

Dorota Hall

Religion and Nation

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Draft version

Issues related to the link between religion and nation have attracted many commentators of the situation of religion in Poland. Usually, the fact is pointed out that the Catholic religion had a crucial part in shaping national identity of Poles in the XIXth century, when Poles were deprived of their own state. The figure of a “Polish-Catholic” reflecting the cluster of two identities managed to dominate Poles’ self-perceptions and functioned as a repository for Poles’ national and religious self-esteem. The tendency to perceive national and religious identities as interrelated was reinforced during the communist period when the Church served as the primary institution of political resistance to the state domination and presented itself as a representative of the nation. In the XXth century, when the majority of European societies were becoming more and more secularized, the Polish society did not seem to reflect the trend, and therefore, it grabbed attention of many sociologists of religion. The “Polish case” has stimulated some to formulate new theories, or to revise the existing ones. For instance, Jose Casanova [1994] made use of the case to present his idea of the deprivatization of religion, and Rodney Stark and Roger Finke [1988] enriched the supply-side theory with the concept of ethno-religious conflict in order to explain the lack of religious decline in religiously homogeneous society. The mentioned scientists associated the religious vitality of Poles with the typical for Poland interrelation of religious and national values.¹

Recent sociological surveys show the level of religiosity is still high in Poland, and so is the level of national pride [Doktor 2006]. Here, the question emerges as to what actual importance the issues related to religion and nation have for Poles’ self-identifications. Of course, when asked, Poles willingly subscribe to religion, and also, they say, they are much proud to be Polish. But do Poles consider issues related to religion and nation more or rather less constitutive for their self-descriptions than any other concepts, such as e.g. family or individualistic values, they identify themselves with? And what is the relation between national and religious identifications of Poles? Drawing on the data from international surveys (Aufbruch, EVS/WVS), Tadeusz Doktor [2006] found a positive correlation between

¹ On the link between religion and nation in Poland *see* also: Borowik 2002, Michel 1994, Zubrzycki 1997, Zubrzycki 2006, and in the Polish literature: Borowik 1997, Kosela 2003.

collective manifestations of religiosity (church attendance) and positively valued national identity. But in which aspects and in what way does the importance of the religious identity stimulate the importance of the national identity in subjective interpretation of those who decidedly subscribe to religion? In this paper, answers to these questions will be sought on the basis of nation-wide surveys, as well as a quantitative research among Polish young Catholics and in-depth interviews with them.

Collective identities and their sociological operationalization

In order to grasp the issue the concept of collective identities needs to be introduced. The collective identity is an emotional linkage of an individual to a category of persons differentiated from others by particular features, such as e.g. a shared practice, a shared fate, or a similar relation to institutions. The linkage may be established to either a formally defined, or an imagined collectivity. And an individual may recognize her- or himself as part of it, no matter whether there exist any objective or formal reasons to perceive her- or himself as such, or not. The collective identities have been operationalized for the purpose of sociological surveys. Among others, professor Krzysztof Koseła of Warsaw University measured them. This was by means of the I-sort procedure. Due to its survey nature, the procedure does not focus on the process of creating or acknowledging identities in various social situations, but instead, it gets them out of respondents in order to assess their prevalence in a population and their salience for the individuals concerned.

The I-sort procedure consists of the following formula: a researcher presents a set of cards to a respondent. Usually, there are about 40-45 cards. They contain various characteristics related to national and gender identities, as well as to religion, family, politics, age, financial and occupational status, membership of a social stratum, and attitudes towards civic society. The researcher says: "I would like to ask you how you think about yourself. There are many various descriptions on these cards. Please select only those descriptions which you deem important to yourself. Who are you? Please, discard the remaining cards". Subsequently, the researcher asks the respondent to arrange the selected descriptions, placing the most important ones at the top of the list, and those less important further down the list. The researcher notes down all selected characteristics and gives successive numbers to them, according to their indicated importance.

The prevalence of an identity in a given population is measured by calculating the percentage of people in the sample who have selected it for themselves as an apt self-characteristic. In order to measure the salience of identities an index is calculated² in which weights indicating the ranking in an individual sorting are multiplied by the percentage of the respondents who have attributed a particular ranking to a given characteristic. The higher the value of the index, the more central the identity is to the members of a given population, i.e. the higher the ranking attributed by the respondents to a given identity while sorting the selected identities in the order of individual salience.

If the I-sort procedure is introduced as part of more complex questionnaire, the binding power of an identity can also be assessed. For instance, religious self-characteristics can be collated with opinions about Church, or moral judgements.

Collective identities of Poles

The I-sort procedure was used in surveys conducted on national samples of adult residents of Poland in 1995, 1998, 2002, 2006 and 2007; in a survey on a random sample of individuals aged 15-24 years in Poland and Germany in 2001/2002, as well as on the random sample of adult residents of the Russian Federation in 1998 and 2002 [see: Koseła 2003, 2005, 2008]. Results of the most recent survey are displayed by the Table 1. It illustrates the prevalence of social identities among adult residents of Poland.

Table 1: Social identities arranged in order of **prevalence** among the population of adult residents of Poland (prevalence in %)

I am:	Ranking	N=989
		%
Polish	1	94
A man/woman	2	85
A citizen of Poland	3	82
A religious person	4	79
A person guided by my own conscience	5	78

² The shift from individual ranking to a group index consists in assigning 16 points to the identity indicated as the most important one, 15 points to the second most important one, 14 to the third one, and so on, up to the last one, i.e. the sixteenth identity in every person's individual order. The last identity in the sixteen-element sequence was assigned one point. Points for ranking first, second and lower in individual rankings are multiplied by the frequency (expressed in per cent) of a given identity appearing on the first, second, third and following positions. The total of the weighted scoring of a given identity for being ranked first, second, etc. in the sorting, divided by 16, is the value of the *salience index* of a given identity.

A mother/father	6.5	70
A person guided by principles	6.5	70
A resident of a region/city/locality	8	69
The master of my own destiny	9	68
European	10	66
A typical person	11	65
A person attached to the Polish national tradition	12	64
A wife/husband	13	60
A person attached to Catholic values	14	57
A person who endures life's adversities patiently	15	55
A democrat/supporter of democracy	16	53
A member of Generation JP2	17	52
A young person	18	44
A person of limited means	19	42
A citizen of a country that matters in the world	20	40
Slavonic	21	37
A member of the intelligentsia	22	36
An old age or disability pensioner	23	33
A person driven by the need of the moment	24	31
A person pursuing an occupation/profession	25	29
An elderly person	26	26
An employee of an enterprise, factory, institution	27.5	25
An anti-fascist	27.5	25
An anti-communist	29.5	22
A person identifying with the Polish People's Republic	29.5	22
A supporter of strong-arm government	31.5	20
A pupil/university student	31.5	20
A worker	33	17
A Solidarity person	34	16
A farmer	35	15
A victim of the post-1989 transformations	36.5	14
A citizen of a country without any significance in the world	36.5	14
A person without a future	38.5	13
A person who has benefited from the post-1989 transformations	38.5	13
A supporter of a politician or a party	40.5	12
An affluent person	40.5	12
Unemployed	42.5	10
A member of societies/associations	42.5	10
A private entrepreneur	44	9

A non-believer	45	7
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Source: *Values of Poles and the legacy of John Pole II 2007*.³

As showed by the table, Poles highly value their national, religious and family identities. Items most obviously referring to them are marked with colours: national identities with rouge, religious identities with blue, and family identities with yellow. As it can be seen, they occupy the higher part of the ranking. Also, the gender characteristic seems to be important for Poles, as it has been the second most commonly selected identity in the survey (with the score of 85%). However, it needs to be highlighted that the gender identity is less widely recognised as important by Poles than their national identity – the “Polish” identity has been selected by as much as 94% of respondents. Other identities related to national issues have also been frequently chosen: 82% of Poles deem the “citizen of Poland” characteristic important for themselves, 64% indicate the “person attached to the Polish national tradition” characteristic, and 40% perceive as important they are citizens “of a country that matters in the world”. Also, religious identities are very commonly acknowledged: as much as 79% of Poles much identifies with the “religious person” category, 57% – with the “person attached to Catholic values” characteristic, and 52% – with the “member of Generation John Paul II” feature.

The “person guided by my own conscience” self-characteristic is also widely shared by Poles (78%). However, not necessarily does it stand for much individualistic self-description, since the notion “conscience” clearly alludes to religious idiom. It might happen, therefore, that those who select it as an apt description for themselves are just driven by traditional religious outlook. This might be even more so, since at the same time, many (70%) subscribe to the “person guided by principles” identity which suggests the conformity to an external authority. Some individualistic values have certainly entered the above described complex of identities of Poles, nevertheless, it seems they have not much changed the general feature of the Polish population in term of its traditional orientations.

The peculiarity of the Poles’ self-characteristic is acutely visible when compared to the self-characteristic of another population. In 2001/2002, the I-sort procedure was exercised as part of a survey on a random sample of individuals aged 15-24 years in Poland and in Germany. In both populations of youth, identities related to the gender, family and nation were willingly acknowledged. However, there were significant differences related to, first, how many Poles

³ Survey carried out in September/October 2007 on the random sample of Poles aged over 15.

or Germans perceived them significant for themselves, and second, what the exact order was in which the characteristics were situated in the ranking of the most prevalent ones. For instance, the “Polish” identity was deemed important by 89% of researched Poles, which gave it the first place in the ranking of most prevalent characteristics. In turn, only 42% of young German respondents selected the “German” category, and this category appeared to be only the sixth important characteristic for Germans (in terms of the prevalence of identities), which means among German youth, it was less widely shared than gender or family identities. The first place in the German ranking was occupied by the “person with a future” identity, but only 62% of Germans selected it (the same self-description, exceeding the value of 59%, had only the tenth place in the Polish ranking). And of course, the most significant disparity referred to religion: while 77% of Polish youth identified with the “religious person” characteristic, only 18% of its German counterpart did so [Koseła 2005: 56-58].

Considering the whole layout of self-descriptions, Germans more frequently than Poles selected identities such as: “a person with a future”, “a person pursuing an occupation/profession”, “a member of societies/associations”, “a person critical about Church”, “a non-believer”, “an affluent person”. That means, German youth appeared to be more attached to rational and secular values. Polish youth in turn, presented itself as more emotionally involved in the issues of family, religion and nation [Koseła 2005: 58-59].

Traditional identities which embrace religious and national self-descriptions, are not only widely shared by Poles but also very important for them. Table 2 displays the personal salience of social identities which attained the highest salience index in the most recent survey carried out among adult residents of Poland.

Table 2: Fifteen most important social identities arranged in order of **personal salience**. The rankings according to the values of the salience index, and the values of the salience index.

I am:	N=989	
	Ranking	Index
Polish	1	70.41
A man/woman	2	54.45
A mother/father	3	50.92
A religious person	4	49.94
A citizen of Poland	5	46.99
A person guided by my own conscience	6	39.79
A wife/husband	7	38.63
A person guided by principles	8	36.33

The master of my own destiny	9	33.15
European	10	28.74
A resident of a region/city/locality	11	28.34
A typical person	12	26.65
A person attached to Catholic values	13	25.17
A person attached to the Polish national tradition	14	24.50
A young person	15	23.92

Source: *Values of Poles and the legacy of John Pole II 2007*.

It is worth noting here that the “Polish” self-characteristic not only occupies the first place in the ranking of the most personally salient identities in Poland, but also, its salience index has much higher value than the indexes for subsequent self-descriptions. This means, many Poles deem the “Polish” characteristic important for themselves, and place it more frequently than other characteristics on the top places of their personal ranking list. The next four identities have similar values of their salience index, and together they compose a complex of identities most important for Poles. It is clearly visible, they embrace national, family and religious components.

Polish young Catholics

The aim of my own research was to find some relations between religious and national identities of Poles. I was especially interested in the national identity of those who unambiguously subscribe to religion. What opinions about issues related to the nation express those who deem religion important and constitutive for themselves? In order to be sure the target group of my research highly values religion, I decided to focus on people proving their religious attitudes by the participation in a religious group. Since I did not want to study any closed or marginal community (likely to subscribe to many peculiar characteristics), I chose young Catholics, aged 19-33, linked to university and post-university chaplaincies run at churches administered by the Dominican order. Obviously, the chosen group is not representative neither for Polish Catholics, nor for the Polish youth. However, the aim of my research was not to discover regularities applicable to any larger part of the Polish society, but rather to find some patterns of self-descriptions that could inspire further research on religious and national identities of Poles.

My research was carried out in two parallel steps. First, I used the I-sort procedure in order to see the layout of characteristics respondents identify themselves with, in terms of their

prevalence and salience, and to find out what is the place of self-descriptions related to religion and nation on the emerging picture. And second, I conducted in-depth interviews in order to recognize the qualitative dimension of respondents' identities – their context and possible ambiguities related to them.

As part of the I-sort procedure, I made use of the set of characteristics previously used in the survey on the random sample of Poles in the Autumn 2007 (the survey quoted above). This allowed me to compare survey results and to see possible peculiarities of the group I studied. There was only one modification I introduced and it concerned the method employed for the realization of the survey. Namely, instead of conducting face-to-face standardized interviews and showing cards to respondents, I distributed an email questionnaire. All identities of interest were listed in it, and respondents were asked to put in order those descriptions they deem important for themselves, placing the most important ones at the top of the list, and those less important further down the list. They were also asked to delete the rest of descriptions. I do not think the slight shift in the method has significantly influenced the survey results, since the distributed Word document allowed to make shifts and changes as easily as if the procedure had been exercised on palpably existing cards.

The questionnaire was handed out among participants of university and post-university chaplaincies in Warsaw, and among participants of university chaplaincies in large Polish towns: Gdansk, Krakow, Poznan, Wroclaw and Lublin, in March 2008. By April 7, when I began to analyze the data, 90 filled out and valid questionnaires had returned to me.⁴ The analysis presented below draws on them. Some questionnaires distributed in Warsaw contained also a question whether a respondent agreed to an interview meant to contextualize the issue of selected identities. If so, she/he was asked to write her/his name and give her/his telephone number. Twelve respondents agreed, and consequently, eleven interviews were conducted by me in the end of March 2008 and the beginning of April 2008. The majority of interviews lasted less than one hour, but there were also some lasting more: two, four, or even eight hours. Interviewees were asked about the significance and personal importance of selected identities, about the order in which they placed them, and about the reasons standing behind the withdrawal of some characteristics. During each conversation, much emphasis was put on the issue of national identity.

⁴ Not valid questionnaires were those filled out by persons aged below or over 19-33 years, or those containing descriptions not placed according to the importance order.

I-sort procedure – results

Obviously, results from my survey cannot be directly compared to results referring to all adult residents of Poland. But they can be put side by side with results referring to people aged the same, i.e. between 19 and 33 years, and educated the same, i.e. to students and high educated persons. The ranking of identities important for the group of high educated young Poles differs from the ranking referring to the whole Polish population in certain characteristics. For apparent reasons, those young and high educated more frequently than the whole population identify themselves with descriptions related to their young age and high education level. Also, they less commonly deem their family identity important for themselves. This is primarily so, because in the set of characteristics to be chosen, there were only two categories, “a wife/husband” and “a mother/father”, related to family issues, which simply excluded unmarried and childless individuals from the possibility to subscribe to the family identity.⁵ Furthermore, high educated young Poles consider themselves more affluent than the whole population, they seem to be more individualistic, they more highly value democracy and civic trends, and they are somewhat less religious. What is important here, they perceive their national identity as important for themselves equally prevalently as the whole population does (although they place characteristics referring to it a little bit further down the list of selected important descriptions than the whole population). It is truth, they far more frequently identify themselves with the pan-national “European” characteristic than the rest of Poles, but if we consider the prevalence of this characteristic among them, we can conclude this is not at the cost of their national identity.

Now, the prevalence of identities among the people I studied is displayed by the Table 3.

Table 3: Social identities arranged in order of **prevalence** among the participants of (post)university chaplaincies aged 19-33, among students and high educated persons aged 19-33, and among the whole population of adult residents of Poland (prevalence in %)

I am:	%		
	Age 19-33 Participants of (post)university chaplaincies N=90	Age 19-33 Students and high educated in Poland N=135	All residents of Poland N=989
A religious person	100	71	79

⁵ In the survey on a random sample of Polish and German youth quoted above, there was a possibility to choose the “member of my family” description, instead of the “mother/father” characteristic, which has given family identity high place in the ranking of most prevalent and most personally salient identities.

A man/woman	99	85	85
Polish	95	93	94
A person guided by my own conscience	86	84	78
A person attached to Catholic values	80	39	57
A young person	80	98	44
A person guided by principles	79	78	70
A pupil/university student	68	72	20
European	67	85	66
A democrat/supporter of democracy	63	62	53
A resident of a region/city/locality	62	68	69
A person attached to the Polish national tradition	52	63	64
A member of the intelligentsia	51	57	36
A citizen of Poland	47	87	82
The master of my own destiny	46	82	68
A member of Generation JP2	41	53	52
A member of societies/associations	37	20	10
Slavonic	31	41	37
An anti-communist	30	24	22
A person pursuing an occupation/profession	24	37	29
A person who has benefited from the post-1989 transformations	24	21	13
A person of limited means	23	27	42
A person driven by the need of the moment	22	37	31
An anti-fascist	22	27	25
A person who endures life's adversities patiently	21	58	55
A typical person	19	67	65
A citizen of a country that matters in the world	18	35	40
A supporter of a politician or a party	12	14	12
A wife/husband	9	35	60
An employee of an enterprise, factory, institution	7	33	25
A supporter of strong-arm government	6	17	20
A Solidarity person	6	18	16
An affluent person	4	19	12
A citizen of a country without any significance in the world	2	18	14
Unemployed	2	10	10
A private entrepreneur	2	17	9
A mother/father	1	38	70
A victim of the post-1989 transformations	1	15	14
A person without a future	1	7	13

An old age or disability pensioner	0	12	33
An elderly person	0	11	26
A person identifying with the Polish People’s Republic	0	9	22
A worker	0	15	17
A farmer	0	12	15
A non-believer	0	15	7

Source: My own survey set together with *Values of Poles and the legacy of John Pole II 2007*

The juxtaposition of identities chosen by participants of (post)university chaplaincies and their social stratum counterparts reveals certain disparities. Some of them are easy to explain (these are marked with grey in the table above). Obviously, all my respondents identify themselves with the “religious person” description, because this was the aim of my research to study identities of individuals personally engaged in religious issues. For the same reason, many of them approve the “person attached to Catholic values” description. It might be regarded as paradoxical that less of my respondents have selected the “member of Generation JP2” characteristic than their counterparts have. However, in fact, this also proves they are more deeply concerned with religion. Namely, although within the whole Polish population, the popularity of the “member of Generation JP2” identity refers to the Poles’ concern with religion and especially the pontificate of John Paul II, not necessarily is it so with the reference to people deeply engaged in religion. As disclosed by in-depth interviews, many of my respondents may perceive the term “Generation JP2” as coined by the media and referring to mass religiosity and superficial admiration for the figure of the pope – the characteristic they do not want to subscribe to.

Also, the lower popularity of identities related to the occupational and family status clearly relates to an inherent feature of my sample. As much as about 85% of Catholics researched by me were students, for the most part unmarried and childless,⁶ while there were more post-graduate, professionally active, married and having children individuals in the group of youth extracted from the national sample of Poles.

Disparities between the percentages of young people subscribing to other characteristics in both juxtaposed samples seem to be more interesting. Significantly less participants of university and post-university chaplaincies than their young and high educated counterparts perceive the “master of my own destiny” description as important for themselves. This might

⁶ Married and having children Catholics interested in deepening their piety are less engaged in group activities, or they choose family chaplaincies, instead of university or post-university ones, which have not been embraced by my research.

suggest they are less individualistic. But at the same time, less frequently, they deem important for themselves such characteristics as: “a person driven by the need of the moment”, “a person who endures life’s adversities patiently” and “a typical person”. This in turn, suggests that not necessarily are they less individualistic, but they simply subscribe to another kind of individualism. They seem to be less hedonistic since they are not likely to see themselves as driven by the need of the moment (or less impulsive, if we want to see this identity in more psychological perspective). Perhaps by the fact they less willingly perceive themselves as masters of their own destiny they express their humility towards God and the higher order. But at the same time, this humility does not suppress their activity against life’s adversities, and does not refrain them from discarding the “typical person” characteristic. However, conclusions referring to another kind of individualism are only provisional, since they have not been much confronted with opinions of respondents during the interviews which explored another characteristics.⁷ It seems the issue of individualism of young Polish Catholics demands further investigations.

Finally, the comparison of prevalence of identities related to national and civic issues among both described samples (marked with orange in the table) brings extremely interesting conclusions. The “Polish” self-description is equally widely deemed important by both groups. However, participants of university and post-university chaplaincies less likely than their age and education level counterparts perceive themselves as those attached to the Polish national tradition. Also, they do not seem to be much interested in the significance of Poland as a country, since they less commonly subscribe to both characteristics referring to the issue: “a citizen of a country that matters in the world” and “a citizen of a country without any significance in the world”. They far less likely choose the “European” characteristic as important for themselves, and they tend to discard the “citizen of Poland” self-description – the latter might suggest they are not much interested in civic issues. But on the other hand, they perceive themselves democrats as commonly as their age and education level counterparts do, they do not approve a strong-arm government almost at all, and they are more likely to participate in societies/associations. The higher support for grass-root initiatives might be underlain by their social feature as unmarried and childless individuals.

⁷ For instance, the fact that the members of the group studied by me refrain from identifying themselves with the “person who endures life’s adversities patiently” description does not necessarily mean they are active. It might also suggest they are more critical about their patience than the rest of the Polish population of high educated youth.

The rest of disparities need to be addressed with the reference to the qualitative component of my research.

The majority of remarks formulated with the reference to the table of prevalence of identities might be confirmed by the next table which refers to the personal salience of selected identities.

Table 4: Fifteen most important social identities arranged in order of **personal salience** according to the ranking referring to participants of (post)university chaplaincies aged 19-33. A comparison with students and high educated persons aged 19-33.

I am:	Salience index	
	Age 19-33 Participants of (post)university chaplaincies N=90	Age 19-33 Students and high educated in Poland N=135
A religious person	93.82	40.85
A man/woman	83.13	54.40
Polish	68.19	67.97
A person guided by my own conscience	58.33	41.56
A person attached to Catholic values	55.49	14.47
A person guided by principles	52.97	44.03
A young person	47.15	61.49
A pupil/university student	36.60	37.46
A resident of a region/city/locality	32.36	26.44
European	27.85	40.96
The master of my own destiny	26.80	46.32
A person attached to the Polish national tradition	26.74	19.27
A citizen of Poland	24.93	52.56
A member of the intelligentsia	24.03	24.25
A democrat/supporter of democracy	22.22	23.35

Source: My own survey set together with *Values of Poles and the legacy of John Pole II 2007*

Two additional remarks can be formulated with the reference to this table which could not be concluded from the previous table illustrating the mere prevalence of identities.

First, although two characteristics, “a person guided by my own conscience” and “a person guided by principles”, are equally widely shared by both the members of (post)university chaplaincies and their age and education level counterparts, their salience indexes are significantly higher in case of the group I studied. It means, members of (post)university

chaplains find them more important for themselves, since they have placed them nearer the top of their list of selected identities. This might confirm the thesis about the internal connection between both characteristics and about their linkage to religious point of view, the supposition I have formulated in the above part of this paper. One of my interviewees has told about her problems with placing the descriptions in order:

Yeah, it was problematic for me. Especially with the person guided by my own conscience, by principles and driven by the need of the moment. These are various things but equally important and simultaneously applied. In a given moment, I am guided by my conscience which is guided by principles. [1]

And second, the table reveals that although participants of (post)university chaplaincies less frequently feel attached to the Polish national tradition than their age and education level counterparts, those who do feel attached to this tradition consider it much important for themselves – although less of them subscribe to this characteristic, the salience index is higher with the reference to them than with the reference to the whole population of young and high educated Poles. This is another issue to be commented with the reference to in-depth interviews.

Qualitative component of the research – results

The common feature of my interviewees is that they rather critically assess the religiosity widely-shared by their compatriots. They deem it shallow, superficial, slavish, and having little to do with morality and actual behaviours of Poles. They are not patronizing towards others on account of their more developed religiosity, they just notice the facts recognized by sociologists of religion – not the personal and individualistic, but rather traditional dimension of Catholicism in Poland, and the overwhelming prevalence of ritual factors over moral and intellectual ones [cf. Borowik & Doktor 2001]:

I've got an impression, in Poland, in the majority of cases, the religion draws on tradition, and not on any convincement as to the values. Even if we consider statistics... On the one hand, there is 90% Catholics. But on the other hand, the church attendance does not exceed 30%, at least in Warsaw. [...] I don't know, I don't conduct any appropriate research, but I've got an impression, for example, in Germany, there is lower difference, lower dissonance between the declared and the practiced religion. [2]

The majority of people treat religion just as tradition, they don't really live with it. Many people hold a cash register in their shops, but they don't include all articles sold. Or a couple says they believe in God but they don't aspire to the marriage while living together. [...] There's a lot of contradictions. [3]

I do like rituals very much and I do appreciate them. But I think, the matters can't rest there. I've got a friend who, quite ironically, says how Poles understand the Holy

Triduum: a little bit of ash, a small palm, and an egg. So, I'm in favour of signs. The signs which reinforce the belief. But they reinforce it, instead of being its substitute. I would put it this way: I'm in favour of the intellectual Catholicism. [4]

The majority of my interviewees – like the person quoted just above – are still attached to the ritual dimension of religion, although they would prefer it to be enriched with more reflexive component. Some of them, however, go as far as to reject any ritualism and focus on almost purely intellectual piety:

I don't feel close to the Polish Catholicism at all. Telling you the truth, such a crib-like, folk religiosity... I am far from it. I don't identify myself with it, and I don't take part in practices typical for such a kind of religiosity. Pilgrimages, for example – I don't participate. I prefer to read an encyclical. [5]

Others just confess they are not able to consider Poles Catholics in the true sense of the word:

I'm very skeptical about... I mean, the Catholic tradition is ok, but I'm very much skeptical about Poles as a Catholic nation. I can't see it. I just can't see it. [1]

In these circumstances, it is simply not possible for the milieus studied by me to establish firm linkages between the Catholic religion on the one hand and the Polish nation on the other, considering both notions – “Polish” and “Catholic” – as equivalent. It has been clearly expressed by an interviewee:

As for me, patriotism, fatherland, an attachment to the country, to its symbolism, to the whole set of meanings standing behind – this is one thing. And being a Catholic is the other thing. For me, such a Polish-Catholic figure is, unfortunately, a resultant of the history. Derived from some determined factors: since the period of Partitions, through the war, to the PPR [Polish People's Republic – DH]. For me, Christianity, Catholicism – this is a community of people closest to me. They are believers and Catholics, no matter which country they dwell, whether it's in Europe or in other parts of the world. I don't identify a nation and Catholicism as one value. [6]

All my interviewees deem much important for themselves they are Catholics, and almost all deem much important for themselves they are Polish, however, they clearly separate both identities from each other. This is even more so since many take part in pan-national religious networks and activities, e.g. those organized by in the Ecumenical Community of Taizé. And they much higher value the pan-national links established by the common interest in religion than their national bonds. One of my interviewees explains:

There are international meetings, there are people from various countries there. And I feel closer to people from China there than to Poles I meet in other places. I just feel I have much more in common with them, I don't now, maybe it's a question of a kind of shared spiritual perspective... [...] I'm linked to them with some crucial, fundamental, most important things. And with another Poles... This something which links me to another Pole is less important than this thing linking me to a Chinese, or a person from wherever. [7]

The lack of space for the traditional concept of a Polish-Catholic among the group I studied does not automatically implies members of this group unambiguously reject any linkages between both constituents of the concept. For instance, they may support ideas to bond together issues related to religion and nation in the public sphere, or to intersperse issues related to religion and the State within the realm of politics and legislation. Their exact attitudes have much to do with identities they most willingly subscribe to.

Two models

Two general identity models have emerged from the interviews I conducted. They inform two different currents of thinking about relations between religion, nation and the state, and they found motivations for the employment or rejection of those self-descriptions which seem to be most attention-grabbing from the perspective of the quantitative part of the research (e.g. “European”, “a person attached to Polish national tradition”). The models I refer to are of analytical nature. This means they are introduced by me in order to sort out the discussed subject, but they do not describe any actual clear division between two complexes of identities embodied by two separate groups of participants of (post)university chaplaincies. In reality, the boundary is blurred, and members of chaplaincies can locate themselves on the border, accepting both models partially, while thinking about various aspects of their identities.

Separated belief model

The first model is composed of the complex of individualistic and civic identities. Within this model, people think of themselves they are much independent of any authorities, they highly value grass-root initiatives and democracy, and they feel they are Polish citizens and European. The most representative opinion for this model is the following:

For me, personal values are most important. I wouldn't say I'm guided by principles. Principles can help, of course, but it doesn't make any sense to be guided by principles. [...] Besides, also political values form very important part of my identity. [...] For me, things like being a Polish, a European, a supporter of democracy – these are very important elements of how I perceive myself. [...] And I am a declared enthusiast of the European Union and the European integration. [8]

The pro-European attitude is supported by an observation that the participation in the European Union is very advantageous for Poles, and especially for youth:

Many of my friends benefit from our participation in the European Union. They travel and so on, and this is related just to the European Union. Or some... Those who begin

working can make use of grants from the Union, or... When my friends organize various events they also get funds from the Union. [6]

Within the complex of identities I am referring to, a strict separation between the Church and the State is postulated:

For me, religion is very personal thing. And it's very important in my life, and it informs my life choices, it determines how I perceive the world, how I interpret it, and so on. But it has nothing to do with my choices in the area of state or policy. This is even more so, since I think the essence of democracy is free choice. [...] And it can't be combined with religious commandments, because in the area of religion, there is no place for compromises. Here, you are hot or cold, and being in between doesn't make any sense. So, religion shouldn't be mixed with politics. Politics should be just a domain for compromises and free choice. [8]

Yeah, I think religion and belief shouldn't be interspersed with politics. Of course, we should have a possibility to express our opinion, to say, for instance, abortion is bad thing, or in-vitro fertilization is bad, because they effect with some psychical changes, for example, they are bad for women. We should explain how bad such things might be for the persons involved, instead of authoritatively condemn them. I think such a standpoint should be loudly expressed by Church hierarchs, but they should not insist on changes in the law, or influence the legislation. [3]

Even if the religious belief and related morality are considered as values to be proselytized, the employment of state power is not taken into account. On the personal level, the realm of belief and the realm of political convictions are seen as separate constituents of an identity. That is why the "separated belief model" seems to be an appropriate label for the model discussed here.

It needs to be highlighted that within this model, the interest in political issues, liberal views on Church-State relations, and the feeling of belonging to pan-national, European society are by no means contradictory to the strong sense of being not only the citizen of Poland, but also Polish, or to the attachment to the Polish national tradition. The self-characteristics related to the nation are seen as closely related to the patriotic, not hued by any kind of nationalism, attitude:

I'm aware of not drifting in the vacuum, I know I have the roots. For me, occurrences such as the Warsaw Rising or the Solidarity movement in which my parents participated... These are very important things which drive my perception of the world. [...] For me, the Polish national tradition is just wonderful. [8]

I don't find the attachment to the national tradition as something similar to nationalism. It's related to patriotism, and the patriotism is different thing. I think I'm much attached to national holidays, because I've been brought up in this country, etcetera, etcetera. The national tradition is very important for me. I'm moved with the anthem, and *Bogurodzica* [Polish medieval song addressing the Mother of God, considered as the first Polish anthem – DH] is very important for me, and historical roots are very important, too. And I'm proud of Poles who are successful in various areas. I just feel I'm Polish, therefore,

the tradition is very important for me, and so is the fact that I'm enrooted in being a Polish, a member of the nation. [6]

In some cases, both identities related to the nation – Polish and supporter of the Polish national tradition – are considered not as something top-down given, but in a reflexive mode, as something personally constructed. Such an approach has been acutely expressed in the following statement:

Being Polish is something I've built within myself. [...] I've just looked for it since I began to realize my settlement, the place where I live was important for me, and also... One of my grandfathers was an Oflag prisoner, the other grandfather was somewhere else, and my family told me much about it. And the whole history of my family was deeply enrooted in Polish things. So I began to look for it, to think what is Polish, what is mine, what derives from what... and so it was. [9]

The outlook current embodied by the model I have just presented is easy to detect while analyzing interviews. However, as statistics suggest, it has not managed to exert a decidedly dominant impact on the group studied by me. It has failed, for example, with the reference to individualistic values embodied in the statement "I'm a master of my own destiny", and it has not much succeeded with the promotion of the European identity. It seems there is another model that prevails, and I am going to address it in the remaining part of my paper.

Public belief model

Within the second identity model, the sense of identification with the nation does not much differ from the one described with the reference to the "separated belief" model. It draws on the sense of belonging to the cultural and language tradition shaped by the history. An interviewee says:

I'm attached to the country, to the tradition. I can't imagine I could live somewhere else. I highly value family values, family bonds, and I think, they are deeply enrooted here, in our culture. [2]

As mentioned before, the national identity is perceived as separate and independent from the religious identity by members of the group I studied. However, people linked to (post)university chaplaincies do not consider their religiosity as entirely private viewpoint or practice, or something to be exercised only within specialized communities of deeply engaged believers. The religiosity is not considered as such even within the "separated belief" model. Within the "public belief" model I am addressing here, the situation is quite the opposite: the religious realm is rather expected to interweave politics, at least in the area of legislation. The idea of an entirely secular state is rejected, "because if we are Christian, we cannot separate

our convictions from another things” – as concludes one of my interviewees, and another adds:

In my opinion, the Church should be allowed to influence the state legislation, yeah, definitely. The Church is universal, so it's just meant to contribute to the good of the whole society. And I think, for example, not to kill the [unborn] children is exactly such a common good. [1]

Apart from abortion, also homosexual marriages and euthanasia are listed as issues publicly debated and requiring legal bans: “Homosexual marriages are curiosity. I just don't understand, why a bicycle should be called a car from today on” [10].

Within the radical version of the “public belief” model, the realms of religion, nation and politics are strived for being much interconnected and much visible in the public sphere. The authorities publicly participating in church celebrations during religious feasts are welcomed, and national holidays celebrated in churches are appreciated:

To celebrate masses during national holidays is a great idea, because it is the God whom we address many thanks for being the liberated country. I mean, it is completely natural we go to the most important person with the second most important thing in our life. [1]

Although it cannot be denied the radical current does exist within the “public belief” model, it needs to be strongly emphasized that the moderate version of this model is put forward. Namely, there is an expectation that the Church teachings will be respected by the law, but at the same time, public manifestations of the attachment to religious values are rather condemned:

Just shortly: abortion – no, euthanasia – no, and the marriage is a sacrament between a woman and a man. This is what I think.

- And do you think this should be protected by the law?

Definitely yes. But to achieve this, it's not necessary that politicians make a display of images of the Mother of God. Especially since such manifestations often drift towards xenophobia in our country, towards attempts to exclude some from the society. I can't find any reasons for excluding anyone. [4]

Thus, my interviewees are against the idea of entirely secular state but at the same time, they much distance themselves from any extremisms based on the deep interweavement of religious values with national ones. In fact, all persons I interviewed have underlined their disapproval with possible xenophobic component inscribed in attitudes which highly value both religion and nation. Since they are aware they themselves are much attached to their religious and national identities, and approve the impact of religious values on legislation, they, so to say, feel obliged to mark they are far from any intolerant views. In many cases this exactly was the reason for the withdrawal of the “personal attached to the Polish national

tradition” characteristic from the set of identities presented to them – they perceived the description as explicitly alluding to the language used by right-wing politicians and other public discourse partakers associated with the xenophobic position:

A person attached to the national tradition – I’ve thrown it away with a disgust. Because I associate it with the League of Polish Families [right-wing political party considered as xenophobic – DH]. [9]

I don’t know what was your intention to put the “person attached to the Polish national tradition” into the set of characteristics to be chosen. Do you consider the national worldview as xenophobic? Or you just perceive it as a respect... Because I perceive it as a respectful attitude, far from any xenophobic connotations... [...] My first impulse was to choose this description, but then I realized it might be considered as an attitude I’m very far from. [10]

This strategy explains what statistics reveal: that the members of the group I studied are slightly less likely to choose the “person attached to the Polish national tradition” description as an apt identity for themselves than the rest of the Polish high educated youth. And if they choose it – they place it high in the ranking of personally important characteristics. It seems, in fact, they do feel attached to the Polish national tradition, but when asked they tend to reject this self-description in order to highlight they do not subscribe to nationalistic outlook. And those who do not afraid to be misunderstood by selecting such an identity locate it high, since they either have nothing against the wide promotion of national values (radical version of the “public belief” model), or they just unanimously perceive the attachment to the Polish national tradition as something having much to do with patriotism, but little to do with nationalism (what is the domain of the “separated belief” identity model, but can also be found within the model I am describing here). My interviewees additionally confirm their reluctance of extremisms by their support for the democracy and their disapproval with the “supporter of strong-arm government” self-description.

The very interesting thing within the “public belief” model is how the European identity is perceived and either acknowledged or rejected. Here, the attitude towards Europe is ambiguous. On the one hand, Europe is disapproved for its promotion of secular values and its excessive permissiveness in the realm of morality, leading to undesired legal solutions which “just don’t make any sense” (as summed up by one of my interviewees [9]), such as the endorsement of abortion or homosexual marriages. Members of (post)university chaplaincies are rather not willing to identify themselves with the Europe understood in such a way. While explicating the rejection of the “European” self-description, an interviewee says:

I’m not much familiar with Europe. Besides, I’d rather say it is the Judeo-Christian culture I subscribe to. But the secularized Europe – I’m just not familiar with it. [9]

On the other hand, however, if the European identity is approved, this is exactly because of the sense of belonging to the Judeo-Christian tradition seen as formative for Europe. On that occasion, bitter words are addressed to those perceived as denying their religious roots, especially French people:

I feel outraged with some European nations, and especially with the French people. And why? Because I just can't understand how it's happened that the country proud of Chlodwig and Saint Gertrude has suddenly forgotten its roots. I'm just irritated with it. I don't say they all should attend the church. I do understand they don't need to find the Church attractive. But the way they treat it... As if they had never, throughout the whole history, had anything to do with it. And I just can't understand it. And I must admit, I'm personally irritated with it – as a believer, and as a European. It makes me seek. 'Cause this is our shared culture. And they would have damn all instead of tourists, if they hadn't cathedrals, or so many sacred objects. Wouldn't they? [...] Christianity is a base for Europe, it's its main source, its root. [4]

Perhaps there is a potential among the group studied by me to replace the figure of a Polish-Catholic seen as inadequate and outdated with the new cluster of a European-Christian. The new figure would refer to the sense of strong interrelation between two identities, but not necessarily would it stand for overtly xenophobic attitudes towards non-Christian residents of Europe. Be that as it may, it seems the potential cannot be fully used because of an evident tendency to perceive Europe as promoting secular values, including difficult to accept legislation. As statistics show, my respondents are more likely to reject the European identity than their Polish age and education level counterparts. It seems however, if the European identity is denied, it is not because of any kind of prejudices towards other European nations, but rather because of a reserve towards European legal solutions. By no means is this reserve informed by the tendency to perceive Europe as a threat to what is Catholic and also Polish (the tendency much visible among supporters of Polish right-wing parties, especially the League of Polish Families disapproved by my interviewees), but it is rather driven by the political orientation, by the conviction that the state legislation and policy should be influenced by Christian values.

The last question to be commented is the fact that members of the group I studied are not likely to perceive themselves as "Polish citizens". I must admit, I have not found a satisfactory explanation for this. Interviewees themselves suggest they are not much attached to the state because they are dissatisfied with the political situation in Poland: they are far from any left-wing ideas and they much disapprove the right-wing parties, either for their overtly xenophobic predilections, or for their excessive willingness to make a display of religious symbols. However, if we take into account statistics, it appears participants of

(post)university chaplaincies are not much more reluctant to support politicians or parties than their Polish age and education level counterparts. At the same time, the disparity between the sense of identification with the “citizen of Poland” self-description in the compared groups is huge. Perhaps members of the group I studied more unambiguously feel they are Polish in terms of the sense of belonging to the Polish cultural tradition, and this identity, so to say, eclipses their Polish civic identity. But even if it is so, the process of disavowing their civil identity in favour of their purely national identity should be better explained. This might be the task for further investigations.

List of interviewees

(sex, age, date of interview)

- 1 – female, 21 years old, 29.03.2008.
- 2 – male, 30 years old, 31.03.2008.
- 3 – female, 28 years old, 26.03.2008.
- 4 – female, 33 years old, 27.03.2008.
- 5 – female, 31 years old, 21.03.2008.
- 6 – male, 26 years old, 02.04.2008.
- 7 – female, 28 years old, 25.03.2008.
- 8 – female, 25 years old, 04.04.2008.
- 9 – female, 33 years old, 25.03.2008.
- 10 – female, 31 years old, 26.03.2008.
- 11 – female, 31 years old, 13.03.2008.

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