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Between tabloidization of religion and religious affiliation on Facebook. Religion in the modern world Part I – Press and television

Introduction

Modern and postmodern trends infuse contemporary times with new values such as spontaneity, ephemerality and leisure. All narrative styles are rejected for the sake of neo-narration or post-narration affirmating the market, the freedom of choice, the ideology of hedonism and entertainment. Not only do they transpire to all spheres of life, experiences and desires, but also form our semantic structures, impact axiological and epistemological models that are a part of the contemporary social order. Postmodern attributes determine the character of societies¹, culture and its components, while the past and the present lead a battle for the citizens', recipients' and consumers' attention. However, they seem to be overwhelmed by the magic of 'nowness'², dynamically changing trends and fashions celebrating pleasure, individualism, quasi-uniqueness and vanity, rather than ideals, values or traditional standards. It seems that contemporary times are as a result contesting and depreciating historical socio-cultural contexts and formulae. These form a reservoir of symbols and meanings, a collection of available means of expression facilitating the dissemination of happiness and consumerism, with ephemerality and simulation supplanting conventional reflectivity and the former structures of sense. Tradition and its potential are in a way trapped in the theatre of consumerism, affirmating emblematic superficiality and fleeting uniqueness, which effectively decon-

¹ See E. Fromm, *Zdrowe społeczeństwo*, Warsaw 1996.

² See S. Bertman, *Hyperculture. The Humane cost of speed*, Westport 1998, after: Z. Bauman, *Konsumowanie życia*, Cracow 2009, p. 39.

struct its former meaning and historically formed role attired in codes of socio-cultural privileges³. But tradition questions the scope of presence imposed on it by postmodernism. With the voice of its supporters, it calls for more piety and affirmation for its humanistic significance, which confronted with every day existence saturated with consumerist phantasmagoria may be perceived as residual, but also fleeting and easily forgotten.

The discourse of rivalry between the past and the present emphasizing the potential for supremacy in both, is particularly visible in religion, which permanently manifests a longing for its historical status, where it determined identity and continuity, at the same time ensuring a relative stability or consistency vital for both the individual and collective security. However, the contemporary trends – relating to, among other things, consumption and consumerism – successively take over living space, experiences, desires and people's imaginations, making them overwhelmingly dynamic and full of content, but at the same time extremely schematic, based on standardized code of entertainment and thus heuristically impoverished and semantically limited. In consumerist narration of everyday life religion and its semantic attributes are encoded in the scheme of commercial interactions, where they become either one of the sources of inspiration authenticating the values of the offered products and services, or a sublimed proposition incorporated in selected life styles. As a sublimed proposition, they complement or fulfil the explorations of contemporary consumers in their search for answers regarding identity and epistemology.

But today religion aspiring to a greater role than merely being a part of the present, which plays with symbols and meanings deprived of their Talmudic contexts, joins the trend of simulation manipulation: endlessly replicating appearances of meanings and their constellations, camouflaging the preservation of uniformity and dedifferentiation of senselessness⁴. Thus religion becomes one of more or less illusory offers competing for the citizens' attention. The contemporary media in a spectacular way exemplify the coexistence of religion and the present. The media are a part and parcel of everyday life⁵, but in fact appears to be a specific emanation of the postmodern era. To build its presence the media homogenise exceptionality and kitsch, heroize the banal and depreciate traditional meanings and senses, glorify fun and pop-entertainment trying to satisfy the tastes and needs of the contemporary recipients⁶. In this context the association of religion and the media shows that such an alliance may be inevitable. At the same time it also indirectly reveals that the society looks favourably at an increasingly visible process of the reproduction of cultural contradictions. It boosts popularity, readership or viewing figures, which determine the *status quo* of today's ingredients regardless of their provenance. It follows that the religious sphere may expect a general depreciation e.g. the 'contact' with

³ J. Baudrillard, *Spoleczeństwo konsumpcyjne. Jego mity i struktury*, Warsaw 2006, p. 62.

⁴ J. Baudrillard, *Wymiana symboliczna i śmierć*, Warsaw 2007, p. 118-123.

⁵ See N. Couldry, *Media Rituals. A Critical Approach*, London – New York 2003.

⁶ See P. Bourdieu, W. Godzic, „We are what we watch”, czyli telewizja rzeczywistości i jej nierealny widz, „Więź”, 2004, no. 10 (593), p. 27-39.

the *sacrum* or transcendence may be transformed into a superficial media show glorifying schematic pictures, ensuring only illusory sensations and experiences⁷. All that will not only replace the previous, indeed little conventional, stimulation sources for eschatological reflection, but also redefine the context and the main ideas behind religious engagement, where 'the medial phantasm of sacrality' will become comprehensive (sufficient) criterion of possible affiliation or religious experience.

This paper attempts to present how religion and the media coexist and what are the character and the potential consequences of this alliance, which in very general terms might be discussed dialectically⁸. On the one hand, mediatisation of the contemporary societies turn religion and religious institutions to the media as a tool of postmodern evangelisation. This reveals their pragmatic approach to audiovisual technological solutions, which facilitate dissemination. At the same time, such a strategy requires presence on the web or on Facebook i.e. a *quasi*-replica of global society, where not only the commercial and mainstream⁹ creations, but also more sublime content are promoted. Thus the *sacrum* is activated in the media and the media are treated instrumentally. The phenomenon might be perceived as a contemporary adaptation of religion, which has always sought effective and adequate forms of presence and new impact models allowing to reach to both the believers and all interested. On the other hand, predilection of the media to promote standardized content propagating mostly, but not only, hedonism and entertainment or infotainment (for more demanding audience) may cause a reduction or disappearance of religious ideas for the benefit of schematic pictures, ephemeral experiences and sensations. The latter may trigger tabloidization¹⁰ of religion corresponding with the socio-cultural demand for superficial and *quasi*-individualised determination of needs and satisfaction. The association of religion and the media will be illustrated in this paper by the instances of their coexistence in the Polish reality.

⁷ It may be exemplified by the eventization of the World Youth Day. For more information M. Pfadenhauer, *The eventization of faith as a marketing strategy: World Youth Day as an innovative response of the Catholic Church to pluralization*, "International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing", 2010, no. 15, p. 382-394; see also A. Hepp, V. Krönert, *Media Culture as Religious Change: „Mediatization” as „Branding Religion”*, paper presented at the conference: *Religion, Media Process and the Transformation of the Public Sphere: A Day Symposium*, January 2008, [electronic version], source: www.imki.uni-bremen.de; see also N. Postman, *Zabawić się na śmierć*, Warsaw 2002, p. 36-73, 164-178.

⁸ For a broader discussion on the relations between religion and the media see e.g. J. Majewski, *Religia, media, mitologia*, Gdańsk 2010, p. 52-72.

⁹ For more information on 'mainstream' in contemporary culture see F. Martel, *Mainstream. Co podoba się wszędzie na świecie*, Warsaw 2011.

¹⁰ For more information on tabloidization see: C. Sparks, *Popular Journalism: Theories and Practice*, in: *Journalism and Popular Culture*, P. Dahlgren, C. Sparks (ed.), London 2000, p. 24-44; see E. Bird, *News we can use: an audience perspective on tabloidization of News in the United States*, "The Public", 1998, vol. 5, no. 3, p. 33-49; Z. Bauer, "Twój głos w Twoim domu": cztery typy tabloidyzacji, in: *Oblicza komunikacji. Język i kultura tabloidów*, preconference edition, Wrocław 2009, source: <http://oblicza.konferencja.org/> [access: 30th July 2011].

Press

The press market seems to be a relatively adequate indicator of readers' preferences and the popularity of religious content. It is not only that the press is very popular among Poles (which can be illustrated by the data collected by Polish Readership Survey Ltd. indicating that 91.5% of the respondents declared reading press in 2010¹¹), but also due to the great appeal of this market in Poland¹². The interest in religious content, and therefore also the demand for this type of offer among the contemporary recipients, may be analysed based on the sales and readership data of the selected religious titles available across Poland¹³.

The following religious weeklies available across Poland will be analysed: "Gość Niedzielny", "Mały Gość Niedzielny", "Przewodnik Katolicki" and "Tygodnik Powszechny". Average single circulation of "Gość Niedzielny" in March 2010 reached 203 201 copies¹⁴, of which 72.6%¹⁵ were sold, while in March 2011 of the total number of 198 848 copies¹⁶ 71.2% were sold¹⁷. By analogy, the sales data of "Mały Gość Niedzielny" looked the following: March 2010 – 100 000¹⁸ and 72.3%¹⁹, March 2011 – 96 193²⁰ and 64.4%²¹, while the average single circulation of "Przewodnik Katolicki" equalled respectively:

¹¹ PBC (Polish Readership Survey Ltd.), *Prasę czyta ponad 90% Polaków! Czytelnictwo prasy wyłącznie w Internecie na poziomie 1%*, 28th March 2011, carried out February 2010 – January 2011, source: www.pbczyt.pl. Altogether 90.6% of the respondents declared reading only printed press, while 0.9% declared reading only online editions. Ibid [access: 29th August 2011].

¹² The Polish organisation controlling press distribution, Związek Kontroli Dystrybucji Prasy (ZDKP) reports that in March 2011, the press market included: 42 paid dailies, 251 paid magazines, 52 trade journals, 3 free dailies, 37 free magazines, 16 free trade journals. Source: www.teleskop.org.pl

¹³ The analysis included only the titles registered at ZKDP i.e. three catholic weeklies: "Gość Niedzielny" (registered since 15th January 1997), "Mały Gość Niedzielny" (registered since 15th January 1997), "Przewodnik Katolicki" (registered since 31st August 2004) and "Tygodnik Powszechny" (registered since 30th March 2001). The latter is identified as catholic press, but as of 1993 the weekly does not have an official ecclesiastical assistant, which is a necessary criterion for a title to be classified as 'Catholic'. For more information see e.g. A. Adamski, *Kościół ma „dobrą prasę”? Stan prasy katolickiej w Polsce*, in: *Media i Kościół. Polityka informacyjna Kościoła*, M. Przybysz, K. Marcyński (eds.), Warsaw 2011, p. 119, 126-132. The author would like to express thanks to Ms Renata Lenard, Specialist for press distribution control at ZKDP for assisting in the search of very detailed information regarding the discussed weeklies in the ZKDP register. The analysis included also publicly available ZKDP data. Source: www.teleskop.org.pl and www.zkdp.pl. All presented data regarding selected titles in the analysed period were broken down by the following categories: "average single circulation" and "total sales". Data regarding the "total paid distribution" were not included. For more information on the two categories ("total sales" and "total paid distribution") see: *Regulamin kontroli nakładu i dystrybucji prasy zarejestrowanej w Związku Kontroli Dystrybucji Prasy (tekst jednolity obowiązujący od 14 grudnia 2010 r.)*, §9, p. 6-11, source: www.zkdp.pl

¹⁴ ZKDP data, average single circulation, March 2010, source: www.teleskop.org.pl

¹⁵ Based on ZKDP data, total sales and average single circulation, March 2010, source: Ibid.

¹⁶ ZKDP data, average single circulation, March 2011, source: Ibid.

¹⁷ Based on ZKDP data, total sales and average single circulation, March 2011, source: Ibid.

¹⁸ ZKDP data, average single circulation, March 2010, source: Ibid.

¹⁹ Based on ZKDP data, total sales and average single circulation, March 2010, source: Ibid.

²⁰ ZKDP data, average single circulation, March 2011, source: Ibid.

²¹ Based on ZKDP data, total sales and average single circulation, March 2011, source: Ibid.

35 858 and 40 005 copies²², of which in 10.1% were sold in March 2010 and 8.2%²³ in March 2011. The average single circulation of "Tygodnik Powszechny" in March 2010 was as high as 41 490 copies²⁴, of which 45.7%²⁵ were sold. A year later the respective figures were equivalent to 38 674 copies²⁶ and 44.8%²⁷. This data suggest a relative stability of the discussed titles in the market. But a comparison with such weeklies as e.g. "Życie na Gorąco" or "Chwila dla Ciebie", shows that the total sum of average single circulations of religious weeklies is lower than the respective figures of each of the secular weeklies separately²⁸. At the same time the circulation of "Gość Niedzielny" ranks it high on the list of the so-called opinion magazines²⁹. The average single circulation of "Polityka" in March 2010 amounted to 192 761 copies³⁰, of which 69.8%³¹ were sold, while a year later the circulation dropped to 188 700 copies³² and sales equalled 70.8%³³. The data regarding the circulation and sales of the Polish edition of Newsweek – "Newsweek Polska" are as follows: March 2010 – 159 569 and 64.8%, and in March 2011 – 177 394 and 60.1%³⁴. On the other hand the average single circulation of "Wprost" in March 2010 equalled 160 376 copies, of which 41.9% was sold, while in March 2011 the circulation increased to 182 000 copies and 50.3% were sold³⁵. Against this backdrop, the market or publishing dynamics of religious weeklies, especially "Gość Niedzielny" in the opinion magazines segment looks impressive, but only at the first glance. In fact, although the circulation

²² ZKDP data, average single circulation, March 2010 and 2011, source: Ibid.

²³ Based on ZKDP data, total sales and average single circulation, March 2010 and 2011, source: Ibid.

²⁴ ZKDP data, average single circulation, March 2010, source: Ibid.

²⁵ Based on ZKDP data, total sales and average single circulation, March 2010, source: Ibid.

²⁶ ZKDP data, average single circulation, March 2011, source: Ibid.

²⁷ Based on ZKDP data, total sales and average single circulation, March 2011, source: Ibid.

²⁸ The average single circulation of "Życie na Gorąco" in March 2010 reached 789 758 copies (ZKDP data, average single circulation for March 2010), out of which 76.3% were sold (calculated based on ZKDP data regarding total sales and average single circulation for March 2010). A year later, in the same month the average single circulation of the weekly equalled 767 838 copies (ZKDP data, average single circulation for March 2011) of which 79.6% were sold (calculated based on ZKDP data regarding total sales and average single circulation for March 2011) source: Ibid. In March 2010 another weekly "Chwila na Gorąco" reached average single circulation of 423 700 copies (ZKDP data, average single circulation for March 2010), of which 70.1% were sold (calculated based on ZKDP data regarding total sales and average single circulation for March 2010), and in the following year the data was as follows: 475 717 (ZKDP data, average single circulation for March 2011) and 70.2% (calculated based on ZKDP data regarding total sales and average single circulation for March 2011). Based on ZKDP data, www.teleskop.org.pl

²⁹ See A. Adamski, *Kościół ma „dobrą prasę”? Stan prasy katolickiej w Polsce*, in: *Media i Kościół. Polityka informacyjna Kościoła*, op. cit., p. 127.

³⁰ ZKDP data, average single circulation, March 2010, source: www.teleskop.org.pl

³¹ Based on ZKDP data, total sales and average single circulation, March 2010, source: Ibid.

³² ZKDP data, average single circulation, March 2011, source: Ibid.

³³ Calculated based on ZKDP data, total sales and average single circulation, March 2011, source: Ibid. The circulation of "Gość Niedzielny" in 2003 equalled 161 824 copies, and 202 141 copies in 2010. ZKDP data, average single circulation in 2005 and 2010, source: www.zkdp.pl

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. The analysis did not include „Uważam Rze inaczej pisane” a weekly of a significant circulation, which was first published in February 2011.

of "Gość Niedzielny" between 2005 and 2010 increased by 24.9%³⁶, the percentage share in sales dropped by 6.35 percentage points from 76.35% in 2005 to 70.7%³⁷ in 2010. By comparison, the sales of "Polityka" in the same period dropped by 30.2%³⁸, but the percentage share in sales jumped by 9.5 percentage points: from 63% in 2005 to 72.5%³⁹ in 2010.

In this context, the leading position of "Gość Niedzielny" in the scale of circulation in opinion magazines segment seems to have been achieved at the expense of profitability. But it is also possible that this model is a part of a strategy, in which the market orientation is dictated by the overriding objective to disseminate specific content and ideas regardless of the economic situation. The greater circulation of "Gość Niedzielny" might be perceived as an attempt to increase its availability and to promote religious content, which does not have strong impact, since the readership of "Życie na Gorąco" in the first half of 2011 equalled 18.09%⁴⁰, compared with 18.68%⁴¹ in the previous year. By analogy in the same period, "Chwila dla Ciebie" achieved 15.06%⁴² in 2010 and 14.19%⁴³ in 2011, while "Newsweek": 9.33%⁴⁴ in 2010 and 8.99%⁴⁵ in 2011, and "Polityka": 7.15%⁴⁶ in 2010 and 6.96%⁴⁷ in 2011, "Wprost" 5.59% in 2010⁴⁸ and 7.36% in 2011⁴⁹, while the readership of "Gość

³⁶ The analysis is based on ZDKP data, average single circulation for 2005 and 2010 from *Komunikat Zarządu Związku Kontroli Dystrybucji Prasy o wysokości nakładów i dystrybucji tytułów kontrolowanych przez ZKDP w 2005 r.* Resolution No. 63/2006, ZDKP, 23rd November 2006, source: www.zkdp.pl; *Komunikat Zarządu Związku Kontroli Dystrybucji Prasy o wysokości nakładów i dystrybucji tytułów kontrolowanych przez ZKDP w 2010 r.*, Resolution No. 80/2011, ZDKP, 17th November 2011, source: www.zkdp.pl. The average single circulation of "Gość Niedzielny" in 2005 equalled 161 824 copies, and 202 141 copies in 2010. ZKDP data, average single circulation in 2005 and 2010, source: www.zkdp.pl

³⁷ The analysis is based on ZKDP data regarding total sales and average single circulation in 2005 and 2010 and *Komunikat Zarządu Związku Kontroli Dystrybucji Prasy o wysokości nakładów i dystrybucji tytułów kontrolowanych przez ZKDP w 2005 r.*, and *Komunikat Zarządu Związku Kontroli Dystrybucji Prasy o wysokości nakładów i dystrybucji tytułów kontrolowanych przez ZKDP w 2010 r.*, source: www.zkdp.pl. Data regarding the remaining religious weeklies is as follows: the circulation of "Mały Gość Niedzielny" decreased by 10% from 2005 to 2010, its sales share dropped by 10.6 percentage points (from 76.3% in 2005 to 65.7% in 2010); the circulation of "Przewodnik Katolicki" decreased by 3%, and its sales share dropped by 74.1 percentage points (from 76.3% in 2005 to 8.8% in 2010); the circulation of "Tygodnik Powszechny" decreased by 30.2%, its sales share dropped by 3.4 percentage points. Calculated based on ZKDP data regarding total sales and average single circulation in 2005 and 2010.

³⁸ The average single circulation of "Polityka" equalled 278 842 copies in 2005, and 197 373 copies in 2010. ZKDP data for average single circulation in 2005 and 2010.

³⁹ Calculated based on ZKDP data, total sales and average single circulation for 2005 and 2010.

⁴⁰ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres styczeń 2011 – czerwiec 2011 r.*, Readership ranking in Poland (Seasonal Readership) conducted by Millward Brown SMG/KRC, source: www.pbczyt.pl

⁴¹ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres styczeń 2009 – czerwiec 2010 r.*, Readership ranking in Poland (Seasonal Readership) conducted by Millward Brown SMG/KRC, source: www.breif.pl

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres styczeń 2011 – czerwiec 2011 r.*, op. cit.

⁴⁴ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres grudzień 2009 – maj 2010 r.*

⁴⁵ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres styczeń 2011 – czerwiec 2011 r.*

⁴⁶ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres grudzień 2009 – maj 2010 r.*

⁴⁷ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres styczeń 2011 – czerwiec 2011 r.*

⁴⁸ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres grudzień 2009 – maj 2010 r.*

⁴⁹ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres styczeń 2011 – czerwiec 2011 r.*

Niedzielną” in the same periods reached 4.14%⁵⁰ in 2010 and 4.25%⁵¹ in 2011 and of “Przewodnik Katolicki” 0.79%⁵² and 0.64%⁵³ respectively. Low, but stable readership may suggest that there is no particular demand for this form of dissemination of religious content, values and ideas in the Polish society, or alternatively, that its character and form is incoherent with heuristic or aesthetic tastes and expectations of potential contemporary consumers. This means that, although the Polish religious market is very homogenous, it does not translate into an equally unified structure of spiritual needs, which could be to varying extent satisfied by the available or newly created sacral media offer. The character of the previous demand for religious content in press, in the context of Polish religiousness appears to be merely token. It shows that religious press is today defeated by the relatively attractive secular tabloids.

Television and religious programmes

Television appears to be, along with the Internet, one of the basic sources of entertainment, information, education and evangelisation. And yet, it may also be treated as a major danger for humanistic experiences and creations⁵⁴. Promoting very specific content, television is one of the factors shaping the structure and character of people's experience, desires, needs and human relations and thus influences the socio-cultural space, making it semantically full and impoverished at the same time. Information and picture packages, ideas and values provided at great pace and dynamics camouflage triviality, selectiveness, *quasi*-individualism, conformity and repetitiveness, which blur or limit possible heuristic explorations⁵⁵. Television glorifies stereotypical, colloquial and average content concealed in exclusive attire associated with exclusive, sublime and unique values. The new pretenders are relatively successful in substituting the role and influence of the traditional axiological structures, which have so far infused our everyday space with axioms and content. It does not follow, however, that the contemporary socio-cultural space constructed together with the media – including television – is deprived of the semantic dimension. On the contrary, it is permanently filled even by increasingly active participation and engagement of the recipients⁵⁶, who contribute

⁵⁰ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres grudzień 2009 – maj 2010 r.*

⁵¹ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres styczeń 2011 – czerwiec 2011 r.*

⁵² PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres grudzień 2009 – maj 2010 r.*

⁵³ PBC report, *Wyniki Badania PBC za okres styczeń 2011 – czerwiec 2011 r.*

⁵⁴ See P. Bourdieu, *O telewizji. Panowanie dziennikarstwa*, Warsaw 2009.

⁵⁵ Ibid. See also M. Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno, *Dialektyka oświecenia*, op. cit.

⁵⁶ See F. Jenkins, *Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars? Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture*, in: *Rethinking media change. The aesthetics of Transition*, D. Thorburn, H. Jednikns (eds.), Massachusetts 2003, p. 281-312; *ibid*, *Kultura konwergencji. Zderzenie starych i nowych mediów*, Warsaw 2007; D. McQuail, *Teoria komunikowania masowego*, Warsaw 2007; W. Godzic, *Ubrana nie-taka-żnowu-małpa przed telewizorem*, in: T. Szlendak, T. Kozłowski, *Naga małpa przed telewizorem. Popkultura w świetle psychologii ewolucyjnej*, Warsaw 2008.

to the production and reproduction of meaning⁵⁷. However, the existing media discourse overwhelmingly superficial and dominated by entertainment, personalised narration and dynamics stimulated by the news model of content promotion imposes a very particular conventionality. This conventionality emanates specific interests or ideological particularities⁵⁸ and offers an answer to special e.g. escapist needs and preferences of the audience, but also presents a spectacular form imitating pluralism and democracy. It seems that the presence of these rules in media projects has an axiological dimension. It is indispensable and coherent with the contemporary standards and requirements. Yet the rules confine the audience to clear cut consumer segments, which are in a way governed by default packages of content and programme formulas answering (at least in theory) different viewers' needs and expectations. The viewers, in turn, choose mostly pop culture or content verging on the border of sublime and exclusive. In this context, the appeal or variety of the programme presents the opportunity to fill the exiting and emerging niches⁵⁹, which smoothly fits the signalled predilection of the media infrastructure and its animators to disseminate content in a predefined form. The form, to a great extent reinforces the existing 'culture of appearances and imitations', in which the semantic systems and the contemporary sense structures are dispersed in a universe of media shows.

The power of socio-cultural impact that the contemporary media exert and the extent to which the available offer is adequate, as well as the popularity of or the demand for specific, especially religious content might be partially illustrated by the data of the Polish TV market. Due to a relative religious homogeneity of the Polish audience, the television market seems to rather truthfully reflect the contemporary trends and changes in the scope of television's influence on the epistemological and axiological preferences of the consumers. It appears that the Polish viewers spend increasingly more time in front of the TV set; while in 2005 an average Polish viewer spent on average 3 hours 16 minutes, in 2010 this period extended to 3 hours 42 minutes⁶⁰. It might be assumed that this upward trend inspires publishers and producers to constantly attract the attention and fight for both the potential and the de facto viewers thus engaging in a relatively effective pursuit to satisfy consumers' expectations. As a result the offers of the most popular⁶¹ TV channels

⁵⁷ See. *ibid.*, see also E. W. Rothenbuhler, *Media Anthropology as a Field of Interdisciplinary Contact*, source: www.media-anthropology.net; E. W. Rothenbuhler, *Komunikacja rytualna. Od rozmowy codziennej do ceremonii medialnej*, Cracow 2003; M. Coman, *Media Anthropology. An overview*, source: www.media-anthropology.net; J. Majewski, *Religia, media, mitologia*, *op.cit.*

⁵⁸ See M. Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno, *Dialektyka oświecenia*, *op. cit.*; P. Bourdieu, *O telewizji. Panowanie dziennikarstwa*, *op.cit.*; G. Murdock, *Large corporations and the control of the communications Industries*, in: *Culture, society and the media*, M. Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curran, J. Woollacott, London – New York 2005, p. 114-147.

⁵⁹ S. Mocek, *Tabloidyżacja czyli kultura wizualna*, "Znak", 2011, no. 11-12, p. 55.

⁶⁰ TNS OBOP Report, *Rynek telewizyjny w 2010 roku. Podsumowanie*, source: www.tnsobop.pl

⁶¹ The following TV channels achieved the highest viewing figures in 2010: TVP1 – 19.56%, TVP2 – 14.4%, Polsat – 13.7%, TVN – 13.68%, TVP Info – 4.79%. See TNS OBOP Report, *Rynek telewizyjny w 2010 roku. Podsumowanie*, *op. cit.*

are dominated mostly by entertainment, which covers more than a half of the air time⁶². Blocks of commercials are a major complement to this offer and their size allows the market to evaluate its attractiveness. Blocks of commercials have become an integral part of TV entertainment, which translates into their supremacy in the TV programme – today commercials constitute almost three-fourth of the air time⁶³. Such a make-up of the offer to some extent reflects viewers' needs and expectations, but also determines them⁶⁴.

Yet in the sea of commerce and entertainment there are also religious programmes, but their share has a rather symptomatic character. Religious content is broadcast only on public television (TVP1 and TVP2) and in the first quarter of 2011 its share ranged between 2.74% to 1.46% in TVP1, and between 1.1% and 0.29% in TVP2⁶⁵. Such a limited presence of religious programmes might be caused by different factors. Consumers may not feel the need for such a form of religious content, which requires piety and calmness. It may also be a sign that the form or content of those programmes do not meet the viewers' demands and expectations. Finally, it is possible that the followers of the Catholic faith distance themselves from the religious sphere. The scope of religious offer available on TV is subject to verification by the market standards, which are governed by specific models and the viewers' right to choose, reflecting their various preferences. The latter depart from possible connotations with the traditional image of a Polish Catholic, as they are clearly located in the contemporary entertainment and commerce sector. This trend may be exemplified by the viewing figures for the beatification of John Paul II and the interest in the offer of religious TV channels.

Beatification of John Pau II on TV

The beatification of John Paul II was supposed to be a very important media event, which gathered 6 800 039 viewers of TVP1 on 1st May 2011⁶⁶. The mass was also broadcast on TVP Info, TVN24, TV Polonia and Polsat News, which gathered the following number of viewers: TVP Info – 911 043, TVN24 – 562 459, TV Polonia – 480 612, Polsat News 248⁶⁷.

⁶² See also data provided by AGB Nielsen, source: www.agbnielsen.pl [access: 27th June 2011].

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ See E. Bird, *News we can use: an audience perspective on tabloidisation of News in the United States*, op. cit., p. 33-49; see also T. W. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, *Dialektyka oświecenia*, Warsaw 2010, p. 123-168; P. Bourdieu, *O telewizji. Panowanie dziennikarstwa*, op. cit.; C. Sparks, *Popular Journalism: Theories and Practice*, in: *Journalism and Popular Culture*, op.cit., p. 24-44.

⁶⁵ Based on AGB Nielsen reports *Raporty tygodniowe* from the following period 9th January 2011-27th March 2011, source: www.agbnielsen.pl

⁶⁶ AGB Nielsen data, after: Ł. Szewczyk, *Beatyfikacja Jana Pawła II w TV: 9 million viewers*, 2nd May 2011, source: www.media2.pl [access: 10th June 2011]. The dataset includes viewers aged 4 and more. TNS OBOP report for "Wirtualne media" indicates slightly lower viewing figures for the mass coverage on TVP1: 6 400 500. See *Rekord TVP1. Beatyfikacja Jana Pawła II hitem tygodnia*, source: www.wirtualnemedi.pl

⁶⁷ Ibid.

The number of viewers that watched the remaining programmes related to the beatification of John Paul II was as follows: TVP1 "Jestem z Wami Beatyfikacja Jana Pawła II" (9.55-12.54) – 6 718 227, TVP Info "Rzym Beatyfikacja Jana Pawła II" (10.02-12.49) – 911 597, TVN24 "Beatyfikacja Jana Pawła II" (9.55-12.52) – 560 361, TVP Polonia "Jestem z Wami Beatyfikacja Jana Pawła II" (9.55-12.54) – 463 817, Polsat News "Msza Beatyfikacyjna Jana Pawła II" (9.41-12.54) – 235 748⁶⁸. Although the number of viewers, who watched beatification was indeed significant, it was not the record that week (25th April 2011 – 1st May 2011) which belonged to a popular series "M jak Miłość" enjoyed by 7.5 million viewers⁶⁹. This staggering number of viewers of "M jak Miłość" in the week preceding the beatification was not the record rating for the series that year. On 18th January the series was watched by 8.407 million people⁷⁰. Even that number was beaten in 2011, by another series: "Rancho", whose rating exceeded 8.505 million viewers on 6th March⁷¹. There were more programmes, which had better viewing figures than the coverage of the beatification: "Teleexpress" – 7.666 million viewers⁷², "Benefis Adama Małysza" (Part I) – 7,254 million viewers⁷³, Wiadomości – 6.908 million viewers⁷⁴ and "Telekamery Teletygodnia" (Part I) – 6.780 million viewers⁷⁵. According to this dataset, even though a major religious event, such as the beatification of John Paul II – key from the Polish perspective – attracted an impressive number of viewers, its importance was still depreciated by pop culture productions, which enjoyed much greater popularity⁷⁶.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Data provided by AGB Nielsen Media Research, *Raport tygodniowy 1 V 2011*, source: www.agbnielsen.pl [access: 27th June 2011]. The remaining programmes that scored the highest viewing ratings that week were: TVP1 series "Ranczo" – 6.1 million (1st May 2011), TVP1 series "Ojciec Mateusz" – 4.862 million (28th April 2011), TVP1 sports programme – 4.814 million (25th April 2011), TVP2 series "Barwy szczęścia" – 4.588 million (26th April 2011), TVP1 news programme "Wiadomości" – 4.398 million (1st May 2011), TVP2 series "Na dobre i na złe" – 4.348 million (29th April 2011), TVP2 show „Kulisy serialu "M jak miłość" – 4.241 million (26th April 2011), TVP1 weather forecast "Prognoza pogody" – 4,107 (1st May 2011). Source: Ibid.

⁷⁰ Data provided by AGB Nielsen Media Research, *Raport tygodniowy 23 I 2011*, [access: 27th June 2011].

⁷¹ Data provided by AGB Nielsen Media Research, *Raport tygodniowy 6 III 2011*, www.agbnielsen.pl [access: 27th June 2011].

⁷² Viewing figures for 26th March 2011. Dane AGB Nielsen, *Raport tygodniowy 27 III 2011*, www.agbnielsen.pl

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Viewing figures for 7th February 2011. AGB Nielsen Media Research, *Raport tygodniowy 6 III 2011*, source: www.agbnielsen.pl [access: 27th June 2011].

⁷⁶ In May 2011 all news services were dominated by the visit of the US President in Poland, which was covered in 59 programmes. The beatification of John Paul II was the main topic of 56 programmes, the majority of which was prepared by the public television news service ("Panorama" and "Wiadomości"). Commercial ones e.g. "Fakty" and "Wydarzenia" devoted only 36% of all news items to this event. See *Obama, Jan Paweł II, Bin Laden – co ich łączy?*, Informacja prasowa, 5th July 2011, source: www.press-service.com.pl [access: 15th August 2011]; *Analiza dzienników informacyjnych. Wiadomości, Panorama, Wydarzenia, Fakty*, May 2011, study of four television stations: *Cztery stacje*, PRESS-SERVICE Monitoring Mediów, source: www.press-service.com.pl [access: 15th August 2011].

TV Trwam and Religia.tv

Yet another model incorporating *sacrum* into the world of the media, or maybe simply a different form of its alliance with the TV world is offered by two Polish TV channels, which identify themselves as religious⁷⁷. One of them claims to be a “TV channel with a soul”⁷⁸, while the other emphasises its Catholic provenance. Religia.tv and TV Trwam focus on sacrality, spirituality and faith. Although both promote religious values, they apply different strategies. TV Trwam is a catholic TV channel⁷⁹ propagating religion, faith and prayer in a very conventional and thus traditional form. The overriding goal of the offer proposed by Religia.tv⁸⁰ is to depart, at least in theory, from the traditional evangelisation model to promote religious content in a modern way by emphasizing not only the role of religion in human life, but also its socio-cultural context⁸¹ in a clearly heuristic perspective. In other words the TV channel focuses on openness, tolerance, education and reflective or intellectual journey in the religious sphere, at the same time affirming the universal character of religion⁸². The programme indeed attracts with a modern approach, as along with conventional offer including a Mass “Msza święta”, religious instruction “Biblijna lekcja religii” or “Lekcja religii”, and other traditional forms (“Gość

⁷⁷ The analysis does not include TV Puls, which developed from the religious television channel named “Telewizja Niepokalanów” launched by the Order of Friars Minor Conventual in Niepokalanów (broadcast licence was issued by the National Broadcasting Council on 12th December 1994 for the former Skierniewickie Voivodeship, and extended in 1997 to other former voivodeships: Łódzkie, Krakowskie, and later also to Nowosądeckie, Warszawskie and Opolskie. This necessitated another amendment in the broadcast licence, which was introduced on 10th December 1999 and granted the permission for the television to be broadcast via Astra 1E satellite, decision no. DK-169/99-12/93. See National Broadcasting Council annual reports: *Sprawozdanie Krajowej Rady Radiofonii i Telewizji z rocznego okresu działalności wraz z informacją o podstawowych problemach radiofonii i telewizji*, Warsaw March 1995, p. 18 and 35; *Sprawozdanie Krajowej Rady Radiofonii i Telewizji z rocznego okresu działalności*, Warsaw March 1998, p. 33 and 46; *Sprawozdanie Krajowej Rady Radiofonii i Telewizji z rocznego okresu działalności*, Warsaw March 2000, p. 42 and 52, and *Sprawozdanie Krajowej Rady Radiofonii i Telewizji z rocznego okresu działalności*, Warsaw March 2003, p. 57-58, source: www.krrit.gov.pl/krrit/informacje-o-krrit/sprawozdania/lata-1999-1994. After the change in ownership in 2007 the station’s categorisation was amended from “specialised socio-religious into universal” (licence no. 187/P/2004-T), as reported in National Broadcasting Council annual reports: *Sprawozdanie Krajowej Rady Radiofonii i Telewizji z działalności w 2007 r.*, Warsaw March 2008, p. 54 and 151, See also *Sprawozdanie Krajowej Rady Radiofonii i Telewizji z działalności w 2008 r.*, p. 85, source: Ibid.

⁷⁸ See <http://religia.tv>

⁷⁹ TV Trwam belongs to Lux Veritatis, a foundation, which on 22nd November 2002 was recorded in the National Court Register (KRS) under the number 000013977. The company is represented by: Redemptorists: Fr. T. Rydzyski (president of the management board) and Fr. J. Król (member of the management board).

⁸⁰ “TVN Religia” used to be a part of the ITI Group, but as of 2009 it is an independent entity. On 7th July 2009 it was entered to the National Court Register (KRS) as “Telewizja Religia Sp. z o.o.” under the number 0000334590. Telewizja Religia is managed by: President of the management board – Witold Marian Sadowski, Vice-president of the management board – Kazimierz Józef Sowa, Member of the supervisory board – Bernard Czajkowski, Member of the supervisory board – Wojciech Julian Kostrzewa, Member of the supervisory board – Karol Marek Depczyński. Financial data were not available. Source: www.krs-on-line.pl

⁸¹ See *TVN Religia kontra telewizja Trwam*, source: www.wirtualnemedial.pl [access: 30th June 2011].

⁸² *Religia.tv. – telewizja z duszą*, source: <http://religia.tv> [access: 27th June 2011].

Niedzielny w religia.tv", "Kalendarium ekumeniczne" or "Dekalog"), the viewers will find programmes clearly inspired by pop culture such as religious talk shows e.g. "Między sklepami" (between the shops), "Bóg w wielkim mieście" (God in the city), "Ludzie na walizkach" (out of the suitcase) or an interactive show based on telephone and online communication with the viewers "Rozmównica"⁸³. Yet despite an innovative programme coupled with the use of modern technology, adaptations and performances, which today constitute an integral part of visual narration and a relatively universal standard of the television market, Religia.tv still follows rather classical discourse and evangelisation models. Therefore one may argue with father K. Sowa, head of Religia.tv, who in one of the interviews assures that it is not their aim "to convert and evangelize"⁸⁴. What the channel has to offer clearly corresponds with the "educational and catechistic trend"⁸⁵ and its guiding principle is quite clear. Despite innovative techniques and different strategies from the ones seen in TV Trwam, new programme formulas corresponding with the popular trend for tabloidization, which celebrates personal narrations presented in a dramatic fashion⁸⁶, Religia.tv seems to be defeated by the religious outlook of the Polish viewers. Thus its offer seems to be incoherent with the viewers' spiritual needs and tastes. The TV channel is regularly watched by slightly more than 2 thousand people, which makes the average audience size equal to 0.01%⁸⁷. In comparison, the first quarter of 2011 TVN attracted almost a million viewers⁸⁸, the September inauguration of another edition of "Taniec z gwiazdami" (a dancing show) over 4 million⁸⁹, "Fakty" (a news programme) on average 4.7 million in the first quarter⁹⁰ and "Na Wspólnej" (a series) on

⁸³ Source: <http://religia.tv> [access: 30th June 2011].

⁸⁴ Ks. Sowa: *nie nawracamy nikogo*, An interview with Rev. K. Sowa carried out by I. Matjasik and R. Łączny, e-kai, 24th April 2009, source: www.e-kai.pl

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ See E. Bird, *News we can use: an audience perspective on tabloidization of News in the United States*, "The Public", 1998, vol. 5, no. 3, p. 35.

⁸⁷ In March 2011 AGB Nielsen Audience Measurement calculated viewing figures for religia.tv which at that time reached 0.01% (AMR%) (2 217 viewers – AMR 4+). Similar results were achieved in consecutive months: April 0.01% (3 473), May 0.01% (3 298), June 0.01% (2 339), July 0.01% (2 501), August 0.01% (2 487). The author would like to thank Mr M. Kozuchowski from TVN Advertising Office for providing relevant data. The SHR (indicating the percentage of people watching television at a specific point in time) for the period between 1st March 2011 and 30th June 2011 equalled 0.04% (2405 in absolute figures). Data provided by AGB Nielsen Audience Measurement. The author would like to thank Ms Aleksandra Boczkowska from AGB Nielsen Audience Measurement for providing relevant data.

⁸⁸ In January 2011 TVN had 971 413 viewers, and the viewing figures reached 13.59%. AGB Nielsen Data, after Ł. Szewczyk, *Styczeń: Polsat sporo traci, TVP w górę, 2 II 2011 r.*, source: www.media2.pl [access: 27th July 2011]. In February 2011 the viewing figures increased to 974 955 (14.08%), and in March jumped to 1 000 577 (15.44%). AGB Nielsen Data, after Ł. Szewczyk, *Marzec 2011: TVN przed Polsatem, TVP1 liderem, 2 IV 2011 r.*, www.media2.pl [access: 27th August 2011].

⁸⁹ The programme gathered 4 311 713 viewers (27.53%) on 4th September 2011. AGB Nielsen Data, after Ł. Szewczyk, *„Taniec z gwiazdami” lepszy od „Must Be the music”, 5 IX*, www.media2.pl [access: 5th September 2011].

⁹⁰ In January 2011 TVN news service "Fakty" were watched by 4 766 707 people (31.18%), in February the audience reached 31.60% of all viewers. AGB Nielsen Data, after Ł. Szewczyk, *„Fakty” (TVN) wyprzedziły „Wiadomości” (TVP1), 2 III 2011*, source: www.media2.pl [access: 27 VIII 2011]. In March the number of viewers watching

average 3.4 million⁹¹. In this context, the offer of the two religious TV channels i.e. Religia.tv and TV Trwam (the latter can boast with slightly higher viewing figures⁹²) become niche products, which does not seem to be their intention. Rather, it results from their belief in special expectations and spiritual needs of the Polish audience built on an auto-declarative vision of the Polish religiosity. It seems, however, that their preferences and areas of interest are completely different.

Instead of conclusions

The selectively presented material depicting the coexistence of religion and media (especially traditional ones) aimed at signalling the multitude of aspects and problems emerging from the alliance between the *sacrum* and the *profanum* in mediatisation conditions. The media are becoming an integral element of the contemporary humanistic experience, important enough to shape the structure of everyday reality⁹³ as well as the socio-cultural space. At the same time they appropriate traditional semantic systems and the power of their influence. In this context, media presence offers many opportunities of e.g. socio-cultural interactions, but reveals challenges, which seem to have major significance for the epistemological, axiological and religious dimensions. As regards religion, the potential of the media becomes a relatively innovative evangelisation tool, which can flexibly match the contemporary reality influenced by secularisation, deinstitutionalisation and detraditionalisation⁹⁴, where the *sacrum* is forced to the sphere of private experience, emotions and investigations. Evangelisation based on the media enables its deprivatisation⁹⁵, which requires not only a confrontation with secular ideologies

“Fakty” equalled 4 688 (32.35%). AGB Nielsen Data, after Ł. Szewczyk, „Fakty” (TVN) gonią „Wiadomości” (TVP1). *Duże spadki*, 2 V 2011, source: Ibid.

⁹¹ Between September 2010 and June 2011 the series had on average 3.424 million viewers. AGB Nielsen Data, after Ł. Szewczyk, *TVN: Serial „Na Wspólnej” – 3,4 mln widzów*, 18 VI 2011, source: www.media2.pl [access: 27th August 2011].

⁹² The viewing figures of TV Trwam is generally rather small, as in the third quarter of 2009 it reached only 0.15%, and in the same period of 2010 it was even lower – 0.1%. AGB Nielsen Data, after *Udział w rynku, wielkość i struktura widowni (wiek, wykształcenie, płeć) programów telewizji publicznej (TVP1, TVP2, TVP Info, TVP Polonia) i koncesjonowanej (TVN, Polsat, TV4, Puls) w III kwartale 2010 roku*, National Broadcasting Council's Office, Warsaw 2010, p. 5, source: www.krrit.gov.pl [access: 30th June 2011]. The number of viewers between 29th December 2008 and 4th January 2009 counted 9 287 (0.11%), while between 26th January 2009 to 1st February 2009 the number of viewers dropped to 6 641. AGB Nielsen data, after: Ł. Szewczyk, *Spada oglądalność TV Trwam*, 4 II 2009, source: www.media2.pl [access: 27th August 2011].

⁹³ See N. Couldry, *Media Rituals. A Critical Approach*, London – New York 2003.

⁹⁴ J. Mariański, *Sekularyzacja i desekularyzacja w nowoczesnym świecie*, Lublin 2006; Ibid., *Religijność europejska między sekularyzacją a desekularyzacją*, in: *Koniec sekularyzacji w Europie*, Cracow 2007; Ibid., *Religia w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym*, Warsaw 2010; P. L. Berger, G. Davie, E. Foaks, *Religious America, Secular Europe?: A Theme and Variations*, Hampshire 2008.

⁹⁵ J. Casanova, *Religie publiczne w nowoczesnym świecie*, Cracow 2005.

or pop cultural offers, but also encourages to draw inspiration from the dominant code of postmodern narration, based on the stimulation of experience and sensations, phantasmagoria, a palette of desires and experiences. Thus satisfying and strengthening spiritual needs through the media seems justified and corresponding to the contemporary trends. Yet, at the same time it places this special sphere of human existence in a very superficial dimension of eclectic meanings, which transform reflexivity into the fetishism of visual sensations, where the *sacrum* or transcendence and eschatological propositions assume the form of ephemeral holograms of religiousness.

The media model of propagating religious content (which at least in the USA has a long tradition owing to such television preachers as P. Robertson or J. Falwell⁹⁶) may, despite a clear evangelisation potential lead to a partial deconstruction of the socio-cultural and humanistic significance of this sphere. It is possible, as the semantic structure, although present in the public dimension thanks to technological solutions, becomes in a way detached from its historical sources and contexts and eventually compiled into a slightly eclectic postmodern formula of a new spirituality⁹⁷. For those, who value spirituality and seek new sources of sense-making ideas, the era of the media is an endless source of inspiration. For traditional religious institutions, however, it is a source of challenges and dilemmas, which might be illustrated by the case of Poland, where the interest in religious offers in the media clearly loses in confrontation with postmodern tabloidised products.

⁹⁶ For more information on television evangelism in the USA see e.g. A. Peck, *Teleewangelizm, apokalipsa i polityka. Współczesna prawica protestancka w Stanach Zjednoczonych*, Tyczyn 2005.

⁹⁷ See also *Sociology of spirituality*, K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp (ed.), Hampshire 2007; J. Mariański, *Religia w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym*, op. cit.