

Sabrina P. Ramet and Irena Borowik (eds.)

Religion, Politics, and Values in Poland: Continuity and Change Since 1989

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When compared with other societies in Western, Central, or Eastern Europe, religion and religiosity in Poland are a specific case: the levels of self-ascribed belonging to the Catholic Church (95%), of declared faith in God (96%), of religious self-ascription (85,6%), and of weekly church attendance (about 40%) are at the top of European societies. Even if one statistically controls these indicators for levels of modernity, the socialist past, and the denominational imprinting, the exceptional character of religion and religiosity in Poland abounds even more (G. Pickel 2014, 105). The dimensions of belonging and faith in God have remained rather stable over time, whereas church attendance has decreased, and statements stressing subjective ways of being religious were more frequently affirmed. Academic discussions came up as to how to interpret the religious developments in Poland: as '(creeping) secularization', 'de-institutionalization', 'individualization', or 'de-privatization'? A lot of comparative quantitative research, including in Poland, has been published, such as on religious social capital (Pickel and Gladkich 2012), religiosity and political values (Rosta 2012), the impact of the religious cleavage (S. Pickel 2014), and church-state relations (Pollack and Pickel 2009). The volume edited by Sabrina P. Ramet (Trondheim) and Irena Borowik (Krakow) adds valuable insights into details of the religious field in Poland, especially on the role of the Church in public life and on the interrelations between the religious and the political fields. With the exception of Ramet, its contributions are written by Polish scholars.

In the first part (17-182) we find rather qualitative analyses of issues, strategies, processes, and specific actors relevant in 'the politics of religion since 1989'. Sabrina P. Ramet starts with an overview of the public agenda successfully pursued by the Catholic Church and of other controversies and scandals it has experienced since 1989 (19-40). She interprets the Church's situation as 'post-Julianic', namely as insecure, 'not in possession', somehow 'at war' with the society, and comparing itself today with its former role as 'protector of the nation against the Communist regime' (35). Stanisław Obirek critically, but sometimes not without exaggeration and resentment, reviews the impact of John Paul II on Polish society (41-59) and attributes him a 'polarizing role' (49). By employing content analysis of Catholic periodicals and Church documents, Katarzyna Leszczyńska shows political pluralism among Polish clergy in their statements on Europe (61-84). She distinguishes three different visions of Europe: the biggest, 'selective' current declares approval for Europe but with many caveats; the 'total' current is 'absolutely critical of Europe'; and the 'affirmative', unconditionally pro-European current understands fundamentalism as the 'threat for Europe' (78). Ireneusz Krzemiński delivers deep insights into the history, the social character, and the effects of the 'media conglomerate' Radio Maryja (85-112). In contrast to its interactive technique and its potential for self-organizing communities, the station promotes fundamental, black and white divisions of worldviews and stigmatizes and excludes 'other' people. In effect it is a threat to pluralistic democracy. The ineffective trials by the Polish episcopate to call Radio Maryja to order lead Krzemiński to the conclusion 'that the political line of Radio Maryja and the mainstream of the Polish episcopate coincide more and more with each other' (92). Anna Szwed's and Katarzyna Zielińska's discourse analysis of public interventions by Catholic bishops on gender issues between 2012 and 2015 (113-136) shows that the Church in Poland acts as a privileged 'defender of public

morality' and promotes 'opinions that cement the traditional gender contract' (131). A similar authoritarian way of proceeding, which is not sensible to democratic procedures, is visible in the way how religious education was introduced into Polish public schools in 1990: without public debate and without the participation of any religious communities other than the Roman Catholic Church, as Marcin K. Zwierżdżyński demonstrates in his chapter on the politics of religious education (137-159). Zbigniew Pasek presents the diversity of religious minorities (161-182), whose faithful in Poland do, on the whole, not exceed 3% of the population.

Part II (183-324) of the book is based rather on quantitative findings and deals with changes in religiosity, religious values, ethics, and perceptions of the Catholic Church. From his data on the public engagement of the Catholic Church in Poland Janusz Mariański (209-230) concludes that 'a little less than 60% of the Poles gave positive feedback on the activities of the Church, but a clear majority demand (sic!) limiting its influence in public life (...) or believe (sic!) that these influences are too strong' (220). So in his view 'the Catholic Church in Poland should make greater efforts to find its place and role in civil society' and should respect the autonomy of the state (220). Mirosława Grabowska shows, by using multiple regression analyses, that church attendance in Poland has been, along with education and age, one of the three strongest factors fostering electoral participation and influencing voting preferences: from 1989 to 2001 in favour of post-solidarity candidates or parties and from 2005-2015 in favour of the 'Law and Justice' party (PiS) and its candidates (257-288). In their careful interpretation of EVS data from 1990 to 2008 Mirosława Marody and Sławomir Mandes (231-255) point out the high and stable percentages of believing in God and being a believer, which stands in stark contrast with declines in the relevance and practice of belief and in trusting the Church. Also taking into account the 'uncompromising' interventions of Polish bishops in public life and in the role of women and its unintended effects, the authors perceive a disintegration of the previously established neo-Durkheimian community: one group consolidates its religious beliefs and claims to observe orthodox Catholic rules, while especially younger and better educated people from larger cities distance themselves from the Church as an institution. As this latter group still shows high levels of belief in God and of self-ascription as Roman Catholics, Marody and Mandes conclude that the deficit of identities other than the religious one is the reason why religion continues to be the only system that structures the everyday life of Poles and gives meaning to their actions (250). Wojciech Pawlik conceptualizes the changes in the moral sphere of Polish society in analogy to Thomas Luckmann's concept of invisible religion as a transition to 'invisible ethics': individuals emancipate themselves from the moral teachings of the Church and develop a kind of non-normative, 'empathic ethics' (289-312). As reasons for the stable and high level of declarations of belonging to the Catholic Church in Poland, Irena Borowik (185-207) refers to the re-established 'operational' relationship between Polishness and Catholicism, the ritualized, incorporated mode of religious socialization, and the generally low existential security in Poland. As the 'most important' factors of foreseeable changes in the religious field she perceives the intensive renegotiation of gender roles and the shift of the religious orientations of young people towards less frequent religious practices, more liberal moral convictions, and widespread aversion to religious education. And what do these features of religiosity say about Polish society per se? It hints, according to Borowik, rather to the characteristics of a traditional society, like the need to strengthen and reproduce the social bond or the non-reflective characteristics of consciousness. At the same time she links the aspects of religious transformation to forces of modernity, like the trends towards diversified needs, specialized social bonds, and individual forms of life.

In the final chapter (313-324), Borowik summarizes the important findings of the book and relates them to theoretical concepts in the sociology of religion. She highlights the contradictions between the privatization and secularization of religiosity and morality on one side and contrasting levels of religious self-ascription, faith declaration, and public visibility of religious symbols, rituals, and actors. Not fitting to Poland is, according to Borowik, Casanova's

(2008) revised concept of public religion because the dominant Roman Catholic Church shows a 'lack of sensitivity for the rules of democracy' (320).

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