientists themselves, scholars also do not live in an academic vacuum. Their texts influence society, which – in turn – affects them. It is only commendable that the author was not afraid to deal with important contemporary trends, which, at face value, have little to do with academic Maya studies, but which are of a great importance to the whole subject nevertheless. Accordingly, the author concentrates on modern environmentalism (co-creating a new theory of classical collapse, p. 51), feminism (fresh criticism of the Goddess Ixchel's "Smurfette principle", p. 170), or the craving for Maya spirituality as a source of spirituality to the new age/contemporary alternative spiritual movement (i.e. scholars writing about "energy" or "transformation of consciousness" in Ancient Maya context, p. 159).

All this intertwining of "sources we have" and "interpretations we introduce" then culminates in a sort of *grand finale*; the last section of the monograph that summarizes the entire history of approaches to Maya religious chronologically, the short addendum of Czech and Slovak Maya studies, contemporary spirituality, pop culture, and the 2012 millennial expectations included. But considering how important is the method of discourse analysis for the author and how the whole book contains a number of references to the last chapter, the final chapter could do with even more elaboration and a more complex approach.

The following matter of dispute is not about what is contained in the book, but what is missing. For example, it is somewhat confusing that despite the constant reminders of the researchers' points of view, the author herself does not give any hints and explicitly reveal her "individual partiality and emotions" (p. 321) to the research subject, which is a pity. As the author puts it: "A completely neutral approach to the past is virtually impossible, and the researcher's personality and the 'Zeitgeist' that shaped her/him can never be completely removed." (p. 321). That is true; but applies to her as well.

With regard to the reflection of archaeological and literal sources, a more theoretical evaluation of the Maya religious syncretism and use of folklore records would complete this "source family", since the author occasionally draws a comparison between contemporary and Ancient Maya customs – albeit with caution. Likewise,

a more in-depth methodological analysis of gods other than the prominent god D, the goddess O (I) and the K'uk'ulkan would be surely appreciated, since in these three cases, the analysis was very inspiring.

Finally, this academic publication lacks indexes or any other apparatus, which is very user-unfriendly. Furthermore, the Maya alphabet table, the solar and lunar calendar tables, and the Schellhas's table of deities are dispersed in the book and that makes it difficult to work with them.

These small final touches notwithstanding, this monograph is beyond all doubt not only an extremely important contribution to current Maya studies, but also a useful tool for researchers in ancient (non)literary cultures and, for its methodological aptitude, for religious studies scholars as well. The discourse analysis implicitly applied to old Maya religion is a refreshing attitude, since not only religion is in constant dialogue with the "profane world" of political agenda, economy, and the prevailing worldview, but so are the scholars who form the image of these civilizations. This meta-methodological technique is certainly a complicated and multi-levelled one, but *The Maya Religion* accepted this challenge with grace.

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## Religion and Education: the Czech Situation (Review)

Jitka Schlichtsová

“In contemporary Europe, the relationship between religion and education is a frequently debated topic. In Western European countries, such as Great Britain, Norway, and the Netherlands, it became discussed as early as in the 1960s and as the number of foreign immigrants increased, it gradually became more and more pressing. Many countries started to realize that in an ethnically and religiously pluralistic society, uniting all the inhabitants of a state on the basis of a single Christian creed is extremely difficult. Consequently, while confessional education kept its place in the school curricula, the educational space started to open itself to reflection of other religious traditions.” So states Zuzana Černá in the introduction to her doctoral thesis, which was defended in 2017 at the Department of Religious Studies of the Faculty of Arts, University of Pardubice, and which has recently been published.<sup>1</sup> She also insists that in the countries of Eastern Europe, interest in the problem only started to getting stronger in the 1990s (allowing for differences between the countries). Černá believes that the greatest rise in interest came after September 11, 2001 when the Council of Europe issued a series of recommendations related to the issue. According to Černá, it was precisely at this time that the Czech Republic realized the need to use the conclusions of Religious Studies in religious education, both at the grammar school and high school levels.<sup>2</sup> The most pressing matter at hand, which has to be conveyed to Czech students, is the support of pluralistic society, respect to foreign cultures (especially the non-European ones), and prevention of future conflicts. In her monograph, Černá asks herself the following core question: “How does our cultural tradition refer to the ‘otherness’ of Non-European cultures?”

Černá seeks to answer the question by means of analyzing randomly selected high school textbooks of History, Geography, and Social Sciences. She identifies the paragraphs which either define the different religions of the world or emphasize religions in the context of describing both European and Non-European cultural realities and their historical and geographical dimensions. She bases her work primarily on a comparative study of cultures proposed by S. N. Balagangadhara and his team of researchers based at the University of Ghent. In his work, Balagangadhara insists that Western Religious Studies and its approach to Non-European cultures has always

<sup>1</sup> ZUZANA ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání s důrazem na analýzu českých středoškolských materiálů*, Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice 2017, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 15.

been influenced by a Christian bias. Therefore, the discipline is unable to produce a true understanding of cultures outside the Euro-American Christian context and their essential difference. He also believes that another basic problem of the current Religious Studies is the idea that every culture has to have religion. According to Balagangadhara, Religious Studies thus tends to us the label “religious” for a whole range of phenomena that, in fact, are not necessarily religious at all; by this means, the discipline creates a picture which fits better to the European Christian type of thought. Černá follows up on these thoughts and applies them to the selected educational material.

The book is divided into twelve chapters. The first four, “Introduction”, “Religion and education in selected EU states”, “Model approaches to education about religion”, and “Religion in Czech school legislation” introduce the reader to the full context of the problem. The author defines the starting points and goals of the book, reiterates the most important theses of Balagangadhara’s team and summarizes the different approaches to education on religion, both in the EU and the Czech Republic. The fourth chapter is of a special interest both for Czech and foreign scholars, since it contains an overview of the General Educational Programs (Rámcové vzdělávací program), which form the basis for the Czech education, both on the grammar school and high school level. While the introduction is not very extensive and could have been expanded on, it provides enough insight into the educational system of Czech high schools for a scholar to build on.

The eight remaining chapters form a unit, which the author labelled “Analysis of the educational materials.” In each chapter, she selects a specific theme that she previously identified in the textbooks and interprets it in the light of Balagangadhara’s theories. The first of these themes is the abovementioned suggestion of many of the textbook’s authors – that religion is a universal trait which, albeit in a slightly different form, appears in each and every human culture in history.<sup>3</sup> Černá specifically questions the assumption that even prehistoric peoples had religion and scrutinizes its descriptions that appear in the textbooks. According to Balagangadhara, this type of interpretation is distorted by the uncritical application of Christian bias and the usage of typical terms that belong in the context of Christian theology (“God”, “worship”, “idolatry”, etc.). Černá also mentions China as an important moment in the discussion about the universality of religion in human cultures, which introduced a possibility of a truly atheistic society into the traditional description of religion.<sup>4</sup>

In the chapter called “Characteristic features of religion”, Černá selects specific terms that the Religious studies usually use to describe religion. The biggest problem in her opinion is that the textbooks treat the terms such as “religion” and “faith” as something which the reader should know intimately. According to her, this creates an impression that these terms are universal and that they represent a clearly defined, systematic concept. Again she refers to the core problem of the definition of religion

<sup>3</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 53–63.

<sup>4</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 63–65.

and agrees with Balagangadhara that there is no consensus on it, meaning that the Religious Studies are unable to define its core point of interest. She insists that this problem is rooted in Christian bias and in the way the description of religious phenomena draws upon the Christian concept of priesthood,<sup>5</sup> myths and gods,<sup>6</sup> sacred texts,<sup>7</sup> the possible non-religious nature of traditions such as Buddhism, Daoism, and “Hinduism”,<sup>8</sup> and religious tolerance.<sup>9</sup>

Aside from the question of definitions and terms used to describe different religious traditions, the high school texts (and therefore also Černá’s analysis) focus on the taxonomy of the religions of the world. The author summarizes the different approaches to the classification of religious traditions and their core thoughts. Again, Černá points out the great multitude of different approaches used for creating taxonomies and she studies the frameworks used by the textbooks’ authors. She highlights the inconsistencies that appear in these taxonomies and looks at the different reasons behind the placement of each tradition in its respective taxonomy. A specific sub-chapter is dedicated to the question of polytheistic, “primitive”, and national religions and their relationship to “idolatry”.<sup>10</sup>

The last four chapters of the monograph focus mostly on History textbooks and the last one also on Geography textbooks. Zuzana Černá describes the textbooks’ tendency to divide historical religions and their specific traits into four eras: Early Christianity and Reformation;<sup>11</sup> the question of religious tolerance in Europe in the 16th–18th century;<sup>12</sup> the Modern era with its considerable distance from religion;<sup>13</sup> and the 20th century.<sup>14</sup>

The last chapter, which analyzes the 20th century approaches to religion, is mostly based on Geography textbooks. Černá notes that the authors tend to divide the world into specific civilizational spheres, which are usually connected with the region’s major religion. However, they are not able to provide either a precise definition of the spheres, or the criteria used to distinguish them. Černá shows the way in which the authors mention the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Islamic sphere. The majority of her book is focused on Christianity, the history of Christianity, and the influence of Christianity on the concept of religion, again based on the theories of S. N. Balagangadhara and J. De Roover; she apparently uses the fragments of the analyzed textbooks to confirm the theses of Balagangadhara’s research team. However, the true strength of the book is revealed in the last chapter, where the author fully shows her mastery of Near Eastern Studies. It is specifically in the chapters dedicated to Islam and Judaism

<sup>5</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 67–74.

<sup>6</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 74–78.

<sup>7</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 78–81.

<sup>8</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 81–83.

<sup>9</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 83–89.

<sup>10</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 97–101.

<sup>11</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 102–115.

<sup>12</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 116–121.

<sup>13</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 122–141.

<sup>14</sup> ČERNÁ, *Reflexe náboženství ve vzdělávání ...*, p. 142–170.

where Zuzana Černá's analysis reveals a deep understanding based not only on the knowledge of both the history and the current situation of the region, but also on her personal experiences with the region.

On one hand, Zuzana Černá's book is a good critical analysis of the concept of religion; however on the other hand, it also has several questionable traits, which the reader should take into account. First of all, there is the problem of the textbook selection. There were apparently no specific criteria to it – it was based neither on the year of publishing, their authors' erudition, their presence on the Ministry of Education's list of approved textbooks, nor on the type of high school. Černá's selection of her primary sources was based exclusively on the fact that they appeared on some school's list of recommended textbooks. However, since schools are under no obligation to make their lists of textbooks publicly available, only a minor part of them announce their recommendations (and only as a service for prospective students and their parents). Subsequently, it is impossible to say whether the books selected by Černá are actually used by a majority of high schools or not.

Based on the relevant parts of these randomly selected textbooks, Černá shows that their authors didn't always use the religious terms and concepts in a perceptive and neutral way. She concludes that the information presented in the textbooks doesn't match the current conclusions of Religious Studies research. However, she omits the fact that the books' aim is not to teach Religious Studies as such and that they were generally published long before the scholarly texts Černá bases her analyses on.

In the same way, we may question Černá's criticism of the fact that most of the space in the textbooks is dedicated both to Christianity and its geographical area and that foreign cultures are mentioned only in a relationship to the European (Christian) area. We may agree with this to a certain extent; however, we have to keep in mind that this type of focus is closely related to the date of the textbooks' publication. Due to the population demographic and social situation in the times when most of these books were written, there was no specific reason to put any exceptional stress on the Non-European areas. The textbooks mostly aimed to introduce the students to their own historical and political context and to build their worldview as inhabitants of a specific geographical area of the 1990s and early 2000s. Naturally the situation has changed since then (along with the demographic composition of the Czech population) and the necessity of intercultural education has risen sharply. In this sense, Černá could have simply pointed out that it's highly recommendable to use recently published material which reflects the current situation better. Unfortunately she cannot do this, since she doesn't know how frequently these outdated textbooks are used.

Černá also points out repeatedly that the authors simply expect the pupils to have an idea of the meaning of such terms as religion, priesthood, divinity, idolatry, and paganism; the books provide no definitions. She therefore deduces the textbooks do not help the students to grasp the terms. Nevertheless, the question remains whether this is negative – in practice, this may actually be an advantage. Černá herself insists that even contemporary Religious Studies must reframe their core terms and approaches.



Moreover, from the pedagogical point of view, the textbooks should only serve as a complementary source of education, not as an authority which would overrule the teacher's insight and erudition. In fact, the educators who teach the subject tend to be interested in the current state of knowledge in the relevant discipline and may use the textbooks in a way that helps the students develop a better understanding of the provided information, as well as critical thinking. This is especially relevant to the current world as new information is more readily available than it was in the past and scholarly research advances at a much higher pace. Consequently, no book should be considered fully up-to-date, especially in the long term.

All in all, even though the author declares in the introduction that her goal is not to correct the mistakes in the textbooks, that is effectively what the book is doing. And in the end, these mistakes are used to introduce and confirm the results of S. N. Balagangadhara's and his team's research. While Černá offers a clear and precise summary of the problems, her analysis can be considered one-sided and excessively critical. Moreover, the book doesn't even answer Černá's principal question about the way our cultural tradition reflects the "otherness" of non-European cultures. The only conclusion is that a randomly selected group of older high school textbooks (which aren't even meant to teach Religious Studies) give an erroneous account not only of non-European, but also of European traditions. The author specifically emphasizes the reasons behind these errors: according to her, they lay in the very discourse of Religious Studies (the concept and term of religion, its definition, and the language and terminology we use to describe cultures and traditions) and its inability to describe religions other than Christianity. Yes, the intent to show these problems through the analysis of high school textbooks seems illustrative and the book is highly readable and well arranged. However, in the end it contains little more than the author's affirmation of S. N. Balagangadhara and his team's research project.

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