

# THE RELIGIOUS MARKET IN POLAND

## – CHOSEN ASPECTS. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

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The relationship between religion and the market or more broadly, the economy and economic processes, is the sphere of analyses within social sciences, which has a well-established tradition, set in two interpretative trends, emphasising the dialectical nature of this relation (Stachowska, 2004: 104). The first one is connected with M. Weber's concept, who indicated the role of religion in economic development, whereas this influence was especially visible in the ascetic Protestantism. The doctrinal assumptions of Protestantism, by affirming certain norms of work and life, such as frugality, methodicalness, and consumer restraint, being above all a form of undertaken efforts aimed at achieving salvation, contributed not only to shaping a specific form of work ethic, but also to capital accumulation, resulting in initiating specific economic processes. In other words, religion creates – according to this perspective – grounds for the emergence of given attitudes and pro-economic behaviours, which involve changes on a macrosocial scale. Weber's vantage point reveals that religion can determine economic behaviours, leading to the emergence of certain norms, favouring the development of capitalism (Weber, 1994).

However, the second dimension of the analyses is set in reverse dependence, emphasising the influence of market mechanisms on the religious sphere, namely the adaptation of economic rules and using mercenary criteria by religious organizations in their activity. We can view the sources of such a perspective in A. Smith's concept, who framed the scope of the "economics of religion" quite accurately, at the same time emphasising the universality of the market rules of supply and demand, determining strategies and forms of action not only of secular,

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but also religious organisations. It is because they implement programmes guaranteeing the achievement of a profitable position on the market, according to the conditions they operate in, that is either in a pluralistic or a monopolistic situation. Therefore, the assessment of orientation determines models of activity of these specific organisations, which are oriented towards eschatological aims, but at the same time they are driven by a maximisation of benefits and care for their own interests, implementing strategic solutions, ensuring them optimal functioning conditions (Smith, 2013: 454-476).

Elements of this interpretative perspective appeared in a theoretical trend, developing dynamically since the 1980s within American sociology due to R. Stark and W.S. Bainbridge<sup>1</sup>. The spectrum of religious life, encompassing *inter alia* various forms of religiousness and commitment, as well as the circumstances of conversion and affiliation with religious organisations, together with their activity in the conditions of competition or monopoly, or quasi-monopoly was compared by them to the economic sphere, thus indicating analogy and coherence of the strategies employed by believers or religious organisations with those emerging in the commercial spectrum (Stark, Bainbridge, 1980; 1985; 1987; 2000). This “innovative”<sup>2</sup> and a bit provocative approach appeared as a characteristic “interpretative *panacea*” (Stachowska, 2004: 104), allowing for the consumption of the complexity of the phenomena and processes in the religious sphere heuristically, towards which traditional theoretical patterns, and especially the secularization one, seemed explicatively incompetent. At the same time this perspective provoked a wave of criticism, generally connected, *inter alia*, with the difficulty or rather inaccuracy concerning the association of the assumptions of the economic model with behaviours and activities undertaken in the sacred sphere (Hadden, 1995; Wallis, Bruce, 1984; Chaves, Cann 1992; Gorski, Chaves, 2001; Bruce, 2011).

However, this interpretative vantage point identified as a “new paradigm” (Warner 2005: 18-62) is defined as a “theory of religious economy” or a “theory of the religious market”, which in its most general perspective assumes that the religious sphere is subject to – similarly to other, secular dimensions – economic

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<sup>1</sup> The trend of analyses connected with this interpretative perspective has been omitted in this place. It was developed on the economic level, where the first work in this cycle was an article by C. Azzi, R. Ehrenberg entitled *Household Allocation of Time and Church Attendance* (1975).

<sup>2</sup> This concept is in the interparadigmatic nature, and due to this fact, it seems somewhat eclectic, since it combines *inter alia* elements of the theory of social exchange and the teaching theory (Stark, Bainbridge, 2000: 25).

laws of supply and demand, as well as the supremacy of rational choice and maximisation of benefits. As a result of its implementation in the sacred sphere and referring to economic terminology, believers are identified as consumers, who in peregrinations in the religious spectrum and various choices are guided by rationality, optimisation, searching for satisfying propositions or offers. However, religious organisations are treated as companies or enterprises, which offer their customers specific “religious goods”, aiming at achieving or maintaining the same consumer potential as before, and thus gaining market advantage. Clergymen, in turn, are perceived in the managerial categories, or even as a specific “sales network”, which by referring to varied marketing and advertising techniques, stimulates, encourages and acquires consumers (Stark, Finke, 2000a: 17). In other words, the economic rules allow for explication of the processes occurring in the religious sphere, as well as activities of religious organisations and believers’ behaviours, where both mentioned segments are driven by the maximisation of profits and striving for achieving a “beneficial factor of exchange” (Stark, Bainbridge, 2000: 79). The network of exchange and transactions between believers and “religious companies” forms the area of the religious market, which can have – analogically, similarly to its secular counterpart – an unregulated nature with a different level of pluralisation and orientation towards the competition, or a regulated character, favouring the monopolisation of this sphere.

The first of the aforementioned forms of the market, referring to its unregulated form, is connected with a multitude of “religious companies” competing against each other. They offer consumers a diverse palette of “goods” and “services”, from which believers choose “religious producers” and their offers, according to their preferences, governed by a calculation, ensuring the optimal result of the profit and loss statement. Peregrinations and choices made by believers revive the religious sphere, since the differentiation of their needs and expectations induces “religious companies” to promote and advertise religious messages as well as implement elaborate techniques to attract believers, which becomes a factor dynamising the appearing activity and participation in the religious sphere. In other words, the pluralism of religious organisations, which compete against each other for customers, stimulates the religious revival or: the mechanism of competition in the pluralised sacred sphere is becoming the “driving force” for religious participation (Stark, Finke, 2000: 200-201). However, the pluralism of religious organisations without competition does not contribute to the motivation of religious activity, as R. Stark and R. Finke emphasise, since the structure of such

a market assumes the existence of a relatively stable division of consumer segments, referring, *inter alia*, to tradition, which legitimises a certain pattern of affiliation and reproduction of religion, limiting the believers' predilection for changes and making choices stimulating the functioning of the religious market (Stark, Finke, 2000: 202).

However, a monopoly position in the "market of spiritual goods" is difficult to maintain due to diversified needs of consumers, which create a favourable context for the competition to appear on the fringes of the dominating religious organisation. It induces the monopolist to undertake various "safeguarding" activities or rather such that strengthen its current position in the market. Hence religious entities form an "alliance with the state" (Stark, Bainbridge, 2000: 123), which by having "cultural coercive measures" at their disposal, are able to provide a privileged market position for a given religious institution (Stark, Bainbridge, 2000: 123, Stark, Finke, 2000: 199, 228-230).

The covenant established between the state and a religious organization or rather a denomination is of a dialectic character and offers benefits to both parties. The doctrine-based norms instilled by religious specialists, promote pro-social attitudes, constituting social order, which contributes to the prosperity and wellbeing of citizens and is obviously in the best interest of the state and the specific that is "favoured" religious entity as it leads to obtaining additional prizes (Stark, Bainbridge, 2000: 128-130). A religious entity "legitimizes" the measures taken by the state that responds by enhancing its privileged position, which lets them obtain specific benefits and profits. While this formula of "co-operation" appears – at least potentially – effective, it is still subject to some risk related to the possibility of instrumentalization and abusing such a religious entity by the state. The government maintaining control over cultural coercive measures, enhancing its sphere of influence, may tend to take over all benefits and restrict the role of a given religious organization, which safeguards itself by promoting and instilling to its believers such norms and values which may stop this potential repressiveness from the state (Stark, Bainbridge, 2000:130). Hence, the monopolist implements such a solution which results in a beneficial rate of exchange.

The covenant established with the state though profitable for a religious organization, yet it is still unable – according to this approach – to fully protect or entirely safeguard the market of spiritual goods from the emergence of additional suppliers of religious goods and services (Stark, Finke, 2002: 37) and thus establish autonomous functioning of the monopoly. The source of the emergence of

pluralism on the edges of a dominating religious entity involves, as signalled before, various needs of the believers frequently unmet by the main supplier, but also lower quality services he provides, decreased interest in the recipients and imposing prices (Stark, 1992: 262:263, Iannaccone, 1991: 159-160). Besides, this approach involves conflicts and disputes related with a struggle for power and benefits, which emerge in the sphere of the dominating producer of religious goods, and precisely among religious specialists, aiming at a specific level of control over the network of distribution, which may lead to potential divisions, fractures and even schisms of various levels of innovation (Stark, Bainbridge, 2000: 163-167). The forming sphere of alternative or rather competitive companies utilizes consumer segments that remain unsatisfied, discouraged and seeking attractive spiritual and life proposals relatively adequate to the preferences, thus making the religious sphere more diversified due to the elements of emerging pluralism, which poses no threat to the monopolist in the dimension of potential competition, but still creates potential possibilities of choice for religious customers susceptible to changes and new investments, assumed to guarantee expected prizes and benefits.

Briefly outlined factors and determinants of the “religious economy”, referring to the activity of religious organisations both in the conditions of a regulated and an unregulated market indicate – from an outside perspective – a certain similarity of undergoing processes and ways of functioning of the organisation in the religious and commercial sphere. It is because religion, faith, religious commitment and conversions are interpreted – from this viewpoint – from the angle of consumer choices, which condition forms of activity and strategies of “religious companies”, which according to market challenges implement various programmes and solutions, making it possible to achieve a competitive advantage in the market. Hence, religious revival – according to this perspective – is stimulated by a range of various measures aimed at obtaining and maintaining the potential of customers, the potential which will only approve of the experiments and risk involved as along the result of the transactions with the new supplier outweighs the costs incurred. The chance for increased religious involvement and revival is the level of pluralism and competition between religious entities encouraging organizations to innovate and improve their offer, which is perfectly exemplified *inter alia* by the US religious market (Stark, 1992: 263). A different character is presented by a market with a dominating religious entity supported by the government and thus restricting the emergence of competition. Nevertheless, the scale and differentiation of spiritual needs of individuals and the contemporary socio-

cultural diversity, stimulate the emergence of axiological offers and proposals at least partially coherent with consumers' preferences, hence contributing to weakening the supremacy of a privileged religious organization, which due to its position, on many occasions neglects the needs of customers. This results in the fall of their involvement which is particularly noticeable in Scandinavian countries. This approach particularly highlights the negative consequences of the predilections of monopolistic religious companies and state interventionism in this field, both of which enhance the stagnation of its outer symptoms rather than develop and maintain religiosity. The level of religious needs is not declining, it only offers a chance for managing it, which may be utilized either by new religious movements or sects or by attempts to modify the strategy by a dominating religious organization.

An exemplification of the adaptational strategies implemented by religious organisations with monopolistic aspirations – at the same time being a form of reaction to the challenges appearing in our times – can be the religious sphere in Poland. It is distinguished by the dominating position of the Catholic Church, which since the political transformation in 1989 has been gaining cooperation with the state in many dimensions. This should – in accordance with the presented perspective – weaken its influence and the effectiveness of evangelising and pastoral initiatives, thus resulting in a decrease in the activity and religious involvement of the believers, although the religious sphere still emanates a significant religious liveliness and openness as well as a specific susceptibility to innovations and projects of sacred provenance.

## THE RELIGIOUSNESS OF POLISH SOCIETY

The Polish religious sphere in the context of an economic model of religion seems to be unique, since despite the functioning of the dominating religious organisation, oriented monopolistically with a slightly outlined segment of other denominations on the fringes, still emanates a significant liveliness of faith and religiousness. These determinants should – according to the previously presented assumptions – favour passivity and a decline in religious dynamism and not the observed vitality, which could indicate a certain incoherence of the economic perspective with tendencies appearing in the religious market in contemporary Po-

land. However, the specificity of native religious liveliness seems to be set in historically determined factors, shaping the position of the Catholic Church<sup>3</sup>, but also appears as an implication of its present-day, relatively effective, adaptation to the market requirements and searching for strategic solutions, referring to marketing techniques, favouring the stimulation of activity of consumer potential. Hence, the picture of religious economics in Polish conditions will be outlined by resorting to three dimensions: firstly the religious structure, secondly selected aspects of religious involvement and thirdly undertaken initiatives and innovations indicating a clear specialisation trend aimed at specific niches, emerging within the dominating religious organisation, which at least partially explain the observed vitality of religion with the symptoms of the “consumer” approach among its religious customers.

The denominational structure in Poland is – as it has already been emphasised – clearly monopolised by the Catholic Church, although at the same time the manifestations of functioning of slightly outlined pluralism are noticeable, which are not competitive with the dominating religious organisation. The data from the census conducted in 2011 highlight the mentioned shape of the “religious market” and indicate that 87.58% of the Polish society belongs to the Catholic Church. The following denominational identifications were subsequent: The Orthodox Church – 0.41%; Jehovah’s Witnesses – 0.36%; Evangelical – Augsburg Church – 0.18%, Greek Catholic Church – 0.09%; Pentecostal Church – 0.07%; Old – Catholic Mariavite Church – 0.03%; Polish Catholic Church – 0.02%; Christian Baptist Church – 0.02% and other religious organisations – 0.12%. At the same time 2.41% of the Polish population did not belong to any denomination, while 7.1% did not reveal their religious affiliation. This data indicates a significant denominational homogeneity in Poland, since 87.7% of the Polish society is connected with Catholicism, while a slight proportion of the population identifies itself with Eastern Christianity (0.4%) and Protestantism (0.3%) (GUS, 2015: 93-95)

An analogical configuration of the “religious market” with the leading share of the Catholic Church is shown in church data from 2015, according to which there were 92% of Catholics at the time and 91.9% a year earlier (*Annuario*

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<sup>3</sup> The Catholic Church before 1989, in the socialist period, was in opposition to the authority of the time, thereby forming a quite tense, not to say, conflicting relationship between the state and the Church, which had a motivating effect on the involvement of the believers. It is because the conflict situation might substitute mechanisms characteristic of the competitive pluralism, favouring an increase in religious involvement (Stark, Finke, 2000: 202, 239-240).

*Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia. AD 2017*, 2017: 4; *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia. AD 2015*, 2015: 4). To compare, in 2010 this figure amounted to 96.21%, 95.84% in 2000 and 95.5% in 1995 (*Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae 2010*, 2012: 72; *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae 2000*, 2002: 71, *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae 1995*, 1997: 66). Although the quoted juxtaposition indicates a slight decrease in the proportion of Catholics at the turn of two decades, it does not change the previous denominational structure of the Polish society, and therefore the position of the Church, which seems to be rather stable, not only in the mentioned dimension, but also in the context of the organisational potential. The data concerning administrative units and staff resources or rather apostolic resources can be an exemplification of this. According to the data of *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae* from 2015, there were 10,248 parishes of the Latin rite in Poland, 9,551 of which were diocesan and 649 monastic. For comparison, a year earlier the total number of parishes of the Latin rite was 10,058, including 9,383 diocesan parishes, and 627 monastic. However, the apostolic potential in 2015 included *inter alia* 162 bishops, 27,978 incardinated priests, and 5,684 monastic priests, 1,014 monks and 20,008 nuns (*Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia. AD 2017*, 2017: 5, 9). The year before these resources were the following: 148 bishops, 24,724 incardinated priests, 5,773 monastic priests, 9,222 monks and 20,355 nuns (*Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia. AD 2015*, 2015: 9). The potential for 2010 was as follows: 133 bishops, 23, 224 diocesan priests, 6,513 monastic priests, 1,075 monks and 21,892 nuns (*Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae 2010*, 2012: 99). The year 2000 figures were the following: 121 bishops, 21,280 diocesan priests, 6,178 monastic priests, 1,297 monks and 23,945 nuns (*Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae 2000*, 2002: 96). The presented data emphasise the organisational potential of the Church in Poland, profoundly influenced by the pontificate of John Paul II, which is reflected by the increased number of clerical students in diocesan and monastic seminaries in the 1980s. For example, in 1972 the total number of seminarians stood at 3,987, including 3,012 diocesan and 975 monastic seminarians. The number of seminarians for 1980 already amounted to 6,101 including 4,410 diocesan and 1,691 monastic ones. Four years later, in 1984, the total number was as follows – 7,730 including 5,355 diocesan and 2,375 monastic seminarians. In 1988 this number reached 8,457, including 5,771 diocesan and 2,686 monastic seminarians (*Kościół katolicki w Polsce 1918-1990*, 1991: 33). The first years of the next decade are also marked by the popularity of this professional specialization, as in 1992 the number of seminarians in Poland amounted to 8,112, including 5,367 diocesan and 2,754 monastic ones. However,



since 1994 the number of vocations has been slowly but gradually declining, as that year saw 7,356 seminarians including 4,607 diocesan and 2,749 monastic seminarians (Kościół katolicki w Polsce 1991-2011, 2014: 144). The subsequent period i.e., 1996 to 2010 saw between 6,954 and 4,662 seminarians to finally reach a level lower than in early 1970s, as that year was marked by as few as 4,607 seminarians.

In this context, the contemporary significant organizational potential of the Catholic Church appears as the effect of previous vocations influenced by the pontificate of JP II and at least partially as an emanation of dislike towards the ideological conditions of the era of socialism, in a certain extent covering its unkind policy towards the sacral sphere (Baniak, 2009: 149)<sup>4</sup>. However, the loss of interest in this religious profession dating from the early 1990s signals a likely future weakening of the resources and the position of the dominating religious organization, both of which may modify the shape of the religious sphere in local conditions. The factor that enhances this process is the system transformation which through political system changes resulted in a number of modifications in socio-cultural sphere, including the dimension of religion increasingly affected by liberalism, democratisation, pluralism and consumption, promoting relativisation of values and consequently the confrontation of traditional axiological structures with the postmodern ideological offer, promoting the styles of life affirming individualism and hedonism<sup>5</sup>.

The market and consumption started to slowly affect the sphere of *sacrum*, where consumers perform analogical peregrinations and choices similar to the secular sphere of commerce, which makes religious institutions seek and apply effective tools for influencing, activating and stimulating the involvement of the faithful. Religious customers are then lured by a number of more or less attractive proposals coming from the sphere of commerce, which through its marketing narrations permanently forecasts some form of rehabilitation or metamorphosis and promises unusual experiences and feelings, frequently imitating heavenly visions of happiness, available immediately without any major restrictions. Hence, in Poland the Church must compete not so much with other religious organizations, though their number has increased since the systemic transformation and the es-

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<sup>4</sup> J. Baniak emphasises that “decreased number of the candidates for priests admitted to Higher Theological Seminary” has been recorded since 1988 (Baniak, 2009: 149; Baniak, 1997, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> See more about the influence of transformation on the religious dimension among the others: J. Mariański 1991, 2011; Borowik, Doktor, 2001.

tablishment of the market of ideas, as 2015 saw 196 registered churches and religious associations with 178 operating ones compared to the period 1980 – 1989 with 23 registered and 22 operating entities (*Wyznania religijne...*, 2016: 10)<sup>6</sup>, but rather with secular proposals, encouraging and tempting with attractiveness and a seductive aura. Though the socio-cultural significance of the Church, its role in the history of Poland and the present pastoral and evangelistic efforts are behind the fact that religion has become a stable element of Polish tradition and identity, still the pressure of present culture stimulating aspirations mainly aimed at satisfying desires at once, succumbing to ephemeral temptations, pursuit of success, pleasure, comfort, affirmation of “I” and “me” are the reasons why religious proposals covering the orders, renunciations, sacrifices and self-control and the postponed future “reward” appear to be if not less appealing but perhaps not fully satisfying for all and therefore more attractive.

Consequently, Polish religiosity is characterised by dialectics. On the one hand, it is clear to see the socio-cultural bonds of Poles with tradition and specific religious patterns, including the rites of passage, in particular the sacrament of baptism<sup>7</sup>. In 2014 the percentage of administered baptisms compared to the birth rate amounted to 93.64%, in 2010 – 94.18%, in 2000 – 99.23%<sup>8</sup>. The increasing prevalence of this rite of passage is then clear, with a slight downward trend that though does not diminish the massive character of the sacrament, yet may still signal upcoming possible transformations of the religious structure in our country (Mariański, 2011: 21; also *ibidem* Baniak, 2013). On the other hand, there are visual symptoms of distancing from the institutional form of religion, signalling the changes in the religious preferences of consumers. It could be exemplified by the figures from the Institute of Statistics of the Catholic Church concerning the attendance in Sunday services, as in 2015 the *dominantes* ratio amounted to 39.8%. The figure for 2014 stood at 39.1% similarly to the 2013 year data but in 2012 the number of regular Sunday service participants was 40%. To compare, a decade before, in 2005, this figure amounted to 45% and in 2000 – 47.5%. The

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<sup>6</sup> The religious division of religious organisation existing in 2015 was as follows: the number of Catholic entities – 10; Orthodox – 3; Protestant – 66; Islamic – 5, Jewish – 5; oriental – 17, others – 20 as well as various and unclassified denominations – 52.

<sup>7</sup> Though the assessment of the importance of particular sacraments indicates a slightly higher importance attributed by Poles to the religious funeral ceremony compared to baptism or church wedding, still it is the baptism that highlights not only the wish to reproduce the faith, but also designates a religion’s role in the indigenous identity. According to the CBOS survey in 2015 the religious frame for funerals was found significant by 85% of the surveyed. The rate of declarations for baptism amounted to 83%, 81% for church wedding (Kowalczyk, 2015: 9).

<sup>8</sup> Own calculations based on ISKK figures, *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae* 2010 i 2000 and GUS data.

1990s saw this figure between 43.1% and 50.3%<sup>9</sup>. So over two decades the rate of religious practices decreased by 10.5 pp.

A similar tendency is presented in a survey by the CBOS opinion polling centre according to which 50% of the surveyed participated in regular religious practices. Irregular activity was declared by 38% of respondents, while the number of non-participants was 12% (Boguszewski, 2017: 3). Analogous percentage of declarations indicating at least a weekly participation in liturgy is presented by the CBOS surveys of 2014 and 2013 where the level of responds concerning irregular attendance amounted to 37% and 38% accordingly and the responds concerning non – attendance stood at: 13% and 12%. In previous years regular attendance in church rituals was slightly higher and was as follows: 2012 – 51%; 2011-52%; 2010 – 53%; 2009 - 54%; 2008 – 55%; 2007 – 57%; 2006 – 56%; 2005 – 58% (Boguszewski, 2015b: 4). The period of 11 years saw the number of regular church goers decreased by 8pp, with an increased number of irregular practitioners and also non-practitioners. These figures demonstrate a distancing of religious consumers from the dominating religious institution, which may be interpreted dialectically. On the one hand, it may be treated as the implications of the functioning of a monopoly which, conscious of its position and above all its substantial durability and prevalence of faith reproduction patterns, related to reception of the sacrament of baptism prefers the formula of pastoral care based on rituals and sacraments (de Farias, 1993: 140), *eo ipso* acquiescently approaches its consumers and implements solutions which incompletely stimulate their religious involvement. On the other hand, the scale and the range of the diversification of preferences and the aspiration of customers are so extensive that one entity seems to have difficulty in meeting such needs effectively. Moreover, the competition emerging from the entities offering numerous proposals not necessarily of sacral background gives rise to an alternative market luring and taking over the emerging unmet expectations. At the same time, the element enhancing this tradition is found in the contemporary culture promoting the attitudes of pleasure and unrestrained hedonism, which externally appear more appealing and attractive than the apologetics of renunciations and self-control promoted by the religious doctrine.

The religious preferences of Poles correspond with this trend, in which their faith is emphasised, yet it is becoming more and more oriented to individualisation and some sort of selectivity. According to a survey conducted by the Centre for

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<sup>9</sup> Data of the Institute of Statistics of the Catholic Church, source: [www.iskk.pl](http://www.iskk.pl).

Public Opinion Research (CBOS) in 2016, 93% of respondents declare themselves to be believers, including 8% who are deeply religious, and only – or as many as – 8% who identify themselves as non-believers. Two years earlier the percentage was similar, as both believers and deeply religious people amounted to 92%, where the second group constituted 8%, while the proportion of non-believers was 8%. By comparison, in 2010 the diversification of answers was as follows: believers – 84%; deeply religious – 10%; non-believers – 6%. However, in 2005 the level of declarations representing faith reached 96%, including 12% of deeply religious people, while 4% were non-believers. This data indicates a slight decrease in the percentage of believers, which is especially evident with reference to the group of deeply religious people, at the same time the percentage of non-believers is noticeably increasing. Despite these minor changes in the dimension of the self-declaration of faith throughout the decade, there has been a significant fall in the attitudes expressing faith and following the Church instructions, after all in 2014 the percentage of respondents demonstrating such a form of commitment amounted to 39%, while in 2005 – 66%. At the same time there has been an increase in declarations indicating faith perceived individually, since in 2014 there were 52% of such answers, while in 2005 – 32% (Boguszewski, 2015b: 6)<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, selectivity in the believers' approach to doctrinal contents is noticeable. For instance, in 2015 the faith in: prayers being heard by God was declared by 82% of the respondents; heaven and Judgement Day – 70%; immortality of the soul – 69%; afterlife – 66%; the Resurrection – 62%; being marked by original sin – 59% and hell – 56%. Alongside the ideas of Christian provenance, extra-religious elements appear, since Poles also believe in: destiny (66%), the idea that animals have souls (36%) as well as reincarnation (30%) (Boguszewski, 2015: 10).

A dimension partially complementing the image of the Polish religious dimension mentioned here, reflecting somewhat symptomatically the level of interest among the faithful in the sacred offer, can be their involvement in religious movements and associations, to which only 4% of Poles belonged in 2016, while 96% were not connected with them (Boguszewski, 2017: 4). By comparison, in 2014 the percentage of people who belonged to the aforementioned associations and movements amounted to 9% CBOS (Boguszewski, 2014: 5). Three years earlier, that is in 2011, the percentage of the members was 7%, similarly to 2008. Such participation characterises first of all people attending church a few times a week (35%) and the deeply religious (19%). Those who are interested in this

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<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the percentage of non-believers increased by 4%.

offer choose participation in: rosary groups (52%); the Light-Life Movement, Oasis and Domestic Church (11%); Catholic Charismatic Renewal (6%); Neocatechumenal Way and the church choir (3% each). However, the groups which are mentioned less often are lectors and altar servers, Caritas, the evangelising community, Catholic Action (2% each), Bible study groups and academic pastoral care (1% each), as well as other communities, such as the Knights of the Immaculata, the Association of Catholic Families, with which 23% of those involved in Church movements and associations are connected altogether (Boguszewski, 2017: 4-6, 8)<sup>11</sup>. The affiliation with movements and associations indicates a relatively moderate interest in this particular offer, especially in the context of the widespread nature of Catholicism in Poland, thereby indicating a rather exclusive than mass form of this sacred proposition. Not very significant popularity of this kind of initiatives may be conditioned *inter alia* by a certain lack of coherence between the needs and expectations of the faithful as well as ineptitude in the field of *public relations*, which means popularising information on such forms of activity in the religious sphere (Mariański, 2013: 231). However, these undertakings can be treated as an attempt to “meet the need for new forms of religiousness and spirituality”, as J. Mariański emphasises (Mariański, 2011: 253), thereby winning over the laity and developing in it – according to J. Mariański (2013: 224) – a new type of Catholic and a feeling of community.

The briefly presented specificity of the religiousness of the Polish society or, more broadly, the functioning of the religious market exposes a significant denominational homogeneity of the Polish religious sphere, set in the affiliative dimension, which is culturally reproduced and strengthened by the native tradition, cultivating rites and rituals, such as for instance the baptism ceremony, which have the form of a mass phenomenon (Mariański, 2011: 20). Despite those external manifestations of monolithic nature, as I. Borowik emphasises, the internal diversification of Catholics is becoming noticeable, indicating inter-confessional pluralism (Borowik, 2008: 23; Borowik, Dyczewska, Litak, 2010: 130), where different consumer segments or rather groups of Catholics emerge, presenting specific types of religiousness (Borowik, 2008: 24). Therefore, in this sphere we can encounter *inter alia* the Church and consequential orientation connected with a regular participation in liturgy as well as the coherence of faith and ethical

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<sup>11</sup> According to the data collected by the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics in 2006 there were 337 movements and communities in dioceses, in which more than 2.5 million members were involved (Wykaz parafii..., 2006: 19).

convictions (Borowik, 2008: 24); “catechismal” or folk (Borowik, 2008: 24), referring to the cultural and traditionalistic aspect, where faith is reproduced in the form of a ritualised cultural pattern, devoid of deeper thought (Borowik, 2008: 25; Borowik, Dyczewska, Litak, 2010: 131); and the last one, an indifferent attitude, defined also as “nominal”, characterised by distancing yourself from the sacred sphere, manifesting itself most generally by selectivity in the approach to the dogmas of faith, festive participation in liturgy, indifference or even criticism towards the Church and its teachings (Borowik, Dyczewska, Litak, 2010: 131; Borowik, 2008: 24).

Another typology indicating the establishment of particular trends within Catholicism is the division proposed by M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, which first of all indicates the presence of the “ideological religiousness”, focused on the messages of Father T. Rydzyk and Radio Maryja (Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, 2004: 94); secondly, the trend of the so-called open Catholicism, integrating the environment of the Catholic intelligentsia, inspired by the intellectual tradition of J. Tischner; thirdly, the segment of “committed Catholics”, formed by members of movements, communities and associations functioning in the Church, which revive the religious sphere; and fourthly, the pillar of “Sunday Catholics”, identified with cultivating traditional religiousness, which is in the character of cultural convention, thus assuming the “lukewarm”, unreflective and rather superficial form (Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, 2004: 94). As M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska points out, the last group is the most numerous among the mentioned ones and at the same time the most susceptible to the emergence of agnostic and atheistic attitudes, thus requiring specific pastoral and evangelizing initiatives, delaying possible changes in preferences or outlooks on life (Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, 2004: 94).

The quoted typologies emphasise – referring to J. Mariański’s expression – the “stratification of Catholicism” (Mariański, 2013: 275) in Polish conditions, which reflects – at least partially – the scale of changes occurring in the religious sphere under the influence of postmodern trends, where *inter alia* the market and economy determine lifestyles to a large degree, including their influence on the shape and form of contact with the sacred. As a result, the emerging variety of attitudes, *eo ipso* the level of religious commitment, refers to the division of consumers into segments, gathering potential clients who have specific habits, tastes and preferences, which derives from the area of commerce. Applying the economic terminology and market mechanisms to the sacred sphere might raise doubts, or even controversy connected above all with the deprecating significance of such associations, which reduce the contact with God or, more broadly, transcendence as well as religious involvement and activeness of the believers, to the

structure of rational (mercenary) choices and transactions. However, this perspective indicates – at least partially – the scale of preference and the believers' interest in religious sacred offers, together with framing the effectiveness of the evangelising forms and activities undertaken so far. These, in turn, are fundamentally set in the formula of mass pastoral work (Mariański, 2011: 254; Piwowarski, 2000: 12), although innovative undertakings are implemented, such as for instance: the annually organised “Night of Confessionals”<sup>12</sup> (Stachowska, 2012: 50-51), the following religious events: “The Station: Jesus”<sup>13</sup>, meetings in Lednica (Góra, Grzegorzczak, 2001), or initiatives, such as: a confession arranged on the phone (*Spowiedź na telefon...*, 2016), an online chat with a priest, spiritual support for almost 24 hours a day<sup>14</sup>, an online retreat<sup>15</sup>, or Masses for singles<sup>16</sup>, which are to influence the religious revival. However, in the context of the data presented earlier, the results of such initiatives seem rather restrained, which shows the scale of challenges for the Church, permanently searching for strategies, relatively effective and adequate to contemporary requirements. Even so, among numerous pastoral and evangelizing initiatives, which are introduced, there are undertakings indicating not only a significant degree of market specialisation, but also coherence with the needs and expectations of the faithful.

#### “POLISH TELEVANGELISM”

Media initiatives, undertaken and developed – directly or indirectly – by the Redemptorists, and associated with the image of Father T. Rydzik may serve as an example of a successful implementation of projects addressed to a given consumer segment, which are both a sign of rather efficient adjustment to market

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. [nockonfesjonalow.pl](http://nockonfesjonalow.pl).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. [www.przystanekjezus.pl](http://www.przystanekjezus.pl).

<sup>14</sup> An example of this initiative might be “Pogotowie duchowe” (Spiritual emergency), where priests offer help and support to people in need for 18 hours a day for the whole week. Cf. the following website for details: <http://www.pogotowieduchowe.pl/>.

<sup>15</sup> The offer of an on-line retreat is quite significant and varied, the exemplification of which can be proposals of *inter alia* the Franciscans, the Barefoot Carmelites, the Salesian Order, or the Jesuits, running the “Internetowy Dom Rekolekcyjny” (Internet Retreat House). Cf. *inter alia*. Retrieved from: <http://franciszkanie.tv/tag/rekolekcje/>; <https://karmelicibosi.pl/aktualnosci-prowincji/adwentowe-rekolekcje-on-line-2017-ze-swietym-jozefem/>; <http://e-rekolekcje.pl/>, <http://e-dr.jezuici.pl/>.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *inter alia* *Częstochowa: poznali się na Mszy dla singli, powiedzieli sobie „tak”* (2016, January 3). *Spowiedź na telefon w Dolinie Miłosierdzia* (2016); <https://ekai.pl/czestochowa-poznali-sie-na-mszy-dla-singli-powiedzieli-sobie-tak/>; *Lubcz w archidiecezji gnieźnieńskiej zaprasza na Msze św. dla szukających żony/męża* (2013, August 23). *eKAI*. Retrieved from: <https://ekai.pl/lubcz-w-archidiecezji-gnieznienskiej-zaprasza-na-msze-sw-dla-szukajacych-zony-mezal/>.

mechanisms and requirements, appearing in the religious sphere, as well as the manifestation of adaptation of technology and the media in the evangelising activity. These undertakings include, *inter alia*, two main media: first of all, Radio Maryja and secondly, Trwam TV (“I Persist”), forming the foundation of a relatively thriving religious “media consortium”. Furthermore, the following press titles are connected with this “media group”: a Polish national newspaper “Nasz Dziennik” (“Our Daily”)<sup>17</sup> as well as a monthly “W Naszej Rodzinie” (“In Our Family”)<sup>18</sup>, which due to the lack of data concerning the size of circulation as well as the level of readership will not be included in the analysis<sup>19</sup>.

The first of the aforementioned initiatives, that is Radio Maryja, needs to be regarded as the most characteristic, and at the same time widely recognizable undertaking, which has become the leading “brand” in the activity of the Redemptorists. The radio station was established in December 1991, initially with the status of a local station, and currently nationwide, where the first concession allowing for disseminating programmes in the whole Poland was granted in 1994<sup>20</sup>. The broadcasting station manages 126 stations, thus having the largest territorial coverage among socio-religious radio stations, which is approximately – 72.08%, as well as a significant population coverage, at the level of 80.77% (KRRiT, The National Broadcasting Council), 2017: 67-68). We can compare the quoted data with the results of a programme with an analogical, that is socio-religious profile, except that of a local range, namely: Radio Plus, which has 29 stations at its disposal, with territorial coverage at the level of 21.94%, while population coverage –

<sup>17</sup> “Nasz Dziennik” (“Our Daily”) is a newspaper present in the Polish market since 1998, the publisher of which is the “Spes” company, and the initiator was T. Rydzik. E. Konopka is the chief editor of the newspaper, who is also the chairman of the “Spes” partnership. Cf. *O nas*, retrieved from: <http://www.naszdziennik.pl/o-nas-pl>; *Wydawca „Naszego Dziennika” ze wzrostem wpływów i zysku, Fundacja Lux Veritatis z 29,8 mln zł zysku*, 11 IX 2017 r., [www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/nasz-dziennik-i-fundacja-lux-veritatis-otadeusza-rydzika-wplywy-i-zysk-w-2016-roku](http://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/nasz-dziennik-i-fundacja-lux-veritatis-otadeusza-rydzika-wplywy-i-zysk-w-2016-roku); On the basis of an excerpt from the National Court Register (KRS), where the partnership is entered under no. 0000070894, source: [ems.ms.gov.pl](http://ems.ms.gov.pl).

<sup>18</sup> The monthly “W Naszej Rodzinie” (“In Our Family”) is an undertaking implemented by the “Nasza Przyszłość” Foundation (“Our Future”), which was established by T. Rydzik. On the basis of an excerpt from the National Court Register (KRS), where the Foundation is entered under no. 0000091141, [ems.ms.gov.pl](http://ems.ms.gov.pl), as well as *Statut Fundacji „Nasza Przyszłość” z siedzibą w Warszawie* (*The Statute of the “Nasza Przyszłość” Foundation with its registered office in Warsaw*) as of 6.10.2010 (article 1), [www.fnp.pl](http://www.fnp.pl).

<sup>19</sup> Neither of the mentioned titles is associated in the “Związek Kontroli Dystrybucji Prasy” (Association of Press Distribution Control), which verifies the data concerning the size of the circulation of press titles as well as their distribution. [www.zkdp.pl](http://www.zkdp.pl).

<sup>20</sup> Concession no. 6 as of 23.06.1994. The content of the concession was obtained from e-mail correspondence with the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) on 27.09.2017.



31.90%. This data generally emphasise the technological potential of the Redemptorists' radio, allowing for the propagation of their messages on a large scale. Radio Maryja market share in 2016 within listenership was – according to Radio Track research conducted by Millward Brown – 1.8%, ranking it eleventh in the radio market<sup>21</sup> and fifth among all-Poland broadcasting stations. By comparison, in the same year, the share of the aforementioned Radio Plus was – 2.1%, while that of the leader in the Polish radio market – RMF FM – 24.5%. In the next places in the ranking of all-Poland broadcasting stations before Radio Maryja there were, *inter alia*: Radio Zet (13.6%), Program 1 PR SA (8.8%), Program 3 PR SA (7.9%) (KRRiT, 2017a: 4-5).

The basic ideological direction of the activity of Radio Maryja is – according to the concession from 2008 – propagating Christian values and the teachings of the Church, religious education, as well as presenting issues and information from the Church life. Moreover, the religious viewpoint accompanies presenting the social subject matter in its broad sense, thus fulfilling the fundamental aim of the broadcasting station, namely evangelisation and formative orientation (Concession, 2008: 1-2). Although the programme policy of the radio is above all orientated towards the propagation of the faith and the teachings of the Church, which have the following guiding ideas: “prayer, religious education and contact with listeners” (Concession, 1994: 15; Lebioda, 1995: 9), it also includes content concerning political and social issues, clearly oriented towards nationalism and antiliberalism, many times presented in a radicalised form, thus being debatable or even controversial by nature (Krzemiński, 2009: 20-21). This special programme policy is present on the air, although the station insists that it is “the negation of evil, hatred, envy and conceit”, whereas “on the air (of the station – *E.S.*) (...) there is as if a feast, as if a never-ending Christmas” (Lebioda, 1995: 6).

According to Radio Track research conducted by Millward Brown in the period from December 2012 to February 2013, mainly women (53.9%) listen to the station; as well as people aged between 40 and 56 years old (42.4%), but the proportion of listeners above 60 years old is also significant (38.8%). At the same time, among the listeners there are mainly people who completed secondary education (34.5%) and vocational secondary education (24.3%)<sup>22</sup>. The results of research conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) in 2011 reveals

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<sup>21</sup> In the enumeration two categories were omitted: the broadcasting stations of the Polish public radio, with the share of 5.2% as well as “local non-network” stations with the share of 11.1%.

<sup>22</sup> Radio Track Millward Brown (2013); Kto słucha Radia Maryja? (s.a.).

a similar trend, according to which the following listeners choose this radio station: people above the age of 65 (29%); who completed primary education only (19%); deeply devout (32%) and attending church a few times a week (38%) (CBOS, 2011: 4). Therefore, in the community of listeners predominate people over the age of 65 (49%); living in the countryside (49%); who completed primary education (45%); and have retired (48%); believers (75%) and deeply devout (25%) as well as attending church regularly, including once a week (63%) or more often (18) (CBOS, 2011: 4). Moreover, the listeners of Radio Maryja have clearly profiled ideological, political and voting preferences, since almost half of them (49%) identify their political views as right-wing, while more than half of the listeners (58%) planned to vote in the upcoming parliamentary elections at the time for the representatives of the political party “Prawo i Sprawiedliwość” (“Law and Justice”) (CBOS, 2011: 4, 10, 16-17).

In this context, Radio Maryja seems to be a rather specific undertaking, which is oriented towards the particular “target group” with clearly defined ideological views and preferred values, affirming traditionalistic beliefs. A successful integration of the listeners around the narration based on religion and conservative approach results in regarding the radio station – according to M. Sroczyńska’s definition – as an “innovative (...) socio-religious project” (Sroczyńska, 2012: 339), which “emerged” on the tide of political changes connected with the system transformation and at the same time skilfully integrated into the Polish socio-cultural reality, consolidating the expectation for changes under the aegis of moral restitution (Sroczyńska, 2012: 339; Mazurkiewicz, 2000: 40). The ideological trend propagated on the air negates not only the ideological assumptions of the former system, but also exudes a clear aversion to other, contemporary proposals even superficially associated with liberalism, which seem to be infiltrated with a potential threat to the Christian vision of social order propagated by the broadcasting station.

The postulancy and ideas promoted by Radio Maryja and addressed to the specific type of listeners contributed to the fact that it assumed the form of a spectacular power, integrating and initiating the listeners’ activity. Successively developed structures of grass-roots mobilisation in the form of the “movement” of Families of Radio Maryja can exemplify this, since they manifest their potential and involvement *inter alia* during pilgrimages to Jasna Góra or jubilee celebrations of setting up the radio station. Moreover, the listeners quite spontaneously commit themselves to the undertakings announced on the air and campaigns connected with defending various normative “postulancies”, concerning either the necessity to toughen the previously binding anti-abortion legal regulations, or being

a manifestation of opposition to the decisions made by administrative bodies, which were unfavourable to the broadcasting station<sup>23</sup>. The involvement and a certain availability of the listeners, as well as constituted structures have caused this environment to be viewed as having a specific political potential, some political parties are trying to refer to, such as for example the aforementioned “Law and Justice”, treating this community as a potential electorate, while the broadcasting station as an instrument in the election campaign. As it can be assumed, this interest is determined by clear political preferences of the listeners, signalled before, as well as the quite specific profile of the “Law and Justice” electorate. According to the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) surveys from 2017, its voters are first of all people who attend church regularly (66%), including a few times a week (11%); living in the countryside (47%), who completed primary or lower secondary education only (25%) as well as vocational secondary education (26%), and over the age of 65 (28%) (Pankowski, 2017: 8-10). It favours the consolidation of the interests of politicians and potential aspirations, including those specific, that is the political ones of the leader of the broadcasting station (Piskala, Potkaj, 2007: 120-149). Although the appearing alliance between the radio station and politics raises objections and controversy, thus creating space for criticism, it does not limit the scope of this cooperation. As a result, the broadcasting station has become not only a tool in the formula of new evangelisation (Rydzik, 1995: 13), on the basis of which – as one of the Redemptorists defined it – the “environment of religious and moral revival” is established (Jasiak, 1995: 41), but has also assumed the form of a social movement, many times instrumentalised for pragmatic, that is political aims.

Another element of the religious “media group” is Trwam TV, which is explicitly identified with the Redemptorists, but formally it belongs to the “Lux Veritatis” Foundation, established in 1998, the chairman and founder of which is Father T. Rydzik. The motto of the station, which has been broadcast since 13 March 2003, is – analogically to the aforementioned radio – the popularisation of Christian ideas and contents, oriented to shaping certain attitudes, thus their formation (Concession, 2003). The programmes of this broadcaster are to “serve

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<sup>23</sup> A wave of protest and activation of the listeners were caused *inter alia* in 2014 by a fine imposed by the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) on Radio Maryja, and precisely on the founder, that is the Warsaw Province of Redemptorists for broadcasting on the air “contents with a hidden commercial message”. The fine was 13 thousand zlotys. Decision no. 11/2014 as of 26 September 2014, retrieved from: <http://www.krrit.gov.pl/krrit/aktualnosci/news,1613,radio-maryja-ukryto-przekaz-handlowy.html>.

– in accordance with the granted concession – (...) a complete and authentic development of human beings through making them sensitive in a spirit of Christian values to the role of the State and family as well as socio-economic and civic matters” (Concession, 2012: 1), as well as should propagate the knowledge concerning “the history and modernity of Christianity”, present the heritage of “culture as well as sacred and secular art” and also provide “information from the Church life in Poland and around the world” (Concession, 2012: 1). In this context we can see a clear coherence of programme policies of both Catholic media under discussion that rather do not arouse spectacular interest, which is illustrated by the data concerning the share in television market as well as the size of the viewership.

The TV Trwam market share in the sector of terrestrial digital TV was 1.48% in 2016, with the average audience of slightly over 47 thousand (KRRiT<sup>24</sup>, 2017b: 7, 10). A year earlier, in 2015, its market share in the discussed segment of digital terrestrial television was 1.52%, whereas in the television market – 0.76%, thus achieving an average viewership of almost 50 thousand people (KRRiT, 2016: 6, 10). For comparison, the leader of the television market in 2016 had a market share of 11.45% and an average viewership of 741.4 thousand. The following programmes took the next places in the quoted juxtaposition: the first public television channel (TVP1), the market share of which was 11.1%, while the viewership – 718.4 thousand, as well as the TVN television with the share and the viewership running at: 10.37% and almost 671 thousand respectively (KRRiT, 2017b: 10). This comparison emphasises a rather specialised orientation of Trwam TV, which significantly differs in popularity from the two key players in the media market, and with regard to its attractiveness takes a place in the “group” of speciality channels such as: TVP ABC, aimed at children from 4 to 12 years of age and their guardians or the “educational and cognitive” Fokus TV (Concession 2013: 2; Concession, 2013a: 2), the market share of which was: 0.92% and 0.81% respectively in 2016, with the following viewership: TVP ABC – 59.3 thousand; Fokus TV – 52.6 thousand (KRRiT, 2017b: 10).

However, the station is able to arouse special interest among the audience and attract specific potential viewers. The ratings from the period of January to November 2015 can confirm that, according to which this television had significant viewership on 12 July, that is on the day when the Radio Maryja listeners’ pilgrimage to Jasna Góra was broadcast, since then it attracted – on average 132.3 thousand viewers. Moreover, it especially enjoyed popularity *inter alia* on

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<sup>24</sup> KRRiT The National Broadcasting Council.

5 November and 15 August, with the viewership: 106.3 thousand and 93.2 thousand respectively. At the same time the demographic structure of Trwam TV viewers is similar to that of the listeners of Radio Maryja, since according to the data collected by Nielsen Audience Measurement in the second quarter of 2015, it is watched first of all by women (61.1%), as well as people over the age of 65 (70.4%), who completed primary education only (58.3%) as well as secondary education (33.45%), the unemployed (73.7%), country dwellers (49.1%) as well as inhabitants of towns with a population of up to 50 thousand (22.1%)<sup>25</sup>.

The presented juxtapositions show that the “media group” associated with Father T. Rydzik and the Redemptorists is oriented towards a specific segment of audience and what is more, it is difficult to regard it as being part of mainstream, since the media which belong to it clearly represent a niche. However, their listeners and viewers are characterised by loyalty, commitment, full identification and acceptance of the conservative policy popularised on the air, together with the suggested vision of changes and revival. This in turn becomes an inspiration or a basis for other undertakings to be formed, with a varied specialised orientation, which is exemplified by: first of all, educational projects, such as the College of Social and Media Culture in Toruń<sup>26</sup>; secondly, telecommunications undertakings in the form of a network of mobile communications “W naszej Rodzinie” (“In Our Family”); thirdly, energy projects, which is illustrated by the initiative “Geotermia Toruń” (“Toruń Geothermal Energy”); fourthly, tourist and recreation undertakings in the form of plans of building a health resort “Termy Toruńskie” (Toruń Thermal Springs) (Krawiec, 2017; Co składa się na imperium..., 2017), and fifthly, cultural and religious initiatives such as the construction of the Sanctuary of Our Lady Star of the New Evangelization (Świątynia pw. Maryi Gwiazdy Nowej Ewangelizacji), which has a chance of becoming another pilgrimage centre in Poland. A. Ryczek designed it, creating a two-level facility, including *inter alia* a chancel which is the copy of St. Pope John Paul II Chapel in Vatican, as well as the Chapel of Remembrance and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. When pilgrims enter the area surrounding the chapel, they cross the Gate of Mercy and go past a sculpture of John Paul II, whereas when they leave, they meet St. Peter. In a multidimensional way the Sanctuary evokes the symbolism clearly exposing the multi-contextual interference of Christianity in the history of Poland, thus taking

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<sup>25</sup> Data obtained by Nielsen Audience Measurement *apud* Kozielski (2016).

<sup>26</sup> The college was entered into the register of non-public vocational colleges pursuant to the decision no. DSW-3-0145-218/TT/2001 as of 14.08.2001. Its founder is Tadeusz Rydzik. The anonymised decision was granted by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MNiSW) on 10.10.2017.

the form of a special pilgrimage centre, which is first and foremost a sanctuary affirming sacredness, but at the same time it is becoming a pinacotheca of the past and remembrance of the Polish nation (*Wotum. Sanktuarium...*, 2016: 149-151).

These initiatives first of all reveal T. Rydzyk's organisational skills as well as an efficient adjustment to market requirements, where the axis of this activity are – at least originally – religious ideas and evangelising. However, these numerous forms of resourcefulness set in the aforementioned “media group” resemble ways of functioning of television evangelists in the American market, for which the media are a platform for popularising religious messages, but at the same time become the basis for creating successful “religious enterprises”, perfectly using the sales and marketing techniques, where the whole relies on the believers' potential, who do not only receive religious contents, but also are the main audience of additional proposals (Peck, 2005). Therefore, the consumer potential attracted to religious ideas is not only a community focused around certain sacred messages, but also – or rather first of all – the potential purchasing power of products and possibly services offered by television evangelists. However, the phenomenon of televangelism is not restricted only to the USA, since in our times it has a global level, and even exists beyond religion. What is more, television evangelists do not only refer to television as the basic means of conveying religious contents, but are also using new media in their activity, thus contributing to an increase in the scope of the presence of the sacred in the sphere of the public discourse (Thomas, Lee, 2012: 1-2), which can be treated as the mediatisation of religion.

Therefore, using the media in evangelisation is common practice, which essentially expands the range of the presence of religious ideas and contents in contemporary societies, independently from the level of coherence with fundamental assumptions of traditional religious systems and the emerging trend of eclecticism as well as often superficial collages of meanings and symbols. However, the development of this sector emphasises the scale of spiritual needs and quests for satisfying proposals pursued by individuals. In this context the activity of the Catholic “media group” in Poland corresponds with the more and more visible trend of the mediatisation of religion, but at the same time it reveals most generally a certain difficulty in the native religious market, where the demand for this kind of offers, even if presented in modern and attractive formula, is rather limited, not to say, slight. The termination of the activity of the religious channel TV Religia in 2015, which belonged to ITI group and offered religious programmes based on the style and arrangement of contemporary programmes, at the same time referring to trends in popular culture, is an example of this (Stachowska, 2012a: 360).

Currently, public television is broadcasting a new programme aimed at young people entitled “Studio raban” (“Ruckus Studio”), which probably has not captivated viewers in any special way, since the first episode presented on 16 September 2017 attracted – according to data collected by Nielsen Audience Measurement – just over 182 thousand people, with a market share – 2.95%. Other September episodes drew the attention of a smaller television audience, since the second episode was watched by nearly 156 thousand viewers, while the third one – almost 146.7 thousand<sup>27</sup>.

The average popularity of religious programmes, as well as the religious media with reference to the prevalence of the declaration of faith, religious uniformity and the dominant position of the Church not so much astonishes and amazes as it indicates the illusory nature of the emblems presented in a brief “Pole-Catholic” formula, which except for the identification with a given tradition, hide an extremely varied palette of religious attitudes and preferences, where conservative as well as traditionalistic trends and orientations are most likely not predominant. However, the functioning of the media associated with T. Rydzyk should be regarded as a success after all, which is based – as it seems – on a skilful integration in the demands of a given consumer segment, which is a group of viewers and listeners more oriented towards reflection than entertainment only and thus unappreciated by other players. Hence the “religious company” established by the Redemptorist meets the demand of a specific group of clients by offering them ultra-Catholic or fundamentalist contents, together with narratives affirming a dualistic view of the world, in which the recipients are identified almost as a special and elite community, where antagonisms and prejudices are cultivated and fuelled, still present in the Polish society, although hidden on a day-to-day basis. While it is true that the demand for this type of rhetoric does not have a common nature, it highlights a rather obvious presence of diverse worldview preferences, which T. Rydzyk’s company effectively satisfies, while seizing the chances which religious economy provides in monopolised conditions.

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The briefly outlined picture of the Polish religious sphere and sacred entities acting within it indicates a certain analogy in the functioning of the religious market with its secular counterpart. Although the economic perspective might appear to deprecate the sacred, since it reduces the activity and evangelising missions of

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<sup>27</sup> Data obtained by Nielsen Audience Measurement *apud* Kto słucha Radia Maryja (2013); Kurdupski (s.a.).

religious organisations to mercenary forms, while the spiritual quests of believers are compared almost with shop peregrinations, it emphasises the parallelism of implemented strategies of adaptation by entities of various provenance with present-day market requirements, which in the religious context expose the chances and threats connected with the fact that economy penetrates the sacred sphere.

An attempt to see the Polish religious sphere from the angle of market interpretations first of all reveals the implication of the functioning of the dominant religious subject, which has a package of “obtained” privileges at its disposal in the conditions almost devoid of competition. The Catholic Church in Poland has the unquestioned position of the market “leader”, which is created and maintained by the attachment of the Polish people to tradition, in which religion, and especially certain rituals such as baptism play a significant role, at the same time constituting an effective mechanism of a cultural reproduction of the denominational affiliation. The effect is the observed homogeneity or a significant religious uniformity, which does not fully reflect the actual forms of involvement and shaping the relationship with the sacred. These seem to be extremely varied, starting with attitudes identified as traditionalistic, or even orthodox, through numerous forms of individualisation with selective or syncretic orientations, ending with a certain restraint, sometimes taking the form of lack of understanding towards the Church and its teachings. This pluralisation of attitudes so to speak demands – referring to the economic terminology – a differentiation of strategies according to the preferences and expectations of individual consumer segments and creating almost unique offers for them. However, the dominant position of the Catholic Church in the market contributes to its certain helplessness with regard to the effective management of the consumer potential, thus lack of suitable and innovative projects, which would dynamise the activity of believers. It does not mean that this religious organisation is completely passive, after all, attempts of influencing “religious customers” are noticeable, but they do not seem to be fully adequate, which is indicated in – the aforementioned – annual research on the participation in Sunday Mass conducted by the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics (ISKK), the result of which in 2017 was the lowest in history, namely – 36.7%. This emphasises the level of difficulty and challenges for the Church that are present in the Polish religious sphere in our times.

Initiatives in the form of the analysed “business concern” of T. Rydzik might be treated as an innovation in the pastoral and evangelising activity with the reservation that its success is based on a specific historic context and conditions created



by the systemic transformation in 1989, which prevented it from possible recurrence or replication. Still, the currently observed development of this undertaking indicates the effectiveness of addressing a given offer to the specific consumer segment, and at the same time skilfully seizing the opportunities created by the religious market in Poland, although the recounted solutions belong – so far – to one of the few. However, the entire efficient mechanism relies on a charismatic leader and the older generations, which raises a rhetorical question about the future of this project.

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