

Metamorphoses of Religion and Spirituality in Central and Eastern Europe

Edited by
Sławomir H. Zaręba,
Maria Sroczyńska,
Roberto Cipriani,
Marcin Choczyński,
and Wojciech Klimski

First published 2022
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2022 selection and editorial matter, Sławomir H. Zaręba, Maria Sroczyńska, Roberto Cipriani, Marcin Choczyński, and Wojciech Klimski; individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Sławomir H. Zaręba, Maria Sroczyńska, Roberto Cipriani, Marcin Choczyński, and Wojciech Klimski to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-1-032-19745-6 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-22302-5 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-27199-4 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003271994

Typeset in Sabon
by MPS Limited, Dehradun

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	viii
<i>List of contributors</i>	x
Transmutation of spiritual and religious mentality: introduction	1
SŁAWOMIR H. ZARĘBA, MARIA SROCZYŃSKA, ROBERTO CIPRIANI, MARCIN CHOCZYŃSKI, AND WOJCIECH KLIMSKI	
PART I	
The metatoretical dimension of social and religious metamorphoses	15
1 Cultural sociology of religion in the perspective of comparative religion	17
ANDRZEJ WÓJTOWICZ	
2 The concept of public religion in the context of the development of the sociology of religion: the perspective of Central and Eastern Europe	33
IRENA BOROWIK	
3 Spirituality vs. religiosity as impetus to the discussion on the change factors in the contemporary sociology of religion	46
SŁAWOMIR H. ZARĘBA	
4 Modern directions of development of religion and spirituality: an attempt at systematisation	55
AGNIESZKA ZDUNIAK	

5	New spirituality as a social and cultural megatrend JANUSZ MARIAŃSKI	66
6	Metamorphoses of religiosity in Poland: post-modern spirituality or religious morality? HALINA MIELICKA-PAWŁOWSKA	77
7	“The Miracle of Mindfulness”: between the discovery of the sacred in everyday life and secularization of the practice of meditation ANDRZEJ KASPEREK	90
PART II		
	Transformations of religiosity and spirituality in a society at risk – an attempt at diagnosis	103
8	Religiosity of the Polish intelligentsia at the beginning of the twenty-first century WOJCIECH KLIMSKI	105
9	The sacred and the young: theoretical and empirical inspirations MARIA SROCZYŃSKA	129
10	The spectre of secularisation: against equating church indifference with religious indifference EGON SPIEGEL	143
11	Spiritual values of university students in contemporary Ukrainian society: a sociological discourse YURIY PACHKOVSKYY	159
12	Contemporary religiosity in practice: experiencing religion STELLA GROTOWSKA	175
13	Religious experience as a dimension of religiosity: Polish youth in the world of experience REMIGIUSZ SZAUER	188
14	The attitude towards Jehovah’s Witnesses in Poland in the light of innovation and religious selectivity MARCIN CHOCZYŃSKI	202

15	From orality to the Internet: transformations of religious communication in Polish miraculous communities	217
	MACIEJ KRZYWOSZ	
16	A scapegoat or a modern devil? The analysis of Catholic press discourse on “gender” and “genderists” (on the examples of “Niedziela” and “Tygodnik Powszechny” weeklies)	231
	BARBARA OBER-DOMAGALSKA	
17	#witchesofinstagram: How does social media spread spirituality, witchcraft, and pagan movements?	248
	MARTA R. JABŁOŃSKA	
	<i>Index</i>	265

NOTE: This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published in "Metamorphoses of Religion and Spirituality in Central and Eastern Europe", Routledge 2022, p. 217-230.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons BY-NC-ND.

Maciej Krzywosz

From orality to the Internet: transformations of religious communication in Polish miraculous communities

Introduction – characteristics of Polish miraculous religiosity

Until the 1980s, it seemed that, with scientific progress, phenomena referred to as miracles would cease to happen and eventually disappear from modern societies, together with religion. Social sciences were dominated by the secularisation paradigm (Davie, 2007, pp. 46–66), assuming the twilight of religion and the constant disenchantment of the world. However, with the crisis of the concept of modernity, it is increasingly undermined (Stark, 1999b). Nowadays, sociologists of religion speak increasingly less about the end of religion and more often about deprivatisation (Casanova, 1994) or desecularisation (Berger, 1999).

Miraculous phenomena are still a very interesting component of religious life, especially of popular Catholicism understood as an ordinary, everyday religiosity that can be seen, felt, and heard (Altermatt, 1989). These events include commonly understood miracles, such as weeping icons, revelations of Mary and Jesus (known as Marian apparitions and Christophanies), and inexplicable atmospheric phenomena, such as the Miracle of the Sun in Fatima in 1917. Social sciences were more critical of these events than of religion as such. They were often treated as medieval relics, and people experiencing them were perceived as having psychopathological problems (Stark, 1999a, p. 287).

Due to the strong ideologisation of social sciences, there was hardly any research based on the social approach to miracles in post-war Poland. With the development of a socialist society, they were supposed to naturally stop arousing the interest of modern masses liberated from "religious superstitions". Few texts which tried to analyse miraculous phenomena using sociological or anthropological categories were censored and could not be published in the Polish People's Republic (Hemka & Olędzki, 1990, p. 14, note 1). Only after the political transformation in 1989, the scientific study of miracles and their cultural and social significance was initiated (Czachowski, 2003; Zieliński, 2004; Krzywosz, 2016a), consciously ignoring the question of their theological truthfulness.

Miraculous religiosity has certain characteristics (Krzywosz, 2007, pp. 255–257). First of all, it focuses on supernatural phenomena perceived as direct divine interventions. People involved in miraculous religiosity look for supernaturality and miracularity devoid of everyday and commonplace character. However, these phenomena are empirical in nature. For example, thousands of people witnessed the Miracle of the Sun or weeping icons. Despite strong emotions, these events are often free from grandeur and highness. This is due to the belief that miracles are an integral part of reality in spite of their unusualness. They are not perceived as a violation of scientifically established natural laws, which is how theology saw it before. They are unusual, yet not unfamiliar.

However, not every unusual event is a miracle. According to Hemka and Olędzki, an event can become a miracle if it complies with the traditional conceptual system (Hemka & Olędzki, 1990, p. 9). Flying saucers or crop circles will not become miracles because they are inconsistent with the Polish religious culture. Moreover, Polish miraculous religiosity cannot be attributed solely to folk or peasant religiosity. As a result of the post-war processes of urbanisation, industrialisation, and mass migration to cities, this religiosity is present in different social strata and constitutes an important element of modern Catholicism (Królikowska, 2016). The question of whether or not a miracle is approved by the Catholic Church is not crucial for miraculous communities. It can be assumed that miraculous religiosity is clearly non-institutional. However, given the influence of the Catholic Church on the entire Polish religious life, believers in miracles hope that a religious institution will recognise them in a certain form.

This chapter discusses how the religious communication of the Polish miraculous communities in post-war Poland has evolved. Until the end of the 20th century, the oral form prevailed, whereas recent decades have been affected by the influence of new media, especially the Internet. The traditions of several sociological subdisciplines, including historical sociology, the sociology of religion, and the sociology of the media, are taken into account in this chapter.

Miraculous phenomena in post-war Poland in the media context

After the Second World War, Poland became a country dependent on the Soviet Union and had to put into practice the principles of atheist communist ideology. As a result, the new state quite quickly started to fight against religious life and its institutions. On the other hand, despite the changes initiated by the communist authorities, religion still played a significant social role in Poland. Folk religiosity with a strong Marian cult was the primary model of religious life. Miraculous events have constituted, and still constitute, an integral part of this tradition (Krzywosz, 2016b).

The miracle of Lublin in 1949

The miracle in the Lublin Cathedral was the first of the socially significant miraculous phenomena in the Polish People's Republic. On 3 July 1949, the copy of the icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa started to leak a dark substance interpreted by many as Mary's tears (Ziółek & Przytuła, 1999). Father Malec, who witnessed the events, described his emotions in the following way:

I looked at the image and noticed dark drops moving from the right eye, flowing down the cheek towards the Swedish scars. It was powerful how people were in ecstasy, moaning, and crying, so I also got down on my knees, together with others, and started to cry with great emotion. More and more people gathered and an increasingly celebratory mood took hold of the place. People were praying and calling out: "Holy Mother, you are crying." I could hear people moaning, weeping, and calling (...). People were crying and screaming out loud. The rapture was so great that no one would be able to outshout anyone.

(Ziółek & Przytuła, 1999, pp. 135–136)

The news about the weeping icon quickly spread among the inhabitants of Lublin and reached other regions of the country. Thousands of pilgrims began to come to the city. The local bishop Piotr Kałwa appointed a commission to explain this phenomenon. His pastoral letter of 6 July 1949 specifying its findings reads as follows:

The results of the Commission's work to date do not constitute the basis for the assumption that the phenomena which took place in our Lublin cathedral were miraculous and supernatural (...) no such signs have been found. Therefore, it is even more advisable to stay calm and do not disturb the balance of mind.

(Ziółek & Przytuła, 1999, p. 34)

The letter did not influence the behaviour of believers. The faithful constantly came to Lublin *en masse*. At the time of increased persecution of the Church and increasingly harsh Stalinist terror, Crying Mary was a clear supernatural sign for them. The Communist authorities interpreted the miracle of Lublin as an intentional political action of the Church in the struggle to preserve the religious awareness of the Poles. They quickly took steps to eradicate it.

The tragedy that occurred in front of the cathedral on 13 July was to their advantage. The panic-stricken crowd crushed a young girl to death and severely hurt several other people. This gave the authorities an excuse to take prosecutorial action against the Lublin clergy and to organise anti-Church

propaganda rallies. Seeing what actions the authorities are prepared to resort to, the Church decided to calm the public mood. In August, the cathedral was temporarily closed. When it was reopened on 12 August 1949, the liquid previously seen in the image disappeared. The miracle of Lublin was dissolved.

From the outset, the Communist authorities accused the Church of deliberate promotion and dissemination of information about the miracle. However, the analysis of published sources completely refutes the conviction of the authorities. The information on the miracle was primarily disseminated by laypeople. They were overwhelmed by the unusualness, as described by Father Malec. Speech was the main medium used to convey information. As a result, oral communication prevailed. This was due to at least three reasons. Firstly, the percentage of illiterate people in Poland after World War II was still high. According to the data obtained in 1950, 1,131,000 people (5.8% of the Polish population aged over 10 years of age) were illiterate, of which 885,000 people were rural residents (Landy-Tołwińska, 1961, pp. 94, 104). In the then Lubelskie Province, the percentage of illiterate people was even higher, amounting to 9.8% (Landy-Tołwińska, 1961, p. 101). Secondly, technological development was slow. Printing and magazine reproduction, especially after the war, were still very limited. Thirdly, even if there were technical possibilities, rewriting and duplication of texts about the miracle of Lublin, for example, on carbon paper, it was contrary to the repressive law and subject to many years of imprisonment. The prison sentence was imposed on Janina E. Markiewicz, who had drawn up a letter calling on the authorities not to interfere in religious matters and hung copies in the streets of Lublin. She was arrested by the secret police and sentenced to 6 years in prison (Ziółek & Przytuła, 1999, pp. 217–229).

Oral communication reveals strong emotions, high credibility, empathy, and commitment (Ong & Hartley, 2012, pp. 45–46). Witness accounts of the miracle of Lublin confirm this thesis:

When I went to the cathedral for Sunday Vespers, I saw people behaving strangely in front of the church. They were excited. Some of them cried. I asked: "What happened?" They answered my question with a question: "Don't you know that Our Lady of Częstochowa is crying bloody tears in the cathedral?" Moved by this news, I went to the church.

(Ziółek & Przytuła, 1999, p. 248)

Other people also reacted quickly to oral information about the miracle. Bolesława Paradowska, an apprentice in a restaurant, described that day in the following way: "Our Lady's face was changed. It was simply alive. That's the impression I had. That's how I remember it today (...). It was also felt in the atmosphere. People cried, sang, and prayed loudly" (Ziółek & Przytuła, 1999, p. 25). Undoubtedly, the atmosphere surrounding people

in the cathedral, influenced their experiences and emotions, and the subsequent verbal messages about the miracle. Their subsequent declarations about the truthfulness of the miracle sounded highly credible. The behaviour of the people who believed in what the witnesses said or personally experienced the miracle of Lublin could convince others. A woman arrested as a Home Army soldier learned about the miracle from a prison officer: “At five o’clock in the morning, a crying prison officer opened the door to the cell. We asked her why she was crying. ‘Our Lady is crying in the cathedral. That’s why I am crying,’ she replied” (Sołtysiak, 1992, p. 122).

The credibility of the personal, emotional message translated into the rapid dissemination of information about the weeping image, even among holidaymakers who learned the miracle from their relatives. Next, they shared this information with their families coming from different parts of Poland (Ziółek & Przytuła, 1999, pp. 26–27). The information spread so quickly that the communist authorities suspected the organised activities of the clergy. The accusations had to be answered by Bishop Zdzisław Goliński, who said: “News of actual or imaginary extraordinary phenomena spread extremely quickly (...). The first news was spread orally by travellers” (Ziółek & Przytuła, 1999, p. 39).

The published materials, i.e. official and personal documents, suggest that the use of media other than the spoken language to promote the miracle of Lublin was rare. Literate people disseminated this information by letter. Their message could also be strongly emotional. The excerpt from a letter of 7 July 1949 reads as follows:

On Sunday, 3rd of this month (...), a drop of blood began to flow from above the eye. The face of the Blessed Virgin was covered with more and more new bloody traces, and tears shine in her left eye to this day (...). Mum, do you understand the enormity of the grace that has flowed into Lublin and us, its inhabitants? Mum, it’s been already three times that I’ve seen it for myself, and so has Dad. Every day, the crowds of pilgrims come here day and night; more and more people.

(Błasińska, 2019, pp. 14–15)

However, a written religious message probably did not have the same effect on the recipients as a verbal message. This was particularly because this type of communication left trace evidence that could have fallen into the hands of the secret police. Therefore, written communication was probably not as significant as verbal (Ziółek & Przytuła, 1999, pp. 68–69). There were also attempts to use typescript to promote the miracle of Lublin, for example, “Nie rzucim Chryste świątyń twych” [Christ, I Will Not Leave Your Temples], a poem of 1949, which was transcribed in 12 copies. However, it was confiscated by the secret police and its author was sentenced to 1.5 years in prison (Ziółek & Przytuła, 1999, p. 70). The title is a remake of “Rota” [The Oath] by Maria Konopnicka, a well-known

patriotic song. Therefore, even though it was typewritten, it seems that it should be treated as a manifestation of traditional oral culture.

Marian apparition in Zabłudów in 1965

With the political thaw of 1956 and the mitigation of communist terror, miraculous phenomena began to reappear in the public space. The miracle of Zabłudów in 1965 was the most significant miracle at that time (Krzywosz, 2016a). On 13 May, Jadwiga Jakubowska, a 14-year-old girl, experienced the apparition of the Virgin Mary in a meadow near Zabłudów. She called for prayer and conversion, and promised Jadwiga that her sick mother would recover. At first, her parents did not believe her, but the next day, her mother felt better and was the first to believe her daughter. Another Marian apparition took place on Sunday, 23 May. On that day, about 50 people gathered in the meadow. Our Lady appeared to the girl once again and promised to appear in a week's time, 30 May. Other people did not see Our Lady but clearly felt her presence and witnessed the Miracle of the Sun. The fact that a great number of people experienced it encouraged the efforts to consider the apparition true. In addition, the information about the event started to spread extremely fast. The news of the miracle quickly spread outside the town and transmitted from mouth to mouth began to transform into a myth about a bedridden mother, her holy daughter and miraculous healing.

In the afternoon of May 30, thousands of people, mainly from Podlasie, gathered in the meadow to participate in the promised revelation. In the vicinity, the communist authorities deployed large troops of the Motorised Reserves of the Citizens' Militia (ZOMO) which attacked civilians (Krzywosz, 2022, p. 155). They were equipped with batons, grenades, tear gas, and firearms. People paid them back, throwing stones at militia vehicles. Since pilgrims outnumbered the ZOMO troops and the losses suffered were significant, the troops withdrew after 6 p.m. On that day, Jadwiga Jakubowska was also in the meadow and experienced a private revelation. However, it seems that the victory over the large militia forces took on a symbolic meaning (defend of revealing Mary against impious communism) and was perceived by the pilgrims as another miracle.

In June and July, pilgrims from Podlasie and also other places of Poland arrived at Zabłudów. The news of miraculous healings attracted the sick and the unhappy. However, due to the lack of new Marian apparitions, the critical attitude of the clergy towards them and, above all, the repressions of the communist authorities who imposed a ban on visiting the place of the apparition, the pilgrim movement ceased to exist. The miracle of Zabłudów spread using the same means of communication as in the case of the miracle of Lublin. However, how quickly the information was shared is quite interesting. At first, only the closest family of Jadwiga believed in the apparition. Other inhabitants of Zabłudów were sceptical. The information about the apparition spread outside the village only after the apparition of

23 May during which some people experienced the presence of Our Lady. It reached Białystok, the capital of the province, a place to which many inhabitants of Zabłudów commuted to work every day. The news of the apparition was also spread in the villages and towns of the Białystok region by inhabitants of other parts of Podlasie. The subject was often discussed on local trains and buses. The events which took place on 30 May, i.e. the victorious confrontation with the ZOMO troops, spread the miracle throughout Poland.

This shows that the miracle of Zabłudów was dominated by direct oral communication, sometimes through the developing telephone network and letters, often confiscated by the secret police. A visual message was also used. At the place of the apparition, photographs of the Zabłudów meadow were sold along with the poem "Dzieweczka z miasteczka" [A Girl from the Town] transcribed many times. The text was written by Emilia Michałowska in June 1965. After the text was distributed, she was arrested for 3 weeks. Although the poem, reproduced using carbon paper, was repeatedly rewritten by pilgrims, it took the form of a song. Therefore, it can be considered as a manifestation of the traditional oral culture.

The meadow was a primary source of dissemination of information about the Marian apparition. In June and at the beginning of July, pilgrims visited this place without limitations and exchanged information about miraculous events. They sang the song "Dzieweczka z miasteczka" together and expected more miracles. There is no doubt that the atmosphere in this place had an impact on the religious experience and thus on the credibility of the subsequent messages about miracles. In addition, the strong dominance of the verbal religious communication consolidated the Zabłudów Miraculous Movement; a social movement intended to prepare for new Marian apparitions (Krzywosz, 2016a, pp. 319–378). As noted by Ong, "Primary orality fosters personality structures that in certain ways are more communal and externalized (...). Oral communication unites people in groups" (Ong and Hartley, 2012, p. 68).

Jadwiga's parents, Maria Jakubowska and Zygmunt Jakubowski, played a significant role in disseminating information. The very presence of Maria Jakubowska, who looked healthy and thus healed, was a proof for the truthfulness of the Marian apparition and her statements about it. In the secret police archive, a stenographic record of Jakubowska's conversation with the pilgrims survived:

Mother said: "I was sick and now I feel better, but I suffer from people." People gathered called out: "You should be proud of your daughter." The question was asked: "How long have you been ill, and what have you suffered from?" The mother answered: "10 years from a few diseases and dehydration. I visited a lot of doctors, but they couldn't help me. And now it's gone. I wish everyone good health like me."

(AIPN Bi 0037/46, 1965, p. 314)

Information about the miracle was also disseminated by letter, similarly to the miracle of Lublin. Note, however, that the letter could have been enriched with other religious objects in this case. There was at least one letter accompanied by a “plant stem from a bunch that was held by a girl during the apparition” (AIPN Bi 0037/43, 1965, p. 228).

Oława apparitions between 1983 and 2002

Events in Oława were the most important revelations in the 1980s that attracted tens of thousands of pilgrims (Zieliński, 2004). On 8 June 1983, Our Lady appeared to Kazimierz Domański in the allotment garden and said: “I have healed you. You will heal the sick” (Pawlak & Moszkowski, 1997, p. 35). On 4 October, she appeared again and said that: “Whoever comes to this place will receive the grace of healing and God’s blessing, but only if they have strong faith” (Pawlak & Moszkowski, 1997, p. 35). From that moment on, he began to heal people, and many pilgrims from all over the country came to Oława. The communist authorities decided to take repressive measures. Militiamen checked the identity of people coming to Oława. Strong spotlights were directed at those who prayed at night and fines were often imposed. However, these measures were not effective. Domański was the only hope for the terminally ill and the actions of the authorities could not stop them. The faithful continued to make pilgrimages to Oława.

From the very beginning, the Catholic Church hierarchy was very sceptical of the activities of the visionary. On 20 January 1986, a special statement of the Episcopate Press Office was published:

The investigation conducted by the competent church authorities revealed that there are no grounds for treating these alleged apparitions [in Oława] as supernatural phenomena. Therefore, the bishops ask the secular and monastic clergy and the faithful to stop gathering in Oława and supporting these alleged apparitions.

(Pindel, 1998, pp. 160–161)

Although the communist authorities and the Church fought against the apparitions, Domański managed to survive that period. After the political transformation, the future of the apparitions was not compromised. In the 1980s, the communist authorities were Domański’s main opponent. After the transformation, the local bishop Henryk Gulbinowicz was the one who was most critical of the apparitions. In 1999, he imposed church penalties on Domański and the people associated with him. The popularity of Oława among pilgrims started to decline, and the death of Domański in 2002 accelerated this process. In 2005, the shrine built by the visionary was handed over to the Catholic Church.

Initially, the Oława apparitions were mostly communicated in a traditional oral way. However, very soon after that, the believers in miracle

started to use printing and audio transmission. In the 1980s, the text of the first 35 apparitions was reproduced and unofficially published in a brochure entitled “Niebieska Królowa Pokoju apeluje z Oławy do Polski i świata” [The Blue Queen of Peace Appeals from Oława to Poland and the World]. As a novelty, tape cassettes were used for a short time, with the recorded voice of 21-year-old Krystyna speaking as Mary (Kamiński, 2018). They could be purchased in the area of allotment gardens, which is where Domański operated, and this seems to be an example of secondary orality (Ong & Hartley, 2012, pp. 133–135).

In the 1990s, multipage, richly illustrated books started to be published with the revelation messages received by the visionary. This was possible due to the greater availability of printing techniques and the abolition of censorship. The information about revelation could be freely disseminated. These improvements were important for several reasons. First of all, Polish miraculous communities were introduced into the “Gutenberg Galaxy”, the typographic culture. Secondly, the messages received by the visionaries increased in number and were extended. Thirdly, the messages could be translated into foreign languages (Speckbacher, 1990) and diffused across the world (Laurentin, 1995).

In the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s, a great number of visionaries appeared. Following Domański and his supporters, they started to publish their revelations in print. This includes the publications of Stefan Ślipek from Ruda (Ślipek, no data available) and Krzysztof Czarnota from Okonin (*Orędzie miłości*, 1996).

The Internet as a communication tool of contemporary miraculous communities

In the 21st century, the digital revolution and the development of the Internet reached miraculous communities. It can be concluded that they also transitioned from oral and written culture to electronic and digital forms (Apolito, 2005). Using the typology developed for studying religion online (Young, 2004, pp. 93–94), it seems reasonable to analytically divide Polish miraculous communities into two types in terms of their online activity. The first category includes Internet websites that provide information about miraculous events (religion online). The second group encompasses interactive forms designed to build and maintain a kind of community (online religion).

The former includes websites presenting the famous Eucharistic miracles of Sokółka¹ (2008) and Legnica² (2013). The analysis of the parish websites content shows that they are strictly for information purposes. There are no message boards or spaces intended for sharing information on the graces received. Books of miracles, widely used in various Catholic shrines (Cekiera, 2016), still exist as manuscripts, i.e. belong to the chirographic culture. The Sokółka and Legnica websites are slightly differ from each other in that the Legnica website enables the user to upload prayer intentions by filling in a

special form. This may result from the intention to bring a miracle closer to the community of Internet users. However, the prayer intentions are hidden, and it is not possible to pray “together”, which is what other religious websites offer.

The websites devoted to miracles or revelations that took place in the Polish People’s Republic were, and still are, made available for information purposes. The website which promoted the Oława apparitions, with excerpts of Domański’s messages and a photo gallery, finally disappeared in 2018³. This strongly suggests that Oława apparitions are no longer present in Polish religious life. The website of Katarzyna Szymon (1907–1986), a well-known Silesian visionary and stigmatist, similar to the non-existent Domański’s website yet much more extended, is still in operation⁴; in 2016 was the last time it was updated. However, it seems that the sustainment and promotion of the cult of Szymon will continue. There are still people who try to initiate her beatification process. Note that the creators of the website, run in 15 languages, seek to popularise the visionary internationally. Szymon’s website is purely for information purposes, and its main function is to promote her cult.

The website of Legion Małych Rycerzy [Legion of Small Knights Association] founded by the visionary Zofia Grochowska (1931–2009)⁵ is updated on a regular basis. Grochowska’s visions were mainly inner in nature. However, she also had the gift of miraculous healing, which made her and the movement she founded popular. Her movement survived despite her death, an event that triggers a moment of crisis in any newly established social movement. The website contains current information about retreats, field structures and moving testimonies, which shows that it is mainly for information purposes while active participation is not possible. It seems that a space for active participation is made on the Facebook page. However, in spite of the various posts shared on a regular basis, the page is not particularly popular. There are usually no comments under the posts, and the number of followers liking the page in August 2019 amounted to 746⁶. This low activity is probably caused by the age of the association’s members; most of them are women over 50 years old (Łubińska, 2006, p. 404).

From the beginning of the activity, the founder sought to receive support from the Church and obtain formal acceptance of the movement. Therefore, the association’s website does not publish any information about contemporary, controversial revelations or miracles that could lead to tensions in this respect. However, an external link leads to a website with information about various miracles and revelations, including those firmly rejected by the Catholic Church in Poland⁷. This includes the Oława apparitions discussed above and the activities of the suspended Father Natanek. The content posted on the website includes multimedia files, e.g. audio recordings of the revelations of Katarzyna Szymon or Zofia Grochowska. However, the website precludes active participation and commenting on the files posted. This means that it is for information purposes.

The website with a meaningful name “in defence of faith and tradition” is the only website partly devoted to contemporary miraculous phenomena indirectly associated with the Church⁸. It takes the form of a blog, which means that commenting on the posts is, in principle, possible. It mainly promotes the concept of Father Adam Skwarczyński, who preaches the imminent Second Coming of Christ, Medjugorje messages, and other private revelations. It also contains information about miracles attributed to Padre Pio and Saint Charbel Makhlouf, the latter increasingly popular in Poland. The website enables adding comments and posting publicly available prayer intentions. It most resembles online religion as a place with a stirring of community in the virtual world.

Conclusions

This paper presents how the use of media means for religious purposes by communities and people engaged in miraculous religiosity has evolved over time. It centres around historical and sociological perspectives with references to the events of post-war Poland. More broadly, the phenomenon discussed here falls within the studies on Polish society’s religious culture conducted, among others, by Stefan Czarnowski (1956) and continued in the post-war period by Edward Ciupak (1973). They believe that sensualism, ritualism and sociocultural dimension are important features of folk religiosity, originally identified with the rural environment. Nowadays, the term describes everyday Catholicism of broad masses of people; it has no folk connotations and is not marginal (Sroczyńska, 2000, pp. 253–270).

The first socially important miracle in the Polish People’s Republic took place in Lublin in 1949. Its believers mainly used a natural medium, i.e. oral communication and letters. Although the means used were modest, the information about the miracle spread rapidly throughout the country. This was caused by the pessimistic public mood (due to the fear of aggravation of Stalin’s terror) and the power of the message given by witnesses of the miracle. The subsequent miraculous events were still largely based on emotional oral communication, with its pros and cons, despite the increasing use of new media technologies, such as photographs and carbon paper copies. The miraculous communities adopted the typographic culture only after the Oława apparitions, dating back to the Polish People’s Republic and continued after the political transformation. Miraculous events could be widely promoted and last longer in time and people’s awareness. However, with these changes, the power of the message declined because it was transferred indirectly through print.

The presence of miraculous communities in cyberspace has certainly further consolidated the existence of miraculous events in the public consciousness. In contrast, the ease of promoting religious content has considerably weakened the power of the message (both individually and collectively) as compared to a direct verbal message evoking strong emotions through facial

expressions and gestures. This is why the Internet is usually used for information purposes and not to encourage participation. Personal experience, not mediated by any media, plays a pivotal role in the promotion of miraculous events. The electronic transmission opportunities are limited in terms of making the miraculous spirituality experiences evident. It can only be used to disseminate, in a secondary way, personal testimonies and related information. This type of communication will be still in use, albeit as a secondary tool or service, inferior to direct religious experiences in the real world.

Notes

- 1 www.sokolka.archibial.pl/wydarzenie_eucharystyczne (retrieved on May 20, 2019).
- 2 www.jacek-legnica-sanktuarium.pl/info/wydarzenie-eucharystyczne (retrieved on May 20, 2019).
- 3 https://web.archive.org/web/*/http://olawa.p.az.pl/ (retrieved on August 9, 2019).
- 4 www.katarzynaszymon.pl (retrieved on May 10, 2019).
- 5 www.mali-rycerze.pl (retrieved on May 9, 2019).
- 6 www.facebook.com/Rycerz1960 (retrieved on August 9, 2019).
- 7 www.prorocykatolik.pl (retrieved on August 9, 2019).
- 8 <https://wobroniewiarytradycji.wordpress.com> (retrieved on May 8, 2019).

References

- Altermatt U., *Katholizismus und Moderne. Zur Sozial und Mentalitätsgeschichte der Schweizer Katholiken im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1989.
- Apolito P., *The Internet and the Madonna: Religious Visionary Experience on the Web*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Berger P.L., *The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview*, in: P.L. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Washington D.C.: Grand Rapids, Mich: Ethics and Public Policy Center; W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., pp. 1–18, 1999.
- Błasińska M., *Cud: W 1949 r. Lublin stał się Częstochową*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Lubelskiej "Gaudium", 2019.
- Casanova J., *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Cekiera R., *Zgryzoty i nadzieje: Socjologiczna analiza wpisów do ksiąg wotywnych w kaplicy św. Wendelina w Rudzicy*, Rudzica: Towarzystwo Miłośników Rudzicy, 2016.
- Ciupak E., *Katolicyzm ludowy w Polsce. Studia socjologiczne*, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1973.
- Czachowski H., *Cuda, wizjonerzy i pielgrzymi: Studium religijności mirakularnej końca XX wieku w Polsce*, Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2003.
- Czarnowski S., *Kultura religijna wiejskiego ludu polskiego*, in: S. Czarnowski, *Dzieła*, vol. 1, Warszawa: PWN, pp. 88–107, 1956.

- Davie G., *The Sociology of Religion*, Los Angeles, London: SAGE, 2007.
- Hemka A. & Olędzki J., *Wrażliwość mirakularna*, "Polska Sztuka Ludowa", 1 (44), pp. 8–14, 1990.
- Kamiński J., *Cud na działkach*, "Gazeta Oławska", 2018, June 8, retrieved on August 12, 2019 from <https://gazeta-olawa.pl/historia/77955-cud-na-dzialkach/>.
- Królikowska A.M., *Beliefs in Manifestations of the Supernatural as an Element of Contemporary Religiosity*, "Opuscula Sociologica", 4, pp. 45–61, 2016.
- Krzywosz M., *Fides quaerens miraculum. Na styku mistyka i Kościoła*, in: W. Pawluczuk (ed.), *W co wierzymy?*, Łomża: Oficyna Wydawnicza "Stopka", pp. 251–261, 2007.
- Krzywosz M., *Cuda w Polsce Ludowej: Studium przypadku prywatnego objawienia maryjnego w Zabłudowie*, Białystok: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Oddział w Białymstoku, 2016a.
- Krzywosz M., *Sociological Aspect of Miracles and Apparitions in Contemporary Poland*, "Przegląd Religioznawczy – The Religious Studies Review", 4 (262), pp. 43–56, 2016b.
- Krzywosz M., *The Secret Police and the Marian Apparition: Actions of the Polish Security Service Against the Miracle of Zabłudów in 1965*, in: J. Kapaló & K. Povedák (eds.), *The Secret Police and the Religious Underground in Communist and Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 148–175, 2022.
- Landy-Tołwińska J., *Analfabetyzm w Polsce i na świecie*, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1961.
- Laurentin R., *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd'hui: Est-ce elle? Que veut-elle dire?*, Paris: Fayard, 1995.
- Łubińska D., *Religijność kobiet ze Wspólnoty Małych Rycerzy Miłosiernego Serca Jezusowego*, in: K. Leszczyńska & A. Kościańska (eds.), *Kobiety i religie*, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, pp. 395–418, 2006.
- Ong W.J. & Hartley J., *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (30th anniversary edition; 3rd edition), London, New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Orędzie miłości*, Okonin, 1996.
- Pawlak B. & Moszkowski W., *Iskra Bożego Pokoju z Oławy*, Wrocław: Arka, 1997.
- Pindel R., *Proroctwa nie lekceważcie, wszystko badajcie: Objawienia prywatne w świetle słowa bożego*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 1998.
- Softysiak G., *Cud w Lublinie. Tropy*, "Karta", 9, pp. 121–136, 1992.
- Speckbacher F., *Botschaften an den Seher Domanski: Offenbarungen Jesu und Mariens*, St. Andrä-Wördern, Altötting: Mediatrix-Verl, 1990.
- Sroczyńska M., *Fenomen religijności ludowej w Polsce – ciągłość i przeobrażenia*, in: W. Zdaniewicz & T. Zembrzuski (eds.), *Kościół i religijność Polaków 1945–1999*, Warszawa: ISKK SAC, pp. 253–270, 2000.
- Stark R., *A Theory of Revelations*, "Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion", 2 (38), pp. 287–308, 1999a.
- Stark R., *Secularization, R.I.P.*, "Sociology of Religion", no. 3 (60), pp. 249–273, 1999b.
- Ślipek S., *Orędzia Matki Bożej z Rudy koło Sieradza. Przekazywane od 13 listopada 1985 roku do 6 stycznia 1995 roku* [no data available].
- Young G., *Reading and Praying Online: The Continuity in Religion Online and Online Religion in Internet Christianity*, in: L.L. Dawson & D.E. Cowan (eds.), *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, New York: Routledge, pp. 93–106, 2004.

- Zieliński A., *Na straży prawdziwej wiary: Zjawiska cudowne w polskim katolicyzmie ludowym*, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, 2004.
- Ziółek J. & Przytuła A., *Represje wobec uczestników wydarzeń w Katedrze Lubelskiej w 1949 roku*, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1999.

Archival sources (Institute of National Remembrance in Białystok)

- Institute of National Remembrance in Białystok, *Plany operacyjnych przedsięwzięć Służby Bezpieczeństwa i Milicji Obywatelskiej w sprawie kryptonim "Ada,"* Part II. AIPN Bi 0037/43, 1965.
- Institute of National Remembrance in Białystok, *Informacje uzyskane z Milicji Obywatelskiej.* AIPN Bi 0037/46, 1965.