

**Multifaceted Religious Identity in Poland: Experiences of Believers Distancing
Themselves from the Catholic Church**

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Abstract

Despite the clear domination of Catholicism in the Polish religious landscape, belief there is nowhere close to homogenous. This ethnographic study shines a light on the diversity of religious experiences in Poland, especially those of distanced believers, who are often omitted in quantitative analyses. Such a group is especially interesting from the scientific point of view as it breaches with the usually assumed identity of institutional religion and personal beliefs. Having provided the historical and conceptual background of the progressing secularisation of the country, I go on to analyse the individual motivations for distancing oneself from the Church, as well as conceptualisations of personal faith as separate from institutional religion and independent of religious communities. I conclude that this group of distanced believers is, in essence, Davie's (1990) believers without belonging.

Keywords: Polish Catholic Church, secularisation, religiousness, crisis of the Church, pedophilia scandals, fuzzy fidelity, believing without belonging

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In this bumpy writing process, I was lucky to happen to encounter people who were neither discouraged by my whining, nor by my confusion, nor even by my excessive and perhaps not-that-justified enthusiasm. It should be noted that the role of these people has been very important: they helped me to get to this place where you, dear Reader, are now.

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Table of content

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
1. Introduction	6
1.1 Paper Structure	7
1.2 The Researcher's Positionality with Regards to Polish Catholicism	9
2. Religiousness in Poland	11
2.1 Literature Review Methodology	12
2.2 Overview on Religion in Poland	12
2.3 Historical Significance of the Church and Post- 1989 Changes	14
2.4 Church Rhetoric and Loss of Authority	15
2.5 Catholic Societies and Groups	16
2.5.1 Rural Folk Church	17
2.5.2 Militant Church	19
2.5.3 Catholic Liberals	21
2.6 Recent Developments and Crisis of the Church	23
3. Theoretical Frameworks: Secularisation, Fuzzy Fidelity, Believing Without Belonging	26
3.1 Secularisation	27
3.2 Voas's Theory: the Rise and Fall of Fuzzy Fidelity	28
3.3 Davie, Storm: Believing Without Belonging	29
4. Methodology	30
5. Results: Distanced Believers, Criticisms of the Church and Religious Communities	32
5.1 Criticisms and Ideal of the Church	32
5.1.1 Marginalisation and Lack of Agency of Women in the Church	32
5.1.2 Church - State Connections	33
5.1.3 Homophobia in the Church	34
5.1.4 Pedophilia in the Church	34
5.1.5 Ideal of the Church	35
5.2 Distance from Institutional Religion	36
5.3 Religious Communities, Faith and Belonging	36

6. Discussion, Limitations, Further Research	37
6.1 Crisis of the Church and Accelerated Secularisation	38
6.2 Distance, Religious Practice and “Fuzziness”	38
6.4 Limitations, Further Research	39
7. Conclusion	40
8. References	42
Appendix 1.: Interview guide	51
Appendix 2.: Selected codes table	55
Appendix 3.: Endnotes	1

If in practice the function of organized religion turns out to be nothing more than to justify and to canonize the routines of mass society; if organized religion [...] seeks [...] simply to “make converts” who will smilingly adjust to the status quo, then it deserves the most serious and uncompromising criticism. Such criticism is not a disloyalty. On the contrary, fidelity to truth and to God demands it.

(Merton, 1965)

1. Introduction

Poland may seem to be a Catholic country, given its high percentage of believers (Halman, & Draulans, 2006). Its history where religion, rites and expression of patriotism have been heavily intertwined, still leaves a legacy of rooted religiosity. Yet, the apparent religious unity of this Catholic society does not withstand longer scrutiny: religiousness in Poland rather than a monolith is a “phenomenon compounded of many elements, sometimes antagonistic, also interdependent” (Kaczmarek, 2008). Moreover, researchers often describe faith of most Catholics as grounded in rituals rather than spirituality (Borowik, 2002; Pollack & Rosta, 2017). They usually depict it as hierarchical, mechanical and predominantly collective, thus lacking room for doubt or introspection. Some argue Polish Catholics show little connection of religion to ethics, or even exhibit no signs of spiritual life (Kaczmarek, 2008). As much as this could be true in some communities, issues related to faith might be much more complex and Catholic religiousness seems to appear under many shapes and forms. This study offers insight into some perspectives of those who distance themselves from the Catholic Church while maintaining their faith. Such voices, often unknown to the broader audience, are being heard less than the prevalent portrayal of Polish Catholics as a homogenous community. Narratives shared by the participants of this study enable a more nuanced understanding of the subtleties of faith and religion. To the best of my knowledge, no qualitative, ethnographic research on this group or on Polish Catholics in general has been performed to this day. Thus, this

study brings a unique contribution to the field, describing religiousness in the country from a novel angle: aligning with previous literature and adding depth to what has been argued so far. Moreover, this investigation draws from theoretical frameworks such as secularisation theory, in particular its concretisation, as described by Voas (2009), and Davie's (1990), claim on believing without belonging, showcasing how they might be relevant in the Polish context.

1.1 Paper Structure

This essay is structured as follows: first, I outline the structure of the paper and then, in section 1.2, I reflect on my own positionality with regards to Catholicism in Poland. Next, I move to literature review methods (2.1) and describing the contextual background, providing information about religiousness in Poland (2.2), delving deeper into historical role of the Church (2.3, 2.4), characterising some distinct groups within Polish Catholicism (2.5) and the recent crisis of the Church (2.6). The groups include Folk Church (term coined by Borowik, 2008) - a traditional, ritualistic approach to faith, Militant Church (called after Kaczmarek, 2008) - radical, conservative and nationalistic wing, and Catholic Liberals (Kaczmarek, 2008) - less dogmatic group of intelligentsia.

To understand the present religious situation and speculate about how it may develop, it is best to study existing theories from both ethnography and sociology of religion. Thus, for the theoretical background I use sociological frameworks such as secularisation theory (3.1), specifically Voas' (2009) (3.2) and Davie's (1990) concretisations with some improvements from newer research (Storm, 2009) (3.3). Each of them examines and systematises the process of populations becoming less religious - secularisation. Voas described this phenomenon as one that has a defined, predictable pattern of a rise and fall in the number of people who are ambiguous in

their religiosity. He called said quality “fuzzy fidelity”. Since Poland begun the process of secularisation later than Western European countries, it is most probably situated in the phase where fuzzy fidelity is dominant - making Voas’s theory the more relevant for this context. Davie, in turn, observed a specific type of believers in Britain who do not feel the need to belong to a religious community. According to Storm, the example of Poland mainly presents a different case. She argues that although there are many so called fuzzies (Voas’s people of fuzzy fidelity) in the country, most of them are not “believing without belonging” but other religious clusters. I attempt to answer whether the atypical group of distanced believers fits Voas’s description of fuzzy fidelity and/or Davie’s framework, linking said scholarship with the Polish context. I am using my own results from a distanced believers’ perspective.

Followed by presenting ethnographic research methods used, I describe and analyse the results. Thanks to a culture-centred and qualitative approach, I am able to reach insights inaccessible to standard sociological studies such as those informing theoretical frameworks. Thus, using an interdisciplinary approach is at the core of this research. Starting with participants’ criticisms of the Church (5.1), I continue to delve deeper into their distance to the Church (5.2) and the relationship between their faith and religious belonging as well as their lack of need for a Church community (5.3). Lastly, I compare the results to the theories used, confirming the presence of the secularisation process in Poland (6.1), assessing whether distanced believers can be classified as Voas’s fuzzies (6.2), and stating that contrary to Storm’s (2009) approximation, believers without belonging are an existing and potentially growing group in Poland (6.3). I also list limitations, e.g. small sample size (6.4). I conclude by answering that although distanced believers might not fit exactly into fuzzy fidelity, they can be described as believers without belonging.

1.2 The Researcher's Positionality with Regards to Polish Catholicism

In this subsection, I contextualise this paper by providing some insight into my own religious upbringing and faith. This background underscores the personal and social motivation for this text and provides a lens through which readers can understand my motivation and assess my perspective.

Brought up a Catholic (even with my family being critical of the Church), religious faith has become important for me in my teens. I joined a youth ministry organised by the Dominican convent in Kraków. The Dominicans are usually seen as the more liberal, big-city, modern circle within Catholicism in Poland (Sekerdej, 2010). This community is mainly populated by middle class, educated believers or others who appreciate a more intellectual approach to faith, community organisation of the “parish”, beautiful liturgy, and less rigid relationship with Church tradition. The youth ministry is where I discovered Christianity and grew in faith. I have spent time studying the Bible, on personal prayer, but also engaging in group activities with my friends from the ministry. We sang in a church choir, organised talks and various events together: shortly speaking, it has been a wonderful time of youthful going head-first into the experience of fresh faith. After I moved abroad to study, I found myself all by myself in a lay country, troubled with the question: is a solitary style of believing possible, or should I search more until I find a religious community for myself? I have been pondering much about the ties between, essentially, faith (individual) and religion (collective).

What is perhaps even more interesting, I also could not go back. When I visited my home church, I was feeling estranged, not belonging. Much has happened “back home” whilst I have been away; already existing issues grew too large to ignore. Catholics' and Catholicism's homophobia, always present in the teaching (tolerance of LGBT+ identity and yet, condemning homosexual

relationships) has come to the forefront. The local archbishop preached about the “rainbow plague” (Figurski, 2019). My own ministry has shown little support to its gay members. In 2020, an initiative further limiting the right to abortion has met with large protests. The Women’s Strike also criticised the Church for its adamant opposition to reproductive rights, often protesting in front of churches or spraying them with paint (see Fig. 1.) (TVN Warszawa, 2021). As many of my friends, I have been torn between loyalty towards the Church and solidarity with the Women’s Strike. Finally, a scandal involving the Dominican Order has gone viral. A priest creating a closed ministry group, brainwashing and harassing its members has not been put before trial. His practices involved repeated rape, blackmail and manipulation (Guzik, 2021). The order has “hidden him” in another convent: the same strategy condemned in numerous pedophilia scandals (Lasota-Krawczyk & Nycz, 2022).



Fig. 1. “Women’s Hell” slogan and Women’s strike logo on a Church in Lublin (Lublin112, 2020)

In times of the Church crisis, I felt compelled to reconsider my own position regarding religion and faith. Since it was a political breaking point rather than a personal crisis, I suspected I was not alone with such deliberations. Where are - I started to think - people in a similar position? Those who are deeply disillusioned with the Church and yet, holding on to their faith regardless of what happens with the religious community? From these questions, I started to develop an interview guide. I also reached out to my network and posted in several Facebook groups looking for participants. The topics I was inquiring about stemmed from my own experiences and the literature review about religiousness in Poland.

2. Religiousness in Poland

To be able to empathise with the perspective of distanced believers, it is crucial to gain an understanding of the contextual intricacies surrounding religious life in Poland. Having presented my literature review methods (2.1), I present several statistical data points illustrating the distinguishing features of religiosity within the country (2.2), accompanied by a brief historical overview of Catholicism's development in Poland (2.3 and 2.4). Next, I outline diverse groups of believers that coexist within the Church, drawing upon the insights of Sekerdej (2010), along with other relevant studies and my own observations (2.5). This involves presenting profiles of three distinct communities within the Polish Catholic landscape: the Folk Church (2.5.1), the Militant Church (2.5.2) and Catholic Liberals (2.5.3). Additionally, I delve into the recent crisis faced by the Church and examine the various responses exhibited by believers, culminating in the introduction of the emerging phenomenon of apostates and distanced believers (2.6).

2.1 Literature Review Methodology

In order to find relevant literature, I followed four consecutive steps. Firstly, I performed a Google Scholar search using key words such as “Poland”, “religiousness”, “Church”, “secularisation”. As such criteria did not yield many results (about five), having selected the most relevant, I chose articles from their bibliography and changed key words used to those appearing in said papers (finding over ten sources). Next to that, I included readings from a university course on sociology of religion that seemed applicable to the Polish case: e.g. Voas (2009) or Davie (1990). Lastly, I searched for additional articles to broaden the perspective on sections I decided on according to the preliminary literature review. As long as it has been possible without excluding a valuable contribution (e.g. Davie, 1990), I aimed to include more recent articles.

Aside of academic papers, I also used newspaper articles: mostly to illustrate my arguments with specific examples. I strived to include the widest possible range of sources, while still retaining a high level of credibility.

2.2 Overview on Religion in Poland

In Poland, being a Catholic is most often taken for granted. Such an assumption seems logical as, when compared to the neighbouring states, Poland is considerably more religious. Poles rank in second place in Europe when it comes to importance of God and almost as high in belief in personal God (Halman & Draulans, 2006). 93% of the population is identified as Catholic and 81% describe themselves as religious (GUS, 2018). In effect, discussing religious life in Poland is, in most cases, telling a story about the country’s Catholic Church: other religions and points of view are often simply absent in the public discourse.

Yet, the high level of belonging need not translate into strong beliefs. A Pew Research Centre (Evans & Baronavsky, 2018) analysis measures the percentage of people who “believe in God with absolute certainty”. Here, only 45% of Poles confirmed. The figure not only falls below the reported proportion of Catholics but also proves to be lower than worship attendance level (61%). This means Poles are more likely to go to church than to be sure that God exists, pray daily (27%) or say that religion is important in their lives (29%): such is the emphasis on public display of religiousness, for instance attending the Sunday mass. As one of the participants said: “for a family to be a good, Catholic family you need to be there, everyone, 11.30, at the holy mass for kids, we go and check in. It’s all just for show”¹. Another participant also recalled that her grandmother was opposed to her leaving the Church because of the gossip that might arise. “It’s this feeling of ‘what would people think’ is very strong for her”². Such emphasis on the expression of religiousness is characteristic of Polish Catholicism.

The picture becomes even more complex considering that Catholics do not always behave the way they “should”, according to the Church’s teachings. It appears that they do not perceive such code of conduct as significant for them personally (Pacewicz, 2022). A large proportion of Poles (42.8%) does not adhere to many official teachings of the Church (Kaczmarek, 2008). Their moral and ethical compass is only partially in line with what is preached during the Sunday masses and religious education classes. For instance, a prevalent majority of Poles considers premarital sex (79%) or use of contraception (83%) to be moral, even though the Catholic Church preaches that both are sinful (see Fig. 2). Moreover, some deeds deemed a great sin in Catholicism (e.g. abortion) are believed to be just as grave breach of ethics as, say, cheating during exams (widespread and mostly socially acceptable). It is not only belief nor Catholic ethics that define Polish religiousness.

Both the data and participants' own experience show that belonging can be seen as much more important.

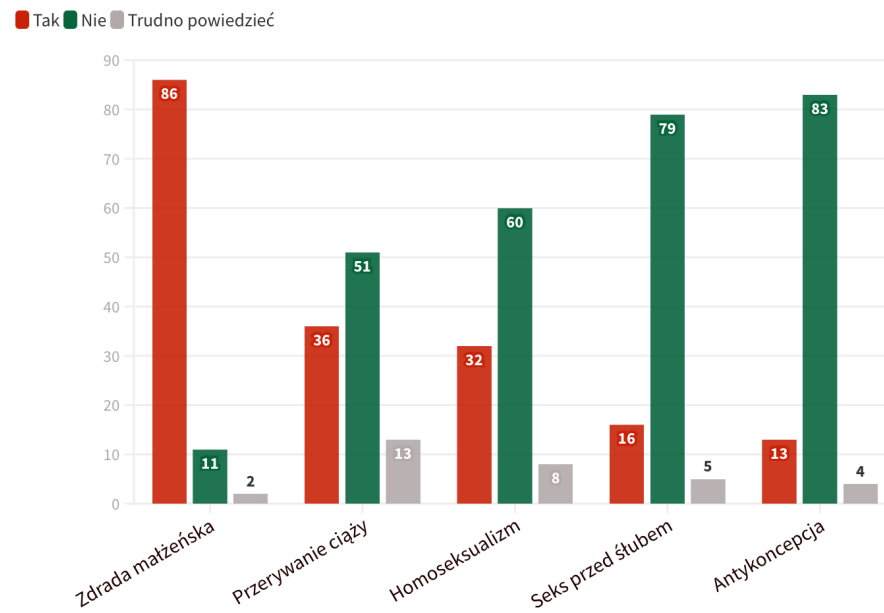


Fig. 2. Proportion of Poles thinking that cheating in a marriage, abortion, homosexuality, premarital sex, contraception are immoral. Red marks a “yes”, green - “no”, grey - “hard to say” (Pacewicz, 2022)

2.3 Historical Significance of the Church and Post- 1989 Changes

Such belief-ethics-belonging discrepancy and high level of self-identified Catholics in Poland can be in part attributed to the special position the Church has had in the nation's history. During the partitions of Poland (1772-1918), Polish and Catholic identities were often seen as synonymous and churches were often a place for cultivating patriotism (Łatka, 2019). Under communism (1947-1989), Catholicism was an identity that allowed one to be anti-systemic and that united the people (Eberts, 1998; Sekielski, 2020). The Church acted as a mediator between authorities and the opposition, more or less secretly supporting the latter. As a result, many factors - holy mass attendance, trust in the Church, self-identification with Catholic faith - were relatively

high until the time of the fall of the communist party (Pollack & Rosta, 2017). Unity and homogeneity were of strategic importance. Any lack of cohesion within Catholicism was used by the communists. Thus, the clergy has worked to minimise external influences to the Church doctrine and discourage any emerging movements (Kaczmarek, 2008). It can be argued that the present distrust towards grassroots initiatives of the lay believers stems from the communist times.

The post-1989 period proved to be more challenging for the Church officials. According to Eberts (1998), “Not unlike the PZPR [communist party] hierarchy in the past, the Church has been attempting to secure a leading role in Polish society.” Moreover, the institution seemed to have lost much ground when it comes to moral authority and trust - from 88% declaring they have confidence in the Church in 1989 to almost half this number no more than two years later (Borowik, 1993). With a newly gained democracy and freedom of expression, the Polish society no longer seemed to request for or accept a politically active Church. The clergy, nonetheless, have continued with their “paternalistic attempts”, not only taking a stance on legal issues (abortion laws, religious education), but even attempting to influence the presidential elections in 1990 (Pollack & Rosta, 2017). Their tone was that of superiority and of command, something that is not to be disputed or contested (Borowik, 2002). The bishops legitimised their right to take a strong stance in the public debate using a discourse that binds Catholicism with Polish history and identity. They did not change their narrative after 1989 even though, as the country regained sovereignty and religious freedom, a link between patriotism and Catholicism became redundant (Zielińska, 2019; Borowik, 2002).

2.4 Church Rhetoric and Loss of Authority

In Poland, belief often has little ground in religious knowledge of personal spirituality; Church hierarchs’ narrative often sustains such an approach to faith. Many participants noticed a

lack of deeper ground for religiousness in their families: “I grew up in a typical Polish Catholic family. When you think of it, there is no faith there, really. There sure is religiousness, rituals. [...] In fact, it’s just like paganism sometimes”³ or “my father thought of himself as a true Catholic but I don’t recall him ever reading any Church documents. He could even ask: ‘so what happened to Jesus’s body after he died?’ He was asking seriously”⁴. Ritualisation of faith and the importance of regular religious activities are strong. Especially in the countryside or small communities, pressure to participate in church festivals and celebrations proves to be exceptionally high (Borowik, 2002). The clergy’s preaching aligns with this style of religiousness, highlighting importance of religious rituals and the institution of the Church on the way of salvation.

Both before and after 1989, Church hierarchs have used paternalistic, authoritarian tone in their public speeches (Borowik, 2002). Although those characteristics of a top-down Folk Church were not new to the society, they proved to be less effective in the post-communist reality and resulted in many Catholics distancing themselves from the institution (Pollack & Rosta, 2017). What might have worked for the times of oppression had slowly started to be less effective. Despite the historically rooted prestige of clergy, the Church has begun to lose prestige and authority (Borowik, 2002). Interestingly, the paternalistic approach was not convincing even to its “natural” recipients: the Folk Church group.

2.5 Catholic Societies and Groups

Although the Folk Church is the most numerous group, any more detailed view on Catholicism in Poland will reveal that such religiousness is practiced only by a part of believers. In fact, there are a few distinct societies and groups of Catholics, with rural, ritualistic belief being only one among many.

The groups are different and antagonistic, which often results in conflicts. As one of the participants put it, there are loud but outnumbered extremes and a silent majority. “There is a group of people who are most often taken as representing the Church. For instance Radio Maryja, ‘only PiS, only TVP’, ‘out with gays’, ‘kill the feminists’ etc. But in my view they are really marginal, even though they are the most visible ones”⁵. Most Catholics do not, in fact, have such strong convictions. According to Sekerdej (2010) there are three main groups: the Catholic elites (later called Catholic Liberals), proposing a more open vision of religiousness, and those who they want to differentiate themselves from. The latter involve the “benign” bad: a traditional, shallow religiousness (Folk Church) and the conservative extreme group (Militant Church). Thus, in the following sections I describe three groups: Folk Church, Militant Church, and Catholic Liberals.

2.5.1 Rural Folk Church

The silent majority of Polish Catholics are mostly rural, Folk Church proponents. The group’s name is derived from links in their religiousness to traditional, folk beliefs (Kaczmarek, 2008). Their faith is rooted in collective celebrations of religious rituals (Mandes, 2004). Local tradition and the cultural aspect of Polish religiousness are of more importance for them than knowledge about Catholic dogmas or spirituality. A participant illustrated such attitude with an example: “we dress up nicely, take a purse, put on our best clothes, we go to a holy mass, we exit the church and forget everything [we’ve heard]”⁶. Other participant recalled a similar image: “a typical Catholic grandma has a rosary in her hand, she will always go to church, [...] put on a holy mass on the TV and compulsively say all her prayers [...]. She is religious but also treats faith as a task. Something you need to do. [...] Those are the rules”⁷.

Moreover, the Folk Church often connects religious faith with patriotism, for instance crowning Jesus Christ to be the king of Poland (Makowski, 2016). Such marriage of national and religious identity is not new in the country. In fact, even in 1901 a writer and reporter noted: “Gadzińska, a Pole, [...], expressed her opinion that Christ, the apostles and Virgin Mary spoke Polish among themselves”⁸ (Staniewski, 2020). Poland is not alone to see a prolonging or even reinforcement of this identity merge. Many post-soviet countries have seen religious growth, perhaps a revival, probably as a result of a societal and economic crisis (Stolz et al., 2023). In the case of Poland, it might be that Catholicism is reinforced as a “defence of national, local, ethnic, or status-group culture” from modern, “Western” cultural norms” (Wallis & Bruce, 1995).

Another two characteristics of the Folk Church are importance attributed to Virgin Mary and eagerness to believe in miracles (Kaczmarek, 2008). “As I observed, in the rural areas Our Lady often has a higher status than God”⁹ - remarked some participants. Some religious practices centred around Our Lady include the rosary or pilgrimages to holy places (e.g. Częstochowa - chosen by 69% of pilgrims or Licheń - 14% (Głowacki, 2017)). This aspect of Polish religiousness is often connected with belief in special sites, often channeled by miraculous paintings (Krzywosz, 2016). Appearance of new miracles is relatively frequent in Poland and scholars have analysed a number of them (e.g. Kalniuk, 2021 or Krzywosz, 2016). There is much “miracle sensitivity” and the need of divine intervention in everyday life, which both form a fertile ground for noticing and declaring miracles. For instance, something scientists might interpret as simply fungi on a tree quickly attracted local inhabitants’ attention as miraculous picture of Lord Jesus’s face (Kozłowski, 2023).

It is important to note that “rural” here is a depiction of a culture more than location. Such a mindset can also appear in a city parish: “[my parish] is quite specific: it is situated in Kraków but

it's organised as if it were a rural one. [...] It's rural... for instance in the type of religious songs and other things"¹⁰ - noted a participant. Next to a village setting, rural religiousness is also more often seen in the elderly, towards the eastern side of the country and in people with vocational education (Gustyn, 2017; ISKK, 2018).

2.5.2 Militant Church

Next to the Folk Church, there is also a more engaged and extreme group called, after Kaczmarek (2008), the "Militant Church". This name highlights an antagonistic, militant attitude that characterises their faith. They are the most outspoken and visible community in Polish Catholicism, recently gaining more momentum still as the ruling party (PiS) has been using religious rhetoric to attract supporters (Morieson, 2017; Motak et al., 2021). Many hierarchs support and co-create such a narrative, using traditional links between national and religious identity to reinforce their position. In fact, the Militant Church's influence is increasing, both in areas that have a direct connection to religion and in others, more or less far away from it (Zielińska, 2011).

An alliance between state and religious officials is most visible in broadcasts of the leading mouthpiece of the Militant Church, "Radio Maryja" radio, which has almost a million listeners (Kaczmarek, 2008). Next to rosaries and holy mass transmissions, it also has a distinct political line: a controversial mix between nationalism, antisemitism, Catholic doctrinal conservatism and general anti-liberalism (Wierzbicki, 2018; Kucia, 2013). In fact, it has been condemned a few times by the Vatican for its extreme views (Syal, 2012; WP, 2016). Moreover, the radio station also has close ties with ruling party and state officials. It frequently organises religious events where government representatives are invited and receives unusually opulent state funds (Zew, 2022; Wprost, 2016).

Another organisation associated with the Militant Church is Mary's Warriors (Wojownicy Maryi). This misogynist, eco-sceptical, anti-modern and anti-Western association attempts to reconstruct masculinity from the time of the crusades (Szczukowski, 2019). They organise national conventions, prayers and trainings (Wojownicy Maryi, 2023). Their aim is to reconstruct masculinity as, they claim, role-models that the modern world proposes for men are amoral (Szczukowski, 2019). They aim to transform their identity, social position and, eventually, overall structure of society, seeing their community as potential saviours renewing Europe based on the medieval idea of *christianitas*. Such goals bear strong similarity to anti-Western ideas of the far right. For instance, the Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny - a homophobic, antisemitic, racist, islamophobic, nationalistic organisation - members often show their faith and devotion (see Fig. 3.) (Mazzini, 2019; Sitnicka & Chrzonowicz, 2019). Official holy masses are organised before their marches.



Fig. 3. “We want God” banner during ONR’s march (Turczyk, 2017)

Such views and practices are more extreme compared to the Polish average, let alone the middle-class, big city intelligentsia typical for Catholic Liberals. Some participants belonging to the latter group identify reservations towards the ultra-Catholic identity characteristic for the Militant Church. One participant reported feeling mistrust when a person associates too strongly with Catholicism. “If that’s the first thing they say about themselves, my reaction is to just run”¹¹. Militant Church members, in turn, criticise and fight more liberal tendencies within Polish Catholicism and society in general. Mary’s Warriors’ march against demoralised families and nihilism of the youth (as absence of true faith) in Kraków or pro-life, homophobic and anti-communist March For Life and Family are some examples (Szpunar, 2023; Maj, 2019).

2.5.3 Catholic Liberals

A very different group within the Polish Church are the Catholic Liberals (Kaczmarek, 2008). This group originated in the post-1945 progressive catholic intelligentsia (Michlik, 2004). Politically on the centre-left, they draw inspiration from the reformatory spirit of Vatican II and Pope Francis (Kaczmarek, 2008). Their alternative name, Open Church, is derived from their desire for inclusivity and open-mindedness. “Catholic Liberals”, in turn, highlights their political orientation and mindset. This group puts emphasis on reason; it is more intellectual and abstract: a “world of ideas, thoughts or spirits” (Kaczmarek, 2008). “One of the reasons why I liked being in the Dominican circles” - recalls one participant - “was that [...] I felt, though it sounds awful, satisfied intellectually. I mean - I didn’t feel I was treated as if I was stupid, which is often the case in the Church”¹².

Some of the most prominent media outlets of this group include periodicals such as *Więź* [Bond] and *Tygodnik Powszechny* [General Weekly] (hence called TP). Participants often feel

Catholic Liberal to be a salient group identity: “my family was a progressive one, the type of Catholic intelligentsia. You know, the type of mainly TP, but also *Gazeta Wyborcza* - that’s the society I grew up in”¹³. TP’s editorial line is more progressive and tolerant than that of typical Polish Catholic press. They also tend to adapt more nuanced, anti-hate speech discourse around the LGBT+ community (Leśniczak, 2020). TP has launched a campaign, “Przekażmy sobie znak pokoju” [Peace be With You], to foster more tolerance and understanding between gay people and Catholics (Fig. 4.). Their posters featured two shaking hands: one with a rainbow bracelet, one with a rosary. Calling for a dialogue is often the message of Liberal Catholics’ news outlets. Rather than blindly aiming for polarisation or breaking with Church hierarchs, they would point to the complexity of the situation and the reasoning of those who do not agree with the religious perspective on the issue at hand. A good example can be the a recent extension on the abortion ban and the moral and practical dilemmas it produced for many Catholics: then publicists tended to point to the counter-productiveness of the law or tragedies women are faced with (e.g. Nocuń, 2021, Piórkowski, 2020 or Nosowski, 2021).

Catholic intellectuals in Poland have criticised the other groups: the Militant Church for being hateful, exclusionary and anti-evangelic, the Folk Church for their shallow and ritualised faith as well as the Church officials, for their authoritarian approach (Pollack & Rosta, 2017; Borowik, 2002). A participant classifying themselves as Catholic Liberal described her circles as “a group of very conscious people, also with strong faith but in the same time, very critical [of the Church]”¹⁴. Perhaps not surprisingly, they have also received much mistrust from the other groups. When another participant mentioned reading a book written by a TP author, a person from her ministry responded with reproach: “TP? Nah, that’s not our political line.” Said participant felt that this group-based judgement also affected the way she was perceived by other members of the ministry.



Fig. 4. “Peace be with you”
campaign poster (Przekażmy sobie
znak pokoju, 2016)

“This probably influences how [...] I am seen. As a TP person [...] or a leftist”¹⁵. Despite lack of support from other communities, Catholic Liberals have the ambition to change the Church. They demand that it become less hierarchical, open to others and other ways of thinking, enhancing the evangelic message of universal love. Yet Catholic Liberals are not numerically significant and so their chances of succeeding in shaping institutional Church are limited (Borowik, 2002).

2.6 Recent Developments and Crisis of the Church

All three aforementioned groups have reacted differently to the recent political engagement of the Church and scandals that have become public. While the Folk Church has remained largely indifferent, Militant Church and Catholic Liberals present exact opposites: the former “fighting” “anti-christian” tendencies, the latter criticising the Church.

Catholic engagement in the public sphere has not lessened after the transformation. On the contrary, the hierarchs have been involved in politics, “using a polarising rhetoric [...] against all liberalising tendencies - portrayed as a threat” (Pollack & Rosta, 2017). Especially demonising the LGBT+ community has deterred believers (Motak et al., 2021). As a result, the social position of Catholicism has begun to weaken, starting the present crisis of the Church.

In recent years, numerous scandals involving the Church have become known, negatively impacting the perception of the institution. In 2018, a feature film showcasing corruption of the clergy and, a year later, a documentary on pedophilia survivors have been important breakthroughs in the discussion on the state of the Church (Smarzowski, 2018; Sekielski, 2019; Kow, 2021). From corruption scandals (Wprost, 2016) and excessive wealth (Nowak, 2021), to brainwashing a ministry group (Sporniak, 2021) and numerous pedophilia cases that have been hidden by the Church hierarchs (Sekielski, 2020), the Church has a lot to explain to the public. Although many of the cases have become known only recently, there might already be a visible trend in a faster decline of religiousness in the country - arguably a scandal-driven shift (Bożewicz, 2020). Moral authority of the Church, already weakened in the 1990s, starts to be questioned on a level unseen before (Szymczak et al., 2022). Complaints about the excessive engagement in politics and the material wealth of priests in the past decades now turn into suspicions that a large part of the institution has been involved in criminal activities - such as not reporting pedophilia cases and protecting the perpetrators (Borowik, 2002; Szeroczyńska, 2018). Yet, the change in attitude towards the Church is mostly a matter of bigger cities: in villages, the local population often supports the priest rather than his victims (Kaczmarski, 2008).

Another contested theme in the Church's teaching is the support of the absolute abortion ban, which was the spark to Women's Strikes in 2016 and 2020. Protesters expressed their anger at Catholicism disregarding women's health and women painted the movement's symbols on church walls (Lublin112, 2020). For many (female) believers, those demonstrations have become an important breaking point, accelerating the process of distancing from Catholic Church (Dąbrowska-Prokopowska et al., 2023).

The recent scandals seem to have also sparked a wave of apostasies - requests to be formally crossed out of the register of believers in the Church documents. For a number of people such a procedure is more of a formality to signal their factual non-belonging: for instance, because of their atheism. Yet, after the moral discrediting of the Church, an act of apostasy has also gained a symbolic meaning as a statement of distancing oneself from the evil that is present in the actions of institution (Wilczyński, 2020). Even though the Church has recently refrained from publishing official reports about the number of apostasies, there has been a grassroots movement aiming to monitor the phenomenon as well as give basic information about the process (Uhlig, 2022; MapaApostazji, 2022). According to self-reported data, in 2022 there have been almost 3000 apostasy forms filled out - compared to only 495 in 2010. There has also been considerably more social debate around the topic - including Dawid Podsiadło, a popular singer, and Sylwia Chutnik, a leading Polish writer, publicly declaring their will to apostate (Uhlig, 2022; Chutnik, 2022). Such an attitude, hardly acceptable a decade ago, was not seen as very surprising today.

Lastly, in 2023 two independent journalistic investigations have confirmed John Paul II's knowledge on pedophilia scandals of the time (Overbeek, 2023; Gutowski, 2023). This revelation has provoked an unprecedented outcry in Polish public opinion: half condemning the Polish pope,

half supporting him regardless of the accusations (Do Rzeczy, 2023). The large scope of the popular reaction can partly be explained by the special position John Paul II has in the national Catholic identity, especially for the older generations. His role in resistance against communism, the fact that a Pole has become a pope as well as his figure in general have been an object of fascination. An example of this is the large number of the pope's monuments throughout the entire country (Mrozek, 2020). The youngest generation does not seem to share such admiration, seeing John Paul II primarily as a meme figure - a pars pro toto of the shifting attitude towards the Polish Church (Wantuch, 2023).

As a starting point for this research, I assumed that in response to the crisis of the Church, some people in Poland have started to distance themselves from Catholicism for reasons other than lack of religious belief. The high response rates from participants prove the existence of such group. During the interviews, many of them confirmed that scandals in the Church have indeed been a chief reason for their distancing (see quotes nr. 18, 24, 25, 26, 28 in Appendix 3.). Distanced believers' position is atypical from a scientific point of view, often assuming unanimity in supporting institutional religion and sustaining belief stemming from its teachings (Pollack, 2003). In this paper, I aim to examine distanced believers' stance with regards to existing theoretical frameworks (Martin, 1969; Voas, 2009; Davie, 19990) as well as depict their experience.

3. Theoretical Frameworks: Secularisation, Fuzzy Fidelity, Believing Without Belonging

In this section, I delve into scientific theories that attempt to find trends about religiousness. Most of them are created outside of the Polish context and rarely replicated in this country - with the

exception of the most widely known secularisation theory. Only having introduced my results will I be able to infer more about the precise situation in the country.

3.1 Secularisation

Secularisation theory states that in industrialised, “modern” countries - at least in Europe - there is a consistent decline in religious beliefs and practices (Martin, 1969). Although scholars still debate about exact mechanisms of the process, most agree about its major drivers (Wallis & Bruce, 1995). Modernisation is a social process involving technological and scientific advance, institutional, and cultural modernisation. The first entails development of non-religious discourses explaining the functioning of the world, which creates a considerable competition for religious claims. The second is a transition towards democratisation and bureaucratisation, often replacing institutions traditionally linked with various Churches: hospitals, orphanages or charity organisations, decoupling their social function from the religious background. The last aspect of modernisation implies a more rational, secular worldview in the public sphere. With its roots in the enlightenment period, cultural modernisation is a mindset that excludes religious arguments as inherently flawed, limiting the space for churches and faith in daily life.

In Poland, academic interest in secularisation has been intensified with open information exchange after 1989 (e.g. Zielińska, 2011). Some studies contextualised Western European theories, confirming a general religious decline and privatisation of faith, with one exception: an active role of the Church hierarchy aspiring to impact state legislation (Zielińska, 2019). Regardless of the clergy’s attitudes, religious belonging and faith are undergoing a slow but steady decline.

3.2 Voas's Theory: the Rise and Fall of Fuzzy Fidelity

One of the most popular theories on the intricacies of the secularisation process is Voas's (2009) claim on the rise and fall of what he calls "fuzzy fidelity": those ambiguous in their religious stance, neither declared believers nor atheists. This group's increase in number is a symptom for the middle phase of secularisation. Instead of transforming overnight from deeply religious to completely atheist, religious decline is a matter of consecutive generations being less engagement in religion. In the beginning of the process, a cohort acquires less belief and practice than their parents, meaning more people join the middle group of "fuzzies" and fewer remain in the religious group. This and a few next, "middle" generations exhibit a slow decrease in religion, with less frequent practice and less importance attributed to belief. Towards the end of the secularisation process, the

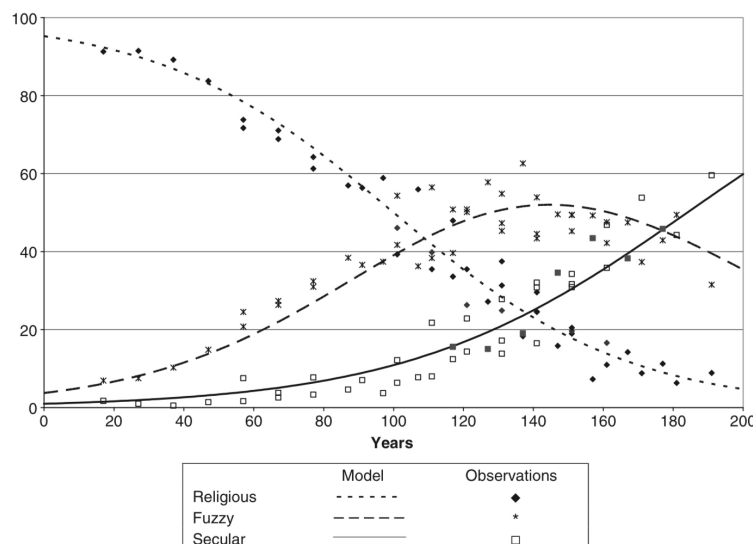


Fig. 5. Three religiosity types over time (Voas, 2009)

group of "fuzzies" declines, as younger generations become indifferent towards religion, constituting the fall of fuzzy fidelity. The three phases are visible on the graph below (Fig. 5.)

3.3 Davie, Storm: Believing Without Belonging

Despite sociologists' assumptions, personal faith and belonging to a religious group are not synonymous (Pollack, 2003). In fact, this "illusion of legitimate religion" might only be a consequence of their specific, historical entanglement (Mandes, 2004). One particularly known phenomenon of their decoupling is believing without belonging, arguably a type of fuzzy fidelity observed by Davie (1990). Many people reported a form of belief in God in line with the Anglican Church's teachings and yet, felt no need to engage in religious activities or be active in their parish. Davie attributed such attitude to the general mistrust in institutions common among the working class but her concept has proven a useful conceptualisation beyond the described case.

Even though Davie argues that such a form of belief is stable or even rising, others link it with Voas's concept of fuzzy fidelity. Storm identifies it among other groups of fuzzies: moderately religious, passively religious and, finally, belonging without believing (Storm, 2009). She claims that in Poland, those moderately religious are the dominant group. People from this cluster have a strong sense of connection to a religious community and reach high rates in practice of belief. Yet, their responses in the sphere of spiritual life score relatively low, differentiating them from the "deeply religious" group. Another cluster, belonging without believing, seems to be numerous in Poland as well, which can be explained by the ritual bond with the Church that was formed in the country's history. Storm claims that "believing without belonging" group is insignificant or non-existing.

4. Methodology

Even though Storm (2009) argues that believing without belonging does not hold for the Polish case, my personal experiences would suggest otherwise. I intended to find a group of believers who do not belong - or distanced believers - and delve deeper into their unique insights. Using ethnographic methods enabled me to find this relatively small group and to understand their perspective better. In this section, I describe methods used for data collection and analysis.

To gather insight on the divergent ways of living their faith found in Catholics distancing themselves from the Church in Poland, I performed nine hour-long, semi-structured interviews. I used in-depth, one-on-one conversations to provide a safe space and some intimacy for my interlocutors. Since for most of my fieldwork, I was not physically in Poland, I conducted all but two interviews online. Alongside the pragmatic reasoning, this also allowed me to talk to the participants in a place where they felt comfortable, mostly at their homes. For the interview guide used, see Appendix 1. All data was anonymised, with the participants choosing their own code name. I also ensured to incorporate quotes from each of the participants. Participants were recruited via Facebook groups - of believers or Church communities (“Lewa Nawa”) as well as those of apostates (“Apostazja 2020”) - and private messages to my network. All participants gave their consent for performing research and recording with confidence.

The participants were between 19 and 55 years old and from large cities (Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk, Szczecin, Zabrze). The group consisted of six women and three men based on self report. All three men - and only them - have converted to another denomination or are in the process of doing so. Most participants (six) have had some ties with the Dominican convent. This may be a result of the sampling method and my own network bias or, alternatively, the specifics of the

Dominican communities themselves, which are often regarded as the “liberal”, “non-standard” Catholics in Poland. As one participant put it, “the Dominican community is often the last step before leaving the Church. The last haven of Catholic leftists. People who will not find a place for themselves in those communities no longer look for different ones, they simply leave. If they feel rejected at the Dominicans, they often lose all faith in the Church”¹⁶.

Although there seems to be a big-enough group of distanced believers in Poland, I have not come across any community, group or even forum that would be meant for them - despite searching for it and contacting various participants. Having (partially or temporarily) left the Church, they do not explicitly seek for people with similar experiences. In some sense, studying distanced believers is the polar opposite of what ethnography typically does: in spite of their similarities, they do not form any particular culture. The only trait they have in common is in negative: what they do not (fully) support. The best proof of it is the absolute lack of a field to do fieldwork in - it is impossible to find a concrete place where a researcher could study distanced believers. One that is the closest to it is a church. It is exactly a polar opposite, a, say, negative field where participants cannot be found. Thus, I proceeded to find and to meet with them individually, only later combining transcriptions, looking for similarities in their experiences.

Main themes of the interviews were religious communities, Polish Catholic Church, faith and religious practices. I only included codes that were present in multiple interviews to ensure a description of broader trends instead of individual tendencies. I also decided to exclude initial themes that yielded insignificant or mixed results, for instance the role of religion in the public sphere or potential ambiguity about identifying as a Catholic.

5. Results: Distanced Believers, Criticisms of the Church and Religious Communities

In this section, I present the views of distanced believers on topics related to religion and faith. The chosen themes illustrate and motivate the process of distancing - from criticisms of the Church (5.1), through the distancing itself (5.2) to differentiating between faith and religion and “bypassing” communities of believers (5.3).

5.1 Criticisms and Ideal of the Church

Many participants express criticism towards the Church, with converts expressing more criticism towards the doctrine, while others focus more on the “praxis” of the Church. Some of the most prevalent ones were criticisms on the exclusionary, condemning approach to people that the Church and Church hierarchs present. “[In this community] there were Catholics who... believe in only one correct way of life, one correct political party and one correct way of functioning. And even mentioning the fact that somebody can have a tattoo or be of a different sexual orientation [...] - those are met with a lot of ostracism”¹⁷ - recalls one participant. Others name close-mindedness, fanatic and deprecating approach of people in the Church. Some also feel that the beliefs that are “promoted” most to the faithful are not the right ones: for instance, with Virgin Mary playing a too important role in comparison to, say, the Holy Spirit or highlighting the sinful nature of humans instead of the love of God (for reference quotes, see code table in Appendix 2.).

5.1.1 Marginalisation and Lack of Agency of Women in the Church

Almost all female participants mention Catholicism systematically marginalising women, for instance by banning them from official functions (e.g. priesthood, but also altar girls as uncommon

and difficult to negotiate in Poland despite the official permission for women to bear that function). Another example that one of the participants found outrageous was the archbishop of Kraków firing all female, unmarried workers of the curia. “How can you connect a situation of a curia’s worker, that happens to be an unmarried person, with the fact that she cannot work, for instance, because that is a worse kind of women?! So somebody who should show charity to others will just pick a social group that he wants to be surrounded with and that needs to be a mother with four kids”¹⁸. A specific social role ascribed to women is quite common in the Church. One participant felt much pressure on her as a Catholic girl in multiple dimensions: not only to fulfil the traditional gender role of a wife and a mother, preferably in a family with many children, but also to dress and behave in a “girly” way. “An image of a Catholic girl, how I see it, is a girl in a flowery dress, who is very polite and nice, she doesn’t [...] speak her mind, never wants to offend anyone, she’s modest and me... [...] I think I often just say what I think [...]”¹⁹. Some participants also note a similar theme in what could be framed as disregarding a woman’s choice: the uncompromising stance of the Church when it comes to abortion laws. Participants felt torn between feminist sympathies and their loyalty to the Church during the Women’s Strikes, with protests against the Church.

5.1.2 Church - State Connections

Many participants also mentioned the various ways in which the state and Church are interconnected as something that they find inappropriate (see Appendix 2.: 6). They named praxis of politically inclined sermons, corrupt links with state officials, controversial statements (e.g. on war in Ukraine), but also the politicians’ actions, such as politicising religion and using it instrumentally as well as corrupt practices benefiting public officers. Such critical stance is, in fact, very common among Polish people in general: only 10% accept the political engagement of the clergy (Kaczmarek, 2008).

5.1.3 Homophobia in the Church

Homophobia was also a recurring theme mentioned by eight out of nine participants. It was also the direct reason why two participants finally decided to leave the Church. For one of them, a breaking point was a talk with the priest leading the youth ministry he attended. The chaplain announced that the participant cannot belong to the community should he stay in his gay relationship. As the person was already in a process of rethinking his faith and religious belonging, such an ultimatum was a moment that made him realise he simply does not want to continue in the youth ministry any longer²⁰. A different participant had a similar story. After her friend at the youth ministry came out as gay (and open for same sex relationships), he was asked to take back what he said or renounce his function in the ministry. At the time, the participant also publicly supported the Women's Strike, for which she was asked to put down the strike symbol from her Facebook profile or renounce her function as well. She refused, in part to remain true to her beliefs, in part to stay in solidarity with her gay friend. Other participants have also mentioned homophobia in the Church practice and teaching to be an important factor in their criticism of Catholicism.

5.1.4 Pedophilia in the Church

Another of the most important criticisms of the Church that returned in multiple interviews were pedophilia scandals. Some participants recall being conscious of other atrocious practices in the institution before (e.g. corruption scandals) but not taking them as seriously as pedophilia cases. "There were moments when I was ashamed to be a Catholic. [...] I was thinking: how can I look somebody in the eyes now, right? Mostly after the pedophilia scandals in the Church. I felt like explaining that I did not experience it myself or I didn't see is completely out of place. We are talking something more profound than 'those who saw saw'"²¹. It was not only the criminal actions

of some priests but also systemic hiding of the perpetrators that was particularly striking for the distanced believers. The hypocrisy and valuing one's image more than the good of a child was particularly striking for them. "The child is an innocent person that [...] often finds it difficult to tell others about their concerns"²² - stated a participant, explaining why she ceased to attend religious practices after pedophilia scandals. Other participants also agreed that this kind of criminal actions committed by the clergy were important for them when deciding to distance themselves from the Church.

5.1.5 Ideal of the Church

Some participants also had an image of their ideal Church. When describing it, they tended to mention issues that hurt them most in the present status quo: enumerating simple yet probably impossible improvements, often with a feeling of bitterness. The desired changes included a more open Catholicism; a community that would love and welcome everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, religion or ethnicity, the deeds they committed (e.g. performed an abortion). They would like to see a Church that would be loyal to Christ's teaching of love and acceptance: "just so that the Church was more of a reflection of Christ, who is there for everyone"²³. For some participants, having a space for discussion and doubts in the institution was crucial. In the present moment, they have an impression that being any different from others is immediately seen as wrong. One of the participants also found it important that the Church becomes reflexive, able to listen to others and admit to wrongdoing: for instance in the case of the crusades. Although they rarely mention it explicitly, some participants have tried and given up on changing the institution.

5.2 Distance from Institutional Religion

As a result of disillusionment with Catholicism, the participants have decided to distance themselves from the Church. It has been a longer process, including limiting the regularity of attending religious rituals, leaving a religious ministry or apostatising. For three of the participants, distance ultimately was converting into another denomination: a Protestant or Jewish one. For many, a breakthrough often meant experiencing something they had known before in a different way: as when the same event occurred in their community. Examples include a sexual harassment and brainwashing scandal involving a priest of the Dominican order (Sporniak, 2021). “I used to see him in the church, where I would go, I knew people directly involved in the case [...]. It was a moment of much disillusion: “no way, those are the people who are gonna tell me how to live my life?!” [...]. Things that I saw at a distance started to touch me personally”²⁴. One of the participants recalls a conscious practice of questioning her beliefs: “I think it can be dangerous, to hold so tight to certain... truths that we take as revelation, as absolute. [...] I met many people whose attitude scared me: they were so xenophobic in their faith, which alarmed me: what can happen if someone becomes very, very zealous. I felt like it’s better to take a step back [...] than to lose track of reality”²⁵. For a few of the participants, distancing themselves is a temporary moment of suspension, for others it is a permanent state.

5.3 Religious Communities, Faith and Belonging

Is being in a religious group or community important for cultivating one’s faith? Here, opinions are varied. Some interviewees mention a need for a religious group, others feel it is not necessary for them or not as crucial anymore: “the time of [...] the formation of my faith in a fundamental way has passed. I feel like I am shaped already and now it would be difficult for me to

adjust”²⁶. One participant perceives the Church and religious communities as a tool given to people to help them approach God. “I think the Church is here in a serving role: it is [...] a frame given here on Earth to somehow keep moving closer to God. And it should generally be helpful in that, not disturbing”²⁷.

All distinguish between their ties with the institutional Church (religion) and personal belief (faith). They see them as independent, even in some cases antagonistic. Their relationship with God is largely independent of religious service, preaching or even the doctrine of the Church. One participant described her situation of a distanced believer as “sulking the Church, not God”²⁸. Similarly, even those who turned to a different denomination did not report a significant change in their faith. All also seem to have a moral compass that is independent of Catholic teachings. Even if it proves to be, in some part, synonymous with what the Church preaches, it is this personal consciousness which has priority when they make decisions.

6. Discussion, Limitations, Further Research

Having presented the results, I proceed to link them with existing research: demonstrating how the criticisms of the Church have accelerated the secularisation process (6.1), discussing whether the participants can, in fact, be classified as “fuzzies” and demonstrating links between distanced believers and Davie’s category of believing without belonging (6.2). Lastly, I present some limitations of my work and suggest future research directions (6.3).

6.1 Crisis of the Church and Accelerated Secularisation

The process of secularisation in Poland might have been exacerbated by the recent criticisms of the Church (Bożewicz, 2020). Many participants also name criticism of the Church as a chief reason for their distancing (quotes number 24, 25, 27, 28). Democratisation of society in general sheds a bad light on highly hierarchical Catholicism and the secular worldview practiced in the public sphere is clearly in conflict with the Church's vision: e.g. in cases of abortion or homosexuality gradually becoming normalised in light of the scientific view and in the eyes of general public (see Appendix 2.). Participants also do not seem to need the Church for needs other than religious, fulfilling them in different ways. For most of them, religious communities' chief to sole role is to facilitate belief. When it fails to fulfil it, it loses all functionality (see quote 28.) In those aspects, their attitude is in line with that pronounced by secularisation theories: secular competition fulfilling social roles previously attributed to the Church, secularisation of the public sphere leading to undermining religious worldview (Gill & Lundsgaarde, 2004; Wallis & Bruce, 1995). Even though participants were recruited among believers, they exhibit some traits of the secularisation process.

6.2 Distance, Religious Practice and “Fuzziness”

Since their religious practice and nominal links with Catholicism are weakened or lost, participants do not possess an important aspect often defining religiousness, which could approach them to fuzzy fidelity. Moreover, participants often report a less rigid, less ritualised approach to religion than their parents or grandparents, aligning with Voas's theory on the replacement of less and less religious cohorts. On the other hand, almost all participants report a rather stable, solid faith and can quote instances in their life when religion is important for them (Appendix 2.: 10. and 12.).

Another interesting phenomenon is that, contrary to my initial hypothesis and predictions, most participants do not seem to feel discomfort with the label of a Catholic despite agreeing that they do distance themselves from the Church (exempting the converts). Perhaps, as Voas (2009) noted, many people are prone to name their denomination as something they recognise in family heritage rather than something they themselves identify with. Such a discrepancy between their claims and practice points to Davie's (1990) framework of believing without belonging. Even though most participants could be identified as middle class (higher education, intelligentsia circles, liberal professions) and not working class, as Davie's group, their characteristics align. While maintaining personal belief fitting within Catholic scheme, they limited or ceased their links with institutional Church (Appendix 2.: 9-12). Similarly to the "original" believers without belonging, the participants show mistrust towards the religious institution, which caused their distance. They also have much criticism towards the Church. Moreover, Davie suggests such an attitude towards religion is on the rise, maybe even marking the future of faith in Europe. In 2009, Storm did not observe a significant group of believers without belonging in Poland, prioritising different groups: moderate believers and belonging without believing - perhaps identifiable as members of Folk Church. My participant group proves that believing without belonging does exist in this context, even if it presents itself as slightly differing from the British picture. What is more, due to recent scandals and the general secularisation process, it is likely that distanced believers will increase in number or even become a significant force in public life.

6.4 Limitations, Further Research

Those preliminary results about believing without belonging in Poland have several limitations. Firstly, the sampling method implies reaching a specific age group, which only offers

limited insight into the society as a whole. As this study only focuses on people aged 19-30 and one participant aged 55, all from relatively big cities, more research on various societal groups would add valuable information. What is more, a larger sample size would enable broader and more nuanced claims about distanced believers. The possible correlation between gender and proneness to convert to another denomination is to be further investigated. Another important limitation is the language: the data collected needed to be translated, there are inevitably some shifts in meaning and potentially shallowing of the message.

7. Conclusion

At first, I have been concerned about the sensitivity of the topics and impact interviews might have on the participants. I approached questions carefully, making sure I do not put too much pressure on my interlocutors to speak about matters very private for them. Yet, they were in fact glad to be able to have a space to discuss faith, religiousness and expression of their beliefs. “It seems to me that there are not so many people with whom you can talk openly about it, from my perspective”²⁹ - remarked one of the participants. For me as well, it was an experience of finally discussing something that is not much talked about, especially without a moral value attached to certain feelings and practices. It was liberating to be able to take the topic to a more neutral, judgment-free ground of research. Thus, studying distanced believers not only brings unique experience to broader academia and popularises the notion that Catholics are not a monolith, but also benefits participants themselves as a space of discussion and reflection.

The local insight into religiousness in Poland can also help understand global issues connected with institutional religion, private belief and tensions between the two. Moreover, proving

the applicability of Davie's concept outside of its original context opens the door to its wider usage to grasp present religious landscapes as well as predict their shape in the future.

All in all, religion in Poland is a complex phenomenon. Religious practice levels tend to be higher than belief and spirituality and the understanding of Catholicism and Catholic values varies greatly in different religious groups, including Folk Church, Militant Church and Catholic Liberals. The Church's status, interlinked with the nation's history, seems to weaken due to many scandals and the overall process of secularisation. In the present day, religiousness of many believers in Poland is ambiguous, consistent with Voas's (2009) notion of fuzzy fidelity. There is also a growing group of distanced believers who express their criticism of the Church, clearly distinguish between their personal faith and religious belonging, claiming they often do not need the latter for their belief. They exhibit many characteristics that are in line with Davie's (1990) believing without belonging, which proves that, contrary to Storm's (2009) argument, such framework on religiousness is, in fact, relevant for the Polish society.

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Appendix 1.: Interview guide

My name is Zuzanna Stawiska, I am a third year bachelor student at the University of Groningen, I am doing research for my thesis. The aim is to put into light the divergent ways of living your religiosity in Poland, among the people who distance themselves from the Catholic Church. Any data collected for the purpose of the study will be confidential and anonymous.

I will record this interview to be able to get back to it later. The recordings will be destroyed in July when the bachelor thesis is completed. Do I have your permission for recording this interview?

If at any point during or after the interview you decide not to participate anymore or you do not feel comfortable with us using your input, let me know and I will delete the audio-recording. Do you have any questions before we start?

Opening questions:

- Age,
- Gender,
- Motivation to take part in the study (+ thank the participant once more)

Key questions:

Part 1 Your practice

To begin this interview, I would like to ask some questions about your personal religious practices.

- How often do you attend Church? [elaborate: weekly mass, for holidays, on events in my social circle e.g. baptism, marriage, death]
- Has it changed relative to how you were brought up? <ask about childhood practices>
- How did you practice your faith in your childhood?

<follow up questions about a religious community, if it appears>

- How was the community organised?
- What was your place in the community?
- How did belonging to the community make you feel?

- What characteristics of this community were important to you?
- Their religious community is not too vital to some people, for some it is very important. What would you say was your approach?
 - Has that changed?

<pay attention to connection between the community and faith, community shaping faith - if the theme appears, ask additional questions>

- How could you imagine living your faith without this community?

Part 2 Your beliefs: Next I would like to ask about your personal beliefs. This can get a little philosophical, and even a little personal. While I don't want to make you uncomfortable, I do want to underscore how important it is for this study. The divergent ways of living your religiosity are often invisible, and I want to include your voice in my study. This way, it could become more known that there are many different people with their own way of believing, that Catholics are not a monolith.

- Do you believe in God <elaborate: specifically the Christian God, the trinity, or a different God or Gods, or something less precise like a supernatural force or spirit, or would you characterise yourself as agnostic or atheist ... take time to spell this out>
- Do your siblings and cousins, if you have any, know of your belief? Is it something you are open about? (i.e. same age cohort)
 - Do/Did your parents and grandparents know... (i.e. older generation)
 - Do your children, nieces / nephews know ... (i.e. younger generation)
 - Do your friends know of your faith? (same generation)
- How open are you about this? Reflect.
- How often do you talk of your religiousness in front of your friends?
 - What topics do you bring about?
 - What is their reaction?
 - How do you feel about those interactions?
 - What are the things you omit when talking about your religiousness with them - if any?

Part 3 Your place in Poland

Poland is a predominantly Catholic country and the institution of the Church still has much influence on the socio-political life. In this part of the interview, I would like to focus on your place in Poland: how does your critical approach to the Church play into it (assuming you are critical of it since you distance yourself from it). Some questions might be getting more direct or personal. I ask for your honesty and reflection - as much as you are ok to answer - to understand better experiences of you and other participants.

- How would you describe a typical Polish Catholic?
 - Would you say that you differ from that image or not really?
 - In what ways do you think you differ from a typical Catholic?
- When you tell somebody you are or were Catholic, how do you think their perception of you changes?
 - In what ways do you think it changes?
 - How does it make you feel?
 - Do you know any other people with similar experiences?
 - Can you relate to them?
 - In what ways do you relate?
 - <look for a potential feeling of not completely belonging, mismatch, discomfort - not provoking the answer but yet digging in should it appear>

Part 4: distancing from the Church

Last but not least, I would like to talk about your approach to the Church. For some time now, especially in the last years, the Catholic Church has been active in many social debates, including controversial and emotional ones. I will ask you a few questions about your attitude about this and the emotions that it provokes.

- You signed up for this research, which means that in some sense, you would say you distance yourself from the Church. Could you elaborate on what it means for you?
 - Why do you distance yourself from the church?
- When was the first time you started distancing?
- Do you know some other people who have a similar stance to yours?

- Did you notice any implications of this on your life in general? (What was the reaction of the people around you?)

<pay attention to the role of faith there, potential changes in faith>

- How would you describe your present attitude towards the Church?

<pay attention to changes in attitude>

Conclusion:

After having conducted the interview do you still consent to us using this information for my research? The thesis will be kept in the archive of bachelor's thesis of the university, a shortened version of the study will also be presented to students and staff of the university. If you would like to, you can read the ready thesis - upon request.

- Asking for a preferred pseudonym for coding the results (a fake name?)
- Is there anything else you would like me to know? Is there anything I should have asked you?
- Do you have any questions?
- Thanking for the interview

Appendix 2.: Selected codes table

	Theme code - English (Polish)	Participant code	Description	Example quotes (Polish)
1.	Criticism of the Church praxis (Krytyka praktyki Kościoła Katolickiego)	Turys tka, Maciejka, Elżbieta, Michał, Sokole Oko, GM, MacBe	Catholics with limited knowledge (cannot explain why Easter is moveable), haughtiness, exclusion: of different religion, sexual orientation, informal partnerships [Turystka] exclusion, contempt (LGBT, divorcees), no Christ at heart of the teaching [MacBe], extreme narration, homophobia, military narrative, contempt: Luter, synods, Germany, Marx, sexual revolution, no discussion possible, supporting PiS, anti-feminist, no bishop on Belarus border, close-mindedness, hierarchisation [Maciejka], only one accepted way of life, hypocrisy, hierarchisation, exclusion (e.g. woman who had abortion), narrative on sexuality (especially of girls), hiperbolisation of sex-related sins [Elżbieta], lies of the hierarchs [Michał], Catholicism no longer universal, exclusion, oppressive space, hypocrisy, forming an alternative reality, non-evangelical, patronising, no dialogue (LGBT people) [Sokole Oko], seldomly	„Tam byli tacy katolicy, hm... którzy wyznają też tylko jeden poprawny sposób życia, jedną poprawną partię polityczną i jedyny poprawny sposób funkcjonowania. W ogóle mowa o tym, że ktoś może sobie tatuaż zrobić albo ktoś może, hm, być innej orientacji seksualnej czy inne takie rzeczy to się spotykało z dużym ostracyzmem.” [Elżbieta], „[...] doświadczenia innych osób, dla których Kościół był tą przestrzenią opresyjną. Jakimś takim miejscem, które się kojarzyło... z karą, z tym, że trzeba odpokutować za... nie wiem, za wszystkie swoje grzechy, które się popełniło albo się popełni w przyszłości. Ta religijność może być tak wypaczona i zniekształcona, że może się kojarzyć z jakimś koszmarem.” [Sokole Oko], „Ostatnio widziałam takiego mema, że... czy chrześcijaństwo się kiedyś przyjmie u katolików?” [GM], „Jest taka chęć chronienia ich [swoich dzieci] przed tym, co uważam za niebezpieczne, sekciarskie, ee... przemocowe, też nie chcę, żeby one wyrastały w lęku, że jak pomyślą źle o mamusci to muszą lecieć do konfesjonału

2.	<p>Criticism of the Church teaching (Krytyka nauczania Kościoła Katolickiego)</p>	<p>Turys tka, MacBe, Michał, Johanen</p>	<p>purgatory, transsubstantiation [MacBe], purgatory, grace + deeds leads to demoralisation [Michał], hypocrisy, mismatch with Old Testament, form of confession [Johanen]</p>	<p>„Spora jego hipokryzja wśród ludzi, którzy deklarują się jako osoby wierzące, katolicy, ale sobą w ogóle tego nie reprezentują plus jeszcze jak czytałem Stary Testament, Torę i w ogóle, to jednak Tora ma mnóstwo zakazów i nakazów, chrześcijanie tego nie przestrzegają, jak się pytają dlaczego, to było mówione, że Pan Jezus powiedział cośtam. To ja mówiłem, że Pan Jezus powiedział, że przyszedł Prawo wypełnić, nie je</p>
3.	<p>Ideal of the Church (Ideal Kościoła Katolickiego)</p>	<p>Turys tka, Maciejka, Elżbieta</p>	<p>calling for peace, inclusive, recognising people [Turystka], more responsibility of the lay believers, priesthood for women, inclusive, Christ-like, listening to others, learning from other disciplines of knowledge (e.g. crisis management), reflecting, admitting to wrongdoing [Maciejka], a space of conversation, with space for doubts - then feeling safer in it [Elżbieta]</p>	<p>„Chciałabym, żeby Kościół był chrystusowy, czyli odbijał jakoś tę rzeczywistość, nie wiem, która jest gdzieś w ewangelii, przynajmniej w moim odczuciu. Która jest mega... włączająca, bardzo personalna też, hm... która się, nie wiem, daje... patrzy na osobę, nie na jakąś zasadę. Mam takie poczucie, że jak teraz powtarzamy to, co jest w ewangelii. To znaczy mieliśmy tych faryzeuszki, którzy mieli tyle przepisów i przychodzi Chrystus i je potępia - a zrobiliśmy sobie tyle samo, a może więcej, niż Talmud” [Maciejka], „Kościół hm... otwartych ludzi [pauza] w którym... no to będzie taki wyidealizowany obraz [śmiech], w którym krytyka nie jest pierwszą rzeczą, z którą się spotykasz, i w którym rzeczywiście hm... jakby najpierw idzie miłosierdzie i miłość do drugiego człowieka i troska o jego dobro, a</p>

4.	Pedophilia in the Church (Pedofilia w Kościele Katolickim)	Turystka, Elżbieta, Sokole Oko, GM, Anna	reason for distance (large scale of it, hiding it) [Turystka], pedophilia and hypocrisy [Elżbieta, Sokole Oko], harassment [Sokole Oko], shame for the Church [GM, Anna]	„[...] ponieważ dziecko jest osobą niewinną i dziecku nie każdy daje wiarę i dziecko o wielu przeżyciach bardzo boi się powiedzieć również rodzicom” [Turystka], „Były takie momenty, że ja się np. wstydziałam być katoliczką... nie ukrywałam tego nigdy i tak jak mówię, moje otoczenie o tym wie, natomiast były takie momenty, że ja miałam takie „no jak ja mogę komuś teraz spojrzeć w oczy?” No nie? Głównie po aferach pedofilskich w Kościele. I czułam, że wytłumaczenie się „ale ja tego nie doświadczyłam” „ale ja tego nie widziałam” jest kompletnie nie na miejscu. Mówimy o czymś
5.	Role of Virgin Mother in the Church (Rola Matki Boskiej w Kościele Katolickim)	MacBe, Elżbieta	too much importance of Virgin Mary [MacBe, Elżbieta]	„Na obszarach wiejskich, jak zdążyłem zauważyć, bardzo często Matka Boska ma wyższą pozycję, niż Bóg.” [MacBe], „Wydaje mi się, że w katolicyzmie, przynajmniej w Polsce, jest strasznie strasznie duży nacisk na Matkę Boską, która jest praktycznie wywyższona do takiej samej pozycji jak Bóg. To nie chodzi.. nie chcę być osobą, która będzie jakoś degradować pozycję Maryi ale ja osobiście sama tego nigdy nie widziałam... jakoś nigdy nie odczuwałam tej potrzeby, żeby konkretnie Maryi zawierzyć jakieś

6.	Church - state relations (Kościół Katolicki a państwo)	Turys tka, Elżbieta, MacBe, Sokole Oko, GM	political sermons [Turystka, Elżbieta], getting mixed in politics (war Ukraine) [Turystka], links with state, corruption, funds [MacBe], politicising, instrumental use of religion [Sokole Oko], links with the state [GM]	„Jedna rzecz, która mnie bardzo zraziła to jest mieszanie się Kościoła katolickiego w politykę. I to połączenie to jest po prostu absurd kompletny, że kazanie w Kościele - to też jeden z czynników, które spowodowały, że przestałam chodzić - że Kościół stał się miejscem kampanii wyborczych, po prostu kampanii wyborczych.” [Turystka], „W Gdańsku też prezydent Adamowicz bardzo łaskawie traktował Kościół Rzymsko-Katolicki. Więc, jeżeli wchodzimy w taki system oligarchiczny, a jest to system oligarchiczny w tym momencie, chociażby kwestia pozycji naszego ojca
7.	Church and women (Kościół Katolicki a kobiety)	Turys tka, Maciejka, Elżbieta, GM, Anna	Jędraszewski firing female curia workers [Turystka], only men as community leaders, pushing women away, no priesthood for women [Maciejka], rigid female gender roles, marginalisation, seen only as mothers and wives [Elżbieta], little agency of women [GM], anti-feminism, marginalisation of women [Anna]	„[...] chyba taki obraz dziewczyny-katoliczki, jaki ja widzę, to jest dziewczyna w kwiecistej sukience, która... jest bardzo grzeczna, nie wychyla się, nie zawsze mówi swoje zdanie, nigdy nie chce nikogo obrazić, jest skromna ee... zawsze daje dobry przykład, a ja raczej hm... znaczy mam nadzieję, że dają dobry przykład, ale wydaje mi się, że częściej mówię to, co myślę i... nie dają sobie czegoś wciskać do głowy, jeżeli się z czymś nie

8.	Homophobia in the Church (homofobia w Kościele Katolickim)	Turys tka, MacBe, Maciejka, Elżbieta, Sokole Oko, GM, Anna	Church excluding - also LGBT people [Turystka, MacBe, Maciejka, Elżbieta], lecturing not dialogue [Sokole Oko], not agreeing [GM, Anna]	„Jak były te akcje wieszania tęczowych flag na kościołach w Warszawie, ja pamiętam, że miałam wtedy taką myśl, że jakby ten Jezus był teraz, z nami, to on by siedział właśnie z tymi, którzy są wykluczani. On by bynajmniej nie siedział w złotym kościółce. Ja sobie pomyślałam, że ja nie wierzę w Boga, który czuje się obrażony tęczową flagą.” [GM], „Homofobia, antyfeminizm [podkreślenie] jest w tym nauczaniu i po prostu gdzieś w samej... w samym fundamencie Kościoła Katolickiego właśnie przez to... to są rzeczami, których się tak łatwo nie zmieni. Nie dopuści się kobiety do pełnej równości w Kościele, nie zacznie
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9.	Process of distancing oneself from the Church (proces dystansowania się od Kościoła)	Mac Be, Maciejka, Elżbieta, Michał, Sokole Oko, GM, Johanan	short period of rebellion, return; Bible, books, discussions [MacBe], doubts not tolerated, outside of the mainstream, controversies, worldview, exiting a religious ministry [Maciejka], cognitive dissonance so a break in religious practice (still faith present), wish to connect them one day [Elżbieta], bullying in a Catholic school, Church's role in Polish history (negative) [Michał], changes in the Church, changes within the person, sceptical, critical attitude, not wanting to hold too fast to it [Sokole Oko], disappointment, redefining things, not feeling like attending holy masses, scandals in Dominican order [GM], never felt it really, being Catholic, only obligation or "it's just the way it is" attitudes [Johanan]	„Uważam, że może to być niebezpieczne, takie jakby kurczowe trzymanie się pewnych... prawd, które właśnie my uważamy za objawione, za absolutne, podczas gdy osoba, która mieszka w innym miejscu na Ziemi, może wierzyć w coś zupełnie innego i jakby ja nie mam prawa jakoś czuć się wyższa czy ważniejsza, mądrzejsza od kogoś tylko dlatego, że on nie podziela mojej wiary. I mi się wydaje, że też spotkałam wiele takich osób, których postawa mnie przerażała: tzn. byli bardzo tacy... ksenofobiczni w tej swojej wierze i po prostu mnie tak... trochę zaniepokoiło to, co może się wydarzyć jeśli ktoś się staje taki bardzo, bardzo gorliwy, aż do przesady. Poczułam, że lepiej... się wycofać trochę i jakby popatrzeć na coś krytycznie, z dystansu niż pójść za daleko i stracić... stracić... rozeznanie” [Sokole Oko], „To był taki moment, właśnie... poczucia, że... że tutaj nie ma dla mnie miejsca. Że mam dwie opcje: albo mogę być w Kościele z moimi poglądami udeptanymi gdzieś po cichu i jakby... udawaniem, że ich nie mam i robić coś aktywnie w Kościele i działać w nim ale jakby nie przyznając się do tego, co myślę, tak naprawdę, kim jestem bo to kwestionowanie, niezgadanie się z Kościołem jest naprawdę... [podkreślenie] bardzo ważnym elementem mnie i ta moja niezgoda na... wiele po prostu
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10.	<p>Breakthrough s in distancing oneself from the Church (przełomy w dystansowaniu się od Kościoła)</p>	<p>Turys tka, Elżbieta, GM, Johanan, Anna</p>	<p>pedophilia [Turystka], be hot or cold, not lukewarm Buble quote [Elżbieta], pedophilia scandals, conscience saying different than Church teaching (morality of birth control, now personal issue), feeling torn: Women's Strike, rainbow flags on churches [GM], talk and ultimatum gay boyfriend or youth ministry [Johanan], ultimatum Women's Strike emblem - belonging to youth ministry [Anna]</p>	<p>„Też na przykład zastanawiałam się nad tym werselem, że albo jesteś zimny, albo jesteś gorący i że... że nie możesz być letni. I... wtedy sobie pomyślałam - no oczywiście ja znałam ten werset zawsze ale wtedy sobie pomyślałam, że... jeżeli przeżywam takie rozterki w momencie, w którym chodzę do kościoła i daję mi to tyle dysonansów poznawczych związanych z tym, co ja myślę, co ja praktykuję i jak wygląda moje życie i że te informacje się ze sobą... contradict, to... ee... to stwierdziłam, że powinnam sobie na chwilę odpuścić i zdystansować.” [Elżbieta], „Widywałam go w kościele, do którego chodziłam, znałam ludzi bezpośrednio zaangażowanych w tę sprawę: ludzi, których szanowałam, a którzy musieli o tym wszystkim wiedzieć. To był taki moment znowu, takiego dużego rozczarowania: „nie no, hola. To są ludzie, którzy mi będą mówić, jak ja mam żyć?” Później... jeździłam jako nastolatka na takie obozy rekolekcyjne i znowu, rok temu aferka. Tam też się okazało. Nawet się ten ksiądz, co tam jeździł, specjalnie nie... nie zaprzeczał temu, tym oskarżeniom. Więc to była taka, powiedziałabym, trochę dla mnie taka emocjonalna ostra jazda bez trzymanki. Te wszystkie rzeczy, które gdzieś mnie tam bulwersowały na odległość zaczęły się dziać tylko mniej, zaczęły mocno mnie dotykać. to były</p>
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11.	Faith and belonging to a denomination (wiara a przynależność do Kościoła)	Turystka, MacBe, Maciejka, Sokole Oko, Johanan, Anna	they're different things, no need for religious practice [Turystka], individual faith - also final judgement is individual [MacBe], easier in community but not necessary, Church in a serving position [Maciejka] , once community - important, now not necessarily but would be nice [Sokole Oko], faith more less unchanged with converting to judaism [Johanan], completely separate (wishing for faith) [Anna]	„[...] obraziliśmy się na Kościół, nie na Boga” [Turystka]), „Ja traktuję Kościół służebnie, to znaczy że on jest jakąś wspólnotą, instytucją, ramą daną mi na ziemi żeby gdzieś tam dążyć do Pana Boga. I generalnie powinien być w tym pomocny, nie przeszkadzać” [Maciejka], „[...] daje narzędzia” [Maciejka], „Ale też w judaizmie nie ma czegoś takiego, żeby być żydem, to trzeba wierzyć. W chrześcijaństwie oficjalnie żeby być chrześcijaninem to trzeba wierzyć w to. W judaizmie nie trzeba. Więc nawet jak nie wierzę w coś, w co powinienem, to jakby nic złego się nie dzieje, nie mam takiego obowiązku. Na zasadzie, że lepiej robić w ten sposób, gdyby Bóg istniał, niż nie robić nic, bo okaże się
12.	Apostasy (apostazja)	Turystka, MacBe, Maciejka, Anna, Johanan, Michał	not necessarily, maybe return [Turystka], pending [MacBe], it's a possibility, going to see other denominations, apostasy doesn't need to be a big step niekoniecznie, it's administration hustle, will do it one day [Anna], pending, almost done [Johanan], done [Michał]	„A tak to wspólnotowo nie wiem, teraz w niedzielę idę do reformowanego kościoła katolickiego żeby zobaczyć, co oni robią z kolei, to jest inna denominacja już... eee...mam takie [jęczy ironicznie] ,dopiero zostałam katolikiem, nie chcę odchodzić jeszcze” [śmiech] [Maciejka], „Jestem w trakcie konwersji na judaizm i też w trakcie apostazji, która się przeciąga. Ale już jest zanotowane w

Appendix 3.: Endnotes

¹ „Żeby [...] rodzina była dobrą katolicką rodziną no to 11.30 msza dla dzieci całą rodziną idziemy, meldujemy się. [To jest] totalnie nastawione na pokazywanie się” [participant code name - GM]

² „To takie poczucie „co ludzie pomyślą” jest dla niej bardzo silne.” [Anna]

³ „Ja wyrastałam w typowej, polskiej, katolickiej rodzinie. I w gruncie rzeczy tam nie ma wiary.” [GM]

⁴ „U mnie ojciec mój uważał się za bardzo katolickiego i w ogóle ale ja nie pamiętam, żeby on czytał jakieś dokumenty katolickie. On potrafił zadać pytanie „a co się stało po śmierci z ciałem Jezusa?” [Michał]

⁵ „Jest jakaś grupa ludzi i to są ci najbardziej kojarzeni z Kościołem i najbardziej charakterystyczni. Właśnie Radio Maryja, „tylko PiS, tylko TVP”, ee... precz z gejami, zabić feministki etc. i... no. Ale tak naprawdę moim zdaniem to jest grupa bardzo widoczna, ale marginalna.” [Anna]

⁶ „Ubieramy się elegancko, bierzemy torebkę, wkładamy co mamy najładniejsze, idziemy na Mszę świętą, wychodzimy z kościoła i zapominamy o wszystkim.” [Turystka]

⁷ „Taką typową babcie katoliczkę to taką z różańcem na ręce, która zawsze pójdzie do kościoła, [...] mszę świętą odpali w telewizorze i obowiązkowo codziennie zmówi pacierze, który będzie prawdopodobnie polegał na tym, że odmówi wszystkie modlitwy, które zna na pamięć po ileś razy. Hm... ale jest no na pewno jest pobożna. Ale też wydaje mi się, że podchodzi do wiary raczej zadaniowo i zasadowo: że trzeba. To nie jest w ogóle kwestia jakiejś dużej potrzeby ducha, że to nie jest kwestia tego... nie ma się w ogóle co zastanawiać, czy się chce albo czy można, czy nie. Po prostu tak trzeba i tak jest, takie są zasady.” [Elżbieta]

⁸ original wording: „Gadzińska, Polka, stróżka przy szkole wrzesińskiej, wyraziła wobec całego audytorium zdanie, że Chrystus, apostołowie i Matka Boska rozmawiali między sobą po polsku”.

⁹ „Na obszarach wiejskich, jak zdążyłem zauważyć, bardzo często Matka Boska ma wyższą pozycję, niż Bóg.” [MacBe], „Wydaje mi się, że w katolicyzmie, przynajmniej w Polsce, jest strasznie strasznie duży nacisk na Matkę Boską, która jest praktycznie wywyższona do takiej samej pozycji jak Bóg.” [Elżbieta]

¹⁰ „Jest taka specyficzna, bo on znajduje się w Krakowie natomiast jest troszkę zorganizowana i prowadzona, jakby była parafią wiejską. Tutaj nie mam zamiaru krytykować parafii wiejskich ale mam wrażenie, że to jest całkiem niedostosowane do miejsca, w którym mieszkam. Jest to takie trochę... Np. jeśli chodzi o taki bardzo... może... to jest najważniejsze oczywiście ale jednak mimo wszystko też ważne: jaka muzyka tam jest, jak organista śpiewa, jakiego typu pieśni... nie wiem” [Sokole Oko]

¹¹ „[Jak] taka osoba przychodzi i pierwsza rzecz, którą o sobie mówi, to to, że jest katolikiem, to to w ogóle jest „ratunku, uciekam”.” [Anna]

¹² „U dominikanów czułam się dobrze też dlatego, że jak nie doświadczyłam tam żadnej przemocy, po drugie dlatego, że się tam czułam, jakkolwiek to nie zabrzmie źle, intelektualnie zaspokojona. Znaczący nie czułam się traktowana jak głupek, a niestety za często czuję się tak w kościele: że ja i wszyscy ludzie wokół mnie jesteśmy traktowani jak głupki.” [GM]

¹³ „Moja rodzina to była taka postępową, katolicka inteligencja typu, wiesz, Tygodnik Powszechny przede wszystkim, poza tym Wyborcza - i jakby w takim środowisku wyrastałam” [Anna]

¹⁴ „Jest też taka grupa ludzi mocno świadomych, mocno wierzących, a zarazem mocno krytycznych.” [Anna]

¹⁵ „Mówiłam, o czym są te kolejne książki. Jedna była napisana przez Justynę Dąbrowską i mówię tam, że ona pisze czasem do Tygodnika Powszechnego. „A, tam, nie nasza linia” [śmiech] I jakby... to pewnie dzisiaj wpływa na to, jak ta Dąbrowska jest postrzegana przez niego ale też jak ja jestem postrzegana. Hm... jako właśnie taka „tygodnikowa” albo „kontaktowa” albo lewicowa albo nie wiem cośtam. I to było o tyle bolesne z drugiej strony, [...] że nie że tamte książki... Dąbrowska tam pisze raczej rzadko, nie jest to jakieś super lewackie czy lewicowe ee... takie rzeczy są zajęte przez takie właśnie „a bo Boniecki”, „a bo Tygodnik”, „a bo Radio Maryja” - jak wszystkie stereotypy, to jest właśnie zamykające, nie?” [Maciejka]

¹⁶ „Znam takich, co już... nie mówią tego oficjalnie na głos ale nie czują już ani związków z Kościołem ani całkiem nie wierzą w Boga, a właśnie też chodzą tam w celach towarzyskich. Są tacy, którzy właśnie... jest bardzo dużo osób, które się z tym nie zgadza. Zresztą - środowisko dominikańskie (ty to wiesz ale ci, którzy będą oglądać twoją pracę niekoniecznie) to jest takie... często ostatnie... ostatni przedsięwzięcie przy wychodzeniu z Kościoła. Ostatnia przystań katolewaków. Że ludzie, którzy tam się nie odnajdą... w tych wspólnotach to już często innych wspólnot nie szukają tylko odchodzą. Jeśli tam poczują się odrzuceni to to już całkiem zwątpią w Kościół.” [Anna]

¹⁷ „Tam byli tacy katolicy, hm... którzy wyznają też tylko jeden poprawny sposób życia, jedną poprawną partię polityczną i jedyny poprawny sposób funkcjonowania. W ogóle mowa o tym, że ktoś może sobie tatuaż zrobić albo ktoś może, hm, być innej orientacji seksualnej czy inne takie rzeczy to się spotykało z dużym ostracyzmem.” [Elżbieta]

¹⁸ „Jak można połączyć sytuację pracownika kurii, który jest osobą zamężną, z tym, że np. nie może pracować, no bo to jest gorszy rodzaj kobiet?! Czyli ktoś, kto powinien wykazywać się miłosierdziem dla każdej jednej osoby, wybierze sobie grupę społeczną, która chce być otoczony, czyli to musi być jej matka z czwórką dzieci.” [Turystka]

¹⁹ „Chyba taki obraz dziewczyny-katoliczki, jaki ja widzę, to jest dziewczyna w kwiecistej sukience, która... jest bardzo grzeczna, nie wychyla się, nie zawsze mówi swoje zdanie, nigdy nie chce nikogo obrazić, jest skromna ee... zawsze daje dobry przykład, a ja raczej hm... znaczą mam nadzieję, że daję dobry przykład, ale wydaje mi się, że częściej mówię to, co myślę i... nie daję sobie czegoś wciskać do głowy, jeżeli się z czymś nie zgadzam” [Elżbieta]

²⁰ „Z powodów tego, że jestem osobą nieheteronormatywną i że miałem chłopaka. Więc stwierdziłem, że odchodzę, że nie będę zostawiał chłopaka po to, żeby być w Przystani. I od tego momentu już nie mam styczności w ogóle z Kościołem.” [Johanan]

²¹ „Były takie momenty, że ja się np. wstydziłam być katoliczką... nie ukrywałam tego nigdy i tak jak mówię, moje otoczenie o tym wie, natomiast były takie momenty, że ja miałam takie „no jak ja mogę komuś teraz spojrzeć w oczy?” No nie? Głównie po aferach pedofilskich w Kościele. I czułam, że wytłumaczenie się „ale ja tego nie doświadczyłam” „ale ja tego nie widziałam” jest kompletnie nie na miejscu. Mówimy o czymś głębszym niż tylko „kto widział, kto nie widział”” [GM]

²² „ponieważ dziecko jest osobą niewinną i dziecku nie każdy daje wiarę i dziecko o wielu przeżyciach bardzo boi się powiedzieć, również rodzicom” [Turystka]

²³ „Żeby Kościół był trochę bardziej odbiciem Chrystusa, który jest dla każdego” [Maciejka]

²⁴ „Widywałam go w kościele, do którego chodziłam, znałam ludzi bezpośrednio zaangażowanych w tę sprawę: ludzi, których szanowałam, a którzy musieli o tym wszystkim wiedzieć. To był taki moment znowu, takiego dużego rozczarowania: „nie no, hola. To są ludzie, którzy mi będą mówić, jak ja mam żyć?” Później... jeździłam jako nastolatka na takie obozy rekolekcyjne i znowu, rok temu aferka. Tam też się okazało. Nawet się ten ksiądz, co tam jeździł, specjalnie nie... nie zaprzeczał temu, tym oskarżeniom. Więc to była taka, powiedziałabym, trochę dla mnie taka emocjonalna ostra jazda bez trzymanki. Te wszystkie rzeczy, które gdzieś mnie tam bulwersowały na odległość zaczęły się dziać tylko mniej, zaczęły mocno mnie dotykać, to były takie momenty, kiedy ja zaczęłam stwierdzać, że ok. Ja też mogę mieć swoje poglądy, swoje sumienie, nie ze wszystkim muszę się zgadzać. No i to się przełożyło też na praktyki religijne.” [GM]

²⁵ „Uważam, że może to być niebezpieczne, takie jakby kurczowe trzymanie się pewnych... prawd, które właśnie my uważamy za objawione, za absolutne, podczas gdy osoba, która mieszka w innym miejscu na Ziemi, może wierzyć w coś zupełnie innego i jakby ja nie mam prawa jakoś czuć się wyższa czy ważniejsza, mądrzejsza od kogoś tylko dlatego, że on nie podziela mojej wiary. I mi się wydaje, że też spotkałam wiele takich osób, których postawa mnie przerażała: tzn. byli bardzo tacy... ksenofobiczni w tej swojej wierze i po prostu mnie tak... trochę zaniepokoiło to, co może się wydarzyć jeśli ktoś się staje taki bardzo, bardzo gorliwy, aż do przesady. Poczułam, że lepiej... się wycofać trochę i jakby popatrzeć na coś krytycznie, z dystansu niż pójść za daleko i stracić... stracić... rozeznanie” [Sokole Oko]

²⁶ „Mam trochę takie wrażenie, że ten moment kształtowania się mnie czy mojego sposobu przeżywania wiary w takim fundamentalnym sensie już minął - w takim sensie, że ja już jestem ukształtowana i trudno by mi było się... jakoś przystosowywać czy dopasowywać do innych form” [Sokole Oko]

²⁷ „Ja traktuję Kościół służebnie, to znaczy że on jest jakąś wspólnotą, instytucją, ramą daną mi na ziemi żeby gdzieś tam dążyć do Pana Boga. I generalnie powinien być w tym pomocny, nie przeszkadzać” [Maciejka]

²⁸ „Obraziliśmy się na Kościół, nie na Boga” [Turystka]

²⁹ „Wydaje mi się, że niewiele jest osób, z którymi można o tym z mojej perspektywy porozmawiać na ten temat” [Elżbieta]