

WOJCIECH SADŁOŃ
Institute for Catholic Church Statistics

Differentiation, polarization and religious change in Poland at the turn of 20th and 21st century

In 2016, Christianity in Poland celebrated its 1050th anniversary. The country, firstly composed of Vistula Slavic tribes in VIII century, became a state in 966 when the ruler Mieszko I converted to Christianity and was baptized by bishops who were coming from Prague. Of course, the baptism of the ruler was not only of religious significance but also a political sign. King's baptism started the long process of rooting Christianity in the Polish original culture rather than resulting in immediate evangelization of all inhabitants of the Vistulans' country. Since Middle Age, through the centuries, Poland has been predominantly Catholic, although there has been sizable orthodox and protestant populations. For example, after the First World War, Polish population consisted of no more than 65% Roman-Catholics¹. Since 1945 (World War II) and especially at the end of 20th century, Catholicism was dominant and resilient as never before in the history of Poland, at least in reference to religiosity of countries neighboring to Poland such as East-Germany, Czech Republic or Hungary and West-Germany. Despite the fact that since 1970s sociologists have been observing symptoms of secularization in Poland², there are reasons to believe that tendencies of Catholicism at the end of 20th century in Poland are in some aspects reminiscent of the bloom of Catholic Church in France after the First World War. According to D. Hervieu-Léger Catholic positive trend in France lasted no more than 40 years. She states that already the 1960s were marked by inevitable decomposition of Catholicism in France and by the end of so called "parish civilization"³.

In Poland the critical date, at least from political point of view, was 1989. So called Revolutions of 1989 were decisive for religious situation in Central and Eastern

¹ J. Mariański, *Katolicy w strukturze wyznaniowej*, in: L. Adamczuk, W. Zdaniewicz (eds.), *Kościół katolicki w Polsce 1918-1990*, Warszawa, p. 37-56.

² W. Piwowarski, *Blaski i cienie polskiej religijności*, in: J. Wołkowski (ed.) *Oblicza katolicyzmu w Polsce*, Warszawa 1983.

³ D. Hervieu-Léger, *Préface*, in: C. Céline, *Prêtres, diacres, laïcs. Revolution silencieuse dans le catholicisme français*, Paris 2007, p. XII.

Europe. As a result, approximately 100 million people joined religious groups for the first time⁴. Before, the role of religion in Eastern Europe was conditioned by the Soviet regime⁵. But 1989 is considered to be the beginning of a new period in political and social history. The Communist regime in Poland which was the consequence of Yalta conference broke down. As a result of the Round Table Agreement *Solidarność* became a legal political party. In the democratic elections anticommunist candidates gained the majority in the parliament. After the period of Communism and civil mobilization in 1980s, after the democratic breakthrough, Poland started, in 1989, its long process of modernization. This modernization was, of course, not a linear path but very multifaceted political, economical, cultural and also religious process. Nowadays, after more than 25 years of transformation, sociologists are looking for new categories to describe the religious situation and changes in Poland⁶. It should be noted that modernization does not necessarily lead to “rational disenchantment”⁷. Religious changes in Poland are not deterministic and not one-dimensional. It does not mean either that religion in Poland has emerged victorious from the clash with the influences of modernity.

In this paper I want to demonstrate that describing religious transformation in Poland only in terms of religious decline seems to be too simplistic. There are many symptoms not only of religious continuity but even revival in Poland. The purpose of this article is to describe some yet not well-known in the literature symptoms of religious change in Poland and to hypothesize the process of religious polarization in the Polish society. To conceptualize described changes I would propose the category of “polarization” which could be understood as a form of differentiation process.

Social differentiation

In comparison to “secularization” the notion of “differentiation” is methodologically more rigorous and precise. It has long tradition in social science and has been used for the first time by H. Spencer⁸ and E. Durkheim⁹. Later on, differentiation

⁴ P. Froese, *After Atheism: An Analysis of Religious Monopolies in the Post-Communist World*, “Sociology of Religion” 2004, no. 65, p. 57-75.

⁵ P. Michel, *Religious Renewal or Political Deficiency: Religion and Democracy in Central Europe*, “Religion, State, Society” 1992, no. 20, p. 339-344; N. Davies, *God’s Playground: A History of Poland, Volume II, 1975 to Present*, New York 1982.

⁶ See Hainz M. et al. (ed.), *Zwischen Säkularisierung und religiöser Vitalisierung. Religiosität in Deutschland und Polen im Vergleich*, Wiesbaden 2014.

⁷ D. Hervieu-Léger, *Le pèlerin et le converti. La religion en mouvement*, Paris 1999, p. 18.

⁸ H. Spencer, *First Principles*, London 1982, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/1390> (21 I 2017).

⁹ E. Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, New York [1893] 1933.

was by S. Eisenstadt¹⁰ used to describe social change and widely applied by neo-functionalists such as T. Parsons¹¹, N. Luhmann¹² and J. Alexander¹³. "Differentiation involves increased structural specialization and growing independence among societal spheres, as economic and political processes detach themselves from religious and familial institutions"¹⁴. In Luhmanian approach to differentiation, social systems tend to enlarge and reduce the complexity of external and internal environments. When system is able to support boundaries and structures of higher selectivity then new systems are emerging. That is why differentiation is a kind of reproduction process with tendency for building new systems. It is a "process of growth by internal disjunction". "Differentiation (...) is the structural technique for solving the temporal problem of complex (time consuming) systems existing in complex environments" and „the reduplication of the difference between system and environment within systems"¹⁵.

According to Luhmann, in the evolution of society's complexity, the same facts, events, and problems obtain different meanings in different perspectives. New social systems emerge in three modes: segmentation, stratification and functional differentiation. Segmentation differentiates the system into equal subsystems, stratification into unequal. The functional differentiation functions within a system become ascribed to the level of the society¹⁶. In religious domain, the differentiation designates disintegration of the old unity between faith and morality, nature and creation¹⁷. As society becomes more complex, all its institutions become more differentiated from each other and have more autonomy. K. Dobbelaere draws distinctions between the process of differentiation, decline, and change¹⁸. D. Juteau Lee defines differentiation "as an economic, political, cultural, and normatively oriented process". Differentiation is based in gendered, ethicized, racialized and other social categories¹⁹. The concept of differentiation refers also to the processes of

¹⁰ S. N. Eisenstadt, *Social Change, Differentiation and Evolution*, "American Sociological Review", 1964, no. 29, p. 375-386.

¹¹ T. Parsons, *Social Systems and the Evolution of Action Theory*, New York 1977.

¹² N. Luhmann, *Differentiation of Society*, "The Canadian Journal of Sociology"/"Cahiers canadiens de sociologie", 1977, no. 2, p. 29-53.

¹³ J. Alexander, P. Colomy, *Differentiation Theory and Social Change: Comparative and Historical Perspectives*, New York 1990.

¹⁴ D. Juteau Lee, *Social Differentiation: Patterns and Processes*, Toronto 2003, p. 5.

¹⁵ N. Luhmann, *Differentiation of Society*, "The Canadian Journal of Sociology", 1977, no. 2, p. 30-31.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ G. Skąpska, *Wstęp*, in: N. Luhmann, *Funkcja religii*, Kraków 1998, p. VII.

¹⁸ N. J. Demerath III, *Secularization*, in: E. Borgotta, R. Montgomery (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Vol. 4, New York 2000, p. 2482-2491.

¹⁹ D. Juteau Lee, *Social Differentiation: Patterns and Processes*, Toronto 2003, p. 3.

signification and identification and has many facets linked to social hierarchization, inequality, status, wealth etc.

For T. Luckmann, P. Berger and D. Martin the differentiation of society was one of the main cause of secularization. They pointed out that different areas of society were getting out of religious control, receiving their own laws and strategies of government. In France, it might have been autocracy which eliminated religious dissent by secular revolution. Religious forces may be also inverted and substituted with a secular ideology. Religious change may be also a result of liberalization as it took place in Calvinist and Lutheran countries²⁰. According to T. Parsons, R. Bellah, and N. Luhmann religious transformation is specific to Occident dualism between the religious and the secular²¹. In the result of the differentiation, religion is – on one hand – sacrificed to secular interests and – on the other – the secular order changes in the direction of the norms provided by religion. In such perspective differentiation results in secularization. As the social system becomes increasingly differentiated, there is a decline in people's practice of religion. W. Goldstein notices that secularization "is not necessarily occurring in a linear manner, but can also be marked by contradictions, progress as well as reversals"²². "Religious movements in the direction of rationalization, and social movements in the direction of secularization spawn religious counter movements in the direction of sacralization and dedifferentiation. These movements and countermovements are in conflict with each other"²³.

The category of "religious differentiation" is implemented not only in "secularization paradigm" but also in the market theory approach to religion, which assigns basic economic free market rules to the processes concerning existence of religion in society. In such approach, vitality of religion in society is tightly contingent on religious market offer for religious consumers. In such a perspective, the process of social differentiation must not have a negative effect on religiosity. The more pluralist the religious market, the greater the competition between religious providers. Religious providers in wider sense are also providers of non-religious values and sense. Competition challenges sense and values providers to improve their services in order to retain "clients" and to attract new ones. Religious communities in monopoly position become lazy and indolent. Within diversified faith-options, a "religious consumer" is more likely to find proper product for himself. Religious leaders work harder and more creatively to meet religious needs of potential followers when

²⁰ D. Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization*, New York 1978, p.5-6.

²¹ T. Parsons, *The System of Modern Societies*. New Jersey 1971, p. 52.

²² W. S. Goldstein, *Secularization Patterns in the Old Paradigm*, "Sociology of Religion", 2009, no. 70, p. 157-178.

²³ W. Goldstein, *Secularization Patterns in the Old Paradigm*, "Sociology of Religion", 2009, no. 70, p. 157-178, p. 175.

followers have non-religious choices available²⁴. It means that religious change is driven by the interaction between opposing forces, between religious and other social subsystems. Also, in P. Bourdieu's theory, there is a field of struggle for symbolic power, domination, social distinctions, cultural and religious capital²⁵. The religious field is an arena where specific forms of capital are produced, invested, exchanged and accumulated²⁶.

Social polarization

"Polarization" as theoretical category is included in differentiation theory. J. Alexander suggests that the process of differentiation should be supplemented with in-depth, historical investigations and examine how institutional entrepreneurs, research mobilization, coalition formation, as well as group competition and conflict affect the course of differentiation²⁷. Polarization may be grounded in economic aspects of social life such as income structure, division of labor²⁸ and may refer to growth at both the ends of the distribution and a decline in the middle²⁹. The polarization process is also known in social psychology with respect to human attitudes and behavior. In such context polarization means growth in disagreement and reinforcement in current beliefs and attitudes among different groups. The attitude towards polarization is based on the so called "confirmation bias" which designates the tendency of people to search for and interpret evidence selectively³⁰. "Polarization" is often implemented in the theories of conflict and used as tool for statistical analysis³¹.

In sociology of religion the category of "polarization" in comparison to "differentiation" is not well known. According to S. Wilkins-Laflamme polarization as conceptual tool was first used by R. Wuthnow in 1988 and J. D. Hunter in 1991³².

²⁴ R. Stark, W.S. Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*, New York 1996.

²⁵ P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*, London 1984.

²⁶ D. Swartz, *Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion: Pierre Bourdieu's Political Economy of Symbolic Power*, "Sociology of Religion", 1996, no. 57, p. 71-85.

²⁷ P. Colomy, A. Jeffrey, in: G. Ritzer (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, New York 2004, p. 8-9.

²⁸ R. E. Pahl, *Divisions of Labour*, Oxford 1984.

²⁹ F. Moulaert, E. Swyngedouw, R. Arantxa, *The Globalized City: Economic Restructuring and Social Polarization in European Cities*, Oxford 2003; Ch. Hamnett, *Social Polarisation in Global Cities: Theory and Evidence*, "Urban Stud" 1994, no. 31, p. 401-424.

³⁰ C. Fine. *A Mind of its Own - How Your Brain Distorts and Deceives*. W. W. Norton 2006.

³¹ See: J. Montalvo, M. Reynal-Querol, *Ethnic Polarization, Potential Conflict, and Civil Wars*, "American Economic Review", 2005, no. 95, p. 796-816.

³² S. Wilkins-Laflamme, *Toward Religious Polarization? Time Effects on Religious Commitment in U.S., UK, and Canadian Regions*, "Sociology of Religion", 2014 no. 75, p. 284-308.

R. Wuthnow describes a strong division between conservative and progressive attitudes in the United States. This polarization is rooted in “symbolic boundaries” such as the attitudes towards abortion, pornography, homosexuality and prayer at public schools³³. According to D. Hunter American society and culture are at war. So called “culture wars” mean political and social hostility rooted in different systems of moral understanding³⁴. Also in North Ireland, religion remains one of the central dimensions of social difference. J.Q. Wilson explains the polarization as “commitment to a candidate, culture or ideology that sets one group apart from people in a rival group”. According to him, in the United States, religion is one of the most important sources of polarization in American politics. That is why the split between the religious and the secular is large and growing³⁵. L. Dawson and J. Thiessen uses the term “polarization” to describe religious landscape in Canada³⁶. M. Evans shows that attitudes towards abortion have been polarizing in the U.S. from 1972 to 1998³⁷. Recently R. Putnam and D. Campbell, claims there is a growing division between religiously involved and secular groups of Americans³⁸. S. Wilkins-Laflamme analyzes the decline in the number of nominal affiliates coupled with no change or an increase among unaffiliates and religiously committed affiliates in Great Britain, the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia between 1985 and 2010³⁹. It is so, because religion helps to constitute the meanings of group identity⁴⁰ and because religion is a factor playing important role in voting, political preferences and decision making⁴¹.

³³ R. Wuthnow, *Reconstructing American Religion. Society and Religion since World War II*, New Jersey 1989.

³⁴ J. D. Hunter, *Culture Wars. The Struggle to Define America*, New York 1991.

³⁵ J. W. Wilson, *I. Politics and Polarization. II. Religion and Polarization*, Harvard 2005, p. 3.

³⁶ L. Dawson, J. Thiessen, *The Sociology of Religion. A Canadian Perspective*, Oxford 2004

³⁷ J. Evans, *Polarization in Abortion Attitudes in U.S. Religious Traditions, 1972-1998*, “Sociological Forum”, 2002, no. 17, p. 397-422; J. Evans, B. Bryson, P. DiMaggio, *Opinion Polarization: Important Contributions, Necessary Limitation*, “American Journal of Sociology”, 2001, no. 106, p. 944-960.

³⁸ R. Putnam, D. Campbell, S. Garrett, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, New York 2010.

³⁹ S. Wilkins-Laflamme, *Toward Religious Polarization? Time Effects on Religious Commitment in U.S., UK, and Canadian*, “Regions Sociology of Religion”, 2014, no. 72, p. 284-308.

⁴⁰ C. Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief*, London 2013.

⁴¹ W.V. D’Antonio, S. A. Tuch, J. R. Baker, *Religion, Politics, and Polarization: How Religiopolitical Conflict Is Changing Congress and American Democracy*, Lanham 2013.

Social transformation in Poland

At the end of 1980s the foundations of the social system were overturned, and Poland started its path from central planning to free market, from autocracy to democracy, from censorship to freedom of expression, from a “society of shortages”⁴² to the consumer society. Although before 1989 Poland was already marked by mass education, industrialization, and urbanization, this “socialistic modernity” was incomplete and may be called “fake modernity”⁴³. From the cultural point of view, the key characteristics of the Polish habitus in time of Communism were: egalitarianism, “disinterested envy”⁴⁴, acceptance of state paternalism, anti-elitism, and anti-intellectualism⁴⁵. After a period of strong mobilization of Polish civil society in the 1980s (*Solidarność* movement) and after the democratic breakthrough, the contrary process within the bottom-up social dynamics was observed: “demobilization of insurgent civil society by pact and decapitation through success”⁴⁶.

The collapse of Communism, was unexpected and rapid, although it was result of a long historical process. It was a systemic and multidimensional change in the areas of politics, economics, culture, and everyday life⁴⁷. Most of studies concerning the transformation in Poland focus on the economic and political issues. However, as R. Inglehart and W. Baker show, economic development brings also pervasive cultural changes, and “cultural change seems to be path dependent” for economic transformation. “The rise of the service sector and the transition to a knowledge society are linked with a different set of -cultural changes from those that characterized industrialization”⁴⁸. Furthermore, Polish transition was focused on the cultural (civil society) rather than on the economic character of social cleavages⁴⁹. Social transformation in Poland resulted in cultural characteristics such as the growing role of individual and self-realization values, personal preferences, and freedom

⁴² J. Korani, *The Socialist System, The Political Economy of Communism*, New Jersey 1992.

⁴³ P. Sztompka, *The Intangibles and Imponderables of the Transition to Democracy*, “Studies in Comparative Communism”, 1991, no.3, p. 295-312.

⁴⁴ M. Marody, *Antynomie społecznej podświadomości*, „Odra”, 1987, no. 1, p. 4-9.

⁴⁵ Sztompka, P. *Looking Back: The Year 1989 as a Cultural and Civilizational Break*, “Communist and Post-Communist Studies”, 1996, no. 29, pp. 115-129.

⁴⁶ M. Bernhard, *Civil society after the first transition: Dilemmas of post-communist democratization in Poland and beyond*, “Communist and Post-Communist Studies”, 1996, no. 29, p. 309-330.

⁴⁷ P. Sztompka, *Looking Back: The Year 1989 as a Cultural and Civilizational Break*, “Communist and Post-Communist Studies”, 1996, no.29, p. 115-129.

⁴⁸ R. Inglehart, W. Baker, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values*, “American Sociological Review”, 2000, no. 65, p. 49.

⁴⁹ G. Ekiert, J. Kubik, *Rebellious Civil Society: Popular Protest and Democratic Consolidation in Poland, 1989-1993*, Ann Arbor 2001.

from traditional forces of authority⁵⁰. Poland, after 1989, is more exposed to global cultural changes than in the time of Communism. The socialization power of groups and institutions is not any longer based so much on coercion and obligation, but on seduction, voluntary participation, and emotional bond⁵¹.

However, Polish society is characterized by continuing vitality of religion and Catholic Church maintains a stable position since 1989⁵². Religious transformation in Poland if perceived in terms of secularization is described as an "atypical" model of secularization or "sub-secularization"⁵³. J. Mariański calls this processes „creeping secularization"⁵⁴. Since 1989 Polish religiosity was faced with new religious movements and syncretic tendencies⁵⁵. The function of Catholicism in Poland is changing⁵⁶. Religiosity in Poland is under the privatization rather than secularization process⁵⁷. According to J. Mariański, the transformation in Poland embraces the changes in the moral and normative domain that may be grasped in four different models: (1) secularization of morality – abandonment of the religious morality model, (2) individualization of morality; (3) transformation of values and creation of new values system; (4) reorientation of moral values which means also moral revival⁵⁸. M. Rogaczewska describes the effect of growing pluralization of religious field in Poland⁵⁹.

⁵⁰ E. Frątczak, I. Sikorska, *Changing attitudes and behaviour concerning contraception and abortion in Poland*, "Studia Demograficzne", 2009, no. 156, p. 78.

⁵¹ R. Hitzler., M. Pfadenhauer, *Eine posttraditionale Gesellschaft. Integration und Distinktion in der Techno-Szene*, in: F. Hillebrandt, G. Kneer, K. Kraemer (eds.), *Verlust der Sicherheit*, Opladen 1997, p. 83-102.

⁵² I. Borowik, 'Why Has Religiosity in Poland not Changed since 1989? Five Hypotheses', "Politics and Religion", 2010, no. 3, pp. 262-275; I. Borowik, *Religion in Poland Between Tradition and Modernity, or Religious Continuity and Change in Conditions of Transformation*, in: S. Ramet, I. Borowik, *Religion, Politics, and Values in Poland: Continuity and Change Since 1989*, New York 2017, p. 185-208.

⁵³ P. Olearnik, *Poland: a Case-Study in Secularization*, "Horyzonty Polityki", 2012, no. 3, p.103-127.

⁵⁴ J. Mariański, *Katolicyzm polski. Ciągłość i zmiana. Studium socjologiczne*, Kraków 2011.

⁵⁵ M Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, *Pluralizm wyznaniowy we współczesnej Polsce*, in: M. Hainz et al. (eds.), *Pomiędzy sekularyzacją i religijnym ożywieniem. Podobieństwa i różnice w przemianach religijnych w Polsce i w Niemczech*, Kraków 2012, p. 199-214.

⁵⁶ M. Dębski, J. Balicki, *Religia – wartości i normy*, in: *Studium porównawcze wyników dwóch Polskich Badań Retrospektywnych 2001 i 2006. Raport syntetyczny z badania empirycznego realizowanego w ramach projektu badawczego: Nr 2H02B 006 25*, Warszawa 2007.

⁵⁷ E. Frątczak, I. Sikorska, *Changing Attitudes And Behaviour Concerning Contraception And Abortion In Poland*, "Studia Demograficzne", 2009, no. 2(156), p. 73-114, p. 101-103.

⁵⁸ J. Mariański, *Katolicyzm polski. Ciągłość i zmiana. Studium socjologiczne*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2011, p. 104.

⁵⁹ M. Rogaczewska, *Przemiany wzorów religijności w Polsce a mechanizmy uspołecznienia*, Manuscript, Warszawa 2015.

E. Pace claims that since 1989 the Polish society has undergone a growing religious differentiation which is intertwined with economic differentiation⁶⁰.

According to the latest national census, which for the first time since 1930s included the question on religious affiliation, from 89% to 97% of Poles declare belonging to a religious denomination.

Table 1. Religious affiliation in Poland in 2011

Belonging to a religious denomination	Percentage of total population	Percentage of respondents
Belonging to any confession	88,9	97,36
Catholicism	87,7	96,1
Orthodox Christianity	0,4	0,45
Protestant	0,3	0,35
Islam	0	0,01
Judaism	0	0
Buddism	0	0,02
Hinduism	0	0
Other religions	0	0,01
Atheism	0	0,01
Without belonging	2,4	2,64
Refusal to answer the question	7,1	x
Unsettled	1,6	x

Source: National Census 2011, Central Statistical Office.

Polish children are still commonly baptized. The proportion of births to baptisms is more than 95%. In 1980s the ratio exceeded 100% which is interpreted as anti-communism uprising.

Table 2. Number of birth and baptism in Poland from 1969 to 2014

Years	Number of births	Baptisms	%
1969	531135	481753	90,7%
1970	545973	516984	94,7%
1971	562341	508414	90,4%
1972	575725	535247	93,0%
1973	598559	547979	91,5%
1974	621080	553825	89,2%
1975	643772	596326	92,6%
1976	670140	606914	90,6%
1977	662582	612777	92,5%
1978	666336	622429	93,4%
1979	688293	658656	95,7%

⁶⁰ E. Pace, *Religion as Communication: God's Talk*, Oxford 2016; E. Pace, *The Crash of the Sacred Conopy in Polish Society: A Systems Theory Approach*, in: W. H. Swatos (ed.), *Politics and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe: Traditions and Transitions*, London 1994, p. 134-144.

Years	Number of births	Baptisms	%
1980	692798	685037	98,9%
1981	678696	711351	104,8%
1982	702351	727058	103,5%
1983	720756	747646	103,7%
1984	699041	741766	106,1%
1985	677576	637606	94,1%
1986	634748	635843	100,2%
1987	605492	604282	99,8%
1988	587741	582028	99,0%
1990	547700	569154	103,9%
1991	547700	565442	103,2%
1992	515200	506323	98,3%
1993	494300	478206	96,7%
1994	481300	462725	96,1%
1995	433100	438461	101,2%
1996	428200	419513	98,0%
1997	412700	410749	99,5%
1998	395600	396207	100,2%
1999	382000	389892	102,1%
2000	378300	379371	100,3%
2001	368200	367765	99,9%
2002	353800	354277	100,1%
2003	351100	343912	98,0%
2004	356100	342613	96,2%
2005	364400	352070	96,6%
2006	374200	353512	94,5%
2007	387900	366881	94,6%
2008	414500	387949	93,6%
2009	417600	397399	95,2%
2010	413300	392598	95,0%
2011	388400	383486	98,7%
2012	386300	378356	97,9%
2013	369600	374509	101,3%
2014	375200	373670	99,6%

However, the high quota of Catholics in Poland may hide subtle religious changes and processes. That is why a more precise and focused research must be used to discover what is going on in the religious field in Poland.

Since 1979, a strong decline in regular Sunday Mass attendance among Roman and Greek-Catholics⁶¹ is observed. In 1980, 51% of Polish Catholics attended Holy Mass (so called *dominicantes*) every Sunday. Between 2013 and 2014 the attendance dropped to 39%.

⁶¹ Data collected using the same method since 1979 by Institute for Catholic Church Statistics (www.iskk.pl).

Table 3. Statistical indicators of religious practices: *dominantes* and *communicantes* from 1980 to 2015.

Rok	Mass attendednece	Communicantes
2015	39,8%	17,0%
2014	39,1%	16,3%
2013	39,1%	16,3%
2012	40,0%	16,2%
2011	40,0%	16,1%
2010	41,0%	16,4%
2009	41,5%	16,7%
2008	40,4%	15,3%
2007	44,2%	17,6%
2006	45,8%	16,3%
2005	45,0%	16,5%
2004	43,2%	15,6%
2003	46,0%	16,9%
2002	45,2%	17,3%
2001	46,8%	16,5%
2000	47,5%	19,4%
1999	46,9%	16,3%
1998	47,5%	17,6%
1997	46,6%	15,2%
1996	46,6%	14,5%
1995	46,8%	15,4%
1994	45,6%	13,1%
1993	43,1%	13,0%
1992	47,0%	14,0%
1991	47,6%	10,8%
1990	50,3%	10,7%
1989	46,7%	9,9%
1988	48,7%	10,7%
1987	53,3%	11,1%
1986	52,9%	10,4%
1985	49,9%	9,1%
1984	52,2%	8,9%
1983	51,2%	8,6%
1982	57,0%	9,6%
1981	52,7%	8,1%
1980	51,0%	7,8%

Source: Institute for Catholic Church Statistics, 2016.

The decline in religious practice during the last 30 years among Poles is evident. Notably, the decline is much softer than in the countries of western Europe. In Germany for example – according to data collected using similar methodology as in Poland – since 1960 to 1990 the Mass attendance rate declined from 46% to 21%, and since

1990 to 2006 from 21% to 14%⁶². In France, according to the surveys, the “messalisants” (i.e., measures of attendance every Sunday) decreased from 21% in 1965 to 5% in 1990s⁶³. This indicates that the decrease in religious practices in Poland was much smaller than in France and Germany. The decline in Poland was also smaller than in the U.S. According to the Center for Applied Research for Apostolate more than 60% of American Catholics attended Sunday Mass regularly in the 1960s and about 40% in 1990⁶⁴.

Interesting changes can be also observed in regard to the self-declaration of faith. Between 1991 and 2015 the proportion of Poles who declare themselves “deeply believing” is stable while the proportions in other categories have grown.

Table 4. Self-declaration of faith by Poles in 1991 and 2015

Category	1991	2015
Total	99,6	100
Deeply believing	10	10,5
Believing	79,9	69,6
Uncertain but attached to religious tradition	6	12
Indifferent	2,4	5,3
Unbelieving	1,3	2,6
No response	0,4	-

Source: Institute for Catholic Church Statistics (1991), Central Statistical Office (1991,2015)

Changes can be also observed in more qualitative aspects of faith. Private religious practices declined during recent decades. In 1991, 62% of total population was praying every day or almost every day, as compared to 61% in 1998 and 53% in 2012. A growing share of people do not go to confession at all or go very rarely: in 1991, 15% went to confession every several years, as compared to 18% in 1998. In 2002, 4% did not go to confession at all and, in 2012, 7%. In 1991, 62% declared regular daily prayer while in 2012 only 53% did. The percent of Poles who never pray individually increased from 2% in 1991 to 7% in 2012. The group of Poles who are totally liberal in their moral attitudes is growing⁶⁵.

On the other hand, in Polish society some reverse tendencies are observed. Polish Catholics tend to receive Holy Communion more often than before. In 1980, only 7,8% of Polish Catholics received Holy Communion (*communicantes*) every Sunday, in 2015 - 17%. On one hand, this tendency may be interpreted as increasingly

⁶² Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, *Katholische Kirche in Deutschland. Statistische Daten 2006*, Bonn 2008.

⁶³ IFOP, http://www.ifop.com/media/pressdocument/238-1-document_file.pdf

⁶⁴ <http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2011/03/sunday-morning-deconstructing-catholic.html>

⁶⁵ L. Adamczuk, E. Firlit, W. Zdaniewicz, *Postawy religijno-społeczne Polaków 1991-2012*, Warszawa 2013.

liberal attitude toward the sacrament, but – on the other hand – the practice of going to confession is quite common and the understanding of sin remains traditional. Since 1991, there is a growing proportion of individuals who go to confession regularly. In 1991, 21% went to confession “during the last month”, and 27% in 1998. In 2002, 13% and 19% in 2012 went to confession “once a month”. A sign of religious vitality and attachment to sacramental marriage – apart from most common interpretation of this phenomenon – is the present interest among Poles in canceling unsuccessful religious marriages. The number of cases for declaration of invalidity of the marriages in 1989 was 1,279, and in 2010 two times more at 3,241. The belief in experiencing God in human life among Poles is increasing. In 2012, 48% of Poles expressed that it is possible by human beings to experience God, much more than twenty years before (24% in 1991)⁶⁶. There is also a growing number of Catholics who are actively engaged in parish organizations. In 1993, there were only 4% of Polish Catholics active in such organizations, in 2013 twice more at 8%. In 1998, there were 39,6 thousand faith-based parish organizations with 2,1 million members and in 2008, there were 60 thousand with 2,7 million members⁶⁷. So called *participantes* – it means percentage of Catholics participating in parish organization – has been growing since 1993⁶⁸.

Table 5. *Participantes* rates between 1993 and 2013

Year	<i>Participantes</i>
1993	4,3
1998	6,2
2003	7,8
2008	7,9
2013	8

Religious mobilization seems also to be quite strong. Although established in the Communism times, religious movements, such as Light-Life Movement, are declining⁶⁹ while new Catholic movements are arising. The most influential of those new movements seems to be the Movement of New Evangelization which is structured into Catholic societies, diocesan teams, academic centers, parish schools and centers of religious orders. Between 2003 and 2016 the movement grew from about 50 centers and 5 thousand participants to 360 centers and 60 thousand

⁶⁶ E. Jarmoch, *Wiara i religijność*, in: L. Adamczuk, E. Firlit, W. Zdaniewicz, *Postawy społeczno-religijne Polaków 1991-2012*, Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego, Warszawa 2013, s. 29-58.

⁶⁷ W. Sadłoń, M. Kazanecka, *Podmioty wyznaniowe prowadzące działalność o charakterze pożytku publicznego*, in: *Sektor non-profit w 2014 r.*, Warszawa 2016, s. 148-161.

⁶⁸ W. Sadłoń, *Kościelny trzeci sektor w Polsce oraz działalność charytatywna*, in: P. Ciecieląg et al. (ed.), *Kościół katolicki w Polsce 1991-2011. Rocznik statystyczny*, Warszawa 2014, p. 208-219.

⁶⁹ A. Nosowska, *Oazy jako zjawisko społeczne i religijne. Rozwój ruchu i jego tożsamość*, Warszawa 2012, manuscript.

participants⁷⁰. There are many mass events organized by this group such as evangelization festivals at the National Stadium in Warsaw, evangelization events in the streets and squares, as well as worships and prayers in market halls. Nowadays, the activities of New Evangelization Movement are much wider and exceed official Catholic structures to encompass grass-roots religious initiatives. According to "Time Use Survey 2013" of the Polish Central Statistical Office, the percentage of Poles declaring religious practices has decreased from 19,7% in 2003/2004 to 16,2% in 2013. However, in the same period, the average time of religious practices performed has grown⁷¹. In Poland, since 1989 the disapproval of abortion has been growing. Polish Catholics are increasingly inclined not to approve of abortion for any social or medical reason⁷². Since 1989, crucial changes are also observed in other political preferences regarding religiosity. According to G. Rosta analysis, based on data from European Value Study, the role of religion in specifying political attitudes has been growing in Poland since 1990. The correlation between religiosity of Poles and their right-wing political preferences grew stronger in 2010 relative to 1999 and 1990. According to G. Rosta, political polarization based on religion takes place in Poland. It means that the correlation between religion and political preferences is growing in the Polish society⁷³.

Political context

Religious situation in Poland seems to be deeply rooted not only in national but also in political and public opinion context. During the Communist period the Church in Poland was the only "indigenous institution in Poland"⁷⁴ and the spokesman of Polish society⁷⁵. During the democratic transformation in Poland religion played important role, because of its connection to national identity. Since 1989, new legislation related to the Church was introduced. According to some western analysts, the Catholic Church in Poland emerged from the Communist period not only as

⁷⁰ W. Szlachetka, *Fenomen Szkół Nowej Ewangelizacji*, Kraków 2012; see also data from Council of New Evangelization by Polish Catholic Bishops Conference.

⁷¹ Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Budżet czasu ludności 2013*, Cz. I, Warszawa 2015.

⁷² E. Frątczak, I. Sikorska, *Changing Attitudes And Behaviour Concerning Contraception And Abortion In Poland*, "Studia Demograficzne" 2009, no. 156, p. 73-114.

⁷³ G. Rosta, *Religiosität und politische Präferenzen – Polen und Deutschland* in: M. Hainz (ed.), *Zwischen Säkularisierung und religiöser Vitalisierung. Religiosität in Deutschland und Polen im Vergleich*, Wiesbaden 2014, p. 135-146.

⁷⁴ B. Szajkowski, *Next to God... Poland, Politics and Religion in Contemporary Poland*, New York 1983.

⁷⁵ E. Morawska, *Civil Religion Versus State Power in Poland*, in: Thomas Robbins, Roland Robertson (ed.), *Church-State Relations: Tensions and Transitions*, New York 1987, p. 221-232.

the highest moral authority but also as the most powerful institution in the country⁷⁶. In the transformation process not only the freedom of the conscious but also the legal position of the Church in Poland was guaranteed. New statutes were introduced: social insurance for clergyman and consecrated persons, restitution of Church properties and autonomy of the state. After 1989, abortion was restricted, religion education returned to public schools. It could be interpreted that the ground for the Polish version of civil religion has been prepared⁷⁷ but such statement – often repeated by foreign observers – nowadays from the perspective of quarter of the century seem very superficial. These statements did not consider the fact that anti-religious and anti-Catholic social forces had not disappeared during political changes. It means that anticlericalism and reluctance towards the Catholic Church were not only instrumental action of Communist party, but were also rooted in the civil society. Notably, in 1995 and 2000 a long-time communist, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, was elected the president of Poland. From 1995 to 2001 and from 1997 to 2005 post-communist governments were established by post-communist parties.

Since 1990 public reforms conferring rights to Catholic Church were fervently criticized (especially in 1990 when religion was reintroduced to public education system). In 1991 and 1993, Church was publicly criticized for its political involvement in the elections. Catholic Church faced criticism and opposition to Her stance on abortion and in regard to concordat legislation in 1993. The concordat was ratified five years after being signed. In 1990s, “[t]he conflict over abortion saw the emergence of an ideological polarization resembling that of Communist times (...) The discourse was then transformed into the polarized model in which liberalism equaled Communism”⁷⁸.

Since 2011, a strong campaign for religious apostasy in Poland was organized mainly by political forces⁷⁹. It was a very visible protest against the dominant “mainline religion” and dominant structure of social relations. Happenings, manifestations, as well as social media, Internet and public media campaigns were organized. In 2008, Polish Bishops’ Conference published “Rules Governing the Formal Act of Defection From the Church”. According to this document “the act of apostasy that has canonical consequences can only be performed by a person who is of age (...) and has legal capacity, in person, in a conscious and free way (...), in writing, in the presence of the priest of the parish where he resides (permanently or temporarily), and two

⁷⁶ M. Eberts, *The Roman Catholic Church and Democracy in Poland*, “Europe-Asia Studies”, 1998, no. 50, p. 820.

⁷⁷ E. Morawska, *Civil Religion vs. State Power in Poland*, “Society”, 1984, no. 21, p. 29-34.

⁷⁸ Z. Mach, *The Roman Catholic Church in Poland and thr Dynamics of Social Identity in Polish Society*, in: L. Faltin, M. J. Wright, *The Religious Roots of Contemporary European Identity*, London and New York 2007, p. 126-127.

⁷⁹ Political party ‘Palikot’s Movement’ was especially active in this area.

witnesses who are of age⁸⁰. In 2010, there were 459 acts of apostasy⁸¹. Those numbers were never before observed in Poland, though the number itself is not impressive. Apostasy movement could be interpreted as a conflict between political and cultural tendencies and social order. However, it was in fact a top-down movement with strong political background and constructed narratives⁸². In 2011, anticlerical and antireligious party gained about 10% of support in parliamentary election.

According to A. Korboński, Catholic Church in Poland acted in counterproductive way, because of its “aggressive and arrogant behavior” in such fields as “religious education, Christian values in mass media, church finances, the concordat with the Holy See, and the debate on the new constitution”⁸³. “The power and influence of the church actually peaked in the early 1990s and that, having absorbed some of the lessons from its decline, its future policies may well be less triumphalistic and controversial, and more accommodating”⁸⁴. According to T. Byrnes Church acted very aggressively to advance its policy and institutional interest⁸⁵.

One of the most visible and also well described in the sociological literature act of political and religious polarization in post-communist Poland of late 1990s was the issue of so called “Zwirowisko crosses. In 1998, due to Jewish sensitivity, the decision was made to remove cross commemorating the visit of Polish Pope John Paul II from the surroundings of Nazis concentration camp KL Auschwitz. Strong Catholic opposition had risen. Although, officially Catholic Church and bishops were rather moderated in their statements, in the public debate a strong dichotomization was present and press releases were very often anticlerical and aimed against the Church⁸⁶. Another inflammatory issue was the restitution of immovable Church property nationalized by the state after Second World War. To carry out the process, Property Commission was set up in 1989⁸⁷. Its work was very often discussed in the public forum. The commission was often presented as unjustly benefitting the Catholic Church and faced allegations of serious

⁸⁰ Conference of Polish Bishops, *Zasady postępowania w sprawie formalnego aktu wystąpienia z Kościoła*, Warszawa 2008, p. 5.

⁸¹ According to the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics,

⁸² D. Bromley, *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements*, Westport 1998.

⁸³ A. Korbonski, *Poland ten years after: the church*, “Communist and Post-Communist Studies” 2000, no. 33, p. 123–146.

⁸⁴ Ibidem.

⁸⁵ T. Byrnes, *The Catholic Church and Poland's return to Europe*, “East European Quarterly”, 1996, no. 30, p. 433-448.

⁸⁶ K. Leszczyńska, *Strategie budowania wiarygodności Kościoła Rzymskokatolickiego w Polsce w obliczu transformacji kultury*, „Studia Humanistyczne AGH”, 2010, no. 8, p. 103-115.

⁸⁷ Dziennik Ustaw 1989, no. 29, item 154.

corruption⁸⁸. The Property Commission was dissolved in 2010⁸⁹ but the problem of restitution remains unresolved.

Religion also played an important role in establishing a new Catholic TV channel “Trwam” (*Persist*). When National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) denied Trwam the access to digital public broadcasting until 2013, more than 2,5 million persons sent protests to National Broadcasting Council and 175 local manifestations were organized. In 2012, in Warsaw, about half a million people gathered to protest against “discrimination of TV Trwam”⁹⁰. Also, Polish bishops, parish priests, and right wing politicians were engaged to support TV Trwam, which is institutionally affiliated with politically influential Catholic Radio Maryja⁹¹.

The manifestations of social polarization rooted in religion may be explained by the growing number of “hate crimes” which include crimes against religious freedom.

Table 5. Number of committed “hate crimes” from 1991 to 2012

Year	Number of crimes
1992	13
1993	13
1994	36
1995	37
1996	33
1997	46
1998	19
1999	44
2000	53
2001	34
2002	34
2003	34
2004	42
2005	68
2006	94
2007	125
2008	147
2009	155
2010	197
2011	188
2012	212

Source: Komenda Główna Policji

⁸⁸ See: <http://www.krakowpost.com/6386/2013/03/polands-property-commission-on-trail-for-deals-that-handed-millions-to-catholic-church> (01.2016)

⁸⁹ Dziennik Ustaw 2011, no. 18, item 89.

⁹⁰ W. Reszczyński, *Konfederacja Warszawska*, „Nasz Dziennik”. [dostęp 2012-10-01].

⁹¹ About the Role of Radio Maryja see: S. Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Post-Communist Poland: Polarization, Differentiation and Decline in Influence*, in: S. Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989*, London 2014, p. 25-52.

From 2012 to 2014, in Poland, 908 acts of profanation of Catholic holy places (i.e., churches, crosses, etc.) were noticed. During this period, priests in 12% of more than ten thousand Catholic parishes reported acts of discrimination⁹².

Conclusions

In Communism, Catholicism represented opposition to the autocratic state. In 1989, the process of rapid modernization and democratization started. The transformation of Polish society could be interpreted in terms of differentiation which concerns religion. New social domains, structures and institutions were built. Free speech and independent media opened in Poland new sphere of public debate and introduced pluralism. Another new dimension of social life is free market economy. During the period of socio-economic transformation, religion was centrally placed in the public debate. In the process, Polish religiosity became more pluralistic and more differentiated. Although there are symptoms of religious decline, according to presented data, differentiation is resulting not only in secularization but also in social polarization. Religious polarization could be connected with political polarization of the society in the Communism time. Currently, it is not possible to answer the question whether relative stability of Polish religiosity is the result of social polarization. More research focused on religious stability and revival is needed. However, it seems far to simplistic to analyze religious change in Poland only in terms of decline.

Wojciech Sadłoń – DIFFERENTIATION, POLARIZATION AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN POLAND AT THE TURN OF XX AND XXI CENTURY

The transformation of the Polish society after 1989 is characterized by multidimensional changes, which refer to various dimensions of social life, including religion. One of the theoretical category used to describe these complex changes is “differentiation”. This theoretical category serves as a analytical tool for the study of religious transformation in Poland. This article aims to describe some elements of religious differentiation in Poland at the turn of the 20th and 21st century. It demonstrates that the “differentiation” is not a simple and uniform process, leading directly to the attenuation and disappearance of religiosity. According to presented statistical data, religious landscape in Poland is characterized rather by the process of polarization. In the article, some socio-political facts of the recent Polish history are reported. These facts explain the specificity of the Polish social polarization, which has strong religious background.

⁹² *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia AD 2015*, Warszawa 2015.