

The Role of the Catholic Church and Polish Religiosity

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Abstract

Poland was perceived as one of the most religious Catholic countries in Europe. However, according to various surveys, the rate of Polish church attendance was gradually decreasing. The decline appears to stem from broadly understood economic, political, and cultural transformation of Polish society resulting from commercialization and de-sacralization of religious rituals, privatization of religious behaviour and a perceived gradual secularization of Polish society. Given secularization theory and debates about the role of the Catholic Church in Poland, the aim of this article was to investigate factors underpinning the changing patterns of religious behaviour. The factors considered were connected with the recent history of the church-society relationship.

KEYWORDS: institution, community, commercialization, de-sacralization, privatization, secularization

The status of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland was unquestionable. Even after more than twenty years of transformation, Roman Catholicism was becoming an object of evaluation by citizens. The evaluation was influenced by the strong institutional bond between the majority of Poles and the church that developed during one of the most traumatic periods in Polish history. While new, albeit by no means dominant, the critical approach appeared to be the result of three factors. First, a democratization that allowed for various opinions regarding political, life, religious, and gender to be articulated. Second, with unlimited access to media information individuals were exposed to the diversity of religion orientations. Third, there was a commercialization of all spheres of human life and social interaction. Generally, the aforementioned factors of possible secularization did not appear to deviate from factors identified by Western sociologists; however, in the case of Poland, additional aspects of the process should be considered, namely the bond between Roman Catholicism and Polish society, the nature of Polish Religiosity, and Polish attitudes about changes within the Roman Catholic Church itself.

Methodology

The theoretical framework of the research was the theory of secularization and related interpretations. Additionally, Robert Merton's (1936) ideas about the unanticipated consequences of purposive social action and the distinction between churches as institutions, and the concept of the church as a community of believers, appeared significant.

The analysis strategy was to combine available statistical data with data derived from sociological and anthropological observations in order to demonstrate that Polish Religiosity was becoming subject to commercialization, de-sacralization, privatization, and secularization which deviated from the patterns observable in western countries.

Secularization

It was commonly accepted that secularization was the process whereby religious beliefs, practices and institutions diminished in social significance. The intensity of secularization and the decline of religion were measured by religious attendance, commitment to specific beliefs and support for the Church, and by the importance attached to religious practices and rituals in social and private life.

Far from being unanimous, sociologists of religion proposed various definitions of secularization and its validity in the discussion of religious decay. The term *secularization* was defined by Weber (1930), Berger (1966), Luckmann (1967), and Dobbelaere (1981), each of whom made significant contributions to the concept.

For Weber secularization was the double-sided effect of 'rationalization' and 'disenchantment,' which meant that social life could be explained through experience and the application of human reason rather than through reference to divine forces. While individuals would continue to believe in the old mysteries of religion, the concept of mystery itself was devalued (Weber, 1994).

In his early discussion of secularization, Berger (1966) followed Weber's explication and observed,

The secularizing effect is seen as having a double character, on the level of the mind by the inculcation of highly rational modes of thinking and on the level of practical living by the application of equally rational techniques to solve problems which previously rendered human beings helpless. If the scientist and the engineer are taken as typical figures of the modern age, it can then be said that religion has become unthinkable for the first and unnecessary for the second. (p. 201)

Later, both Berger and Luckmann questioned such a global thesis of secularization. Luckmann claimed modern Religiosity undergoes the process of privatization and

individualisation instead of secularization, and what was observed was not the decay of religion, but a religious metamorphosis. It was the institutional form of religion that was affected by secularization, but not subjective individual consciousness. Secularization did not refer to religious meanings and symbols which constitute, as he called it, *invisible religion* (Luckmann, 1996). Modifying the earlier concept of secularization, Berger admitted that, although traditional religious systems were decaying, the decay had a limited range and almost everywhere orthodox and traditional movements emerged and lead to religious fervency. Thus, on the macro level, secularizations lead to de-monopolization of traditional religion, thereby resulting in the transmission of religious beliefs from public to private sphere. The privatization of religion was understood as the process through which *sacrum* became subject to private choice to such an extent that it caused the phenomenon of *common heresy* (Berger, 1997).

The initially accepted theory of secularization was challenged. New Religious Movements, which appeared and persisted in the countries where the levels of practice or saturation with traditional religions were relatively low, were an important argument against the scientific validity of the theory of secularization (Swatos & Christiano 1999). Others emphasised at least the dual nature of secularization, acknowledging that its different patterns depended upon the cultural context. Dobbelaere (2008) referred to the three relatively independent dimensions of secularization: societal system (laicization), religious organizations (religious change), and individual religious involvement that provoked most controversies, and the question whether or not in modern societies people are likely to abandon religious practices due to the loss of religious consciousness. Importantly, Dobbelaere (2008) emphasized that the three dimensions vary from society to society. This helped distinguish between of the way secularization developed in different societies. Similarly, Possenti (2005) distinguished between *immanent* and *moderate* secularism. The former supported the self-sufficiency of reason that lead to understanding religion as a private fact; the latter implied the separation between religion and politics (church and state), but did not deny the possibility of interactive cooperation, or a positive *secularism* and an *open secular State* (Possenti, 2005, pp. 5-16). Casanova observed that secularization should be understood as privatization of religion perceived as a general modern historical trend and as “emancipation of social secular spheres (state, economy, science) from religious institutions and norms” (Casanova, 2007, pp. 409-442). Kaufmann, in turn, emphasized the progressing emancipation and cultural criticism connected with the diminishing control the church formerly exercised over social life and the demystification of faith, on the one hand, but preservation of Christian heritage in secular modern culture and the spiritualization of the secular sphere (“Christianity beyond the churches”), on the other (Kaufmann, 2007, pp. 361-382).

The above mentioned meanings of secularization included at least three interrelated perspectives which could account for different patterns of secularization. First, it is an ideological assumption that secularization, as the Enlightenment criticism implies, is an inevitable process which will result in the total decay of religion. With reference to Christianity, this idea paralleled

the concept of de-Christianization. Second, secularization would mean privatization of religion, or perceiving religion as a purely individual problem. Third, secularization means separation of ecclesiastical and secular spheres.

However, with reference to the RCC in Poland and Polish Religiosity, none of the above concepts or patterns of secularization can be applied without reservation. First, one cannot assume that religion and the church have lost an influence either on a macro or micro level of social life. Moreover, the church was still strong enough to neglect a significant difference in the ways in which society and religion have interacted in the past from the present. Therefore, the question was whether the term "secularization" should be used with reference to the Polish society, or whether the processes that have been taking place in Poland within the last decade or so should be called commercialization, de-sacralization and privatization instead of secularization. If secularization was the issue, then the specific version referring to the institutional form of religion (the Catholic Church) should be considered rather than the decline in "Religiosity" as such. Therefore, one could assume that Polish Religiosity seemed to be the blend of Beyer's (1996) collective cultural type, organized religion, politicized religion and small social-network religion. The collective cultural type of religion was understood as the one, in which religion is not clearly separated from other aspects of culture, and where religious expressions are maintained "by local custom and tradition." Organized religion "differentiates religious activity in terms of distinctions between members and non-members and the rules that define the difference." Beyer included denominations, religious movements, monastic religion, cultic and pilgrimage centres. Finally, the politicized religion "includes state enforced religious monopolies such as the classic church, and instances in which religious prescriptions are made collectively binding through incorporation in political and legal structures" (Beyer, 1999, p. 296). Apart from secularization theory, the concept of unanticipated consequences of purposeful social action could be helpful. Merton claimed that incorrect analysis may lead to the error of assuming that some phenomena or causes that worked in the past would be applicable to the current situation, which may additionally generate undesirable effects (Merton, 1936, pp. 894-904). It seemed that the Roman Catholic Church made such a mistake when it neglected the changes which were taking place in Poland for the last two decades as a result of the transformation, the nation's access to the European Union, and of economic and cultural globalization, consumerism, and post-modern rejection of traditional value hierarchies.

The Bond between the RCC and Polish Society – Historical Background

If, for instance, whatever makes for societal integration, community solidarity, worldview, or speculation about ultimate reality is to be counted as religion, then it is located so closely to the very existence of social groups and the act of reflection on the human condition that religion will

be influential in any society by definition (Beyer, 1999, p. 295). This accurately describes religion's role in Polish society, and supports the importance of tracing the roots of this role.

Generally speaking, Polish Catholicism has always been a national religion, even though under the system of the Nobles' Democracy (15th and 16th centuries), Poland was refuge for religious dissidents. The identification between the church and nation created a strong bond, and was one of Poland's inherent features. The bond appeared to have strengthened with the partitions of the country in 1772, 1793, and 1795 when the church, able to penetrate borders of the annexed territories, was, besides national literature, the only depository of the national culture, tradition, and collective memory of the nation. As a result, in "the 19th century, Catholicism, romantic nationalism and Slavic messianism contributed to the development of the new Polish civil religion" (Casanova, 2005, p. 160).

Originally, the civil religion attracted mostly gentry and intelligentsia; however, the policy of *partitioners*, aiming at the eradication of the peasantry's mother tongue and culture, increased an awareness of the national-religious identity. In this way, the church united all who adhered to it into a single moral community in which religion's latent role was to preserve collective cultural and historical memory in more "psycho-emotional, though collective rather than individual terms" (Swatos & Christiano, 1999, p. 218). It was then that the saying "a true Pole is a Catholic" emerged.

The next crucial period for the consolidation of the Polish-Roman Catholic bond came when Poland became a member of the Soviet bloc. A high prestige of the RCC in post-war Poland stemmed partly from its earlier role, the Nazi extermination of Polish Jews, and mass relocation of the Ukrainian ethnic minority. Poland became almost totally (96.6 %) a Roman Catholic country (Casanova, 2005, p. 164). Statistically impressive, the Religiosity of Poles and the social prestige of the church, which reached its climax when Karol Wojtyła was elected pope, required discussion. Two vital questions emerged. The first concerned whether a high level of churchgoing was a manifestation of Religiosity or of objection to the imposed political system. The second concerned whether churches were actually places to worship God or just places where desirable national values were found. These questions have not been answered in the Polish sociological literature; however, under the social realism, the efforts aiming at the breach of the bond between the RCC and society proved fruitless.

Because of the nation's religious uniformity and social support, the church was able to oppose the new authorities. The state's policy toward the church was discordant and inconsistent, which deeply affected the power of the sweeping socialist propaganda. Paradoxically, not only did Religiosity and churchgoing grow to an unprecedented level, the Pole-Catholic pattern grew even deeper roots. This pattern was reinforced in the early stages of transformation processes and the Solidarity movement. "The memorable image of Gdańsk shipyard workers kneeling and taking holy communion showed that the traditional Polish folk Religiosity with its unique lack of distinction between the sphere of *sacrum* and the sphere of *profanum* had survived the whirls of modern Polish history" (Casanova, 2005, p. 183). As historians Paczkowski (1998) and Davis

(2006) observed, what actually contributed to the popularity of the church in the 1980s was the role of a mediator between the authorities and society, particularly during the martial law enacted in the country from 1981 through 1983, when its role included some quite secular elements: latent resistance against unwanted political system, on the one hand, and pursuing freedom associated with national and religious values, on the other.

Thus, a theoretically religious bond between the denomination and its believers was then understood in political and patriotic instead of religious terms. Although workers sang religious songs, held crosses in their hands, knelt and asked God for blessing and the Virgin Mary for protection, they did not fight for faith. Neither did the church. Religious practices and instruction were not forbidden. Early attempts to secularize education met opposition. Pastoral letters were read in churches calling for the defense of "the father's faith" (*Wiadomości Archidiecezjalne*, 1990, pp. 483-6). It was only in 1961 that, under respective parliament resolution, religion was removed from state schools to registered classrooms at churches or in private houses. In 1991, a law was passed providing for Christian values to be respected in education, and religion instruction returned to primary and secondary schools (Doppke, 1998).

After 1989, clergy involvement in politics increased, and that year parliamentary elections opened a new chapter in church-state relations giving rise to further essential questions. The first of these probed whether the church would resign from its historical role as the depository of traditional national values or compete with the state to function as a symbolic representative of the Polish nation? The second asked whether the church would fully accept the rule of separation between church and state. And the third inquired into which form of social integration the church would accept: one based on the concept of a pluralistic civil society, "heterogeneity of norms, values, interests and models of life," or one based on the idea of a homogenous "Polish and Catholic national community" (Casanova, 2005, pp. 188-89)? Some of the responses to these questions will be addressed in this article.

The Roman Catholic Church in Poland as an Institution

Surprisingly, the 1989 victory of democracy in Poland did not prompt the Roman Catholic Church to feel as though the church's secular duties had been fulfilled and it could retire from the political arena. On the contrary, the church started to play a new political role--that of an ally for post-Solidarity political parties and individual politicians. Such a role was possible because of an important additional social factor. Although at the early stages of transformation identification with the democratically elected authorities was stronger than ever before, the change into a free market economy, which included changes such as closing large state farms and industrial plants, brought about unemployment and poverty. As a result, the two types of relationship between society and the government developed: one in purely economic terms, and the other in political terms. Individuals who benefited from the transformation were supportive of a liberal approach,

both in economy and in social life. Individuals who suffered most from the change were opposed to that position. The latter became the electorate of populist parties, and made reference in their slogans to the national identity and values traditionally associated with Catholicism. Therefore, the group could rely on the church's support.

With acceptance from the majority of politicians (even the leftist and liberal governments did not dare criticize or refuse the clergy), the church succeeded in influencing legislation in such spheres as education and family life. By doing this, and by neglecting the impact of transformation upon the values and attitudes of individuals and their Religiosity, the Roman Catholic Church appeared to have made an error in analyzing the situation (Merton, 1936). The church should be considered as both an institution and a community.

Like any other social institution, the church has a structure, roles to play, and powers (economic, political, and educational) to exercise which are expected to accommodate existing social arrangements. Structurally, it is hierarchical and complex with the smallest administrative units being parishes (10,114). The staff included 133 bishops, 22.2 thousand priests, 6.3 thousand monks and 23.3 thousand nuns (*Statistical Yearbook 2010*, pp. 215-244).

The economic component of the church included property, sources of revenue, means of funding, and privileges and exemptions not granted most other social institutions. Apart from land, sacral and non-sacral buildings, most of which were recovered after 1989 as a result of the Property Commissions' activity, the church also took advantage of the state's subsidies. The state's subsidies included the cost of religious instruction, funding of Catholic higher schools, and the financing of theological departments at state universities. Additionally, the state budget contributed to the construction of sacral buildings, such as the Temple of Divine Providence in Warsaw which thus far has cost the state PLN 110 million. Moreover, the government donated to the Church Fundⁱ in order to pay social insurance fees for the clergy (partially for priests, but mostly for monks, nuns and missionaries), and the salaries of specialized chaplains were covered by the government. For example, in 2010, the Ministry of Defense spent, as a result of the aforementioned liabilities, PLN 24.5 million. According to other estimations, the total annual amount spent on the work of the church in Poland ranged from PLN 2.5 to 5 billion PLN (Socha, Henzler & Zagner, 2002; Jakubczak, 2010). Finally, in accordance with the concordat's provisions, the church was granted a number of tax exemptions, such as non-taxable economic activity for cult and charity purposes. Apart from this, the clergy enjoyed remarkable social insurance deductions (vicars paid from PLN 116.00 to 436.00 every three months, and parish priests from PLN 375.00 to 1341.00 during the same time frame), exemptions from property and legacy tax, and media concession fees. Additionally, priests or altar boys took collections from parishioners during masses, fees were charged for religious services such as baptism, marriage ceremonies, funerals, and special masses ordered to commemorate kinsmen's death anniversaries. None of the fees were taxed (Jakubczak, 2010). In a situation where half of the population lived below the poverty line recognized by the European Union, and even the lowest old age pensions were taxedⁱⁱⁱ, and with the information about it accessible in the GUS reports published in the press and

on the Internet, the public was becoming increasingly critical about these expenses, exemptions, and privileges. Still, the historical heritage and role of the church were romanticized.

The Church as a Community: Commercialization, de-sacralization, privatization of religion and/or symptoms of secularization

The statistical data obtained by survey research showed the great majority of Poles (over 90 percent) claimed affiliation with Catholicism (*Statistical Yearbook 2010*: 215-244).

Table I. Regular churchgoing (four times a month) and praying of adult Poles in the years 1992-2011.

Years	1992 N=3384	1993 N=2304	1995 N=3018	1997 N=2097	2000 N=6635	2003 N=9420	2005 N=8566	2007 N=12365	2009 N=23594	2011 N=26453
church going	55.7	51.8	50.3	51.4	50.1	46.4	46.4	46.1	43.7	42.7
praying	no data	no data	27.4	30.4	31.9	32.1	33.8	30.5	28.3	25.5

Source: Czapiński, 2011, p. 226

Table I demonstrates that, between 1992 and 2011, participation in religious practices and rituals fell by 13 percent. Between 1997 and 2005, the proportion of those who acknowledged saying their prayers grew. Janusz Czapiński claimed that the latter change suggested the process of de-institutionalisation (privatization) of faith was comparable to that in Western countries, understood as diversification of religious behavior and decreasing importance of its institutionalized forms (Czapiński & Panek, 2011, pp. 226-234). Czapiński and Panek's observations were confirmed by other studies which revealed that about half of the churchgoers identified themselves with the phrase: 'I am a believer and I follow the teachings of the church' (55%); another 39% preferred the identification of being a believer in his or her own way, and emphasized a more subjective and personal dimension of their faith independent from the institutional church (Boguszewski, 2005, 2011). Such declarations seemed to reflect growing pluralism and diversification of Polish Religiosity. These tendencies were accompanied by commercialization and partial de-sacralization of religious rituals and festivities.

Commercialization and De-sacralization of Religious Rituals

Of the global changes observable in modern societies, indulgent consumerism has far reaching consequences for a variety of social arenas, religion included. Poles were not an exception to the rule, and it was commercialization of the rituals of religion that were most

revealing. An example of this phenomenon was a relatively new custom of giving an envelope of money on baptism, Holy Communion, and wedding days.

For example, the costs of a wedding party, presents given to newly married couples, and priest's fees vaguely defined as, "I leave it to your generosity," but on average ranging between PLN 500-1000, made weddings a costly affair. Cash gifts were normative given the occasion; however, wedding invitations began to include statements about empty piggy banks, and lottery coupons were sometimes given in place of flowers. From a cultural standpoint, drawing attention to and placing greater emphasis on the price of wedding gifts was a new development.

As parties were usually given in restaurants, the *envelope amount* was expected to include the cost of catering and accommodation as well as something extra. The following day^{iv}, the most important task was to settle the financial accounts. Those who gave less than others would be criticized by the wedding party and assistants. Money-oriented wedding celebrations were justified considering a newly married couple needed cash to start a household. However, money gifts became more normative for other religious rituals as well, particularly when children took the Holy Communion for the first time. The older custom was to present them with prayer books, rosaries and holy medals in order to confirm the affiliation with the Catholicism once declared in the ritual of baptism. This practice was no longer the case. Increasingly, events such as Holy Baptism or First Communion became a *party-and-presents-day* preceded by heated discussions on "what" or "how much" to give. A web search of the term "Holy Communion" revealed access to 700,000 relevant web sites; a content analysis of exposed a prevailing commercial character. Of the first 49 entries, only one discussed the rite of Holy Communion itself. Three announced the agenda of this celebration in three parishes, with two in Poland, and one in Paris. The fifth website, biznes.gazetaprawna.pl, suggested the special day brought not only a spiritual experience but "as it appears ... financial as well". Two bookshops, www.skapiec.pl and <http://ksiegarnia.izajasz.pl/>, advertise a collection of short stories titled *My First Holy Communion* which can be bought for PLN 8,50, and were made more attractive to possible readers with a very low delivery cost. The eighth website, (www.pomagamyoli.pl), contains thanks given to the contributors by the mother of a disabled daughter. The remaining 40 sites are purely commercial, and split into three categories. The first category is websites of both Internet and brick-and-mortar shops that offer and advertise dresses, suits, headdresses, candlesticks, angel figures, and catering. In the second category, relevant services are promoted, such as photography and videography, poetry writing, and electronic messaging services. An example of this can be found at www.allegro.pl. The third category, containing sites such as www.gizmaniak.pl, contains entries recommending suitable presents for "ambitious and creative children", and is supplemented with price lists, such as those found at www.ceneo.pl. In all these ads, the words 'holy communion' are accompanied by sheer commercial nomenclature, such as "full wypas"^v, assuring the buyer that they are buying a top quality good.

Indicative of the increased emphasis on consumerism and religion, parents and godparents express opinions and other sentiments on social portals. For example, PLN 500 is the most

popular amount given by a godparent ...; instead giving the kid money, open a bank account for him; if you don't want to give money, you can offer a voucher to shops where the child can buy a digital camera or other electronic; you can give the money in a sealed envelope with the cash inside and attach a card offering best wishes which can, but does not have to be signed by you; when giving a child money, you won't leave him anything to remember you by, thus add some trinket, such as a small Bible."

One conclusion drawn from these lengthy discussions is that money was the best gift idea. The advantage of giving cash is that a person could avoid off-target presents. The list of the advantages of monetary gifts was sizeable, but it includes no acknowledgement of the religious value of the ritual. Instead, practical advice was given. First, "...it is not an auction, where the most expensive present wins. Besides, not everybody has the same opportunity, as different relatives are not equally rich." Second, "...money provokes competition and turns the focus on who collected the most on this special occasion. Moreover, it is uncertain whether the child is responsible enough to spend the money in appropriate ways." Third, "...godparents should give valuable and remarkable presents, and they are expected to give more generously than others. Once they used to buy watches, bikes, mobile telephones, computers and the like, and now quads (four-wheeled motorcycles) are the most desirable." Fourth, and finally, "...we cannot avoid giving presents- the tradition imposes this duty upon godparents." A short statement from a contributor to the site provided insight into the dilemma:

Oh, God, this year I am giving a 100 Euro, the Bible and a holy medal, probably it's an anachronism; I felt pissed off, when my godchildren boasted at a family meeting that the auntie from abroad (me!) would bring them a laptop. Damn! Do they think I grow money-trees in my garden?! This ritual costs me a lot. Plane tickets are expensive. Besides, I have to buy evening attire. [...] I also have to take two days off. I agreed to be a godmother when I was 15, and I regret that I did. Never again!

As the above discussions demonstrate, the majority of Poles associated some vital religious rituals with partying and cash. Being well aware of this, the church responded with ambivalence. On the one hand, the church forbade drinking alcohol at Holy Communion parties and recommended alms to prevent communion fashion shows. On the other hand, in the church's effort to attract believers and meet their consumerist needs, it was itself becoming commercialized. The church objected to trading devotional articles in supermarkets, but allowed to trade them in popular pilgrimage centers which became religious malls. The model example of such a facility is the basilica in Licheń, which reflected a typical medieval image of a supermarket adapted to the consumer needs of modern believers (Sulima, 2000). Indeed, the basilica's baroque gold interior overloaded with mosaic coloured glass adornments, Disney-like caves and nooks to commemorate the Virgin Mary's revelations, rosary paths, countless large and small monuments,

and, last but not least, numerous boutiques and stalls with devotional pamphlets rendered this sacred place a modern-day mall. Szlendak and Pietrowicz (2005) concluded that it was the place where consumerism and the mission of the church were closely interwoven and supported Ritzer's argument that religion will maintain its influence upon consumption provided it became merchandise itself. Licheń was the place where the boundaries between *sacrum* and *profanum* have disappeared for good. The question was, whether or not God felt at home there.

Besides commercialization of religious rituals, now a quotidian practice, de-sacralization of special places, objects and practices was noticeable. Baniak (2007) argued that Christmas and Easter functioned more like social and family events than religious holidays. Even though parishioners flocked to attend Christmas midnight mass, the practice did not mean that people attended for religious reasons only. What really mattered was tradition. Parishioners attended church for reasons of tradition alone (Baniak, 2007). Many Poles spent religious festive days at home with friends, while some went to spas in order to avoid time-consuming preparations or just to relax. Religious rituals of passage, such as baptism or Holy Communion, gained an increasingly ludic character, and young Catholics "are becoming religiously etherized and indifferent to *sacrum*. [...] God is removed to the margin of their life until eschatological questions emerge, such as the life after death" (Baniak, 2012, p. 4). As a result, religious holidays were becoming subject to a slow evolutionary process of de-sacralization. Religious rituals survived because of a desire for tradition, beauty, and magic. The church wedding stands as an example of a ritual that might be designated as *magic*: an old ceremony, white dress with a veil and the swearing of an oath in a beautiful building, with organ music in the background. Could this sort of commercialization and de-sacralization of religious ritual promote and hasten secular tendencies in the end?

The Church and Believers

The above question called for a comparison of the church's policies before and after 1989 (Piwowarski, 2007). First, under the former political system the church was unique for its openness to both believers and non-believers, and as such the Church was a religious and national organization. Currently, with the focus on its role as the supreme moral authority, the church requires uniformity in thinking, action, and conformity to formal recommendations. Most priests refuse baptism for children born out of wedlock; godparents and the married-couple-to-be must submit certificates of confession. Second, the priests who were once accessible to all, have been replaced by a formal and costly system of specialized chaplains. Except for the community of the Maryja Radio, Polish involvement in organized religion was very low, and it appeared as though Poles did not feel the need to cooperate with the clergy outside of the shrine walls. Third, the church continues to shape a specific type of religious spirituality dominated by Marian cult and a close link between religion and national identity. Fourth, the clergy placed great emphasis on the role of ritualism and religiosity in public life. As a result, the main session chamber of the Polish Parliament was, and is, ornamented with the cross. In school classrooms and numerous

administrative offices, one can see crosses and portraits of John Paul II. Many politicians continue to openly declare their affiliation with the RCC to win supporters in the name of “national values, culture and even sovereignty which are allegedly threatened by prevailing liberalism” (Piwowarski, 2007, p.17). Therefore, in spite of the clause in the *Constitution of the Republic of Poland* (2007) on neutrality of religion and belief (Article 25), one might ask whether the concept of secularization, understood as separation of state and church, can be applied to Poland today.

The external manifestations of the church’s influence over secular segments of social life were not readily accepted by the younger part of society. In a survey of 955 secondary school students, Baniak (2008) found that although church attendance among Polish youth did not deviate from the national average (approximately 50 percent), attendance at the Easter confession was much lower (hardly 34 percent). Respondents’ explained that this was mostly due to the confessors’ excessive interest in their sexual activity and contraceptive use, especially 83 percent of them broke the prohibition against using them. The Polish youth felt they were being instructed, but not understood. Almost one third of them accused priests of neglecting the problems they felt were important, and attempting to impose personal views regarding doctrine and religion. The respondents were also critical about religious instruction and treated it as simply one more school subject to pass. The reason knowledge of Catholic dogma is rather limited among Polish youth could be that the youth are generally not familiar with the doctrines of the Holy Trinity. When asked, some claimed the Holy Trinity consisted of the Virgin Mary, Saint Peter, or even Pope John Paul II. In addition, the youth disapproved of the clergy’s advocacy for specific candidates during election campaigns, and 75 percent perceived the participation of the church in the state affairs too excessive. The expectation among the Polish youth was that priests should be apolitical (Baniak, 2008, pp. 79, 118, 398, and 313).

Machalica (2007) suggests that a natural result of such opinions, shared by 60 percent of Poles, was a withdrawal from institutional piety and an increase in social and cultural pluralism which “develops, when there occurs competition for various preferred systems of meanings present in the so-called ideological market” (Piwowarski, 2007, p. 15). Before 1989, the ideological market was shared by the two institutions: the government and the church. The former had nationalization, industrialization, and atheism to offer; the latter integrated the nation in defense of religion and national values. However, neither institution appeared to notice the growing socio-cultural pluralism (Piwowarski, 2007, p. 16). After 1989, socio-cultural and ideological pluralism began to develop openly, similar to other modern societies, which affected Polish religiosity in two ways: the *global dimension* which included declared Religiosity or *being a churchgoer*, and the *individual dimension*, or the declared faith or *being a believer*. In the post-war period, the rates of churchgoing did not change much, and during some periods were even higher. Nonetheless, the faith and moral principles of Poles have become unique for their selectivity. Thus, Piwowarski (2007) wrote, “ [in] Polish society religion retains continuity and

remains on a high level in its declarative form, however in the context of everyday life it is subject to a deep change. Nevertheless, due to Poles 'devotion to tradition' and 'the faith of fathers', it is far from being religious indifference, and still further from atheism" (p. 17).

Mariański (2011) agreed with those proponents of secularization theory who assumed that social modernization contributed to the diversification, pluralism and transformation of religion rather than to its decay. But, he implied, because Poland seemed to follow the patterns observable in Western Europe, the stage of Catholicism's domination may evolve into the stage of socio-religious pluralism. Although the declared faith remained relatively stable, traditional patterns of thinking and life orientations were being replaced by the increasing individualization of decisions and options. In spite of this, Mariański argued, Poles are not likely to reject religion in the near future (Mariański, 2005, 2011).

The changing pattern of religiosity was also reflected in what Poles value, which were in order of importance: health, a happy family, children, money, a career/job, religion, honesty, other people's friendship and respect, optimism, and a strong personality (Boguszewski, 2007; Czapiński & Panek, 2011). The values connected with individual well-being and satisfaction far precede religion which, both in 2007 and 2011, came sixth in the continuum.

Social values, together with the commercialization and de-sacralization of religious rituals, socio-cultural pluralism, and the clergy's aspirations influenced the previously strong bond between the church and society. As a result, anticlerical attitudes were beginning to intensify. Liberal intellectuals, politicians and leftist parties (Raison of the Polish Left, The Green 2004) openly criticized some decisions or actions of the church on television (TVN 24), and in anticlerical magazines and papers such as *Nie, Bez Dogmatu, Fakty i Mity, Przegląd*, and *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Critical assessments were written by both non-Catholic journalists and those who identified as members of the denomination.

Society gave voice to their disappointment during the 2011 parliamentary elections in which an anti-clerical party "Palikot's Movement" ^{vi} unexpectedly entered the Parliament on the third position, just behind the two biggest parties, the liberal Civic Platform and conservative Law and Justice. Sociologists found Palikot's achievement inevitable, "it is not that all of a sudden the scales fell from these people's eyes. They live in Poland... but they were not recognized on the political arena because they did not have their parliamentary representation. Palikot *whistled the meeting over* and the coming out followed" (Czapiński, 2011, p. 8).

However, can the above changes be defined explicitly as processes of secularization as such, or was the situation in Poland simply an increase in critical opinions about the RCC as an institution? The latter seems more justifiable. Although the church was still assessed positively, some forms of its activities and attitudes were met less favorably, namely its economic power, its interference with secular spheres of social life (politics, education), and its aspirations to influence the life of humans to the same extent as it had in the past. Merton's theory of unanticipated consequences helps explain the former role of the church as the depository of national identity

and freedom. As such, the church was recognized more as a community; whereas currently, society views the Roman Catholic Church as one of many social institutions that they rightly meet with increasing criticism.

Neglecting this criticism, the clergy may be making an error by assuming that some phenomena or causes which worked in the past still apply to the current situation. As a result, instead of critically analyzing the social changes which would reveal the lifestyles and opinions of Poles as more liberal than before, the church takes for granted that the religious heritage and its own influence is strong enough to continued attrition and a growing level of criticism. The Roman Catholic Church in Poland did not appear to have noticed that "priests, ministers, rabbis, and mullahs are less sought for solving world problems than economists, physicists, and political scientists, while psychologists, social workers, and medical doctors are the societally recognized experts at the individual or micro-social level" (Swatos & Christiano, 1999, p. 212).

Summary

With reference to Luckmann's concept of secularization, it should be emphasized that Poles have and still do identify religion with the church. The Roman Catholic Church in Poland is a social institution of ritual and tradition. Moreover, the individual religious practice of Poles is, to an extent, based upon psychological needs which are both defined and met by the church. Consequently, religious practices are perceived by them as the fulfilment of particular role requirements (Luckmann, 1996). The Roman Catholic Church plays this role in an overly routinized manner. As a result, although the sacred quality of the norms continues to be recognized, the symptoms of non-observance by younger members of society are increasing. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that the combination of church oriented religiosity and the routine manner of meeting specific religious norms may sooner or later contribute to secularization.

Nevertheless, one must admit, secularization in Poland is still a relatively new and somewhat limited social process. However, we can still identify various factors which contribute to its development. These include, globalization of information, widespread consumerism, post-modern changes in value hierarchies, and changing attitudes of the clergy. However, as the role of the church in Poland shows, the secularization of Polish society should not be utilized simply to distinguish between civil (education, politics) and ecclesiastical spheres which are still closely interwoven. Neither should it be perceived in terms of Weber's theory of rationalization which dominates virtually the entirety of modern life, that is, as "the belief that explanations for events could be found within this-worldly experience and the application of human reason" (Shiner, 1967, p. 216). Even the term *disenchantment* does not simply mean that people no longer believe in the old mysteries of religion or its teachings. Churches are not declining in membership; on the contrary, Christmas or Easter masses, as well as on other

important religious holidays are crowded with participants. It is as if Poles have undergone the process of rationalization in their way of living and thinking, but at the same time they have resisted the process of *disenchantment*. Their appeals to divine authority have not completely vanished, and they still believe that God will forgive and support them. Moreover, since religion influences all aspects of life, from personal habits to social institutions, it is inaccurate to describe it as being in dramatic decline; the case of the Poles seems to challenge the theory of secularization.

The liberation of individual consciousness from the institutional form of faith is not unknown to Poles who are now more likely to choose other options. Individual religiosity no longer replicates official church models. Commercialization and de-sacralization of some religious rituals and privatization of religion may develop into secularized forms. At the moment, "secularization" in Polish society seems in opposition to the influence of ecclesiastical law upon secular law. Such issues as clergy deciding whether children born out of wedlock can be baptised, whether using contraceptives is sinful, whether childless marriages can apply the test tube children (in vitro) technique, or whether abortion should rely on a justified individual decision are some examples of the issues Polish society faces.

The aforementioned social and cultural changes are confusing for the Catholic Church in Poland which refuses to accept that its role, once suited for the time of partitions and real socialism in Poland, has become less effective in solving new social problems. Moreover, focusing on the past and believing that the community of Catholics is homogenous enough to be immune to the impact of modernity, the church seems to overlook that after the experience of social realism in the Soviet bloc, Poles are not likely to accept any ideological monopoly, even that imposed by the church. Facing the readiness of its believers to succumb to the temptation of consumerism, the church has embraced the concept and is now trying to adjust to these needs, offering them something that could be called a religious consumerist carnival. However, disregarding the change, the church hierarchy continue their traditional policy. "They think of the church in a practical and economic manner as if it were a religious enterprise, thus any alleged threat to it is turned against with the use of the same language [...]: If one raises their hand against this institution, they assail the nation, the most respected values ..." (Bartoś, 2011, p. 11). Some sociologists believe it a cardinal mistake to accept that religion is something fixed, whereas religious "concepts easily lend themselves to reification. As ideational systems, religions are always in interaction with material culture, social structure, other cultural systems, and individual personalities. ...to change as inherent in religion, just as change is in other institutional spheres and cultural dimensions, precisely because religion is a socio-cultural institution" (Swatos & Christiano, 1999, p. 224). Not taking this into account, the RCC in Poland behaves as if it were "its own gravedigger" (Berger, 1997, p. 129).

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Notes

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- ⁱ The Property Commission worked from 1989 to 2011. Its main aim was to return or transfer to the church the property which had been taken away by the authorities of the Polish People's Republic with the breach of the law.
- ⁱⁱ The Church Fund (1950) regulates the economic status of the Catholic church.
- ⁱⁱⁱ In 2010 a median for annual income per person in a household was calculated as 60 per cent of the average income, e.g. PLN 15720, that is circa PLN 1200 a month.
- ^{iv} Websites quoted in this part of the article were accessible on July 15th, 2012.
- ^v The Polish word "wypas" means "pasturing , grazing".
- ^{vi} Janusz Palikot, a former PO member, criticizes a privileged status of the Church and its interference with political and social affairs.
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