

*Interdisciplinary Journal of
Research on Religion*

Volume 9

2013

Article 2

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Considerations Based on an Economic Approach

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The Influence of the Quasi-Monopolistic Religious Market on Religiosity in Poland: Considerations Based on an Economic Approach

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Abstract

Religious market theory is an approach to studying religiosity that is based in economic theory. It was established by American economists and sociologists, who were inspired by the theory of rational choice. In Poland, in contrast to the United States, the religious market is not fully competitive and pluralistic; the Catholic Church occupies a dominant position. In this article, I investigate whether a decline in participation in religious practice and involvement in Church activities among Poles is more likely to be attributable to secularization or to the quasi-monopolistic nature of the religious market in Poland.

For a long time, the paradigm of secularization dominated the field of sociology of religion. The origin of that approach can be found in the philosophy of the Enlightenment and in the concepts that were developed in the social sciences in the 19th century (Hadden 1987; Stark 1999). A fundamental assumption of the paradigm is that secularization is a consequence of the process of modernization. However, that view has become a subject of debate in recent decades. Since the 1960s, new religious movements have developed rapidly in the West, and viewpoints and practices that are typical of those movements have spread, becoming part of popular culture (Heelas and Woodhead 2005). Religion has also returned to the public sphere, and the importance of fundamentalist movements has grown since the 1970s (Corm 2006; Kepel 2003). Now, even some of the founders of the secularization approach admit that it does not fully explain such changes in religiosity (e.g., Berger 1999).

The issue of American exceptionalism has always posed an important challenge for the paradigm of secularization. The situation in the United States has been treated as a kind of anomaly because participation in religious observances remained at a high level there, thus diverging from the characteristic conditions in other modernized nations. This anomaly became the foundation for the construction of a new paradigm, the economic approach (Warner 1993). The inspiration for this approach was rational choice theory. The new approach questioned the view that saw secularization as a phenomenon of contemporary societies. Instead, the level of religiosity was thought to depend on religious pluralism and competition between denominations (as well as congregations). A free religious market was not typical of European societies, in which one church held a quasi-monopolistic position. According to the economic approach, the resulting lack of competition caused churches to lose their effectiveness over time. The level of involvement of believers and their participation in religious observances would then decline. This process was what the supporters of the old paradigm called secularization.

In this article, I focus on the religious market in Poland. Inspired by the economic approach, I have formulated two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: After the fall of communism, the Catholic Church in Poland came to occupy a quasi-monopolistic position.

If I can show that Hypothesis 1 is correct, I will attempt to verify the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The quasi-monopolistic position of the Catholic Church in Poland has caused a decline in the level of religiosity (participation in religious practice and the involvement of believers in Church matters).

I begin by explaining the theory of religious markets. Then I describe the quasi-monopolistic position that the Catholic Church occupies in contemporary Poland. In the third section of the article, I concentrate on changes in religiosity that are taking place in Polish society. Then I discuss a question that results directly from the thesis of secularization: whether the secularization approach or the economic approach appears to be more applicable to the current situation in Poland. In the final section of the article, I present the conclusions that result from those considerations.

RELIGIOUS MARKET THEORY

Religious market theory is one of many theories that take an economic approach to studying aspects of religion. According to Iannaccone (1991), the foundation of religious market theory was laid by Adam Smith. In a frequently overlooked passage in his best-known work, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (2007 [1776]), Smith stated that both entrepreneurs and clerics are oriented toward the achievement of profit and that market forces affect both secular companies and churches. Smith also pointed out that in the religious sphere, there are fundamental questions related to the existence of monopolies, competition, and government intervention. Iannaccone built on this foundation by treating religion as a product. In this view, consumers decide which religion (if any) they want to believe in and how much they want to involve themselves in it. This possibility of choice affects producers of religion, including denominations and individual congregations, which might have to adapt their offering to the needs of the consumers if they wish to attract followers. In other words, the supply created by producers of religion is determined at least in part by the expectations and preferences of the believers. However, this possibility of choice is limited in some cases and in others does not exist at all. We must therefore speak of varied market structures. Some are monopolistic; others are open and pluralistic. For example, the religious market in the United States falls into the second category (Finke and Stark 1988, 1989, 1992; Stark and Finke 1988). In pluralistic markets, religious organizations compete with one another for members. As a result, particular denominations and congregations become more open to accommodating consumers' expectations. This results in a higher level of participation in religious services (Iannaccone 1991). However, my interest here is in religious markets of the first type, that is, monopolistic markets.

One of the forms of noncompetitive structures in a religious market is a simple monopoly (Iannaccone 1991). In this case, there is a single, dominant church, and the consumer does not have the possibility of changing faiths. The dominant church establishes barriers to entry that prevent other denominations from operating in the market. The dominant church also avails itself of state protectionist

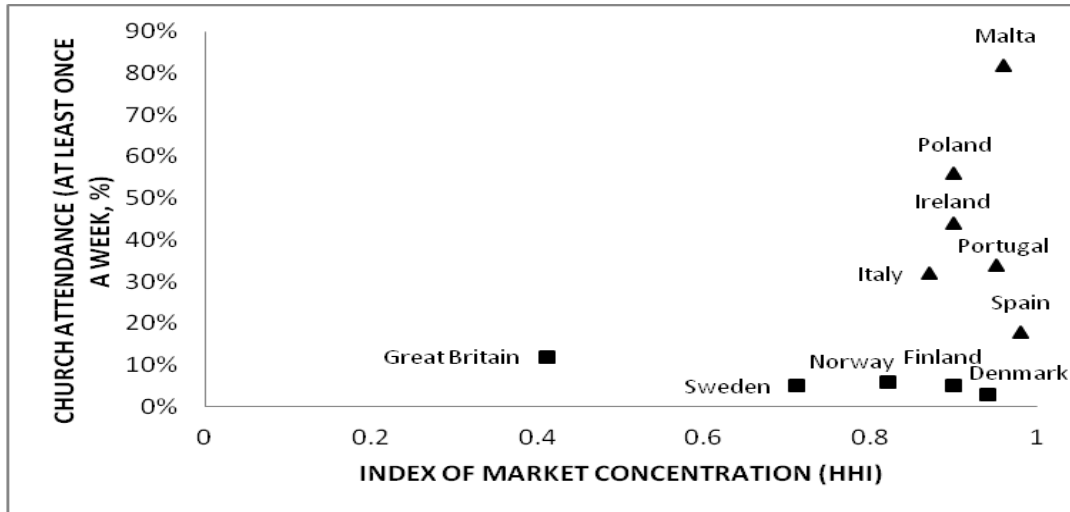
policies. In Iannaccone's view, a simple monopoly functions ineffectively. The consumers of religious services are obligated to bear the costs associated with the function of the dominant religious institution. Meanwhile, the church itself is not interested in adapting its offerings to the needs of its followers. A simple monopoly leads to a decline in the level of religiosity as churchgoers lose interest in consuming the products generated by the dominant church. This market structure was typical of European societies during the Middle Ages.

Iannaccone dedicated more space in his reflections to regulated religious markets. I define these structures as quasi-monopolistic. According to Iannaccone (1991), they are distinct from both simple monopolies and competitive markets. In this case, the dominant role in the market is filled by an official religion, which is provided to the citizens by the state. The state collects a subsidy for the church through the taxation system. The state also intervenes in the processes of both production and consumption of religion. Other religious groups that compete with the dominant church are tolerated. However, the state will frequently lay down certain barriers that limit or impede the activities of these groups. To function in the market, they must therefore meet certain requirements, such as possessing proper licenses. The quasi-monopolistic structure, like the monopolistic one, causes a decline in the effectiveness of the dominant religious institution. This model mainly fits Protestant societies in Europe where state-sponsored churches operate. The negative effects of a quasi-monopolistic structure of the religious market can be seen in the Scandinavian countries. Iannaccone, Finke, and Stark (1997) point to the example of Sweden, where the dominant position is occupied by the Swedish Lutheran Church, which has many privileges and makes use of protectionist policies set up by the state. From an economic point of view, the quasi-monopolistic position of the Swedish Lutheran Church is responsible for its ceasing to attempt to attract followers. In 1991, only 2 percent of Swedes regularly took part in worship at least once a week.

Two challenges can be made to the fundamental assumption of the economic approach, according to which regulation of the market and lack of competition cause a low level of participation in religious observances and, conversely, deregulation and the existence of competition between denominations is responsible for a high level of participation. First, certain problems appear when the subject of the analysis is the market structure that is characteristic of Catholic societies. The level of concentration in these countries' religious markets remains at the same level as that in Protestant European nations. This suggests that the Catholic Church may occupy a quasi-monopolistic position. However, the percentage of people who regularly take part in religious services remains significantly higher in Catholic countries than in Protestant countries (see Figure 1). This situation poses some fundamental questions: Do religious markets in Catholic countries, where percentages of people regularly participating in religious services are high, not

have a quasi-monopolistic character? Does religious market theory perhaps explain only phenomena that occur in Protestant countries?

Figure 1: Church Attendance Rates in Selected European Countries, 2008



Source: Based on data from European Values Study (2008).

A second challenge to religious market theory is posed by the situation that is characteristic of postcommunist countries. In the former Soviet republics, the number of people who declare membership in the traditional churches or other religious groups has been growing. Some authors have called this a religious revival (Greeley 1994). Between 1970 and 1995, the percentage of people in these countries declaring membership in some church or religious group grew on average by 21 percentage points. This phenomenon was particularly evident in the republics of the Caucasus, including Armenia (which had a 42 percent increase) and Georgia (which had a 33 percent increase) (Froese 2004a). This religious revival, a consequence of the deregulation of the religious market and the elimination of an atheistic state monopoly, seemed to confirm the fundamental assumptions of religious market theory. However, the results of research conducted by Froese (2004b) more than a decade after the fall of communism leads to other conclusions. Perhaps surprisingly, he found the highest level of participation in religious services in the former Soviet republics in which the religious market was the most homogeneous. A more detailed analysis indicated that the fall of communism caused a religious revival but that the beneficiaries were traditional churches, which, thanks to being favored by state policies, rebuilt their dominant, quasi-monopolistic positions.

These challenges do not call into question the viability of religious market theory and do not suggest that the theory is unable to explain phenomena in religion. The analyses conducted by Stark and Iannaccone (1996) have shown that a quasi-monopoly exists in Catholic countries and that the same tendencies occur in them as in Protestant nations. However, the data coming from postcommunist societies are not very clear. It appears that it is too early to form any final conclusions concerning religion in those countries.

In light of these theoretical challenges to the economic approach, the case of Poland becomes particularly interesting because it is a country that is both Catholic and postcommunist.

THE POSITION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN POLAND

In weighing the structure of religious markets, we should pay particular attention to a fundamental question: Can we determine whether or not a given religious market is quasi-monopolistic solely on the basis of information about its level of concentration? In theory, it is possible that a state does not employ a protectionist policy in regard to the dominant religion, the church has no influence over the government, and despite the fact that its followers constitute a majority in the society, it exerts no pressure on politicians. I begin my examination of this issue with the question of state protectionism.

Over 90 percent of Poles declare membership in the Catholic Church. Given this high number, it is worth examining whether the Polish legal system gives any preferential treatment to the Catholic Church. This involves two issues. First, there is the question of whether barriers of any kind exist in Polish law that would prevent or inhibit other denominations or religious groups from entering the religious market and functioning within it. The second issue is whether there are laws that grant the Catholic Church specific authority or privileges that are not granted to other faiths.

In regard to the question of potential barriers to entry, the Polish constitution guarantees freedom of religion to everyone (in article 56) and does not designate an official national religion. It also guarantees the possibility of religious expression and rearing of children in accordance with the worldview of the parents. These principles are defined with greater precision in the Act of May 17, 1989, which provides guarantees of freedom of conscience and religion. The act states that citizens may create denominations with their own structures, doctrines, and religious ceremonies.

According to Ł. Doktor and M. Doktor (2008), however, the Polish legal system lacks an unambiguous definition of a denomination or a religious faith. This leads to certain problems. There have been instances in which the administrative courts have rejected a petition for the legalization of a denomination because of

the denomination's nontheistic character. This problem has also been described by Borowik (2000), in whose opinion the concepts of church and denomination are used in the Polish legal system without any definition of either how the terms are to be understood or the difference between them.

The Act of May 17, 1989, also defines conditions necessary for the establishment of a religious group. A denomination may be registered once it has at least 100 Polish citizens as members. A petition is then submitted to the administrative court, which, in addition to the list of founders and their personal details, includes information about the denomination's forms of religious life, basic goals, and doctrinal rules and ceremonies. The most important document in the process is the denomination's charter. It should be emphasized that the Polish legal system allows for a situation in which a religious organization is not registered in this manner; the organization may instead function as an association. In this case, however, it may not use the term *church* or *denomination* in its name. It also has no access to state subsidies intended for registered religious groups. In my opinion, the laws in effect in Poland do not constitute a major barrier to denominations that are interested in functioning in the religious market. This is confirmed by the data of the administrative courts, which show that only a few religious groups have had difficulties in legalizing their activities (Ł. Doktor and M. Doktor 2008).

The second question that I consider here is whether the Polish legal system gives any degree of preferential treatment to the Catholic Church. According to the constitution, all faiths are equal. However, according to Borowik (2000), the problem is somewhat more complex. The constitution dictates that the state regulates its relations with the Catholic Church differently than it does its relations with other churches and denominations. The signing of a concordat agreement between the Polish state and the Holy See of the Catholic Church in 1993 had a major influence in this matter. This agreement defines not only the conditions of cooperation, but also certain obligations of the state toward the Catholic Church. The signing of the concordat was accompanied by controversy. Some critics of the concordat argued that it calls into question the secular nature of the state as guaranteed in the constitution. The government took upon itself certain obligations in the concordat that it did not declare in other legal documents regulating the relations between the state and major non-Catholic denominations in Poland. These obligations were related primarily to the funding of Catholic universities, theological faculties, seminaries, and academic institutions. Some passages of the agreement were written in a rather ambiguous manner, leaving them open to various interpretations (Dzidek 2007).

Additional privileges were guaranteed in the Act of May 17, 1989, which grants to the Catholic Church the right to make use of subsidies. It is the state that finances the teaching of religion and salaries of chaplains employed in the armed forces. The government also established the Property Commission, which was

responsible for returning Church property that the state had seized during the communist period. This intention was certainly justified and laudable, but in practice, the commission did not function well. The Catholic Church received real estate (or its monetary equivalent) that was worth significantly more than what it had lost. The controversies associated with the commission's activities were widely discussed in the Polish press, including outlets that were sympathetic to the Church.¹ The Sejm (the Polish national assembly) disbanded the commission in 2011.

The Catholic Church also is entitled to certain tax exemptions. Priests pay lower income tax than other citizens do, while monks, bishops, archbishops and cardinals are exempted altogether. The Catholic Church is also exempted from customs duties, local taxes, real estate taxes, civil legal activities, and inheritance and donation fees. It should be noted that this financial support in the form of subsidies or tax exemptions is guaranteed to all registered religious groups. There can be no doubt, however, that the Catholic Church is its greatest beneficiary.

It is important to consider the symbolic role of the Catholic Church in Poland, a role that is closely associated with politics. During the communist period, the Catholic Church was the only institution functioning outside the control of the state authorities. The Church united people in resistance to the regime. It could even be said that the Church competed with the authorities for influence in society. In 1989, the situation changed. The Church found itself facing a new set of realities. Some authors have suggested that it was unprepared for these changes. In the early 1990s, priests in Poland began to see a threat in the liberalism that had, in their opinion, been responsible for the privatization of religion. They did not participate directly in politics; instead, they worked to exert pressure on politicians (Casanova 1994). Plagued by problems in the process of crossing over to the free market of values that is characteristic of a democratic society, the Catholic Church has attempted to maintain a central position in the management of the symbolic capital that it gained at the end of the communist period (Michel 1994). Mach (1997) notes that the Church has had problems functioning in the new, pluralistic system that was established after 1989. Borowik (2000) emphasizes that it was particularly in the years after the fall of communism that the Catholic Church actively engaged in political activity. Clerics directly supported right-wing candidates in both presidential and parliamentary elections. With time, however, some evolution could be seen in the behavior of priests. Their political involvement

¹ This problem was discussed by the liberal-oriented *Gazeta Wyborcza* (e.g., “Kościół Dostał Kilkaset Rekompensat Więcej, niż Wnioskował: Dlaczego?” [“The Church Received a Few Hundred Compensations More Than It Asked For: Why?”], published on February 19, 2012), conservative *Rzeczpospolita* (e.g., “Przestępstwa w Komisji Majątkowej?” [“Offenses in the Property Commission?”], published on February 21, 2011), and Christian *Tygodnik Powszechny* (e.g., “Komisja Widmo” [“Ghost Commission”], published on September 28, 2010).

became more subtle. They began to avoid endorsing specific candidates; during religious services, priests only indicated which party's policies would be nearer to Catholic values.

The Catholic Church did not limit its public activity to elections. It attempted to exert influence on politicians so that certain legal documents would include language that the Church desired. This pressure could be seen particularly in the case of two laws concerning education and mass media. The government accepted outright the solutions suggested by the Church. Clerics also worked to influence the content of the law concerning abortion. As a result, the Sejm adopted the most restrictive abortion law in Europe, although the law did not completely reflect the principles of Catholic doctrine. However, surveys have shown that Poles have a negative perception of the involvement of the Catholic Church in politics. More than half of respondents stated that the Church should have less influence in the public sphere (Boguszewski 2007).

The conclusions that can be drawn from these considerations support Hypothesis 1. However, the quasi-monopolistic character of the Catholic Church is not only a result of the fact that the majority of citizens are Catholics. This position of the Church can also be seen in the fact that it is the principal beneficiary of state policy, including privileges, financial subsidies, and tax exemptions. The Church also has a significant influence on the political life of the country. In my opinion, there are many similarities between the position of state churches in Protestant European countries and the position of the Catholic Church in Poland. The only difference is that in Poland, the informal ties between the government and the religious institution have greater importance. Given this quasi-monopolistic structure, there should be, according to Hypothesis 2, a decline in the level of religiosity. Can this phenomenon be observed in Poland, given that a decisive majority of Poles remain—or at least claim to be—Catholic?

RELIGIOSITY IN POLISH SOCIETY

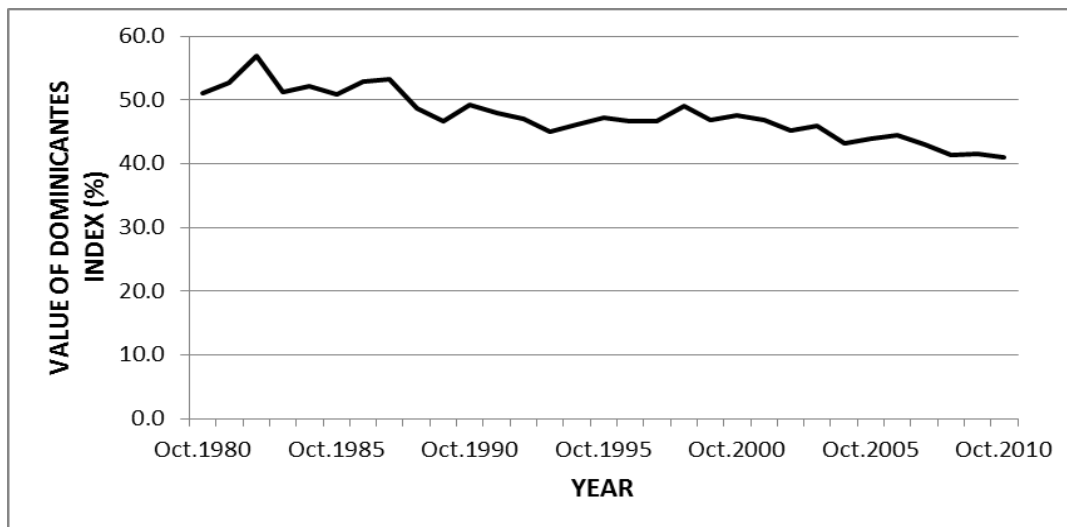
In this article, I concentrate on two dimensions of religiosity. The first concerns participation in religious services. The second involves ties between followers and their parishes. By examining these aspects of religious life, I will attempt to verify Hypothesis 2. They are directly related to the question of whether the quasi-monopolistic position of the Church has an influence on the level of religiosity in Polish society.

First, let us look at participation in religious services. Some interesting data on this come from the reports prepared by the Institute of Statistics of the Catholic Church SAC,² which uses a *dominantes* index in its research. This index

² The term SAC (from Latin: *Societas Apostolatus Catholici*) is an abbreviation used by the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, better known as Pallottines.

measures the percentage of members of a given parish who attend Sunday Mass. The first study of this type was done in 1979. Since then, such studies have been systematically carried out by determining church attendance on a selected Sunday every October or November in every parish in Poland. The results appear to be reliable, especially in comparison to data from surveys, in which respondents often attempt to present themselves in a better light by declaring that they regularly attend services. The analysis covered the years 1980–2010. During this period, the *dominantes* value declined systematically from 51.0 percent in 1980 to 41.0 percent in 2010 (see Figure 2). This is evidence that the percentage of Catholics attending Sunday Mass is decreasing

Figure 2: The Value of the *Dominantes* Index, 1980–2010



Source: Data from Institute of Catholic Church Statistics SAC.

The conclusion that participation in religious services is decreasing appears to be confirmed by public opinion polls. Each month, the Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS),³ the largest public opinion research institution in Poland, gathers information concerning participation in religious observances, among other topics, using representative samples.⁴ I used data from June 1995 and June 2012 in my analysis (see Table 1).

³ The name translates to “Center for Public Opinion Research.”

⁴ In interpreting the result of these surveys, one thing should be kept in mind: The data presented refer to all citizens of Poland, not only to Catholics. However, the percentage of non-Catholics in the surveys was very low.

Table 1: Participation in Religious Services, June 1995 and June 2012

Date of Survey	Population (N)	Do You Attend Religious Services Such as Mass, Worship, or Religious Meetings?			
		At Least Once a Week (%)	Once or Twice a Month (%)	A Few Times a Year (%)	Never (%)
June 1995	1255	65.9	24.1	9.9	0.0
June 2012	1013	52.9	16.1	20.4	10.6
Difference (percent- age points)		-13.0	-8.0	10.5	10.6

$p < 0.05$.

Source: Data from Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.

The percentage of respondents who declared that they take part in religious services at least once a week fell by 13 points between 1995 and 2012. Meanwhile, increases of more than 10 points were seen in the percentages of respondents who said that they take part in services a few times a year and those who do not attend church at all. The changes are statistically significant.

In addition, the data from June 2012 indicate that a certain generation gap exists in participation in religious services. Regular participation in services at least once a week was claimed by 43.4 percent of respondents under 30 years of age and by 55.8 percent of those over 30 years of age (see Table 2). From this, we may predict that the drop in participation will continue in the coming years. However, generalizations should be made with caution, as individuals' level of religiosity may rise as they age (see Azzi and Ehrenberg 1975; Iannaccone 1995a).

Table 2: Participation in Religious Services by Age of Respondent, 2012

Age of Respondent	Population (N)	Do You Attend Religious Services Such as Mass, Worship, or Religious Meetings?			
		At Least Once a Week (%)	Once or Twice a Month (%)	A Few Times a Year (%)	Never (%)
Under 30 years	235	43.4	17.0	24.7	14.9
30 years and over	778	55.8	15.8	19.2	9.3
Difference (percent- age points)		-12.4	2.8	5.5	5.6

$p < 0.05$.

Source: Data from Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.

The value of the *dominantes* index and the survey data show that the percentage of Poles taking part in religious services is falling. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the results of the European Values Study (EVS). In 1990, 65.6 percent of respondents in the EVS declared that they took part in religious services at least once a week (European Values Study 1990). Eighteen years later, that figure had dropped to 52.7 percent (European Values Study 2008). This difference is statistically significant.

In theory, the quasi-monopolistic position of the Catholic Church should negatively influence not only participation in religious observances, but also the ties between Catholics and their parishes. This question is worthy of investigation. Before 1989, when the Catholic Church competed with the official atheistic monopoly, its parishes became the places where the new civic society took form (Firlit 2008). Various Catholic religious movements were developed, directed mainly at young people (Marianiński 2004). We should now be seeing a different situation. According to the economic approach, the lack of competition in a religious market dominated by a single religion that is favored by the state causes a process of increasing apathy in that religion's institutions. As a consequence, they reduce their offerings and the quality of those offerings. Do the results of the research bear this out? In considering this question, I examined the surveys carried out by CBOS in 2005 and 2008. The results were interesting. The percentage of respondents who stated that their parishes organized various forms of activities for members had fallen in almost every category in 2008 in comparison to 2005 (see Table 3). This may be evidence of growing passivity on the part of the Catholic Church. The data show that parishes had withdrawn mainly from activities oriented toward children, young people, the elderly, and the disabled. The difference in the respondents' answers is statistically significant.

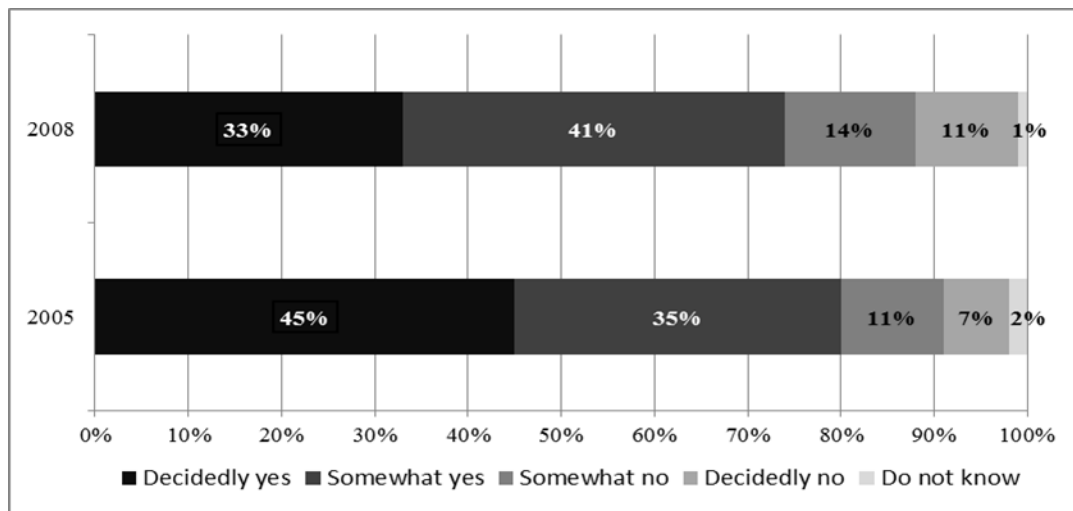
It seems possible that this poorer number and quality of offerings for members creates a loosening of ties between churchgoers and their parishes. Data from the same survey appear to confirm that assertion. In both studies, the following question was asked: "In general, do you feel that you are a member of the parish that includes your place of residence?" The category of "decidedly yes" included 45 percent of respondents in 2005 and 33 percent in 2008. The percentage of those who indicated "somewhat yes" rose, from 35 percent in 2005 to 41 percent in 2008. The percentage of respondents in the "somewhat no" category increased from 11 percent to 14 percent, and the percentage in the "decidedly no" category also rose, from 7 percent to 11 percent over this period. The changes that were observed are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). These results indicate that the ties between churchgoers and their parishes are becoming looser. Detailed data concerning this question are presented in Figure 3.

Table 3: Parish Offerings for Members, 2005 and 2008

Apart from Mass, Worship, and Other Religious Services, Does Your Parish Organize Secular Activity, Including:	Percentage of Affirmative Answers		Difference (in Percentage Points)
	2005	2008	
Pilgrimage to sanctuaries in Poland	84	76	-8
Pilgrimage to sanctuaries abroad	56	53	-3
Help in kind (medicine, food, clothes)	62	53	-9
Vacation for children and youth	53	45	-8
Activities for youth (clubs, scouting)	48	36	-12
Cultural events	34	34	0
Family counseling	38	33	-5
Care for the elderly or handicapped	42	31	-11
Childcare	44	28	-16
Sports events, tourism	34	27	-7
Support for unemployed	26	19	-7
Library	19	15	-4
Continuing education and professional courses	8	8	0
Other activities	4	2	-2

$p < 0.05$.

Source: Data from Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.

Figure 3: Percentage of Respondents Who Consider Themselves Members of Their Local Parish, 2005 and 2008

Source: Data from Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.

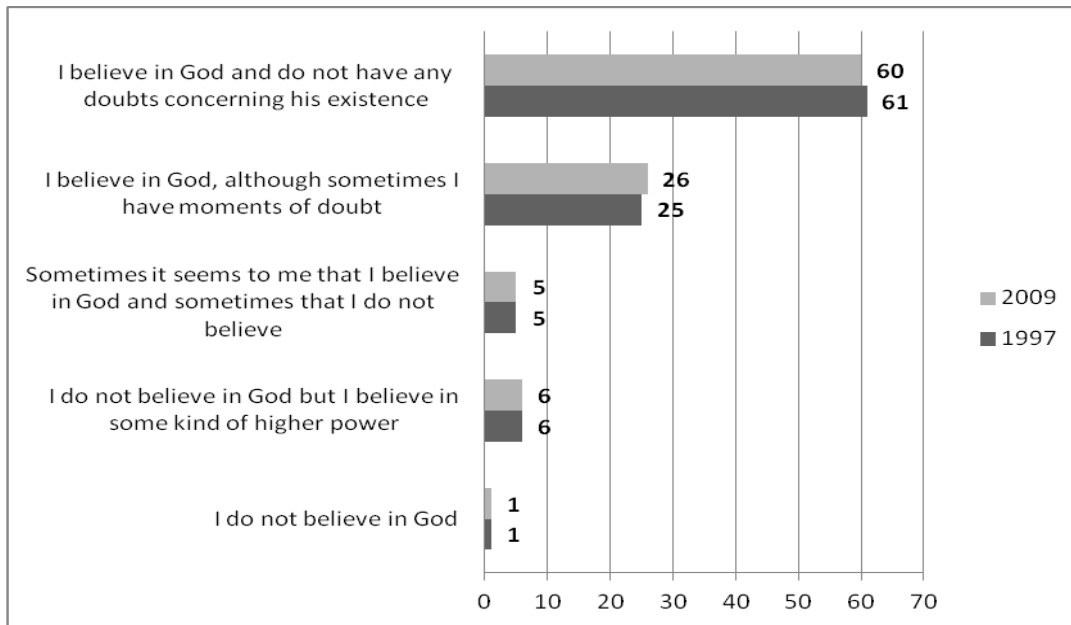
The data that I have presented here suggest that the quasi-monopolistic position of the Catholic Church in Poland has had a negative effect on the level of participation in religious observances and on the ties between Catholics and their parishes. It would therefore appear that the Hypothesis 2 has been verified. However, do the data indicate that the assumptions of the religious market theory are correct? It is possible that the data constitute proof of the correctness of the theory of secularization. To answer these questions, it is necessary to examine certain other information.

IS THE THEORY OF SECULARIZATION CORRECT?

The data that I have presented might suggest that the theory of secularization is correct in the case of Poland. Catholic countries have long been less well developed economically than Protestant countries. Secularization began to arise in the Catholic countries when they moved onto the path of accelerated modernization. However, it is my contention that at least two phenomena show that the theory of secularization does not explain the situation in Poland. These need to be examined in detail.

First, it is important to note that the percentage of Poles who declare faith in God has not changed over recent years. These conclusions result directly from an analysis of the data from the EVS, which found that in 1990, 97.5 percent of Poles believed in God; in 2008, the figure was 96.1 percent (European Values Survey 1990, 2008). Similar results can be seen in data from Polish surveys. I performed a comparative analysis of the answers in Polish surveys done in 1997 and 2009 (see Figure 4). In 1997, as many as 61 percent of Poles declared that they believed in God without any doubt. In 2009, the percentage was only one point lower. In 1997, 25 percent agreed with the statement “I believe in God, but sometimes I have certain doubts.” In 2009, 26 percent of respondents chose that response. In 1997, one in a hundred Poles claimed that he or she did not believe in God at all. In 2009, nothing had changed in this regard. This difference in declarations by respondents between 2009 and 1997 was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Second, analysis of the data suggests that consumers choose a variety of strategies to achieve religious satisfaction. These strategies may include seeking out religious services outside the Catholic Church. According to Iannaccone (1995b), religious consumers seek to limit the risk associated with religious activity. They do this by choosing one of two methods of practicing their religion. The first is related to collective production of goods, exclusivity, and a high level of involvement. Western religious systems exemplify this method. The second is based on private, diversified production and consumption of religious goods. This method is represented by New Age groups or, more broadly, religious beliefs that are characteristic of the Far East (e.g., Buddhism, Hinduism).

Figure 4: Belief in God in Polish Society, 1997 and 2009

Source: Data from Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.

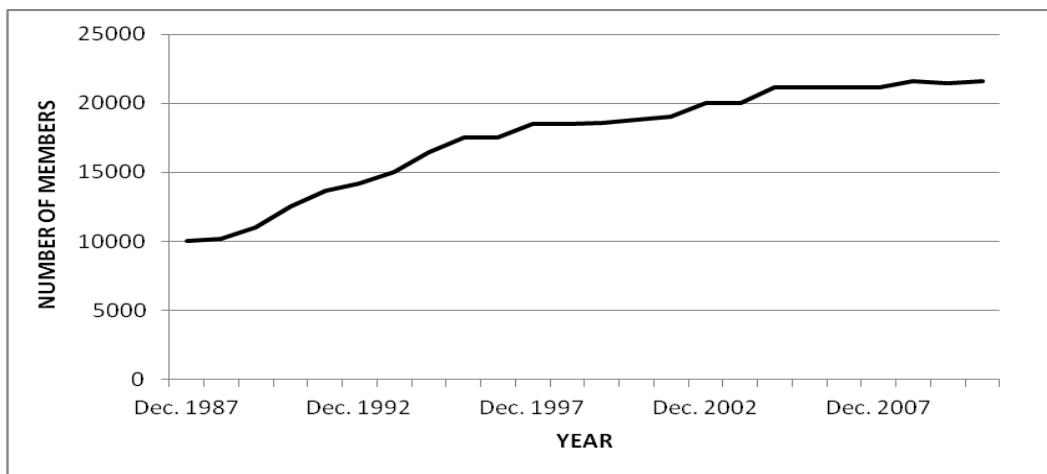
Carrying these concepts over to the situation in Poland, I identified four strategies used by consumers there to achieve religious satisfaction. I was inspired in this area by the typology proposed by Mariański (2008). The first strategy is, of course, choosing membership in the Catholic Church. The consumer in this case achieves religious satisfaction within the dominant religious institution in Poland. However, because the quasi-monopoly cannot guarantee rewards on an appropriately high level, some religious consumers use another strategy.

One of these alternative strategies is particularly interesting and has been the subject of research by many Polish sociologists. In this strategy, religious consumers search for satisfaction beyond the Catholic Church while still claiming to belong to the Church. Their beliefs are syncretistic in character. These consumers attempt to find religious goods beyond the quasi-monopoly when its effectiveness declines but do not withdraw from formal membership in the Church, perhaps because in a religiously homogeneous society, such an action could have high personal costs. Research shows that some Polish Catholics combine beliefs that are characteristic of New Age ideas with membership in the Catholic Church. Between 1998 and 2000, Kubiak (2005) conducted interviews with participants in workshops, lectures, and meetings dedicated to esotericism and holistic practices and found that over 40 percent of the people who engaged in these New Age activities were Catholics. Some information about the makeup of this group was

provided by the RAMP (Religious and Moral Pluralism) project.⁵ In analyzing its results, T. Doktór (2001) suggested that New Age culture was most popular among Catholics who occasionally took part in religious observances.

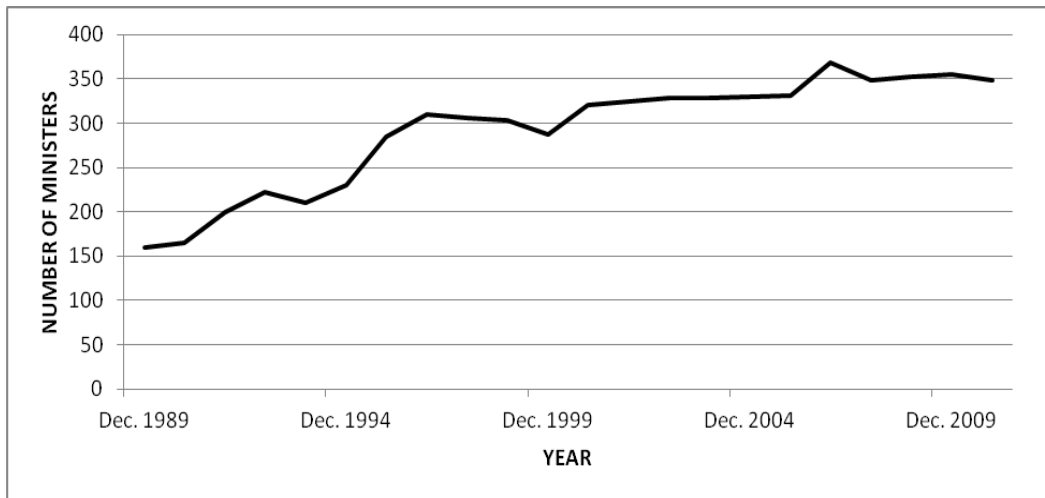
However, some of the people who attended the workshops, lectures, and meetings had completely withdrawn from membership in the Catholic Church. The low effectiveness of quasi-monopoly creates niche markets that non-Catholic faiths have entered. This phenomenon can be seen in Latin America, where Evangelical Protestantism has been growing in popularity (Chesnut 1997, 2003a, 2003b; Gill 1998; Stark and Smith 2010). A similar phenomenon is occurring in contemporary Poland, though on a smaller scale. For instance, the popularity of Pentecostal faiths has been increasing for many years. In 1987, the Pentecostal Church counted 10,000 members in Poland. After the fall of communism, that religion grew rapidly. In 2010, its membership had increased to 21,577 (see Figure 5). In 1987, the Pentecostal Church had 160 pastors; by 2010, there were 348 (see Figure 6). Over those twenty-three years, the number of congregations also grew. In 1987, there were 84 such congregations, and by 2010, there were 219. Similar growth has occurred for many other Protestant denominations.

Figure 5: The Number of Members of the Pentecostal Church in Poland, 1987–2010



Source: Pentecostal Church in Poland.

⁵ T. Doktór (2009: 25) described RAMP as following: “The international research project ‘Religious and Moral Pluralism’ (RAMP) was designed to study the religious and moral diversity in Europe and its social and political implications. The initiators of the RAMP-project, Wolfgang Jagodzinski and Karel Dobbelaere, have invited the collaborators from 15 countries, who for a few years worked on its preparation.” The fieldwork was carried out in 1997–1999. The data were collected in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden. Four countries were dropped because of the lack of funding for the research on the national level.

Figure 6: The Number of Ministers of the Pentecostal Church in Poland, 1987–2010

Source: Pentecostal Church in Poland.

There are also consumers who end their formal participation in any denomination whatsoever. The answer to their religious needs is a different, more open type of organization that offers specialized services. In creating religious satisfaction, such organizations do not place a high value on the existence of a religious community. This structure is characteristic of groups that are associated with New Age culture. In Poland, this strategy was seen as early as the 1970s (Hall 2008). The fall of communism accelerated the growth of New Age culture. This strategy remains typical mainly of young people with higher education and better earnings who live in large cities (T. Doktor 2001).

The research cited in this part of the article suggests that secularization theory does not properly describe the changes in religiosity that are taking place in contemporary Poland. The existence of a quasi-monopoly does not imply a nonreligious society. Instead, what we are seeing is a significant and growing gap between the percentage of Poles who believe in God and the percentage who take part in religious services. It appears that that gap is an outcome of the weakening ability of the Catholic Church in Poland to provide religious satisfaction to its members. Religious consumers are increasingly choosing strategies other than participation in the Church. These strategies allow consumers to attain their desired level of religious satisfaction.

CONCLUSIONS

According to my analysis, both of my hypotheses were confirmed. First, I demonstrated that in the new Polish society that developed after the fall of communism,

the Catholic Church achieved a quasi-monopolistic position. Evidence for this is seen in the fact that the Catholic Church is the principal beneficiary of subsidies and tax exemptions guaranteed by the Polish state. In addition, the Church makes full use of its symbolic role in society, particularly in the political sphere, as when priests have exerted pressure on politicians to word legal documents according to the Church's desires. However, I did not identify any fundamental barriers that would impede or prevent non-Catholic denominations or religious groups from functioning in the Polish religious market. Existing law allows two possibilities in this area. If a group has enough members, it can function in the market as an ordinary denomination. In that case, it has the right to make use of financial subsidies and tax exemptions guaranteed by the state. If a given religious group is not able to fulfill all the conditions necessary for registration, it can instead function as an association. However, the group cannot then access the privileges reserved for denominations.

Second, the data presented above show that as a consequence of its quasi-monopolistic position, the effectiveness of the Catholic Church has declined. Proof of this is seen in the diminishing percentage of people who regularly take part in the Church's religious services. This problem of declining effectiveness can also be seen at the parish level. Research has shown that the offerings of parishes are becoming less attractive to churchgoers. The Catholic Church is increasingly perceived as a bureaucratic institution and less and less as a community that unites its members. It is no longer a center for the formation of innovative Catholic movements, as it was before the fall of communism.

I have considered the question of whether the changes that I have identified should be treated as evidence supporting the secularization theory. In accord with this theory, the decline in participation in religious services could be seen as a result of accelerated modernization taking place in Catholic Poland. I disagree with this interpretation. In this article, I have shown that the percentage of Poles who believe in God remains high and has not changed in recent decades. Instead of leaving the religious market, religious consumers use a variety of strategies to achieve religious satisfaction. Some consumers limit themselves exclusively to the Catholic Church. Others supplement the religiosity of the Church with New Age beliefs and holistic practices. Consumers may also leave the Church for one of the many denominations that function in the Polish religious market. Alternatively, they may adopt a strategy of diversification, seeking religious satisfaction outside traditional religious institutions.

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