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## TRANSFORMAREA RITUALURILOR TRADIȚIONALE

**Număr îngrijit de Irina Stahl**

### S U M A R



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*RITUALURI ÎN EVOLUȚIE*



*RELIGIA ÎN ROMÂNIA*



*VIAȚA ŞTIINȚIFICĂ*



*RECENZII ŞI NOTE DE LECTURĂ*

# FOREWORD

The theme of this special issue of the *Romanian Journal of Sociology* (*Revista română de sociologie*) – *Transformation of Traditional Rituals* – is derived from a panel convened at the 12th congress of the Société International d'Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF), held in Zagreb last June. The volume presents a collection of papers which were part of this panel (one of two panels organized by the SIEF working group on The Ritual Year).

Rituals are commonly associated with unchangeable human behaviour. Despite this, there are numerous examples that prove the contrary. Rituals do transform in response to particular circumstances, or as a direct consequence of social change. Examples of traditional rituals which have been transformed are the subject of the articles included in this volume. The texts have been compiled into three sections: *Rituals Confronted with Modernity, Rediscovery and Transformation of Rituals*, and *Rituals in Evolution.* Two papers on *Religion in Romania*, in addition to *Academic life* and *Book reviews*, complete this special issue.

The first three studies deal with rituals and traditions transformed in contact with modernity. **Tiziana Soverino** opens the volume with her article about the custom of the "Bonfire Night", or "Saint John's Night" in Ireland. Observed since the 17th century, the bonfire celebrations have registered a few changes over the years, as they have had to adapt to new changing life circumstances. Through investigation of a large array of sources, three major changes are identified: the material allowed in the fires, the commercialisation of bonfires, and the withdrawal of a certain part of the population from the festivities. The article reveals the reasons behind these trends.

In the second article, **Kinga Povedák** explores the ways in which official and lived Roman Catholic religion responded to the changes of late modernity, with a special focus on the emergence of Christian popular music. The author reveals the dynamic tensions that have arisen from the different ways in which the Church and the communities of believers refer to the pervasive spread of Christian popular music.

**Agnes Hesz** documents changes which have occurred in funerary rituals in a Transylvanian village inhabited by Hungarian Roman Catholics. These changes are consequent to the construction of a local funeral home and the emergence of local businesses offering full service for funeral receptions. The author shows how rites

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that were traditionally carried out within the household, have been moved into the public sphere, and tasks traditionally fulfilled by people nurturing social ties to the family of the deceased have been taken over by the service sector. By focusing on people's reaction to the imposed changes, this study emphasizes their agency in restructuring the ritual dimensions of their lives.

Section two, on rediscovery and transformation of rituals, is distinct with **Anders Gustavsson**'s study of a new, charismatic movement in Sweden, known as "The Oasis Movement". With a particular interest in occurrences and the discourse used within the movement, the author seeks to identify how the movement has changed over time. New rituals, accepted as signs of guidance by the Holy Spirit, arise spontaneously, but their roots are always founded in biblical examples. The Oasis Movement upholds the idea of renewal on an historical foundation, adhering to the fundamentals of the Bible and bringing them into a new age, thus experiencing a continuous oscillation between continuity and change.

The third section of the volume focuses on the evolution of rituals. While **Alexandru Rusu** offers a general overview of Roman Catholic demonology and exorcism traditions from the past to the present, **Aigars Leilbārdis** investigates the tradition of the May devotions to the Virgin Mary, in the Catholic territories of Latvia (Latgale). Both authors focus on the evolution of traditions and on the impact of socio-political factors.

The first three sections, reuniting articles referring to transformation of traditional rituals in Europe, are completed with a distinctive section on religion in Romania. The two articles which are included, written by my colleague, **Manuela Gheorghe**, and I offer a general outline of Romanian religiosity. Relying on statistical data, the articles offer an historical perspective on religious affiliation, followed by a more recent analysis which situates Romanian religiosity in the larger European context.

The section on academic life presents information about the last conference of The Ritual Year Working Group, recently held in Findhorn (Scotland), while the book review section introduces a volume by Ion Petrică and the last printed volume of The Ritual Year series.

At the end of this Foreword, I would like to express my gratitude to Sorin M. Rădulescu, Editor-in-Chief of the *Revista română de sociologie*, for the opportunity of editing this special issue, in English, and to the editorial staff, for assisting me with this task. I would also want to acknowledge the considerable contribution of Barry L. Jackson, who has thoroughly revised all of the articles and corrected the English manuscripts.

This year, the Institute of Sociology celebrates the 150$^{th}$ anniversary of the Romanian Academy, and although it is a coincidence that the publication of this special issue should be during this anniversary, I am pleased that the volume is dedicated by the Editors of the Romanian Academy to the occasion.

*Irina Stahl*

# MIDSUMMER (SAINT JOHN'S FEAST) IN IRELAND: THE OLD AND THE NEW

TIZIANA SOVERINO[*]

**ABSTRACT**

"Bonfire Night", or *Oíche Fhéile Eóin* ("Saint John's Night"), has been observed in parts of Ireland for centuries. The earliest documentary evidence of the lighting of bonfires on the eve of the feast, 23 June, dates to the 17th century. The custom was so important that it gave rise to the appellation "Bonfire Night". In the west of the country, and elsewhere, such as in Cork city, bonfire celebrations seem strong even recently. However, to survive, they must kaleidoscopically adapt to ever-changing circumstances.

Drawing on a range of sources – from the unpublished replies to National Folklore Collection (NFC) questionnaires, to twenty-first century local newspapers, and to fieldwork undertaken in 2008 – three major changes in this custom have been identified: the material allowed in the fires, the commercialisation of bonfires, and the withdrawal of a certain part of the population from the festivities.

The article will explore complementary reasons behind these trends.

**Keywords:** festival, adaptation, legislation, elderly, fundraising.

## INTRODUCTION[**]

St. John's Day – also known as Midsummer[1] – falls on 24 June. Much of the emphasis is, however, placed on the previous evening, 23 June, known as "Bonfire Night" in most cases in those parts of the country where the tradition of lighting

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[**] The author wishes to acknowledge her gratitude to Dr. Bairbre Ní Fhloinn, for her many helpful comments and suggestions on the article. Remaining errors are the author's own.

[1] The words "Bonfire Night" and "Saint John's Eve/Night" will be used interchangeably throughout this article, to denote the evening of 23 June, while "Saint John's Day" indicates 24 June only. The term "Midsummer", on the other hand, will be used to denote both 23 and 24 June.

bonfires on that night was observed, including in County Kerry. (O'Hare, 2008: 26–7) In Irish, the day is most commonly called *Oíche Fhéile Eóin* or *Oíche Shain Seáin* ("Saint John's Eve/Night"), with various dialect spellings. It is known that the Feast of Saint John, and its principal attached custom, the lighting of bonfires, has been observed in Ireland at least from the 17th century, as immortalised in the writings of Sir Piers. (printed in 1786: 123)

Yet, this is not merely an Irish feast. In the past, it was celebrated throughout Europe, and even as far as Morocco and Brazil. Even nowadays, bonfires are still lighted in many places (*e.g.* in Spain; in Ireland, "West of the Shannon"[2]).

The festival in its modern manifestations appears to be a combination of pre-Christian and Christian ideas and traditions.

This article draws primarily on original research (Soverino, 2009)[3]. The focus is on the festival from the late 19th century to the early 21st century. The material discussed draws mainly on the replies to two questionnaires: "Midsummer – The Feast of St. John" (1943, clustered in the following manuscripts: NFC 956–959; 1135; 1855–1857; 1911; 2027; 2074; 2153) and "Bonfires" (1973, NFC 1855–1857; 1911; 2027; 2074; 2153); and two minor questionnaires on "Patron Saints" (1943, NFC 945–948; 1135; 1305) and "Holy Wells" (1934, NFC 466–468; 1136; 1305; 1823). All of these questionnaires were organised and circulated by the Irish Folklore Commission (IFC)[4] and successive institutions in Ireland. The article is also based on fieldwork carried out in parts of Counties Mayo and Roscommon in June 2008 (by the author), and by members of the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin (UCD) in June 2001. Notices and articles from local journals and newspapers from the west and from other parts of Ireland have also been consulted.

The most common English name for the feast in Ireland is "(the) Bonfire Night". (Soverino, 2009: 3–10; 54–61) The terms are here telling, since bonfires are often the *sine qua non* of the festival[5]. As put by a tradition-bearer from Co. Donegal: "Just as the sun set (...) nothing was to be seen all over the district but fires". (NFC 958: 98)

The custom is still surviving in parts of Ireland, especially in the west of the country, and in other areas, such as Cork city[6].

[2] As put by some tradition-bearers (NFC manuscript, heretofore NFC 959: 19).

[3] For references to specific pages of the NFC primary sources, see Soverino 2009.

[4] Since its inception in 1935, the Irish Folklore Commission, which became the Department of Irish Folklore in 1971, and subsequently the UCD Delargy Centre of Irish Folklore and the National Folklore Collection in 2005, focussed on collecting traditions of the people.

[5] It may be noted in passing, however, that the lighting of bonfires is by no means the only custom associated with the Feast of Saint John in Ireland.

[6] In the east of the country, bonfires were lighted on a different summer day (28 or 29 June, respectively the Eve and the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul), or on other occasions (*e.g.* on Halloween in Dublin).

In what one may perceive as a contradiction, a festival of possible Anglo-Norman origin has survived in the most "Gaelic" areas of Ireland. From an historical perspective, it can be noted that there are either no very early literary references to the lighting of Midsummer bonfires in Ireland, or that they have not yet come to light. While the absence of records for the festival in the medieval literature is normally considered a reflection of historical reality, the lack of literary references until the 17th century may call for explanations of a different kind. The maxim according to which "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" must perhaps be borne in mind in this case. However, it seems justified to assume that the festival was introduced in Ireland, or at least strengthened, by the Anglo-Normans from the 12th century onwards. Although Saint John the Baptist was probably considered relevant in Ireland already in pre-Norman times, it is likely that his cult was intensified, and spread at a popular level, following the Anglo-Norman arrival. It is from this time onwards that statues of the saint were commissioned, and produced, in an Irish context, no doubt also encouraged by the establishment of Continental monastic orders in Ireland (MacLeod, 1946: 95–97); and several churches, both Catholic and of other denominations, were dedicated to St. John the Baptist.

## EMPHASIS ON RECENT TRENDS

Festivals may be considered living links between the past, the present and the future. They go back to the past, as they were often observed by ancestors (origins); simultaneously, their survival indicates that they are relevant now (functions); finally, they are constantly changing to survive in the future.

It is thus hardly surprising that the Feast of Saint John in Ireland is also adapting to novel circumstances. This article will explore some of the principal changes in the observances and celebrations of the festival, in relation to its principal custom: the lighting of bonfires.

In the past, there were two principal kinds of bonfires usually lighted on Saint John's Eve, 23 June, namely family and communal bonfires. Family bonfires, as suggested by the name itself, were relatively small, private conflagrations, which involved the participation of the extended family, and they were usually held in the vicinity of the house or on the farm. The communal bonfires, on the other hand, saw the coming together of one or more townlands, representing major annual social occasions (Danaher, 1972: 137–138). Indeed, Saint John's Eve bonfires constituted one of the principal opportunities for the members of the local community or townland to gather together on a yearly basis. Even elderly members of the community, who might rarely be seen outdoors throughout the rest of the year, frequently joined in the celebrations associated with the St. John's Eve bonfires.

Three major trends have emerged from fieldwork conducted in June 2008, in parts of Counties Mayo and Roscommon, and from an examination of newspapers from the west and north of Ireland published in June 2001 in addition to local journals, newsletters, magazines, and of more recent YouTube videos of celebrations. These are as follows:

***1.*** Reactions to the prohibition of burning tyres/rubber/toxic material because of legislation.

Principal source of information: fieldwork interviews conducted in June 2008[7].

***2.*** The organisation of bonfires by businesses such as pubs and restaurants, or by local authorities; and charity fundraising events held on or around Saint John's Night (*e.g.* "Dancing at Crossroads" event, Kilmore, County Wexford).

Principal source of information: selected local newspaper notices and articles.

***3.*** The withdrawal of the elderly from the bonfires.

Principal source of information: replies to NFC questionnaires.

## FIRST TREND: REACTIONS TO THE PROHIBITION OF BURNING TYRES AND RUBBER

New regulations, aiming to protect the air quality, came into force in Ireland in 1987, with the Air Pollution Act (*http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1987/en/act/pub/0006/index.html*). The Act specifically prohibits, *inter alia*, smoke consisting of "heavy metals and their compounds" (*ibidem*). Rubber tyres, when burned, release zinc oxide, toxic dioxins and carcinogens (Sharma *et al.*, 2000: 381–382), *i.e.* heavy metals. Those substances can cause both environmental pollution, and health hazards for those exposed to them.

As clear from the quotations from the 2008 interviews provided below, all tradition-bearers, regardless of age and location, agree that tyres, rubber and other rubbish formed a substantial part of the material burnt in Midsummer bonfires in the past, but which were subsequently forbidden, by law.

INTERVIEW 1 (CO. MAYO)

**Tiziana**: Yeah. And, what is the attitude of the guards, or the police, the way...?

**Tradition-bearer**: Oh, they never interfered at all, no problem, not at all. Nowadays, there would be a problem nowadays with the pollution, like, because there would be lots of tyres and rubber, and stuff like that, and you are not supposed to burn them anymore, yeah, because of… that's the law, you know. But I think they sneak a few in anyway.

**Tiziana**: Yeah, I mean, it's just an old tradition.

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[7] Recordings of the interviews are available in the NFC Audio Archive; for full-length transcripts of the interviews, see Soverino, 2009: 423–445.

**Tradition-bearer**: It is (?) a chance nowadays to get rid of all extra bits and pieces around the house, you know, like, everyone has more than they need, beds and mattresses and chairs, or whatever, you know, and it seems that you can't burn them in any other way, people store them up and keep them, and get rid of [them].

INTERVIEW 2 (CO. ROSCOMMON)
**Tiziana**: Did you put rubbish?
**Tradition-bearer**: Yeah, yeah, not so much rubbish, not so much rubbish, but we would get tyres, bald tyres, you wouldn't get away with that now, you know; OK, you can understand why, they are noxious fuel. And to start a fire we would get used oil – we used to call it burnt oil. The garage will keep the burnt oil, you know, when they take the oil out of the engine, you know, it's all black and sticky, and it's, you know, they are changing the oil, but they'd keep the oil for us, and we would use the used oil to start the fire. So, I mean, when you start a fire, it wasn't great to start with now, you know, you are talking about tyres, and burnt oil, and maybe turf. (Years ago).

INTERVIEW 3 (CO. MAYO)
**Tradition-bearer**: All the bonfires, you said... they are all gone (?...*Unclear*).
**Interviewer 1**: Why is that, do you think?
**Tradition-bearer**: They just stop from burning anyway, that's that, you shouldn't be at it.
**Interviewer 2**: Is it the legislation has stopped do?
**Tradition-bearer**: Oh, yeah, you are not allowed to burn the tyres there, like.
**Interviewer 2**: Oh, that's why.
**Tradition-bearer**: (...?) a few cardboard boxes in it. We did buy lots of tyres once, and you burnt them, not now, no, finished, finished now (...). Mostly now they would have the bonfire, like, at their backyard, where they won't be seen. They are trying to do that now, because the Guards will be out. If they saw the black smoke, they can come in here. (...)
**Interviewer 2**: So a whole pile of people tonight will be breaking the law then...?
**Tradition-bearer**: Yes, yes.
**Interviewer 1**: That's right.

INTERVIEW 4 (CO. MAYO)
**Child 1**: I might ask my dad could he put some tyres in.
**Tiziana**: Oh, what's the name of this... *(interruption)*?
**Child 2**: No, you are not allowed tyres, you are not allowed tyres.
**Tiziana**: But you are going to have them... no? You are not allowed anymore? I think...
**Child 2**: It's illegal to burn them in Ireland.

We can trace an evolution of the material put in the Midsummer bonfires in Ireland, as indicated by the questionnaire replies. Until the 1950s, it consisted primarily of the most readily-available type of local fuel and material, *e.g.* turf, wood, furze, heather, cow-dung.

From the 1950s, discarded rubber tyres (from bicycles and motor cars) became increasingly widespread, as clear from the replies to the 1970s questionnaire on bonfires at least until the late 1980s (Soverino, 2009: 121–132; 188–241).

In 1987, legislation prohibiting them was promulgated, as mentioned. As a consequence, people nowadays avoid putting tyres in the bonfires, or they put them in at the last minute.

The tradition-bearers from Co. Mayo and Roscommon quoted above seem to have an ambiguous attitude towards the topic. Tradition-bearers 1 and 3 seem to imply that, even though the burning of tyres was in theory forbidden, local authorities may turn a blind eye for the night, and that is the reason why some Saint John's Eve bonfires have been moved from public spaces to backyards, to try and make the black smoke less visible for the police to intervene. On the other hand, informants 2 and 4 seem more guarded: they claim that tyres are not burnt any longer, perhaps out of fear of doing or reporting something illegal.

In connection with the Midsummer bonfires as occasions to burn rubbish, a somewhat controversial article, dated to June 2001, reports that an Anti-Dump Action Committee organised a barbecue for "Bonfire Night"[8]. Now, to this writer, it looks quite contradictory that a group interested in putting an end to the illegal disposal of rubbish made use of the tradition of "Bonfire Night" to set up one of their events. Perhaps it was intentionally done, in order to show that Bonfire Night can be enjoyed even without the burning of illegal material, as no bonfire is referred to in connection with such event, the barbeque being the only form of entertainment mentioned. Alternatively, the choice of holding an Anti-Dump Action Committee barbecue on the Eve of the Feast of Saint John might have been a coincidence.

In more recent times, environmental regulations have become even stricter. The Waste Management (Prohibition of Waste Disposal by Burning) Regulation 2009, S. I. No. 286 of 2009, imposes a fine of up to 3,000 euro to those who breach it by burning waste, and also urges people to report neighbours or other individuals whom they may catch *in flagrante delicto* (*http://www.epa.ie/waste/householder/burn/#.VjS-bWvakQI*).

It remains to be established whether this more recent law is regularly implemented.

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[8] See the *Connacht Tribune*, 22 June 2001, 8: "Anti-dump grouping hold big night out". Newbridge Anti-Dump Action Committee are holding a fundraising barbecue on Bonfire Night (Saturday, June 23) with music by Mike and John. A great night is promised and all support would be appreciated (...)".

## SECOND TREND: THE ORGANISATION OF BONFIRES BY BUSINESSES; CHARITY FUNDRAISING EVENTS

The commercial developments of Saint John's Feast celebrations in Ireland, and the organisation of a variety of fundraising events at the time of the festival, represent another trend. This trend, which has developed in the last twenty years, has emerged from an examination of local journals, newspapers, parish newsletters and, to a lesser extent, from NFC manuscripts themselves. The fieldwork carried out by members of the UCD Department of Irish Folklore in June 2001, and the fieldwork undertaken by the present writer in parts of Counties Roscommon and Mayo in June 2008, have shown that, in a number of instances, Saint John's Eve bonfires are still a spontaneous event, undertaken by and for the young members of local communities, and occasionally for the whole community. This, however, does not always hold true. In some places, the celebrations of Saint John's Feast have moved away from the form they had in the past, assuming commercial and charity connotations. What is now being witnessed is perhaps an example of the "Second Life" of folklore, when folklore material is used "in an environment that differs from its original cultural context". (Honko, 1991: 43) The First Life of folklore, on the other hand, is "the natural, almost imperceptible existence of folklore in the folklore community (…), neither noticed, recognised, or emphasised" (*ibidem*). "The Second Life" of folklore may be detected in the observances of the Midsummer festival in other countries. For instance, in Turin, the practice of lighting the Saint John's Eve bonfires was abandoned in the 1850s, and was then reintroduced into the cultural scene of that city from 1971 onwards. (Flamini cited in Bonino, 2007: 3–8) To return to Ireland, the dates of some of the bonfires and associated celebrations organized by public houses and restaurants, as well as of fundraising events, are usually moveable, being held on the Friday or Saturday closer to the 24 June.

The commercial potential of folklore and of calendar events in particular, is substantial. This is shown, for example, by the sale of religious objects, such as rosaries, at the "pattern"[9]. The sale of fancy dresses and ready-made decorations for Halloween in Ireland, and for Carnival in Continental Europe, are examples showing the level of commercialization which can be attached to festivals. It does not come as a surprise, then, that the custom of lighting Midsummer bonfires, along with the more recent open-air barbecues to accompany them, is also being commercialized, in at least parts of the west of Ireland. An analysis of newspapers from that area of the country for June 2001 has indicated that many public houses and restaurants offer a ready-made bonfire and/or barbecue on the grounds of their premises. These events are often accompanied by a band playing live music.

[9] From the Irish *patrún*, it indicates a religious pilgrimage, which was usually associated with a patron saint and was often held on an annual basis (Ó Giolláin, 2005: 11).

An example is found in the *Roscommon Herald* dated to 20 June 2001, where, as part of the "Entertainment" section, was written:

> The Corskeagh Lounge and Restaurant (Farrell's) – Frenchpark. Saturday, June 23: Bonfire and Barbecue with Open Air Session (weather permitting), fancy dress parade at 9 o'clock.
>
> (Roscommon Herald, 20 June 2001: 31)

This appears to be a fairly recent development, perhaps paralleling the shift of the Irish *céilí*, or informal social gatherings of neighbours and friends, from private fireplaces, to public-house settings (Brennan, 1999: 136). Likewise, the dances, which were held at crossroads and other outdoor locations up to the 1930s, moved to the dance halls under the Dance Hall Act of 1935 (*ibidem*, 125–126), later shifting to other venues such as clubs. Numerous informants, when talking about Saint John's Feast, also stated that the prohibition on holding outdoor dances had a bearing on the survival of the customs associated with Saint John's Feast. For instance, one informant from the Ballintober area of County Roscommon remarked, in the late 1970s, that:

> The Dance Halls first injured the bonfire, for they one and all held a Bonfire Night Dance for just a few pence. At the start of this, all the young folk went, now it's the singing pub. What a pity – the beautiful wide tarred roads now for dancing – but then it would mean a car or lorry a minute; what a change from the bicycles along the roadside.
>
> (NFC 1911: 23)

It may be argued that the organisation of some Midsummer bonfires by pubs and restaurants is not merely an exploitation of an ancient festival for profit, but perhaps also a form of adaptation to modern lifestyles. Firstly, many people nowadays are accustomed to ready-made living, so to speak, as shown, for example, by the vast array of ready-made meals available in supermarkets. Consequently, a good number of people who would like to attend a Midsummer bonfire are simply too busy, or lazy to contribute to the gathering of the material necessary for it. Furthermore, an element of profit associated with Saint John's Feast was already present in former times, for a few tradition-bearers remarked that drinks were sold in the vicinity of the Midsummer bonfires (for example NFC 957: 118, Kilcommon area, County Mayo), or that people, at the end of the bonfire celebrations, would stop in the local pub for drinks. (NFC 957: 198, Kiltoghert area, County Leitrim) Not only that, but stalls selling drink, foodstuffs and other objects were also present in the case of religious patterns[10], in Ireland and elsewhere, showing that not even in the past there was a real dichotomy between sacred and profane, genuine and commercial.

[10] As already indicated.

It may thus be claimed that the organising of the Midsummer bonfires by pubs and restaurants, while representing a modern development of the celebrations, and possibly belonging to the "Second Life" of folklore, has stemmed from the time-honoured tradition of buying drinks at the local pub when coming home from the Saint John's Eve bonfires. Perhaps it is also of some significance that, at least by the 1970s, some of the places where Midsummer bonfires were lighted were conveniently "close to the pubs", possibly because such hostelries were local meeting points, and it would have been easier for the people to celebrate in the local public house after the bonfires had been lighted. (for example NFC 1856: 42, Lackagh area, County Galway) Only one more step was needed to have the pubs themselves organise the whole Saint John's Eve celebrations, something which eventually happened in some cases.

Undoubtedly, in some cases, the pubs and restaurants have taken charge of the whole Midsummer festivities, which were formerly organised and carried out by individuals and community groups without money-making goals. This fact should be evaluated against the backdrop of the pub taking the place of informal social gatherings in private houses and at crossroads, a phenomenon that gained more and more momentum from the second half of the twentieth century in Ireland. Additionally, as mentioned, the acceptance of ready-made and passive entertainment, partly caused by a more hectic and busy lifestyle, may also have contributed. Obviously, there is also a profit element involved, for, at times at least, the people attending the bonfires-cum-barbecue and the live music organised by pubs and restaurants, pay a fee to take part in the event. Even when there is no cover charge, the bonfire draws customers to the premises, and thus leads to an increase in sales and revenue. But one is reminded of the old custom, current in certain places of Ireland, according to which everyone attending the bonfire had to contribute his or her share of fuel, or of the custom of "giving a penny for the bonfire", something that was often requested by groups of youths carrying out a door-to-door collection for bonfire purposes. (Soverino, 2009: 130–132; 230–241) Perhaps, then, considering the enormous changes that have occurred in Irish society in the last fifty or sixty years, the fee that sometimes people pay to attend the bonfires in pubs represents the modern counterpart of those old customs of "giving something" for the bonfire. It remains to be established if the custom of having the Midsummer bonfires prepared by commercial enterprises will ultimately survive, as it appears to be a fairly recent development, yet in embryo.

A second relatively recent development of the celebrations of Midsummer in Ireland consists of Saint John's Eve and surrounding days and evenings being used to hold fundraising events. It may be noted that there are thousands of fundraising events organised in Ireland every year, which unite the generosity of the Irish with their love of entertainment. The exploitation of the feast of Saint John with its bonfire for charity and philanthropic purposes falls into this category. Once again, an analysis of a sample of local journals, magazines, parish newsletters and newspapers, from late-twentieth century and early twenty-first century Ireland, shows that in various parts of the island, from County Mayo in the west to County Wexford in the east, Saint John's Feast has been exploited as a premium time for holding fundraising events. Concerning this, it should be emphasised that, in some cases, the clustering of outdoor charity events around the 21/24 June might have to do with the fact that the weather is more likely to be clement during this period of the year than at other times. On the other hand, a number of charity events scheduled around Midsummer appear to represent a conscious attempt, on the part of the organisers, to take repossession of ancient customs. Those customs are often deemed as part of the heritage and identity of Ireland, and they are said to have been forgotten, or no longer practised, as clear, for instance, from comments about the "Dancing at the Crossroads" event. Many charity events held on or around Saint John's Eve include the lighting of bonfires, or the organisation of a barbecue – similarly to the regular, non-fundraising events organised by venues, as noted. Other events, such as the kindling of candles to be brought in procession to a mountain top[11], may also derive from the custom of lighting Midsummer bonfires on such heights. (Soverino, 2009: 102–105)

Perhaps one of the most telling fundraising happenings, openly recalling old customs which were specifically, although not exclusively, associated with Saint John's Feast, is "Dancing at the Crossroads" event. (Dillon, 2005–2006: 82–84) Based in Ballycogley, County Wexford, this successful event was hosted for three consecutive years from 2002 (*ibidem*). Organised by local people and clergy, (*ibidem*, 83) its aim is to restore the old and often half-forgotten custom of dancing at the crossroads, which formed part and parcel of life in rural Ireland. Although practised on many other occasions throughout the year also, as mentioned, dancing formed part of the Midsummer celebrations in Ireland. This is undoubtedly shown by the many informants who replied to the 1943 and 1973 questionnaires about Saint John's Feast and about bonfires, as indicated by an examination of the relevant NFC manuscripts. (Soverino, 2009: 144–147; 299) The organisers of the fundraising event "Dancing at the Crossroads" seem to have been well aware of this, so much so that they decided to hold the event around the 22 and 23 June each summer. At the same time, the exceptional number of people attending "Dancing at the Crossroads" (more than one thousand people assembled there in 2003, for instance) meant that a substantial amount of money was also collected, furnishing much-needed funds for charities such as Hospice Homecare, Concern, Special Olympics, and the cancer treatment unit at Wexford General Hospital. (Dillon, 2005–6: 82–84) Apart from Irish dancing, the charity event comprised many other

[11] From the *Leitrim Observer*, 20 June 2001, 8 (Keadue/Arigna/Ballyfarnon community news): "BONFIRE NIGHT. The now annual lighting of the "Midsummer Candle" at the Mount on the 6 000-year-old collapsed chamber grave on top of Kilronan Mountain will take place at midnight on Saturday night, weather permitting. All who wish to walk up to light the "fire" should meet at the Presbytery at 11.00. The walk is an easy one but different. Anyone who wishes may come along".

disparate activities and performances, such as live music, singing, comedy, clowns, mummers, a barbecue and fireworks (*ibidem*).

As noted, the celebration of Saint John’s Feast, especially in its more modern and commercialized forms, or for charity, has in some cases shifted to the weekends. This is possibly because those are the times when people are more prone to celebrate. Taking place in the late evening, Midsummer parties are likely to continue until very late at night; if held during the week, this may cause problems for people who have to get up early the following morning. Those problems are mitigated if the celebrations are held on a Friday or Saturday night. It may also be noted that different parts of the population are likely to be targeted by the Midsummer bonfires organised by public houses, and by those prepared by families or communities. The earlier are probably addressed primarily to an audience of unmarried people, since there is a ban on admitting young people to pubs after a certain time at night. The latter, on the other hand, seem to be attended primarily by children and youths.

It appears that a moveable date for the lighting of Midsummer bonfires does not generally apply to those bonfires that are more spontaneously prepared by local communities, most of which are held on 23 June, Saint John’s Eve, each year. This, at least, is what emerged from the fieldwork carried out in June 2008; and this point was corroborated by an investigation of recently-collected material. However, it should also be noted that these more spontaneous bonfires are primarily prepared by and for children, teenagers and their parents, and that most of the older children and teenagers do not have to attend school at this time of the year, since pupils of secondary school age are already on holidays by 23 June. Finally, it is also possible that the shifting of these Midsummer celebrations organised by pubs and other commercial venues to the weekend nearest to Saint John’s Day, ultimately betrays a secularization of Irish society, although, even in the first half of the twentieth-century, some informants did not consider Saint John’s Day a religious festival.

Perhaps some folklorists belonging to the old school of thought would be quick to dismiss these new developments of Saint John’s Feast, such as the bonfire and the barbecue prepared by public houses and restaurants, and the fundraising events associated with it, as unworthy of study, regarding them as spurious (re)-inventions of tradition. However, the present writer is of the opinion that folk customs and beliefs are worthy of investigation, even when they are relatively new, or re-invented. Folklore does not live exclusively in the past; it is also part and parcel of the present, and this is exactly what makes the academic discipline of folklore challenging and thriving. It is argued here that any given custom or tradition will, at one stage or another, have to change in order to adapt to new social and cultural milieus, while customs failing to do so will often be abandoned. Since life in Ireland, as in the rest of Western Europe, has changed enormously in the course of the last one hundred and fifty years and even more so from the 1950s, it is only to be expected that the customs surrounding Saint John's Feast are also changing. The fact that pubs and restaurants have sometimes begun to take charge of those celebrations, and the organisation of fundraising events around Midsummer, represents new trends in the festival. It is possible that, in the future, events such as those described above will increase, and maybe even replace the more spontaneous bonfires organised by local communities and children. It was also noted above that the bonfires organized by public houses and the bonfires organised by communities seem to be addressed to different kinds of audiences: the earlier target mainly adults, the latter target mainly children and their parents. Already in the 1970s, one tradition-bearer, from the Ahamlish area of County Sligo, recognised that on Saint John's Eve, while children lit bonfires, adults preferred to go to the public house:

> All people in the locality went to the bonfire. Nowadays only the children go, most of the older people now go to the public houses for the social activities.
>
> (NFC 1856: 135)

Considering this, it is thus possible that both kinds of Midsummer bonfires will continue to survive side by side.

An analysis of the newspapers from June 2001 shows that both family and communal bonfires were still lit, depending on the areas and on local circumstances. Moreover, it is also apparent that new, "untraditional" activities, such as children's face painting, adult golf, and so on, were being carried out around, or in connection with, the bonfires. In some cases, a fancy dress parade was also mentioned. (Roscommon Herald, 20 June 2001: 31)

The most common attitude shown by journalists in local newspaper articles examined by this writer on the subject of St. John's Eve bonfires is to view them as a harmless, time-honoured amusement to be cherished, although they noted that there might also be problems associated with them, at times. The following article, taken from the *Ulster Herald*, is a typical example of that attitude:

> For many, the tradition of bonfire night has died out because of other such attractions such as televisions and computers but not in one home in Trillick. The McCaughey family of Badoney have kept this age-old June practice alive over the years, and this year was no exception. On Saturday evening last, the night sky glowed over the family home as one of the biggest bonfires seen in the district raged, fuelled with old tyres, old logs and anything else that was considered obsolete. Friends and neighbours gathered to see the inferno, to renew acquaintance and to talk about the events of the day. However not everything does always go according to plan. Patsy recalls that last year's fire took place in a field near the home. This year his brother Vincent went to cut the grass on that same particular field, but after a few swathes he noticed the mower wasn't cutting as freely as usual. On examination he noticed fine wire jammed in the machinery – yes, you have guessed it – the wire from the tyres

> was playing havoc and caused more than a few headaches. Patsy made sure the same thing didn't happen this year.
>
> (Ulster Herald, 28 June 2001: 19)

Moving forward in time, the attitude of journalists towards "Bonfire Night" was still largely unchanged in June 2008, as shown by the following piece, reported in the *Roscommon Herald*:

> LOCAL NOTES – BOYLE. "BONFIRES":
>
> There weren't too many bonfires again this year on the traditional "bonfire night" which was last night (23 June), although some smoke was visible early in the evening. Bonfire night is another tradition that is dying out all over Ireland, which is a shame really as kids never will know the *craic* and rivalry, and weeks of planning that went in to the storing of tyres at secret locations and waiting for the surprise raid from a neighbouring "gang". Bonfire night was awaited with excitement for months by the youths of Boyle, and if you were lucky enough to know an obliging adult with a trailer, then a trip to JT Emmet's in Ballyfarnon was requested to see could the much sought after tractor tyres[12] be obtained – alas all no more and all stories that will go down in history, although it is reported that one or two youth-groups had their own bonfires for their members.
>
> (Roscommon Herald, 24 June 2008: 26)

What is most striking about the above article is the great sense of nostalgia for a past tradition that is dying out, or, at least, that is felt to be on the wane, by the journalist. It is possible that Midsummer bonfires are "always going and never gone", since even in the early twentieth century there was talk of the custom disappearing (Soverino, 2009: 195–196; 212–219), whereas it is still vibrant in parts of Ireland, *e.g.* parts of Counties Mayo, Roscommon and Donegal. Obviously, however, many changes have been introduced in the celebrations. Possibly the author of the *Roscommon Herald* article quoted above was alluding to this, although transformations in the St. John's Feast celebrations were already well under way in the 1970s, as shown by the replies to the bonfire questionnaire. It must also be emphasised that the days immediately preceding the 23 June 2008 were extremely wet and windy in many areas of Ireland, something that might have determined the somewhat sparser lighting of Midsummer bonfires in that particular year. Sometimes tradition-bearers fail to recognize a custom they have engaged in is still observed if it has changed substantially in the meantime. But in today's fast-changing world, as already mentioned, it is vital for folk customs and traditions to adapt in order to survive.

[12] We may note, in passing, that tyres are fondly remembered as an integral part of the Midsummer celebrations by this journalist of the *Roscommon Herald*, who does not mention environmental pollution or health hazards.

By and large, then, the newspaper accounts have shown that, besides the various modernizations, the celebrations of St. John's Eve are still alive, although at times the very people who perpetuate them are not aware of the full significance the lighting of the bonfires had for their own ancestors. But the big bonfires are still blazing, and maybe this is all that matters.

## THIRD TREND: WITHDRAWAL OF THE ELDERLY

The principal and most significant shift in the celebrations of the Midsummer bonfires in Ireland, commencing around the middle of the twentieth century, consisted of the withdrawal of the older people from the bonfires. This was evident from an investigation of the replies to the 1943 questionnaire on Midsummer, and it emerged even more clearly from the replies to the 1973 questionnaire on bonfires. (Soverino, 2009: 195–199) By the latter period, Saint John's Eve bonfires were mostly lit by groups of children and/or youths, especially teenagers, who were occasionally accompanied by their parents as a form of supervision. Numerous informants explicitly stated that adults and older people did not join the crowd gathered around the bonfire anymore. This was perceived as something to be regretted, and described with nostalgia and a sense of disappointment. (for example NFC 1856: 14, Moylough area, County Galway) By contrast, as is apparent from the replies to the 1943 questionnaire, in the late nineteenth century, and often into the first half of the twentieth, essentially the whole community had gathered around the Midsummer bonfires and, although the older people often left earlier than the young (Soverino, 2009; 305; NFC 957: 85; NFC 1856: 28–30), it was they who were responsible for carrying out the most overtly ceremonial aspects of the celebrations. It was very common for the bonfire to be lit by the oldest member of the community present (Soverino, 2009: 195; 242–243; O'Hare, 2008: 36)[13]. Furthermore, prayers said around the bonfire, such as the Rosary, were mostly led by older people. (Soverino, 2009: 195–196; 418–422) Even more importantly, the crop-and cattle-protection rites associated with Saint John's Eve bonfires were undertaken by the elderly, in some cases, at least. (*ibidem*, 195–196; 380–381)

There is undoubtedly a close link between the non-participation of the oldest community members in the bonfire celebrations and the wane of prayers and crop- and cattle-protection rites at Midsummer in Ireland – as prayers and apotropaic rites ebbed significantly from the second half of the twentieth century, when many elderly stopped attending the bonfires. The exact relationship between the withdrawal of the older people, and the wane of prayers and protective rites, however, remains to be determined. Although there are some exceptions to this

[13] O'Hare is here specifically referring to Midsummer bonfires in County Kerry, as opposed to in other parts of Ireland.

situation, many tradition-bearers, when answering the 1943 and the 1973 questionnaires, remarked that the Midsummer bonfires were losing, or had lost, most of their ceremonial aspects, as they were by then lit just by children or youths and solely for the purpose of having fun. For example, an informant, from the Ballindoon area of County Galway, reported in 1943:

> The practice of lighting bonfires is still practised here, but the custom is shorn of all its old time significance. It is now just to amuse and perhaps offer a meeting place for youngsters. The jumping through the smoke and throwing a live coal into the field has ceased. The people have no idea of the origin of the custom, but they have ceased to associate it with St. John and some have come by the information that it is of pagan origin and has something to do with the fire worshipping of pre-Christian Ireland.
>
> (NFC 957: 60)

While the withdrawal of the elderly from Midsummer celebrations was a very widespread phenomenon from the 1970s onwards, in at least some parts of Ireland – as indicated by the replies to the bonfire questionnaire from that decade – that trend was well under way even at an earlier stage. For instance, a tradition-bearer from west County Limerick commented in the 1930s:

> Old people now living do not remember these things (...) I know Athea for the past forty years and the only fires of this kind I saw here were those made by young people in a dozen different places. (...) The interest of the elders in the festival had clearly died out (emphasis by the author; Danaher, 1972: 135)

The loss of interest in Midsummer bonfires by the older people should be considered against the wider background of the changing nature of society and lifestyles in the last century or so. While a detailed examination and discussion of those social changes cannot be undertaken here, a few possible reasons for the withdrawal of the elderly from the bonfires will be suggested. These can be said to fall under three main headings: social, economic and educational. It must be pointed out that such reasons are not to be considered mutually exclusive, for they could, and probably have, appeared side by side.

The principal social change which might have affected the participation of older people consists of the shift from extended family to nuclear family situations. (Kennedy, 2001: 46–47) By no means exclusive to Ireland, this is a wider phenomenon. In traditional Ireland, grandparents and other elderly relatives usually lived with their children and grandchildren. Thus, for example, certain types of vernacular dwellings contained a bed outshot, that was the sleeping space occupied by grandparents. But from the 1950s onwards, more families tended to be nuclear, that is to say, made up of parents and children only, while the elderly more frequently live alone, or took up residence in homes for the elderly (*ibidem)*. As a consequence, elderly people have not been participating in the life and activities of their relatives or of their community as much as previously. Furthermore, nowadays the widespread use of motor cars, which are not accessible to many older individuals, has contributed to the marginalization of the elderly in some cases, especially in rural areas, where public transport is poor or non-existent. (Treacy *et al*., 2004: 183)

Among the economic factors is the tendency, over the last fifty years or so, to move away from farming and husbandry. In particular since the 1990s, the great success of the tertiary sector in Ireland and the growth of urban areas have played a major role in the economy of the country. (Clinch *et al.*, 2002: 24–42; Walsh, 2007: 146) Since there was a deep and close connection between the lighting of the Saint John's Eve bonfires in the countryside and the protection of crops and cattle, the fact that many people nowadays have no crops under cultivation, and own no cattle, possibly has had a bearing on the nature of the celebrations themselves, which have become more and more associated with youths, children and fun, and less with protective rites.

Finally, the increase in the levels of formal education, and the abandonment of traditional lifestyles and world-views could also have contributed to the disinterest of the elderly in Midsummer bonfires. A tendency to rationalise and consider only scientific explanations and proceedings as legitimate means that, for the average person, chemical fertilizers are now deemed much more effective than the ashes from the Midsummer bonfires. So, in reality, there was no longer any need for the older people, who tended to perform crop protection rites, to join the bonfire celebrations. Such an attitude was expressed by a tradition-bearer, referring to the use of the ashes on cattle:

> My father R.I.P. used to say that it was the way they had for killing the fleas on the cattle before DDT [talking about cattle protection rites].
>
> (NFC 2153: 153)

Although probably said with humour, this statement may well reflect the world-view of some tradition-bearers. In many places in Ireland cattle were driven through the May Day and/or Midsummer bonfires to rescue or preserve them from disease and supernatural evil influences. The two matters – ailments and supernatural hostile powers – were inextricably correlated in the world-view of the Irish people who lived in rural areas in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

A widespread change in the world-view and way of life of many Irish people is also confirmed by the fact that, with a couple of exceptions, supernatural legends associated with the bonfires were no longer reported in the answers to the 1973 questionnaire about bonfires. This situation stands in sharp contrast to that pertaining in the replies to the 1943 questionnaire on the Feast of Saint John, which included some supernatural legends. (Soverino, 2009: 236–256)[14]

[14] An article on the topic is currently being prepared by this writer.

**SAINT JOHN'S FEAST IN IRELAND: IN A STATE OF FLUX**

Many Midsummer bonfires in Ireland are now lighted just for and by children and youngsters. Should this be considered a degradation of the custom, or merely a change, having no bearing on the vitality of the observance itself?

Even in the 1940s, tradition-bearers lamented that the tradition was in decline, although martial conflicts may have played a part. Fifteen tradition-bearers remarked that the custom of lighting Midsummer bonfires suffered a serious blow because of wars. (*e.g.* NFC 957: 167) The first half of the twentieth century saw the First World War, (1914–1918) the Irish Civil War (1920s) and the Second World War. (1939–1945)[15] During those periods, it was considered dangerous for people to congregate at night in outdoor locations, for two main reasons: because, during the Civil War, the British Authorities considered all outdoor meetings a potential threat to the British occupation of Ireland, and because of the blackout. With regard to the latter, people were not allowed to light bonfires in the evenings. It is very possible that wars thus played a significant role in determining the abandonment of the lighting of the St. John's Eve bonfires, at least in those areas where the tradition was not strong enough to continue after being interrupted for a few years.

As a consequence of the deep-seated and powerful changes which have taken place in the western world in the last century, and increasingly from the 1920s, the way in which folklore is interpreted, lived and studied has shifted. Among the many transformations there was the development of a society in which mass-produced goods, and a popular culture often encouraged and dictated by the mass media, came to the fore. In our society, globalization is a strong reality: a wide range of ideas, material goods and ways of life are thus now found side by side in the same surroundings. While, on the one hand, this means that different cultural values and ideas are more easily accessible to many people, it also means, on the other hand, that globalization could cause the loss of local identity and traditions. Those could be replaced by a more generalised, often commercially or profit-driven cheap version of various local concepts, and by objects from around the world, available in cities and small towns alike. (Ó Giolláin, 2000: 171–84) In contrast, however, as a reaction to the relative flattening of cultures posed as a threat by globalization, a tendency to re-appropriate one's own local "heritage", and "authentic traditions", has also come to the fore, as shown by the development of the "slow-food" movement all across Europe and the USA, whose aim is to (re)establish foodstuffs and drinks typical of the local area, and often coming from an old tradition, which is also, by the way, often seen as a tourism opportunity.

That same trend occurred at many levels, so that, for instance, as emphasised by Ó Giolláin, pilgrimages to holy wells closely linked to local saints have often

[15] Although Ireland remained neutral during the Second World War, whose period was known as "The Emergency", the war obviously affected Ireland too.

been replaced by more universal-type pilgrimages, dedicated to international saints or to the Virgin Mary. (1991: 211–212)

The role of Saint John's Feast in relation to all of this is exceptional. Although associated with a foreign saint, and probably introduced into Ireland by the Anglo-Normans[16], the feast managed to survive quite strongly in part of Ireland, including the west.

It has thus often, quite paradoxically, been equated with Irish, Celtic and Gaelic identity, as opposed to English identity.

There have been attempts to localize the festival of Saint John. As Saint John the Baptist was a foreign saint, of a by-gone area, he needed to be linked to the world of the tradition-bearers, to better mediate between the people and God, and be more relevant. Therefore, for instance, some informants claimed that Saint John had once visited Ireland, or that the 24 June was not the festival of Saint John the Baptist, but of a local saint bearing the same first name:

> In this locality the festival became associated with *Naomh Eoin* (St. John), a local saint whose habitation was *Teach Eoin*, St. John's Point.
>
> (NFC 1857: 122)

Alongside that, in recent times, the influence of globalization has also been felt on the lighting of the bonfires. For example, one tradition-bearer, from the Killorglin area of County Kerry, argued that, whereas in the past the main bonfire of the year was lit on Saint John's Eve, in the last few years that bonfire has been on the wane, while a bigger one is now lit for Halloween, possibly because of influence from Dublin. (NFC 2153: 119–120)[17] The first aforementioned change, in the material burnt in the Midsummer bonfires, ultimately comes from outside, in reaction to the fact that it is now prohibited by law to burn tyres in bonfires. Other facets of modernization intruding into Midsummer celebrations in Ireland include the organization of bonfires and other celebrations by public houses and restaurants with a commercial undertone, and the holding of fundraising events linked to Saint John's Feast. Undoubtedly, increased secularism, and the shift from an agrarian economy, have contributed to transform Midsummer celebrations in Ireland.

Yet, as mentioned above, a manifestation of the "counter-globalization" movement, so to speak, is represented by the willingness of people, emerging in many different parts of Ireland where the Midsummer bonfires had not been lit for many years, to get repossession of their cultural heritage, by lighting those bonfires again. This may said to correspond to the "Second Life" of folklore, and it usually means that bonfires are now organized by pubs, local county council authorities, or other societies. It is also exemplified by the above-mentioned charity event

[16] See p. 3 of this article.

[17] This comment refers to the custom, still observed in parts of Dublin city and county to light bonfires on Halloween, 31 October, rather than on Saint John's Eve.

"Dancing at the Crossroads" of County Wexford, where traditions from the past are re-invented in new settings and for a novel purpose. That event, besides attracting commercial tourism, could also be read as an attempt, by participants, to regain possession of their past identity and traditions. From the foregoing discussion it has emerged that the festival of Saint John is a vibrant calendar occasion, which is adapting to changing social, economic and cultural circumstances. Tyres may be avoided or sneaked in the bonfires; older people do not take part in the bonfires as widely as they used to in the past. Still, even in a sophisticated and super-technological era such as our own, Midsummer bonfires retain their appeal. As put by McKean, "No traditional practice is static; indeed, though change is often not volitional, customs evolve in order to retain vitality and relevance, usually in a fairly conservative way, but they alter nevertheless". (2012: 27)

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# ASPECTS OF CATHOLICISM AND MODERNITY THROUGH THE EXAMPLE OF CHRISTIAN POPULAR MUSIC

KINGA POVEDÁK*

**ABSTRACT**

The present study examines the ambivalent connection between modernisation and Roman Catholic religion. It focuses on the appearance of popular music in a religious environment and seeks an answer to the question of how the official and lived religion responded to the changes of late modernity. What dynamic tensions arose from the different ways in which the Church and the communities of believers have judged in the past and judge today the invasive spread of Christian popular music? What connection is there between the emerging or reviving religious music styles and the various interpretations of religious modernisation?

**Keywords:** Catholicism and modernity, religious modernization, transformation of Catholic ritual music, Vatican Council II.

## INTRODUCTION

At first hearing the two words evoke contradictory associations in the layperson. *Obviously they do not match, religion is basically conservative, a phenomenon that preserves the values of the past, while modernisation is everything opposed to that.* But is this commonly held opinion really true and is there an irreconcilable contradiction between *the church defending the ruins of the past*, and the social transformation that *wants to sweep away the ruins of the past*? However, the situation is far from being so straightforward and clear-cut. Just as we cannot speak of a single pattern and uniformly occurring process of modernisation, so we cannot speak of a uniform Catholic reaction either. Just as there are many different kinds of modernity, so there is also Catholicism modernising in many different ways.

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**CATHOLICISM AND MODERNITY**

This process, the interactions and reactions of the two can be grasped by focusing on the changes in music, giving a much clearer picture of the explanatory factors that led to tensions, either internally (among the different actors of the institution), or externally (between trends in the institution and in the profane sphere). It enables us to understand all the accommodation strategies by which religion tries to enculturate among the conditions of the given age, and to give relevant answers to its believers. This involves questions, the problems arising from them and the difficulties of self-interpretation of no less import than those formulated by the theologian and philosopher Tamás Nyíri: "the question of undoubtedly the greatest concern for the Christian believer today is: where is my place in the modern world." (Nyíri, 1965: 5) From the second half of the 20th century all this becomes of special interest in the light of the "secularisation" trends of late modernity. The process of secularisation that is also interpreted in various ways in religious studies, was experienced by the Catholic church basically as the shrinking of its influence, social role and following, and in its continuous frustration over this it raises again and again the fundamental question of whether the church is following the right path or it is rather being threatened by the nightmare of extinction and will itself become a victim of modernisation. Naturally, only a brief, superficial answer can be given to this question within the frame of the present article.

Before beginning an analysis of the topic, it is worth noting that among the many definitions of modernity, the one used here is that of multiple modernities that rejects the idea that there could be a single perspective, a kind of master narrative to explain the changes, and that takes the position that alternative modernities have arisen side by side. It must be stressed therefore that there is no generally valid modernisation thesis and that the most frequent use of the term as a synonym of westernisation and Europeanisation (Altermatt, 2001: 33) is mistaken. As Herzfeld concluded, modernity cannot be regarded as exclusively the property of the West. (Herzfeld, 2001: 83) Naturally, this does not mean that the importance of the West in the processes is being questioned, but simply that its role is not regarded as absolute and the global processes are decentralised. This must be regarded as especially true if we are examining the reactions of the transnational churches, in this case the Roman Catholic Church. Obviously, in such an examination, both a supranational, generalised approach and research limited within national frames can throw light on only a part of the whole picture. The two need to be linked if we are to reveal the responses given by religion to modernisation in different regions of the world. This is not the aim of the present study due to their numerous overlaps and interactions. As Niedermüller writes, "research must move beyond the previously accustomed national, regional or local frames, it must also extend its attention to the global connections." (Niedermüller, 2008: 9) For the present topic, because the analysis is directed at the contemporary situation, the debates concerning the historical beginnings of modernisation are of secondary importance. Whether the origins of modernity can be traced to the 18th, 17th or even to the 16th century (Taylor, 2008: 26) is of no significance here because it was only in the 19th century that the Catholic Church as an institution responded to its manifested forms.

If one begins the analyses from the perspective of the connections between the church(es) and modernity, we must first cast aside a few widely held suppositions that could basically mislead researchers (and have in fact misled them in a number of cases). The first of these is that religion and modernity are inherently opposed. According to this supposition – as Hellemans notes – religion is not part of the process of modernity, and so it is increasingly subjected to negative influences from that direction. In contrast, in reality religion as an element of the society and the culture in the same way as politics, the economy, the sciences or indeed the family is a part of modernity, and similarly to the way that the economy or politics developed from pre-modern forms, the same thing happened to religion. We cannot therefore regard religion as some kind of pre-modern relic alien to modernisation. In place of the contradictions one should focus rather on the various forms of interaction between the two and the changes resulting from these interactions (Hellemans, 2001: 20). These soon reveal that the increasingly strong centralisation of the transnational Roman Catholic Church in the 19th century could only have been achieved under the circumstances of modernisation and certainly cannot be interpreted as a relic of pre-modernity. As Hellemans also puts it, this is not pre-modern backlash but rather a manifestation of modernization. (Hellemans, 2001: 22) The "opening of doors", among which other example are the circumstances of becoming a priest, entering an order, or even the growing congregations, is also a consequence of modernity even in spite of the fact that this modernity also resulted in a strong conservatism. Generally speaking, as Zsinka points out; "a certain tendency to idealise mediaeval Christian society can be observed in 19th century Catholic thinking, and seen from this viewpoint the bourgeois societies – together with their economic consequences, the market economy and capitalism – were to be rejected". (Zsinka, 2010) While from the beginning of the French Revolution Catholicism moved in the opposite direction to the processes of modernity, the changes and the direction of development or to the strengthening of subjective individualism, this also occurred within the frames of "diverse modernisation" and not outside those frames. In the words of Hellemans, religion, including its institutionalised forms, is imbedded in modernisation and is in continuous interaction with it[1].

[1] "Religion, including church-shaped religion, is embedded in modernity and is continually remade in interaction with modernity". (Hellemans, 2001: 22)

As a consequence the question that is also raised by Altermatt – *Is it true that Catholicism (was) fundamentally opposed to and the antithesis of the modern age? Is anti-modernism one of the constants of the Catholic mentality and way of life? (*Altermatt, 2001: 33) – cannot be answered with a straightforward yes or no. A distinction must be made, on one hand between the institution itself and the believers, and within these, among the various, often opposed groups with conflicting interests. Of course, within this, in the spirit of diverse modernity, the situation for example of the American church operating among the challenges of the religious market, is entirely different from that of states behind the iron curtain, or the Catholics of the African missions. We must also take into account the change occurring over time, the different attitudes of different periods. On the other hand, modernity may also have various aspects also within the frames of religiosity, and it cannot be stated that a correlation exists between the different dimensions. Examining, for example, the important musical dimension, it is far from certain that those who do not support the use of Christian popular music within the frames of the liturgy are also opposed to the Church's use of the latest communication technologies, among others to their appearance in the social media. At the same time the dichotomy of tradition versus modernity must also be handled in a more nuanced way. Among other examples, it can be clearly seen from the renaissance of Gregorian chants beginning at the end of the 20$^{th}$ century, in its various arrangements and albums, that tradition can also use the tools of modernity. As Patrick Kavanaugh also remarks: "After years of neglect, chant has recently made a well-deserved comeback. In the mid-1990s, chant suddenly sold millions of CDs and tapes". (Kavanaugh, 1999: 15)

Another example is evidenced in the melodic world of the Taize songs evoking the Middle Ages in which one can also discover the traditionalism of a spiritual movement that has features of modernity. Modernity can thus transform the segments and actors of religious culture in a variety of ways and at different paces. As Kamarás also stresses: "The counteraction may arise in the spirit of innovation or traditionalism, and innovation may also take place in the spirit of traditionalism, in response to which M. Mártonffy noted: traditionalism that arbitrarily selects a particular historical slice of theological interpretation and regards it as exemplary arises from a – typically modern – time pressure and may become dangerous to the individual and the community". (Kamarás, 2003: 16)

If one wishes to examine chronologically how the attitude of the Church towards modernisation changed in the different periods, one would also obtain an answer to the questions of how and why the Church reacted in the given period in the way it did, to the innovations manifested in religious music. Taking these considerations into account, on the basis of MacSweeney and Hellemans one can distinguish four basic periods in modern church history. The main characteristic of the first period, from the French Revolution to 1878, was the total rejection of a "licentious and impermanent disorder". The second period beginning in 1878, that is, from Leo XIII to the Second Vatican Council gave way to competition “against a hostile order”. The years immediately following the Council were characterised by alliance, while the fourth period beginning in 1978 is marked by an alternative voice. These, in turn, are connected to four self-images of the Church: ***1.*** victim of temporary, revolutionary agitation; ***2.*** counter-power fighting a fearsome enemy; ***3.*** partnership with modernity; ***4.*** embattled minority group. These also link with the mirror images of how the Church perceived modernity: ***1.*** sinful interruption; ***2.*** secular power; ***3.*** partner; ***4***. social context hostile to the Church. (Hellemans, 2001: 117–127)

In the decades following the French Revolution the Catholic Church perceived itself as a loser due to the changes in Europe, and expressed many reservations about the bourgeois society that was coming into being. (Zsinka, 2010) “Conservative Catholicism reacted to the crises by placing greater emphasis on the religious-ethical values of its own world-view. The more opaque and unstable the world became, the more aggressively the Catholic elite proclaimed its own world-view as an antidote”. (Altermatt, 2001: 45) And as Altermatt points out, the same thing happened during the major changes of the 1870s, 1930s or the 1970s. By the 1870s, under, Pius IX (1846–1878) a mass Catholic religiosity arose with the use of what were at the time modern means of communication. Pilgrimages, the cult of the saints, the cult of Mary, the proliferation of confraternities, congregations and societies were all part of this trend. In the course of this shift, Catholicism changed from a popular, vernacular religion to a popularised religion that was also manifested in mass culture directed from above. (Altermatt, 2001: 46) In the face of modernisation and the general cultural, moral and social changes and threats it represented, Catholicism tried to isolate its followers and shelter them behind the bastions of tradition. And it was able to do so because the power of the Catholic Church, by which is meant both the side turned outwards towards its followers and its internal hierarchy, had increased. The priests developed a tendency to attribute all problems of religious morality to the excesses or distortions of modernisation. In religious music all this meant that as Catholicism separated itself from the culture of the period (Meier cited by Altermatt, 2001: 35) in the 1860s it turned back towards the music of early classicism. This shift was strengthened by Pope Pius X in 1903 with his Motu Proprio that represents the victory of traditionalism despite the fact that it also allows more use of modern music with strict limitations:

> “…modern music is also admitted to the Church, since it, too, furnishes compositions of such excellence, sobriety and gravity, that they are in no way unworthy of the liturgical functions. Still, since modern music has risen mainly to serve profane uses, greater care must be taken with regard to it, in order that the musical compositions of modern style which are admitted in the Church may contain nothing profane, be free from reminiscences of motifs adopted in the theatres, and be not fashioned even in their external forms after the manner of profane pieces. […] It is strictly forbidden to have bands play in church…”

Pope Pius X also declared that Gregorian chant was:

> "proper to the Roman Church, the only chant she has inherited from the ancient fathers, which she has jealously guarded for centuries in her liturgical codices, which she directly proposes to the faithful as her own, which she prescribes exclusively for some parts of the liturgy, and which the most recent studies have so happily restored to their integrity and purity. On these grounds Gregorian Chant has always been regarded as the supreme model for sacred music, so that it is fully legitimate to lay down the following rule: *the more closely a composition for church approaches in its movement, inspiration and savour the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes; and the more out of harmony it is with that supreme model, the less worthy it is of the temple*. The ancient traditional Gregorian chant must, therefore, in a large measure be restored to the functions of public worship... The above-mentioned qualities are also possessed in an excellent degree by Classic Polyphony... [It] agrees admirably with Gregorian chant, the supreme model of all sacred music, and hence it has been found worthy of a place side by side with Gregorian chant, in the more solemn functions of the Church".
> (*http://egyhazzene.hu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/motuproprio.pdf*)

The hierarchical Church was still able to maintain processes directed from the centre, from above, it was able to go against the new trends appearing in the popular culture of the period. However, as the means of mass communications became widespread, and in the light of the political and cultural processes, the changing values, and in general the trends of mass civilisation towards uniformity, all this became increasingly difficult. The Church was less and less able to achieve its ideal and practice of a hermetically isolated, autocratic Catholic society operating on the basis of Christian values. In the words of Béla Fila, the Catholic Church "towards the end of the papacy of Pius XII, by the late 1950s had become rigid and in deep crisis because it had not solved the problems of modern life, the question of modernism that appeared in the early 20th century". (Fila, n.d.) With the radically accelerating social and technical changes, an answer had to be found to the processes endangering the prestige and status of the Roman Catholic Church, as there had not really been any comprehensive reforms up to the Second Vatican Council. At the same time grassroots movements had arisen among the believers as spontaneous reactions in a bottom-up process. Because this process was unregulated and lacked any clear guidance, these movements became increasingly diverse and spread ever wider. In this sense the Second Vatican Council was both a product of the reforms and contributed to their advance. Its innovations were based on already existing demands, and this was due to the fact that the Church was less and less able to keep pace with the changes that accelerated after the Second World War. The Church structures drifted further away from social consciousness, and this naturally resulted in a widening of the gap between the Catholic faithful (who were also part of social consciousness) and the institutional Church. As Altermatt emphasised, the Church and the faithful no longer lived in the same time. (Altermatt, 2001: 255–257) The period in time had come, says Gelineau, for the Church to finally make an effort to bring itself into line with the zeitgeist, to change, just as all other living organisms change. (Wilson-Dickson, 1998: 263) The convocation of a synod became unavoidable.

Even before the convocation of the synod opened it aroused much hope, fear and speculation. (O'Malley, 2015: 13) The guidelines and decisions of the basically pastoral synod would determine the course of the Church for a considerable time. (Pákozdi, 2013: 7) What is regarded by many people as the most significant religious event of the 20th century is most frequently associated with three symbolic words that in practice characterise the nature of the radical changes that occurred: aggiornamento ("bringing up to date", "modernisation"), development (progress) and ressourcement ("return to the sources"). Aggiornamento focuses on the present, development on the future, and ressourcement on the past. (O'Malley, 2015: 59)

There have already been many thorough surveys of the changes made by the council. What is of interest here among the areas of reform are mainly the most spectacular and at the same time most contradictory liturgical changes, their implementation and reception. As Lukács also emphasises, beyond the changes in the particular areas, at the deepest level they appeared in the entire ecclesiology. (Lukács, 2013: 10) The Council was held over four sessions between 1962 and 1965, in the autumn of each year. Up to 8 December 1965 Pope Paul VI proclaimed sixteen documents in his own name and that of the Council. Of these, four were constitutions (on the sacred liturgy, on the Church, on divine revelation and on the Church in the contemporary world), nine were decrees of the council (among others, on the media of social communication, on ecumenism, on the lay apostolate), and three were declarations (on Christian education, on non-Christian religions and on religious liberty). (O'Malley, 2015: 14–15) Among others, it was stated as a basic principle that "the liturgy is the summit and the font of the life of the Church", in which "the full and active participation of the faithful is important", and in the renewal of the liturgy "sound tradition should be retained and the way remain open to legitimate progress". (Lukács, 2013: 11) The aims also included easing the ritual rigidity of the mass, and promoting the active participation of the people. As a consequence of the liturgical reform, the form of the mass changed. The celebrant priest now stands facing the congregation, not with his back to them, the screen separating the sanctuary from the nave - and the faithful – has disappeared. Within a few years the exclusive use of Latin for prayers was replaced by the national language throughout the world. O'Malley stresses that we cannot speak of modernisation of the mass, what was achieved was that it was made to correspond more precisely to certain fundamental and traditional principles. (O'Malley, 2015: 194–195)

From the musical point of view these are considered to be revolutionary, because the opening and the possibility of active participation inspired creativity in many. A whole series of church guitar groups appeared with widely differing abilities. Lukács notes that:

> "encouraged by the reforms under way, the desire to innovate flourished in various countries of Europe. In many churches [...] a wide variety of innovations were introduced into the mass [...] There were reports of 'Eucharistic suppers, of 'parties' involving whole congregations, reports and photos that many found offensive appeared in the papers. Since the life of the Church is manifested primarily in the liturgy, the struggle between the two extreme camps during these years appeared almost to threaten the unity of the Church …". (Lukács 2013: 15 –16)

## AFTER THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

In the case of the Roman Catholic Church, after the reforms of the Second Vatican Council the Church appears as an interpreter of the signs of the times, as a fellow traveller of modernity and as a partner of modernity. On the one hand the Council gave greater value to the laity and on the other hand it modernised the forms of the religious cult. It ended the Catholic "new Enlightenment", or pushed the Baroque forms of devotion into the background, provoking a resistance among some groups of lay persons. The Church found its way back to the lost emotional values, and the institution, as Hellemans noted, no longer condemned modernity, but under the key word of "aggiornamento" strove to bring itself closer to modern times, to adapt Catholicism to modernity, although this effort was far from straightforward and problem-free. Regarding the Second Vatican Council Baldovin basically distinguished five different attitudes that clearly show the contradictory effects of the Council among Roman Catholics living in different parts of the world. (Baldovin, 2008) These attitudes are: ***1.*** demand for further reforms; ***2.*** return to the status quo before the Council; ***3.*** revision of the Council's reforms; ***4.*** inculturation of the reform; ***5.*** re-Catholicisation of the reform.

Although the Council tried, in the spirit of "aggiornamento" to bridge the gap and approach its own age, the sudden reforms had an ambivalent effect. In place of a simple solution the transformation did more to provoke an internal crisis. It can be regarded as an automatic effect that a counter-reaction basically aimed at strengthening the restoration after the Council, coming from some of the clergy and faithful who had been socialised in the institution operating according to unquestionably traditionalist and strict principles in the period from the mid-19$^{th}$ century to the 1950s, contributing to the creation of a Church model fraught with ambivalences. Within this model a trend turning inwards to traditionalism and increasingly breaking away from the present, and another trend increasingly adapting to the circumstances of the period have lived side by side and opposed to each other within Catholicism, often giving rise to greater tensions between the two than compared to some trends outside Catholicism. People who clung to the traditions observed with alarm what were in many cases subjective evaluations of the Council's decisions. (Wilson-Dickson 1998: 264) In the case of music it is an indication of this ambivalent process that together with the marginalisation of Latin almost all music linked to it was also neglected. In this way the valuable legacy of the chorale and polyphony disappeared from use. During this period of the Church was fraught with internal tensions and was divided into parts, yet it strengthened and still continues to do so today. (Altermatt, 2001: 255) However, as Altermatt points out, it is a mistake to assume that all this was caused by the Church or the Council adapting fully to the modern age.

> "The Church drew closer to the modern world, but it did not allow itself to be incorporated into it. The ambivalent nature of the processes of adaptation led to uncertainty. Shortly after the stage of optimistic awakening, the certain belief that the texts of the council were being interpreted correctly was shaken and led to differences of opinion within the church. While some warned of the age of renewal, others feared the approach of restoration. The progressive and conservative trends clashed with each other on practically all issues. […] Catholic culture lost its cohesive force; the closed Catholic micro world fragmented. […] The monolithic church society – if it ever existed – is now a thing of the past" (Altermatt, 2001: 257–258).

A further factor contributing to this was that the Council was practically held at the same time as the general transformation of society and the wave of modernisation that brought turbulence to the revolutionary character (Altermatt, 2001: 254). (Wilson-Dickson, 1998: 263) In 1998 (!), arguing for reform of the reform, Ratzinger stressed that "The present low point of the Church is to a great extent based on the disintegration of the liturgy. [...] That is why a new liturgical movement is needed, that will bring to life the real legacy of the Second Vatican Council". (Ratzinger 2005: 164) Nor can we fail to mention that the political events of 1968, and the appearance of the cultural revolution that emerged after the Council fundamentally influenced the reception and evaluation of the Council, and in this light the struggle of the conservative, traditionalist trend versus the progressive trend in part also acquires a different meaning that is not determined only by the religious reforms.

Parallel with the strengthening of the "secularisation trends" in Europe, the ambivalent attitude towards modernity has been occupying a growing space in Christian discourse since the beginning of the Second Vatican Council. At this point it is worth making a brief digression in the direction of secularisation, another disputed territory. If one examines the studies analysing the connection between modernity, our times and religion, for a long while one finds the predominance of secularisation theses, but now this paradigm has quite clearly become untenable. In

1991, Peter Berger wrote a study titled ‘Desecularization of the World’, emphasising that secularisation is not necessarily the correlation between modernity and religion. Religion cannot always be linked to the past or to peripheral situations. (Davie, 2010: 16) This is true if for no other reason than the diverse modernity presupposes diverse secularisation models. Some are compatible with religion and some are not. The overemphasis on secularisation is also confirmed by the international political conflicts of our time, and we cannot explain contemporary social changes without taking into account religion, as Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel did in their time. (Davie, 2010: 18) Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of the Roman Catholic Church (and historically Christian churches) it is a problem that, under certain circumstances, the rapidly spreading “desecularisation” in some regions is not resulting principally in a return to the traditional religions. Zulehner stresses that “The ‘old’ Christian churches, as parts of the culture, are suffering from a deep crisis of transformation. In particular the Catholic Church has not yet been capable of dealing with the problem of modernisation of the culture and as a result it also has to face a crisis of modernity”. (Zulehner, 2004: 14–15) Undoubtedly a sign of this is the crisis of the traditional forms of institutional religion, one of the symptoms of which is the slow erosion of membership (Davie, 2010: 20). Because of the pluralisation of culture, and together with it the growing proportion of those turning away from the historical churches, the privatisation of religion transforming it into a private affair “*the church can no longer rely on Christianity being passed down socioculturally by itself*” […]. Zulehner points out that “As a consequence the gospel must be proclaimed to every new rising generation, that is, under the circumstances of an always new *ecclesiogenesis*. The period of foundation of a new church has dawned”. (Zulehner, 2004: 15) As early as the start of the 20$^{th}$ century, Georg Simmel stressed that modern people are not necessarily less religious than their ancestors were. They are religious in a different way because the forms of religion are changing together with the society of which they are a part. (Davie, 2010: 53) In other words, the Church too must articulate its’ principles in a manner consistent with the latest circumstances.

What does all this mean for music? In all parts of the world modernisation is making its effect felt in Catholic music, although with shorter or longer delays. An explosive change occurred in the 1960s. Music was the most striking manifestation of the general cultural revolution that appeared in the 1960s, especially in the western world; it was able to express in an explicit way the feelings of the young generation of that time which turned away from the values of their parents based on conformism, authoritarianism and hierarchy. Because of the prominent part it plays, for the young generations music is never just music, it is always at the same time an expression of a way of life, a life feeling, rebellion, autonomy or separateness: a confession of faith, way of behaviour, lifestyle, world-view. However, the rebellion and opposition did not result in atheism but in a spiritual awakening, the awakening opening in the spirit of liberalism towards previously unknown and therefore attractive, exotic eastern philosophies and religions. A Rousseauian "back to nature" concept, communes based on utopian equality or the rejection of consumer civilisation spread in the "hippie" movement as a quasi-religious new ideology/lifestyle. Eastern religions and cults appeared, in many cases popularised by the musicians themselves. At the same time contents linked to Christianity can also be found in the songs of many performers indicating that it is not right to say the period unequivocally turned away from Christianity. Two different manifestations of this are apparent: one where the religious appears in popular culture and the other where elements of popular culture seep into religious culture. Both can be regarded as an effect of modernisation, even if they were judged and used entirely differently. Regarding the former, it is worth mentioning a few examples. Cliff Richard openly spread Anglicanism in his performances. Jeremy Faith's Jesus was successful in France and the UK. The title of the album of the group Quintessence and the theme of its songs was: Sweet Jesus. José Feliciano, the sightless Puerto Rican singer performs the religious songs of his native land. In 1970 a rock opera with a biblical theme was performed in Essen under the title Jesuspiltz, and in London as Godspell. The undoubted peak of all this was the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar", begun by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice in 1968 and completed by 1970.

There was another direction in the intertwining of religious and popular culture, including music that is more closely linked to the topic of this study: the renewal in a fashionable style of music serving a religious function. It is quite obvious that in its musicality the religious music revolution of the 1960s was built on the fashionable music styles of the time. There were a number of trends within it, arising independently of each other but, in the final analysis, reaching the same end. The "folk mass" movement that began in America in the 1960s under the influence of the "folk songs" hallmarked by the name of Bob Dylan; in the 1950s the French Jesuit Father Aimé Duval, inspired by French chansons picked up a guitar and travelled around the world with his music. The guitar number Dominique, by the Belgian Dominican nun, Soeur Sourire, even reached the top of the American pop charts. The style appeared behind the iron curtain entirely independently of them. In Hungary, already in 1967 Imre Szilas wrote a beat mass that launched a whole guitar mass movement and the new songs of the new generations also spread within the liturgy. Of course, in its function the same style had a different significance in the eyes of believers within the frames of socialism. The renewal here was perhaps targeted even more firmly at retaining the younger generations which, under the given circumstances, was not only a religious but also a political question. During the period of roughly half a century since then the increasingly diverse and complex new religious movement has spread to all parts of the world.

## FINAL REMARKS

There are places where a whole industry has been built on contemporary religious music as an economic aspect of modernisation. In the United States alone, as Cusic observes, in the year 2000, sales of Christian music, books and films were worth more than 3 billion dollars. Within these sales of recorded gospel Christian music amounted to 747 million dollars, and the proceeds of concerts added at least an additional 300 million dollars. (Cusic, 2012: vii) The number of gospel/Christian music recordings sold was double that of Latin American music and was more than the combined sales of jazz, classical and New Age music. (Cusic, 2012: x) Compared to this, there is practically no "Christian popular music industry" in the countries of the former socialist bloc. But what all these trends have in common is the reception: entirely independently of each other, rejection of the new, modern religious music appears with elemental force, in many cases taking the form of a "worship war" aimed at eradicating the new musical styles in churches. From the 1980s the latter music has also been experiencing a renaissance and Gregorian chants are now just as much part of the offer of video sharing portals and music publishers as, for example, Christian rock groups.

Modernisation and Catholicism: clearly the two are inseparable, but it is also inconceivable that the interaction of the two will take place without cataclysms. The intertwining of religion with modernisation is a predestined characteristic, in the same way as the rejection of modernisation and shaping the future with the instruments of the (distant) past.

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# THE STORY OF A FUNERAL HOME: RITUAL MODERNIZATION AND ITS RECEPTION IN A TRANSYLVANIAN VILLAGE COMMUNITY

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**ABSTRACT**

The paper offers a brief re-study of funerary rituals in a village inhabited by Hungarian Roman Catholics in Romania. Since the completion of long-term fieldwork there in 2003 and 2004, the construction of a funeral home and the emergence of local companies, offering full service for funeral receptions, have led to considerable changes in the course of funerary rituals. Rites that were traditionally carried out in the home have been moved to the public sphere, and tasks traditionally fulfilled by people nurturing social ties to the family of the deceased have largely been taken over by the service sector. Since funeral rites are intricately intertwined with cultural beliefs and values and with the management of social relations, these changes are more than technical. By focusing on how people reacted to the changes imposed on them, this study emphasizes their agency in constructing the ritual dimensions of their lives.

**Keywords:** funerary rituals, modernization, ritual change, adaptation.

## INTRODUCTION**

This paper is a brief re-examination of funerary rituals in a village inhabited by Hungarian Roman Catholics in Romania. In 2003–2004 an eight month study

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examined the social role of the family dead through the various channels of communication that connected them to the living – death rituals being one among several. Since the time of that fieldwork, however, there have been significant changes in funerary rituals. While in 2003 people were buried after wakes in homes, where the rituals involved considerable help from kin, neighbours, and friends, the last few years have witnessed the construction of local funeral homes in the municipality. The introduction of the funeral home, which was an initiative of the local parish priest, was accompanied by other ritual innovations, most notably in the field of rites concerning communal solidarity. Since cultural patterns, social systems, and rituals are intricately intertwined, such top-down or enforced ritual changes offer ample material to study. This paper will be limited to studying the reactions of locals: how people come to terms with ritual changes imposed on them, how they react to and negotiate these changes, and how they fill new rituals with meaning more suitable for them. Since reactions were not univocal in the community, the paper will also try to show the different values governing divergent opinions. The arguments are based on the experiences of continuous visits to the field over the years[1], and a focused, three week fieldwork conducted on ritual change in 2015.

## THE SETTING

The municipality under study is located in the Eastern Carpathians in Romania, meandering in the long and narrow valleys of a river and its tributaries for circa 15–20 kilometres. In 2003 it had a population of about 5 300 – a number that has since remained stable. Due to its peculiar layout, the township is naturally broken up into several villages called *patak*s[2], whose inhabitants have a sense of local identity. This inquiry focused on one of these villages, the largest in acreage and in population, which is called Patak in this paper[3].

Due to its peripheral and upland location, the municipality, like the entire region to which it belongs – has always been relatively poor. Agricultural production has long been limited to animal husbandry, mainly of cattle, while crops were limited to subsistence farming. Although the development of a railway line

[1] After finishing fieldwork in 2004, I returned to the village almost every year: first to supplement my material, and then, from 2010, to make research on other topics. The length of these visits ranged from a week up to a month.

[2] Meaning stream or creek in Hungarian.

[3] In keeping with ethical and responsible practice in Cultural and Social Anthropology, the community in this study has been identified by a pseudonym. Public disclosure of the ritual practices and the attendant conflicts reported in this study could lead to increased tensions within the community and therefore the pseudonym has been used to protect the identity of individuals and the interests of the approximately 2700 of its inhabitants. Interested researchers may contact me for further information.

and reforms in land ownership at the turn of the 19–20th century led to the arrival of timber companies to the region, subsistence farming remained a major means of living. This was the case until the socialist era, when the majority of the local male workforce was absorbed by factories in neighbouring towns, with farming maintained for family consumption and as supplementary source of income. After 1989, the region has experienced the social and economic changes typical of post-socialist countries: unemployment grew rapidly and people reverted to agricultural production. In spite of the fact that privatization of forest land and the loosening of state control over logging offered a new source of income, most households found it harder and harder to make ends meet. By the mid-2000s the villagers increasingly felt the negative impact of the disintegration of Romania's food-processing industry, which was reinforced by the country's entrance in the European Union. As a consequence of new food production and safety regulations, the marketing of local agricultural products became difficult or unprofitable. Logging was halted due to a considerable decrease in forest area and stricter government controls. Households tried to cope with these difficulties by capitalizing on two possibilities EU accession offered them: international migration and agricultural subsidies. An ever-growing number of people – male and female, young and middle-aged, single and married – work abroad. Most are engaged in seasonal agricultural work in Germany or (to a lesser extent) in Hungary, while the most fortunate men work in construction or logging in Austria, Germany or Scandinavia. In addition to money earned outside Romania, agricultural subsidies provide the only other major source of income, with only a few households that are resourceful enough to engage in agricultural production that is profitable or in other kinds of enterprises. Subsidies, therefore, are the main incentive for keeping many locals in agriculture, including those who spend some time of the year working abroad. Although the changes outlined above are undeniably substantial, their impact on local social relations are not yet fundamental. While the circles with which individual households cooperate have slightly shrunk, people still heavily rely on their social networks in their farming, ritual, or everyday activities.

The layout of the municipality had a bearing on ecclesiastical life and practices of pastoral care as well. Until 2006, it formed one Roman Catholic parish, with the parish church and the priest's house being located in the village that serves as the township's administrative centre[4]. There are two additional churches – both in Patak – one of which was enlarged in 2000. The township also has three cemeteries, one by the parish church and two in Patak, but those in Patak are located at considerable distances from the two churches there. Although the parish had a curate assisting the parish priest since the 1970's, the size of the community,

[4] The Roman Catholic church is the only denomination in the municipality. Before the Greek Catholic Church was banned in Romania in 1948, however, a part of the population was Greek Catholic, and several families have close kin ties to Eastern Chrisitans living in the neighbouring municipality.

the number of churches and the distances to be covered complicated pastoral work. The solution was the division of the parish in August 2006, when a new rectory by the enlarged Patak church was finished. Since then the priest who had been in service in the village for decades took charge of a newly established, independent parish.

It was he who initiated the construction of two funeral homes before the split of the parish, in 2005. His aim in doing so was to modernize local funerary rituals[5]. In the case of Patak, however, his plan did not come easily. It was hard to find a big-enough site in or near the larger cemetery due to its topography and the uncertain ownership of the land around it. Finally, the dilapidated building of a former sawmill, owned by the most prominent entrepreneur of the village and situated over 500 meters from the cemetery, was converted to a funeral home. The renovation of the building was slow; when the first corpse was taken to the funeral home in December 2011, it looked more like a garage than a place for religious rituals. Although there is still work to be done – most notably, a refrigerated morgue to be added – by 2015 the building operated as a proper, ordained church with a sanctuary, a bell-tower, and regular masses[6]. Thus, instead of a simple funeral home, the community received an additional church, one halfway between the other two.

## THE FUNERAL HOME AND ITS IMPACT ON FUNERARY CUSTOMS

The people of Patak's reactions towards the new funeral home are related to the changes it brought to local funerary rituals. Traditionally, funeral activities lasted for three days. A couple of hours after death, the corpse was washed, dressed, and laid in a coffin placed on a bier, which was set up in the best room of the house[7]. The bier was customarily decorated with hand-woven and richly embroidered bed sheets. A wooden cross and a burning lamp were placed at the head of the deceased, and candles and flowers at the feet. The lamp and the candles have ritual significance, as their light is thought to protect the soul of the deceased on its way to the afterworld. A wake was held on both nights that the dead stayed at home, when relatives, friends and neighbours gathered by the body to bid farewell and to pray for the soul. The wake, which was called *praying*, lasted only a couple of hours, and upon their departure visitors were offered cake and drinks as alms for

[5] It is interesting to note that locals merge the construction of the funeral home with the other regulations the EU has imposed on them lately: it is widely believed that funeral homes are an EU requirement. To my knowlegde, however, no such regulation exists, neither in the EU, nor in Romania. Romanian legisation has only approved of a long prepared Act on cemeteries in 2014, which prescribes the establishment of air conditioned funeral homes only in the case of newly established cemeteries. In the last few years, however, there has been a clear tendency to build funeral homes in Transylvanian villages.

[6] The new church was ordained on 5 November 2015, its patron saint being Saint Emeric of Hungary, son of Hungary's first king, Saint Steven.

[7] If someone died in the hospital, the corpse was prepared by the hospital staff.

the soul of the departed. The deceased was usually left alone after the wake, and in most families no one, not even close family members, kept vigil by the body. During those days the home of the deceased was the site of intensive – often parallel – activities: the house was cleaned and large quantities of food were cooked for the funeral reception, while visitors were coming and going and the wake was going on. All these activities, along with many others not confined to the realm of the house, were carried out with a considerable assistance from kin, neighbours and friends.

The house of the deceased was the site for much of the funerary ritual as well, including the funeral mass. This in itself was a relatively recent development. According to local people, the funeral procedure in Patak traditionally involved three stages: the priest came to the house for the deceased, escorted the body to the cemetery and interred it, and the next day celebrated the funeral mass in the church. In 1973, however, the funeral mass was merged with the rest of the ritual process at the request for a prominent family, in order to make it more convenient for everybody. After that, funerary ritual consisted of two stages: the mass at the house, then the funeral procession escorting, often on foot, the body to be buried in the cemetery. Transport of the coffin in the procession was by whomever the family asked for this purpose. After the burial, all the guests – or, in the case of families with fewer resources, a selected set of guests – were invited back to the house of the deceased for a funeral reception.

Since the advent of the funeral home, the house of the deceased has ceased to be the main venue for ritual activity. If someone dies at home, the corpse is still washed and dressed there, but it will be moved to the funeral home within a couple of hours[8]. If someone dies at the hospital, the body is taken directly from there to the funeral home. According to the standard procedure, the body is kept there for two days, and wakes are held on both evenings. On the day of the funeral, a funeral mass is celebrated in the funeral home, after which the coffin is taken to the cemetery by a richly decorated horse-drawn carriage that belongs to the funeral home.

A collateral effect of the funeral home has been a trend in the community to have the funeral reception organized by one of two local catering companies in either the village "house of culture" or in the school near the cemetery. The phenomenon is not new; some families held their funeral feasts at the house of culture already in the 2000s, but these cases were exceptional and the food was prepared at home with the assistance of the usual circle of helpers. Use of the catering companies, however, became widespread after the funeral home was opened. A little less than half of the families opted for the services of these companies and invited all participants to the reception, while the other half gave a smaller, traditionally prepared funeral meal at home[9].

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[8] People who die in the evening or later are usually kept at home for the first night, and are only taken to the funeral home the next day. In this case, the corpse stays there only for one evening.

[9] In a sample of 41 funerals, 18 funeral feasts were organized by the catering companies. By the time of this study, 134 people had been buried from the funeral home.

While the funeral reception and the site of the rituals have changed, the introduction of the funeral home has left the rites themselves practically intact. Lay practices accompanying dying and the preparation of the corpse have remained the same.[10] As before, the corpse stays on the bier for two days, the bier in the funeral home is accompanied by a cross, a lamp, candles and flowers as before, the two wakes are still held, and alms are distributed to the participants. Since the official church ritual for funeral has not changed either, the deceased are provided with the same spiritual assistance as previously. The changes initiated by the funeral home, then, could be termed as merely technical: they moved much of the activity from the private sphere to the public one, thus making it simpler and more convenient for the bereaved, participants and priest alike. Yet the reactions of the people of Patak indicate that these changes were in fact more than technical.

## LOCAL REACTIONS: CONFLICTING VALUES AND NEGOTIATIONS

Reactions to the funeral home in Patak were diverse from the start. As in other places (*e.g.*, Kilianová, 2010: 748) most people welcomed it for practical reasons, but there were critical voices as well. Some were unhappy with the financial contributions they were asked to make and quite disappointed with the building itself: they thought the old sawmill was not decent enough and too far from the cemetery. Opposition came to a head in 2014, when a small group of villagers took legal steps to have the priest removed. They did not succeed, above all because by then the majority had grown to like the building after its transformation into a proper church. People now praise both the building and the convenience it has provided.

Other complaints about the funeral home and the changes it has triggered are deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and social values. There were a number of mostly elderly people – especially at the beginning – who had strong feelings against being taken to be buried from a "strange" place, that is, from outside their home. The reasons for this were complex, and had to do with the strong, intrinsic bond between the home – house and courtyard – and its owners.

First of all, the thought of being left alone in an unfamiliar place made people psychologically and metaphysically uneasy. A widow in her late seventies said that her late husband was so afraid of the possibility that he made her promise to take him to be buried from the house:

> He was so afraid... "My good Lord," he said, "if I die before you, please don't let them take me to the funeral home. Why did we suffer," he said, "why did we starve, if I cannot stay at home dead for two days." Poor man, he always told me this. So. And God listened to him, for the funeral home was still unfinished when he died.

[10] For a detailed analyses of these rites, see Hesz, 2012a.

As can be seen from the excerpt, the old man escaped the fate of which he was afraid. His and others' fears were deeply rooted in beliefs concerning death and the fate of the soul. They believe that the separation of the soul from the body is a gradual process during which the soul lingers around the body until the funeral and keeps returning to the places where it lived at least until the first memorial mass is celebrated six weeks after the funeral[11]. Even if by definition people know that death separates soul and body, they treat and refer to the unburied dead as living people: they say the dead can hear and see what happens around them, and they say the deceased sleep at home, when they refer to days preceding the burial. From this perspective, being laid out in the funeral home entails a premature experience of being deserted and alone, something people want to avoid. Although no one explicitly said so, fear of being alone might also have to do with worries that are metaphysical. Death is a dangerous transition, and in the liminal phase between death and interment the soul is held to be vulnerable to attack by the devil or other demons. Since these attacks could be warded off by religious ritual, or more generally by human presence, for some people being left alone in the funeral home could mean being left unprotected. It has to be noted that in Patak concepts and practices regarding the dead are – as they were in 2003 – quite varied. There were many beliefs, official and vernacular, "in the air," and people shifted among them according to the context[12]. They often discussed these views, arguing about the validity of certain beliefs or the orthodoxy of certain practices, and the funeral home provided ample opportunity to consider the concepts about the fate of the soul after death. During a family gathering well before the funeral home was opened, the widow quoted above expressed her fear of being left alone in the dark, cold, and deserted building. Her teenage granddaughter, who lived in a nearby town, immediately dismissed the old woman's fears by saying she should not mind it, because being dead she would not feel anything. Both laughed, but the old woman had lingering doubts.[13]

Protests against the funeral home also refer to another kind of intimacy between people and their homes. People's lifelong work creates a strong bond between them and their house and its courtyard, which is seen as the centre of the Patak farm. People work at the farm and for the farm, they devote all their physical and mental energies to maintain it, improve it and pass it on to the next generation.

[11] Local concepts and beliefs of death, the dead and the afterlife are widely known in Roman Catholic and Eastern Christian Europe, but for the lack of space, I will refrain from detailed references.

[12] This has been emphasised by many anthropologists working in very different sociocultural contexts (see *e.g.* Davies, 1997; Lewis, 1986; Geertz, 1960; Huntington-Metcalf, 1991). People are aware of the heterogenity of concepts and worldviews, and discussions about their validity is common practice (Bell, 2002; Hesz, 2012b).

[13] To round the story off, I should mention that by 2015 the same widow was a fervent supporter of the funeral home, and never mentioned her fears when we spoke about the changes it has brought to funeral procedures.

Through sweat and pain, people become inseparably attached to the home place. This attachment is expressed in many ways. When locals talk about people who, for certain reasons, had to leave their homes, they always lament the work and effort these people invested to the place, without being able to enjoy its outcome. A woman who had had a very difficult marriage once said that from time to time she had considered divorce, but rejected it because she would have had to leave behind everything she had worked for. This bond between house and person is also a driving force for the ritual obligations towards the dead: while people should care for all their dead relatives, they are especially responsible for the former owners of their houses. Should they fail to live up to this obligation, the dead could strike them with death, illness or economic misfortune. One can argue that, in addition to the fears mentioned above, it was this very deep sense of belonging to one's home, that made certain people reject the funeral home[14]. When the dying man in the quote talked about struggling and starving, he was referring precisely to this idea.

Houses are not only the sites of people's struggles, but also the fruits of their labour. To have a house decent enough for the funeral ritual is an indication of a hardworking and honourable life. This message emerged in statements against the funeral home in which people claimed they had worked hard enough to have enough rooms, so they do not need another place to be buried from. A 56-year-old woman recounted about a late acquaintance: "At first they didn't want to be buried from the funeral home, no and no. He said they had added so many rooms, I don't remember how many, that he wouldn't let them take him to the funeral home." People with this attitude considered their houses as symbols of their social status and were proud to open them to the public when the time came.

Positive reactions and supporting arguments for the funeral home, however, favoured it precisely because it removed most activity from the home. Apart from mentioning practical reasons – the house did not have to be rearranged, less work had to be done at home etc. – most people stressed how happy they were at not having to have so many people in their houses. They were especially pleased to escape the critical eye of the public, stating that many people only came to see what they have in the house and to criticise the household and the way the funeral rites were prepared:

> [The funeral home] is good, because it may turn out so that you don't have time to paint your rooms, the walls are cracked, there are spider webs. You don't think of death, and you don't have time for cleaning. Then those who come to the wake in the evening have their eyes on the ceiling, on the beam, on the wall, they are not there to pray but to look around. To look around. And then they go and talk about it. About

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[14] Seeing the relationship between the living and the dead as an exchange is an almost universal belief through space and time (see *e.g.* Barraud *et al.*, 1994; Geary, 1994; Goody, 1962; Kenna, 1976; Oexle, 1983; Sutton, 2007).

> how your house looked. Then isn't it better at the funeral home? There's no place for mocking over there.[15]

These arguments also reveal different attitudes towards privacy, norms and social control. People who preferred to be taken for burial from their homes were ready to open up their private sphere to the wider public, and accepted community control as a natural aspect of their lives. Supporters of the funeral home, on the other hand, rejected excessive social control and valued privacy over display. Many people also welcomed the standardization the funeral home offered: the decoration and the ritual accessories were the same for everybody, thus funerary rites were less likely to display social differences. Some also appreciated the controlled environment of the funeral home: the time frame of the wake was set, so families did not have to cope with guests who overstayed as in the past, and since everybody left at the same time, the distribution of alms was easier to manage and consumption could be held within reasonable limits. On these matters the local discourse was in accordance with that of the priest, who brought up the same arguments in favour of the funeral home.

Since those who rejected the funeral home for the reasons discussed above were elderly, it would be tempting to attribute different attitudes to privacy and social control to generational differences. In reality, however, there are and were just as many, if not more, older people who welcomed the changes brought by the funeral home. In theory those who wanted to have their wakes at home could do so and could be taken to the funeral home only for the funeral ceremony. It does not appear that anyone has chosen this option. What some families did – and still do sometimes – is to keep the dead at home for the first night for a wake there. In most cases they do so when the deceased lived far from the funeral home and close associates, friends and neighbours are too old to get to it. In these cases the first night wake at home is not a rejection of the funeral home, but rather a practical solution.

## LOCAL REACTIONS: REINTERPRETATION AND APPROPRIATION

Another new ritual introduced by the priest, called wreath-money, became by far the most debated change connected to the funeral home. It is a kind of "ransom." In lieu of a wreath or flowers, people are asked to bring an optional financial contribution on arrival at the funeral. Part of the money covers the costs of 10 masses for the salvation of the deceased, while the rest goes for the construction and maintenance of the funeral home or other parish needs[16]. The

[15] Woman, aged 72.

[16] These masses were not celebrated by the local priest, but by priests who serve in smaller congregations and therefore have less income. The transference of votive masses within the church is common practice as an act of welfare.

custom was unknown in the community, although the priest claimed it had been in practice for decades in his hometown nearby. He sought to replace wreaths and flowers because he thought that due to their ephemeral nature they were a waste of money, and their disposal was irksome. In contrast, if the money spent on flowers were donated for memorial masses and for the needs of the parish, it would serve the real interests of the dead and the community. While people understood these arguments, they were deeply critical of the priest's initiative and hotly debated the issue in their various daily interactions. They talked about being ashamed to ask relatives and friends coming from other villages to bring money instead of flowers and wreaths; asking for money instead of the traditional gifts was simply unacceptable and indecent in their eyes. They also claimed that the money collected should be given to the family of the dead. According to their logic, wreaths and flowers were gifts to the dead, therefore their monetary substitution should go to the dead, or in this case their families, and not the church. In line with this, many commented that the priest did not have the right to divert that money from the family, and interpreted his act as a sign of avarice.

Despite all criticism, the number of donors and the amount of the money collected has grown steadily. Donations range from 5 to 20 Romanian lei, and are correlated to the closeness of the relation between the donor and the deceased: people usually give 20 lei or more to those to whom they felt close. The amount of money collected per funeral varies greatly, from several hundred to one thousand five hundred lei or more[17]. The money is collected at the door of the funeral home by someone close to the bereaved family, and the donors' names and the sum they have given is added to a list that the priest read out, until 2014, at the end of the mass. By that time the lists had become so long that the priest and the church council decided to announce only the final sum. Parishioners supported the decision; as a woman in her 40s said: "There's no point in stressing how much so-and-so gave after the donations have been made. It is quite unnecessary to go into details, especially at a funeral, that so-and-so gave this much and so-and-so gave that much". Her point seems to be demonstrated by the fact that the sums of the donations have not decreased since the priest stopped reading out the donors. But as can be seen, these offerings and the amounts given do matter to people.

In 2014 the custom of wreath money evolved yet again as people started to collect money for the families of the dead in parallel with wreath-money. The practice was initiated by one of the opponents of wreath-money; it was at the funeral of a man who had long been ill, and whose family was in financial difficulty. Upon arrival at the funeral home, people were asked whether they wanted to give their offerings to the family or to the church, and the donations were listed separately. As it turned out, roughly one third of the money was donated to

[17] 10 Romanian lei was about 2–2.5 euros in 2015. As for comparison: masses for the dead costed 20 lei, people usually gave 200–300 lei per couple as wedding gifts, and the standard daily wage was 50 lei.

the family, and the widow also received as much if not more money at home. Although not all the people in Patak supported the initiative, it was copied on at least three other occasions. By the time of this fieldwork in the early summer of 2015, the priest had put an end to this practice, but it has been reported that it goes on privately: instead of being collected at the funeral home, donations are given directly to family members. Further inquiry would be needed to learn how widespread this practice has become, or is becoming, but its emergence is already in itself significant as an instance of how people adapt top-down ritual innovations by the authorities.

It is tempting to interpret the way locals started to use the custom of wreath-money as an attempt to replace the social functions of the funeral procedure that were weakened by the introduction of the funeral home. It is intrinsic to funeral rituals to display, reinforce, or loosen social relations (see *e.g*. Douglass, 1969; Strathern, 1981; Cohen, 1985), and pre-funeral home burials offered ample opportunity for both the family of the deceased and the people around them to do so. It was an honour to be asked to perform the various ritual roles – to bear the flags, the crosses or wreaths, to hold the candles by the side of the coffin, or to carry the coffin – and there is evidence that families often used these roles very consciously to reinforce the social bonds they valued. People around the family of the departed could reinforce these bonds by offering various kinds of assistance during the funeral and in its preparatory phases, or by simply showing up at the wakes and the burial. It was a source of pride if one had many helpers and many people attended the funeral, because it demonstrated the family's social embeddedness. Assistance and attendance were guided by the logic of exchange, and were intricately integrated into exchanges of objects, labour, or other everyday services, and thus had far-reaching effects in social relations. The introduction of the funeral home, together with the growing involvement of the service sector it has entailed, has clearly curtailed ways to express loyalty and support to the bereaved family.

There are also clear signs that the custom of wreath-money has taken up the function of indicating social bonds: the amount of the donation varies according to the closeness of the relation, and the fact that it was made public has significance. After coming home from a funeral ceremony, a man mentioned that the priest forgot to read his name among the donors, and although he dismissed the matter as unimportant, he returned to the matter more than once during the conversation. There is also an instance in which a woman, who could not manage to make it to a funeral, sent the wreath-money with a neighbour and asked her to put her name on the list of donors. And for the family the amount of money collected as wreath-money is a matter of pride, just as the number of participants at the funeral ceremony and the number of helpers at the house were a matter of pride before.

It can be argued, however, that the utilization of the custom of wreath-money to display social ties is neither an intentional substitute of former customs, nor a conscious way of resistance to modernization and the changing values of social life in general (Cohen, 1985), even though some locals did complain about people growing apart and being less willing in general to help others. While it is true that there is less extra-familial help needed to perform the funeral, there is still enough room for assistance, especially if the funeral reception is held at home. According to data, the closest friends and neighbours are still actively involved in the preparations of the funeral procedure, so the reformed ceremony does provide an opportunity to reinforce social relations, even if to a smaller circle of people. What happened then was that locals instinctively interpreted the ritual innovation of the priest in terms of the logic of former practices. The wreath-money was, after all, a gift given to the deceased, even if a larger part of the donations went to the church. Thus the custom has naturally lent itself to the demonstration and display of the closeness of relations.

The emergence of financial aid to the bereaved family was then the result of the combination of this reinterpretation of the wreath-money and the resistance against the priest for taking gifts intended for the deceased. By starting to collect money parallel to the collection of the wreath-money, locals appropriated the ritual practice imposed on them, and – to paraphrase Shaun Malarney in regard to the reception of state reforms of funerary rites in Vietnam – inserted their own values into it. (Malarney, 1996: 556) This direct financial support to the family of the deceased had the unintended consequence of monetizing ritual assistance. Money as a gift for the bereaved was not part of the funeral previously. It often happened that the family was given some financial aid to cover the costs of the ceremony, but in these cases the donors were either very close kin – mostly siblings of the dead – or the sum was given as a loan or as a recompense for various kinds of previous assistance from the deceased or their families to the donors. Only one exception to this is known, when people collected money at the funeral to help a poor and old couple whose soldier son died tragically in the turmoil of the 1989 Romanian revolution.

It is too early to say whether this innovative practice will continue. The fact that people started to give money to the bereaved privately, outside the confines of donations at the funeral home, and that the sum of money donated on these occasions – often up to 50 lei – exceeded the amount usually given as wreath-money shows that it is coming to be a custom independent of the wreath-money. The priest's negative reaction only encouraged this procedure by forcing direct donations to the family into the private sphere. To date, as far as it is known, such financial aid has only been given to families the community with economic difficulties, but it has the potential to expand its scope to all families and become an integral part of all funerals. An important force behind such tendencies might be the predominance of reciprocity in all interaction in Patak. One of the beneficiaries has already said that she would give the same amount of money to her donors, when someone died in their families – regardless of their financial state. On the other hand, there are people who oppose the practice of giving money to the bereaved family, considering it inappropriate. Thus there is an equal possibility that in time direct financial aid to the family will drop out of Patak's funeral practices.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

As the case of the funeral home in Patak shows, top-down ritual innovations are never a one-way process. The authoritative introduction of a ritual change – or of a ban on existing rites – triggers complex processes in which several actors, from the representatives of authorities to the different factions of the local community, take an active role. Although the introduction of the funeral home into the ritual sequence of the burial has been by far the most significant ritual innovation for decades, negotiations over beliefs and ritual practices are something people are used to. The local funeral procedure in Patak, as in other communities, consists of official church rituals and vernacular practices in domains where the official rites provide insufficient consolation and social support. In this sense, death-related concepts and practices lie on the frontier between church and lay practice, with some of them becoming subjects of tugs-of-war between the clergy and the locals. Apart from condemning certain vernacular concepts about the dead as superstitious, especially those that attribute a kind of physical reality to the dead in the afterworld, the practice the local priest most wanted to eliminate was the funeral reception held after the funerals. According to local beliefs, the funeral meal has an eschatological bearing on the departed soul's fate, as the food consumed and the prayers of the participants ease the deceased's sufferings in Purgatory. The priest, on the other hand, sees the funeral reception as a futile act of conspicuous consumption that puts an unnecessary economic burden on the family of the bereaved. He argues that the slice of bread and the glass of brandy distributed at the cemetery gate after the burial would have exactly the same effect on the salvation of the deceased as a full reception. Although his reasoning has been incorporated into local discourse, the funeral reception, as we have seen, continues, becoming even more expensive when organized by the catering companies. The reasons for the priest's failure are those symptomatic of top-down ritual innovations in general. As Donald Sutton has pointed out in regard to Confucian funeral reforms in China, people accept or resist ritual innovations to the extent that these innovations fit their beliefs and serve their emotional and social demands. (Sutton, 2007) In Patak people maintain the funeral reception in part because it is deeply embedded in the context of local beliefs concerning the relationship between the living and the dead. When people talked about their motives for having a funeral reception, they said that the dead "deserved" to have a decent funeral feast. Another powerful reason is social expectations. They mentioned that they would be criticised if they omitted a reception. Thus people's emotional obligations to the dead and social pressure kept the funeral feast as a custom, despite the economic burden it entailed.

These forces were also at work when people reacted to the funeral home and creatively adapted to the changes it has brought about. For some, fear of departure from the home and loneliness provoked resistance. And it was the obligations to the dead, coupled with the social urge to express belonging and social relations that lead first to the reinterpretation to the custom of wreath-money, and then to the new practice of financially supporting the bereaved family. The process of ritual change was far from straightforward; repeated action and reaction lead to an outcome originally unintended and pushed the funeral rites towards monetization. Nor was it a simple two-sided opposition between the community and the priest; the community itself was divided over the changes, which were subject to constant negotiation. And while people debated these changes, they discussed the social values – what is decent, what is not, what is the scope of social control, should one obey religious authority – that provide the cornerstones of everyday community life.

All this leads to the correlation between ritual change and social change. Anthropologists tend to understand rituals not only as reflections of sociocultural contexts, but also as active forces in constructing these contexts – hence their utilization in attempts to reconfigure societies. (see Malarney, 1996; Bell, 1997) As Catherine Bell has argued, rituals are not magic tools in the sense that they will not change existing social and cultural structures only by themselves. They will, however, orient "people toward ideals, the mere articulation of which must be a first step in their embodiment and realization". (Bell, 1997: 235) In Patak there is nobody, and certainly not the priest, who would consciously promote individualism over the much-praised solidarity of village communities. Yet by transferring most funeral activities from the private to the public service sector, the funeral home and the changes it has triggered have the potential to reinforce the impact of other changes – most notably the growing presence of seasonal migration and technical modernization of farm-work – that may orient people to this direction. Whether this will be the case, it remains to be seen.

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# REDISCOVERY AND TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITIONAL RITUALS WITHIN A NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT IN SWEDEN: THE OASIS MOVEMENT

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**ABSTRACT**

The Swedish Oasis Movement (*Oasrörelsen*), which considers itself to be part of the worldwide charismatic movement, was started in 1984. This work refers firstly to occurrences in the Oasis Movement and how it has changed until the present time. An insider perspective and empirical reality are thus essential. And secondly, this work refers to the argumentation or discourse (questions of the ideal) within the Oasis Movement concerning both innovations and retentions of specific points of view. The Oasis Movement is not a static organisation, but one in continuous change. Some new rituals have arisen suddenly and spontaneously, but their roots are firmly planted in biblical examples. There is an obvious continuity in this regard. If something new begins, it is willingly accepted as a sign of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. An obvious basic principle in the Oasis Movement is the idea of renewal on an historical foundation. This concerns transforming history for a new age: adhering to the basic fundamentals of the Bible (and of Luther) and bringing them into a new age. There is in this way an oscillation between continuity and change.

**Keywords**: Charismatic movement, continuity, individualization, liturgical independence, the Oasis Movement, transformation of religious rituals.

## INTRODUCTION

The Oasis Movement (*Oasrörelsen*) was originally a charismatic renewal movement associated with the Swedish Lutheran Church. Until 2000 the Swedish

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Lutheran Church was the established state church of Sweden but has since become independent. The Oasis Movement, which considers itself to be part of the worldwide charismatic movement, was started in 1984 as the Reference Group for Spiritual Renewal in the Swedish Church (RAF) and re-named Oasis in 1989. The Swedish movement was inspired by the Norwegian Oasis Movement (OASE). The Norwegian Oasis Movement is older, having been established in the 1970s. Its first summer meeting was held in 1980 in Kristiansand, Norway (*http://www.oase.no*, Jørgensen, 1999). In the first issue of the RAF publication for 1984, Swedish Oasis' first leader until 1997, the clergyman Carl Gustaf Stenbäck, wrote, "Many Swedes have returned from these OASE meetings renewed and grateful at finding that such sound charismatic revival and openness for spiritual gifts of grace could be combined with Lutheran professions of faith and the church's divine service. The RAF hopes to maintain and develop its contacts with the OASE Movement in Norway" (RAF Blad, 1984/1). It should be noted that Stenbäck emphasizes "Lutheran professions of faith and the church's divine service", in other words an obvious concentration on both traditional declarations of faith and on liturgical aspects. Bishop Bertil Gärtner of Gothenburg, Sweden (1970–1991) was a professor of New Testament Exegetics in USA in the 1960s and while there became inspired by the American charismatic movement. He summoned the clergyman Gustav Börjesson to a meeting in 1971. There Gärtner told Börjesson how inspired he had been by the charismatic movement in USA. "It will continue. It will be strong. And it is important. We must take heed of it. We must follow it, we must grasp it. That's what he said", Börjesson stated in a eulogy for Gärtner in 2009 (Oasblad, 2009/4).

"Oasis" suggests a fresh-water spring in the desert, thus referring to the biblical oases in desert areas. The Oasis Movement stresses a "sound spiritual revival" as its goal. "Sound" in this context means non-extreme.

A charismatic movement emphasizes the presence of the Holy Ghost and the so-called spiritual gifts of grace (of the Greek *charisma*), which refer to the prophesies, speaking in tongues (glossolalia) and the gift of curing the sick with reference to Paul's words in Rome 12: 6–8 and 1 Corinthians 12: 4–11 (*https://www.ne.se*, Karismatisk rörelse). A movement of this kind does not advocate the creation of new churches but wishes to influence existing churches. This concurs with the Oasis Movement's goals.

## *QUESTIONS AT ISSUE*

**1.** Which historic basis forms the grounds for whatever is to be renewed or rediscovered? It is in this regard that the many new liturgical rituals gain interest. These are communion, songs of praise, dances, flags, confession, speaking in tongues (glossolalia), healing, intercession, anointment with oils and pilgrimages.

**2.** How does adjustment to a new era in the present occur? The question of oscillation between continuity and change is basic.

**3.** How does the Oasis Movement use its own history? How is it manifested?

This work refers firstly to occurrences in the Oasis Movement and how it has changed with time. An insider perspective and empirical reality are thus essential. And secondly to the argumentation or discourse (questions of the ideal) within the Oasis Movement concerning both innovations and retentions of specific points of view.

### *SOURCES*

Sources for this study consist primarily of the newsletter *Oasblad* from 1990 on and the *RAF Blad* for 1984–1989. They contain information about the spiritual message or the discourse conducted in the movement as this has been clarified by theological advisors and inspirators. In addition they contain notices about coming events, advice on beneficial literature etc. In some cases participants write about their experiences at Oasis meetings. This author has been an observer at both the large summer meetings held between 2011 and 2015 and at some smaller meetings held in the autumn and spring in various parts of Sweden and has also interviewed leading persons in the Oasis Movement. These include the inspirator Berit Simonsson, who has been an active member of the movement since the 1980s. The clergyman Åke Danielsson, who started the healing worship services, has also been interviewed (see below) as has the paediatrician Anna Aronsson. She has long been a member of a so-called caring group during such healing services. In addition the dance leaders Kristina and John Egil Rage were contacted.

At the 2015 summer meeting in Jönköping, a questionnaire was distributed to people who work as volunteers in the Oasis Movement. The questions dealt with personal commitment and experiences of both a positive and critical nature. Eight answers were sent in electronically allowing for the sender to remain anonymous.

The Oasis Movement uses digital media diligently to spread its spiritual message and information. It has a comprehensive and always up-dated website *https://www.oasrorelsen.se*. The *Oasblad* newsletters have been posted on this website since 2009.

## THE OASIS MOVEMENT'S ORGANISATIONAL AND ECCLESIASTIC/POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS

### *ECUMENISM*

The Oasis Movement has successively acquired a more ecumenical emphasis in Sweden and is no longer concerned solely with the Swedish Church as at its start. Representatives for the free churches, especially for the Pentecostal Movement, are now members. The Oasis Movement works closely with the Evangelical Fatherland Foundation EFS, a movement associated with the Swedish Church. The religious movement called Word of Life was not accepted originally. As Carl Gustaf Stenbäck wrote in an issue of the *RAF Blad* for 1989 (1989/3) and an *Oasblad* for 1990 (1990/4), the Oasis Movement disapproved of the theology on which Word of Life based its work. Started in 1983 in Uppsala with the former clergyman Ulf Ekman as leader, it has been marked by a theology of prosperity that considers Christian faith as being a route to success in all phases of life (*https://www.ne.se*, Framgångsteologi). A change occurred in Word of Life in 2005 when they invited the Oasis inspirator Hans Weichbrodt to be a speaker, something that the Oasis Movement accepted. It was the first time that an ordained clergyman had spoken to Word of Life. The Oasis Movement responded by inviting Ulf Ekman to speak to them. Cooperation has continued since then, although criticism was originally raised in some Oasis circles. In the 2010s, the Oasis inspirator Berit Simonsson lectured to Word of Life in Uppsala while the present leader of Word of Life, Joakim Lundqvist, was one of the speakers at the 2015 summer meeting in Jönköping. Ulf Ekman, who converted to Catholicism in 2014, preached at one of the four worship services televised by the Oasis Movement in 2014.

Collaboration with the Catholic Church was at first non-existent. Contacts were established by Lillemor Hallin, a prominent figure among charismatic Catholics from 1973 to 2008 (Dagen, 11 March 2008), who spoke at several Oasis meetings. Collaboration increased even more due to contacts with the Swedish Catholic bishop Anders Arborelius starting in 1998. He preached at one of the four services televised by the Oasis Movement in 2014. Charles Whitehead, who is a leading figure in the charismatic Catholic movement, was one of the keynote speakers in Jönköping in 2015, as he had been at a number of earlier summer meetings such as Hässleholm 2005 (Oasblad, 2005/2). The Pope's preacher and spiritual advisor, Raniero Cantalamessa, has participated at several summer meetings, most recently in Söderhamn in 2015.

Ecumenism also involves the Orthodox Church. The priest Irenaeus from the Antiochian Orthodox Church in Belfast was a keynote speaker at an Oasis meeting in Borås in 2009. Here Berit Simonsson's son Mikael was inspired to become an Orthodox deacon on the way to ordination. He has since participated in this capacity in recent Oasis summer meetings.

In connection with the summer meeting in Jönköping in 2015, the Christian journal *Världen idag* published an article entitled "Church distinctions are conspicuous by their absence at Summer-Oas" (Världen idag, 24 July 2015). Similar affirmative statements about ecumenical contributions were made by other delegates who had been interviewed by journalists (Kyrkans Tidning, 31/32 2015) and who were quoted in the *Oasblad*. After the summer meeting in Borås in 2009, Hanna Håkansson pointed out that the Oasis Movement "had taught me that the essence was to focus on similarities rather than differences" (Oasblad, 2009/3).

One discussion that arose in the summer of 2015 showed that ecumenism did not include Islam. Five clergymen from Stockholm had written an article entitled "Our church must be tolerant of other religions" in the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* for 19 August, which demonstrated acceptance for holding church services or other spiritual gatherings where a minister and an imam served alongside each other in a joint service. On 21 August the parish priest Björn Gusmark, who is a board member in the Oasis Movement, published a critical insertion on his blog entitled "False tolerance" (*http://bjorngusmark.blogspot.se/2015/08/den-falska-toleransen.html*). He received instant support on Facebook from other leading Oasis Movement personages. Berit Simonsson wrote: "Well written by the vicar Björn!" The clergymen Åke Danielsson, who started the healing worship services (see below) emphasized "that's the way it is". A previous Oasis leader, Leif Nordlander, expressed his agreement with the brief word "Amen!".

### *EVERY AGE AND EVERY SOCIAL CLASS*

The Oasis Movement focuses deliberately on every age and social class. It is seen as being of extreme importance that everyone feels welcome at the meetings. Hierarchy is not allowed. One question discussed in the Oasis Movement is why the leadership sits on a raised platform in sports arenas during the large meetings, at which lecturers and vocal groups also appear. Berit Simonsson raises the question "Why are you sitting on that platform?" in three issues of the *Oasblad* published in 2001, 2005 and 2011. It is obvious that the Oasis leadership wants to keep this question alive with an eye towards new members. The articles for 2001 and 2005 are identical. As Berit Simonsson emphasises, "We are not on that platform to 'increase our importance' – really, quite the opposite" (Oasblad, 2001/1). The reason that they sit on the platform is instead to "help, support, encourage and pray for speakers, meeting leaders and participants". Another argument is that "many eyes are necessary in order to see and understand whatever happens in the hall as the meeting progresses. Things the speakers or meeting leader might not discover. Paying close attention to anything the spirit of God desires and what happens in the hall is our joint responsibility".

**Figure no. 1** – The Oasis Leadership sitting to the left on the platform. A hymn-singing dance group performs in the centre with a vocal group to the right at the summer Oasis meeting in Jönköping, 2015.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

In order to maintain equality regardless of age, a children's group called Children's Oasis was established in 1999 with Lennart Henricsson engaged part-time from the start. In recent years, the name Youngsters has replaced Children's Oasis (*http://www.youngsters.se*). The Youngsters group is aimed at children and young people up to the age of confirmation. Young people older than that belong to Youth Oasis (*http://www.ungdomsoas.se*). Children and young people are expected to have their own plan of activities and also participate in portions of the larger meetings. Meetings for children and young people combine games and fun with detailed Bible instruction. Concentrating only on play or only on instruction is not acceptable. The children and young people are not to feel bored by Oasis meetings but look forward to attending them. The Oasis Movement emphasizes that entire families and their children are welcome. One reason for this is the movement's manifest goal of encouraging future interest among Christians in the various congregations. The leadership of Youth Oasis wrote in 2005 that "our prayer is that the Lord shall foster a young generation in Sweden who believes in the Gospel of Jesus" (Oasblad, 2005/4).

**Figure no. 2** – Children being instructed by Lennart Henricsson in Nässjö in 2015.

**Photo: Hanna Simonsson.**

**Figure no. 3** – A lot of children in front of the platform singing for the audience in the beginning of a large meeting in Jönköping 2015.

**Photo: Hanna Simonsson.**

**Figure no. 4** – The Youth Oas-group being instructed by Lennart Henricsson.

**Photo: Hanna Simonsson.**

Youth Oasis arranges both summer camps and New Year's camps. Spiritual instruction and songs of praise are combined with sports and various forms of entertainment. The invitation to a youth camp in Kungsbacka in the summer of 2012 offered such enticements as "lots of new friends, Jesus, songs of praise, sport, instruction, party tent, praying, music... simply lots of fun!" (Oasblad, 2012/1). Reflections on arousing future interest are also the basis for Youth Oasis decision to start arranging their own confirmand instruction at a four-week-long camp. Since 2014, the camp has taken place at the Helsjön Folk High School in Gothenburg diocese. Here, too, amusement is combined with intensive instruction. The invitation to the camp for 2016 reads, "Here you'll have four weeks of learning more about God, meeting new friends, laughing a bit, maybe crying a bit, discovering new things about yourself and getting memories that will last a lifetime. We want your confirmation period to be a time when we get closer to Jesus and discover the life He wants us to lead". Photos of the confirmands are published on the website. The happy atmosphere that is evident among the confirmands is heightened by the frolicking clergyman on *Figure no. 5*.

**Figure no. 5** – Oas-confirmands in 2015 at the Helsjön Folk High School.
Note the happy atmosphere that is accentuated by the frolicking clergyman.

**Source: *http://www.ungdomsoas.se/konfirmand* (retrieved 7 July 2015).**

The Oasis Movement has recently begun to become interested in socially vulnerable people who are encouraged to take part in the annual summer meetings at a greatly reduced price. The initiative for activity came from the clergyman Ingo Söderlund who experienced a vision from God about it. He presented the idea for the leadership of the Oasis Movement, who immediately consented to it. The inspirator Hans Weichbrodt writes, "I can still remember how fascinated I was when Ingo Söderlund shared his vision about this initiative with me". Söderlund established a foundation and got sponsorship so that the guests can be offered board and lodging for a symbolic sum at a drug-free, non-alcoholic camp. This initiative started in 2013 under the name "Broken Camp". Social engagement is always combined with spiritual guidance for these people's future. Hans Weichbrodt notes that, "The main focus is on inviting everyone at the camp to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour and also being inspired to allow prayer and the Bible accompany them on their way through life" (Weichbrodt, 2015).

*ECCLESIASTIC/POLITICAL STANDPOINTS*

The Oasis Movement's leadership has kept a low profile in questions of ecclesiastic politics "because we feel that it is not our business" (Oasblad, 2009/3). One obvious exception concerns the question of gender-neutral marriage between same-sex couples, which was approved by the Swedish Church in 2009. Before the decision about this had been reached, the Oasis Movement's leadership sent a protest letter to the Synod of the Swedish Church. It referred to both the biblical grounds and the church's own traditions. "This is a serious deviation from the biblical and ecclesiastical tradition on which the Swedish Church is based, since the word of God as it has been manifested for us in the Holy Writ has been normative for us through the ages" (Oasblad, 2009/3). The inspirators Hans Weichbrodt and Berit Simonsson continued this criticism when the so-called right of refusal for clergymen in the Swedish Church began to be questioned in 2014. This right meant that clergymen could not be forced to marry same-sex couples against their will (Weichbrodt and Simonsson, 2014).

The Oasis Movement has not issued an official statement concerning the question of women ministers. On the other hand, no women ministers have ever been keynote speakers or participants in communion masses. This has led to some external criticism. Women ministers have, however, participated in Oasis Meetings. The minister Ingegerd Carlsson from Aneby, Småland Province, wrote very enthusiastically about her experiences at the Summer Oasis Meeting at Hässleholm in 2004. "Thanks to all you gifted ministers! ...How fantastic to stand (or sit) there with several thousand other people and sing songs of praise to glorify and exalt God for what He is and what He has done for us. Amazing that the roof of the meeting hall didn't take off!... The high mass was an absolutely high point when we all accepted the Lord in the bread and the wine". (Oasblad, 2004/3) Ordained women deacons do however serve regularly at communion masses.

Representatives for the Norwegian OASE Movement have noticed that clergymen and their duties in the rediscovered liturgical rituals are far more obvious in the Swedish Oasis Movement than in the Norwegian (*http://www.oase.no*).

The main intention in this analysis is to study the Oasis Movement from the inside. Therefore, any external critical opinions and reactions, primarily from representatives for the Swedish Church, are of less interest for this analysis. External criticism is seldom mentioned in the *Oasblad*. Carl Gustaf Stenbäck wrote in his historical account from 2002 that clergymen in Gothenburg initially criticized the early movement for being "soulfully fanciful, meaning that it was based on emotions. They could not understand why the usual worship services where the word of God was preached could not suffice" (Oasblad, 2002/3). This criticism was aimed at its charismatic trend. Such criticism has, however, lessened with time.

## *ECONOMY*

The economy of the Oasis Movement is based exclusively on voluntary donations of cash given during the collection and gathered in large plastic buckets, and via credit card terminals and swiping at the meetings. In addition, there are about 250 regular monthly contributors who mostly pay by direct debit from their bank accounts. Voluntary contributions are very common at the large five-day summer meetings. Participant fees for the meetings are also used to pay for the hire of meeting rooms and for other expenses. The Movement employs two inspirators, namely the theologian Berit Simonsson since 1997 (originally at 25%) and the clergyman Hans Weichbrodt since 2001. Two part-time inspirators are also employed to guide the Youngsters Lennart Henricsson and Hanna Simonsson. The Oasis Movement does not own its own meeting places and has no real members, only supporters who receive the four annual issues of the *Oasblad* free of charge. It has been published since 1990. The large summer meetings are always held at different places in Sweden. One meeting is usually held in northern Sweden and one in the southern part of the country.

## REDISCOVERY OF THE ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS

The reintroduced liturgical rituals include the rediscovery of communion, confession, dance, flags, intercessional prayers including the laying on of hands and anointment with oils, healing services, speaking in tongues (glossolalia) and songs of praise. This in many cases takes place in combination with lifted hands, personal testimony, prophetic messages and music played on modern instruments. The experience of joy in the presence of God and Jesus is obvious at these meetings in comparison to the obvious solemnity and sorrow in older pietistic revival movements. Joy is shown with happy laughter from the audience at the lectures held by inspirators or other speakers. The atmosphere is not at all sad. Day-to-day Christian life is not especially mentioned in the Oasis Movement, in contrast to earlier Free Church and pietistic revival movements (Gustavsson, 2012). Individuals are helped indirectly through Oasis Movement instruction on guidelines for daily life. A relationship to God and Jesus as expressed in the liturgy is seen as being most essential in the Oasis Movement.

### *COMMUNION*

Communion is celebrated daily at the large Oasis Movement's meetings, in contrast to the pietistic revival movements of earlier years. Then warnings were given against taking communion too often with reference to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11: 23–29 and to habitual communion takers during the 1800s when communion was obligatory. The theological advisor and clergyman Staffan Ljungman from Osby, published an Oasis booklet in 2014 entitled "Communion – Spiritual Nourishment", now posted on their website. He writes in a section entitled "So often ...", "It is very odd to think that Communion can be taken too often. As if it was a stimulant and not a foodstuff. There is no reason to put Jesus' friends on a starvation diet. That's not how it was at the beginning". Reference is made to Acts

2: 46 which reads, “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God”. Margareta Wahrenberg from Vaggeryd in Småland Province related with great satisfaction about the Oasis-days that took place at Flämslätt in Västergötland Province in 1999. She exclaimed, “Just imagine celebrating mass every single day!” (Oasblad, 1999/2). That same year Agneta Flodin from Asklanda in Västergötland expressed a similar opinion after the Oas-meeting in Varberg, “Just imagine being able to take communion several times in the same week!” (Oasblad, 1999/3). People who participate actively in the Oasis Movement have reported that they prefer to attend divine services where communion is celebrated Criticism about celebrating communion too often has not surfaced. Each individual in the Oasis Movement can choose for themselves how often they will take communion.

**Figure no. 6** – Clergymen and deacons waiting to take communion at the Festive High Mass in Kungälv in 2014.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

**Figure no. 7** – Long queue to the communion at the summer meeting in Jönköping in 2015.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

*CONFESSION*

Like communion, confession has also been rediscovered. This is dated to the summer meeting in Varberg in 1997. The clergyman and theological advisor Bengt Pleijel at the Åh diocese centre in Gothenburg diocese wrote in a later issue of the *Oasblad* that he was assigned to be the "confessor" and to sit in a "confessional". He was surprised over the huge numbers of people who came to confess. He was unable to allow more than five or ten minutes to each. More and more clergymen were summoned to this confession service to avoid having people wait too long. "I couldn't count them all. I think there must have been about forty every day. I usually devote enough time to hear a confession. It takes time before the ice thaws and begins to melt. But here the speeches and the Bible walks had done the basic work. God's holy presence was so strong in Varberg. During the confessional moment, everything that had been hidden just rushed forth. ...It felt like a torrent of sin". (Oasblad, 1998/3)

Confession was mentioned in several subsequent *Oasblad*. Other writers in addition to Pleijel told about its content and theological motivation. In 1999, the clergyman Björn Fyrlund and his wife Katriina from Varberg, discussed confession as being "a word with an ancient history, but still so unfamiliar". He related about how at an Oasis meeting in Varberg in 1998, several confessionals had been set up for the clergymen who were to be "confessors". Through confession, the individual becomes conscious of "personal guilt in the presence of God" and is given an opportunity to confess it. Fyrlund emphasises that what is unique in confession is "a direct and tangible notice of forgiveness". The clergyman functions both as "the ear of God" and as "the mouth of God". Secrecy is fundamental. (Oasblad, 1999/3) This article does not consider confession's historic source. In a later article from 2001, however, Fyrlund discusses Luther's view of and emphasis on confession. "Living with confession and pastoral care is emphasised by Luther as living out one's baptism, as realizing in one's daily life the lifelong withdrawal from sin that begins with baptism". (Oasblad, 2001/3) Before the summer Oas-meeting in 2005 in Borås, the Oasis Movement published a folder on confession and distributed it to the participants. It had been written by Björn Fyrlund and the clergyman Niklas Adell from Landeryd in Linköping diocese. In this booklet, confession's New Testament foundation was stressed through Jesus' promise to the Apostles, "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are then forgiven". (John 20: 23) Confessor clergymen wear a purple armband as a token of their duties.

### *HEALING WORSHIP SERVICES*

At a summer meeting in Värnamo in 2003, the clergyman Åke Danielsson from the town of Helsingborg felt encouraged to start healing worship services together with a clergyman from Värnamo, Håkan Sunnliden. He had had a vision about curing invalids by letting shadows fall over them. This had been described in Acts 5: 15 as "Insomuch that they carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some one of them", although Danielsson made no mention of it. The fact that healing worship services began in connection with this precise summer meeting in Värnamo is still mentioned in the invitation to the 2015 Oasis Meeting in Jönköping. This is another example of how the Oasis Movement chooses to describe the start of a new ritual and how it could happen suddenly without any preceding plan. This is a way to use history and the belief in the leadership of the Holy Spirit to inspire the activities of the present.

The first time healing is mentioned in the *Oasblad* is in 2000. In that year the Anglican bishop Graham Dow (born in 1942) was invited to be the keynote speaker at an Oasis meeting for clergymen and associates held at the diocesan centre Flämslätt. His speech was summarized by two women named Cecilia and

Maria. Dow told of the healing rites he based on Jesus' command to missionize. All baptised believers can begin to offer up prayers for the sick. "We cannot promise results to any of them we pray for, but we can say: Jesus loves to heal". Participants at this meeting had several opportunities to pray for each other using words that Bishop Dow dictated. "Many of those suffering from back pains felt that their pain disappeared or was lessened", as the two women wrote (Oasblad, 2000/2). This is an example of how influence comes from countries outside Sweden. Speakers from England have often been called in and have been important inspirators for new rituals (see below concerning dance).

At such healing services, caring groups consisting of three persons lead the healing intercessions. These three are a clergyman, a layman and a doctor. One caring group, consisting solely of women, can be chosen by anyone. The clergyman Åke Danielsson and paediatrician Anna Aronsson have borne the main responsibility. At the summer meeting in 2015 thirteen different intercessional groups were active and 346 people had applied ahead of time for intercession. To control the size of the queues they had been issued tickets whose numbers appeared on a screen. Three daily healing worship services were held while several hundred people received personal intercession every day.

Åke Danielsson defended the presence of three people in the caring groups by saying that the clergyman diagnoses spiritually and the doctor diagnoses physically and psychically. The third person prays continually for the one seeking to be cured. Occasionally the doctor will diagnose a psychiatric casus that can only be treated medicinally and not through intercession. It is obvious that prayers for healing are seen as being complementary to and not as substitutes for medical treatment. This is guaranteed by the presence of a doctor in the caring group. Anna Aronsson justifies her participation by saying that there are limits to scientific achievements and that God is greater than humans. He can therefore accomplish the unforeseen. Jesus' example is quite obviously the basis for these healing worship services in the Oasis Movement. In the invitation to the summer meeting for 2015, mention is made of "laying of hands on the sick according to the precepts of the Bible", exactly as was expressed by Bishop Graham Dow in the year 2000.

Anna Aronsson was actually reported by a private individual to the medical disciplinary board after a summer Oasis meeting in Hässleholm in 2004 for her statements to the media about how "my scientific expertise is limited, but God's comprehension involves us all. After all, He created us". The objector believed it was unsuitable that a licensed physician could say that religion is superior to medical science. (Göteborgs Tidningen*,* 14 August 2004) The complaint was later withdrawn without legal proceedings and Anna Aronsson retained her medical license.


**Figure no. 8** – Healing intercession to the right behind the hanging textile with the Jesus figure and the text “Lord, our Healer”. The ticket number 256 fastened on a long pole, Sofia Church, Jönköping, 2015.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

“Prayer cloths” are also available for use by sick persons who cannot come to Oasis Meetings. The caring groups pray for healing over these cloths and coat them with oil. Relatives then take the cloths home with them and place them on the invalid who is thus provided with intercession even at a distance. The biblical example given by the theological advisor Staffan Ljungman is Acts 19: 11–12 in which a cloth that had been in contact with Paul’s body was laid on the sick. According to Ljungman, such usage was an exception because “a personal meeting provides better opportunities for pastoral care than a dispatched cloth”. (Oasblad, 2010/2) This symbolic usage is supposed to have started quite suddenly at a summer meeting in Varberg in 1997, when bedsheets had to be bought and cut into pieces. This took place before Graham Dow’s visit to Sweden in 2000 and Åke Danielsson’s revelation in 2003.

Even though the Oasis leadership has emphasised that it is impossible to know or to promise anything about the effects of healing prayers (see above quotation from Graham Dow and Berit Simonsson´s statement in Oasblad, 2011/2), personal testimony from people who claim to have been healed has been printed in the *Oasblad*. Two women named Birgitta and Margareta tell of how they were healed at the Oasis-days held at Munkviken camp in Västerbotten province. Birgitta had had a painful knee for many years but during an intercession, she had experienced intense heat in that knee. “Later that evening I was able to bend and twist that knee in a way that had not been possible for many years. The pain had disappeared!” Margareta had had sciatical pains in her right side for several years. She attended intercession in some uncertainty because of suffering from social phobia. There she experienced a feeling of “a burning coal in my right hip. I didn’t dare say anything because I didn’t think it was true. The feeling moved out to my hip and took away all the pain”. (Oasblad, 2002/1) A woman from Skövde, who had suffered from streptococcus bacteria in 2014, received an oil-soaked cloth and is said to have been cured in a way medical science could not explain. The most important task for a cultural scientist is to study the personal experiences of the involved persons without attempting to give an explanation of whether pain really disappeared or if sickness was really cured. Such explanations exceed humanist scientific competence.

## *INTERCESSION*

Intercession is not exclusively linked to prayers for healing. Any individual can approach the intercessors wearing orange neckbands and standing in pairs around the meeting hall. The Oasis Movement places great emphasis on having two intercessors, both for their own and for the prayer receivers’ protection. Those who approach them may wish for personal intercession for a special reason or situation or in order to offer thanks for something. The intercessors first listen to the wishes and problems expressed so softly that no other nearby person can hear them. After this they ask if they can lay hands on the person’s head just as is done during healing worship services. Those who desire intercession are allowed to stand with their backs to the meeting. Intercession is short and can be concluded with the words “Go in the Lord’s peace”. In 2006, specific rules for intercession were published and later revised in 2009. They are posted on the Oasis Movement’s website.

Approaching for individual intercession did not emerge in the 2000s, however, but has taken place during the whole of the Oasis Movement’s history. As early as 1984, the clergyman Lasse Nilsing, then a member of RAF’s leadership, wrote, “Intercessional worship services are above all warm and safe spiritual surroundings where partakers can support each other as is shown in Mark 2”. (RAF Blad, 1984/2) The spirit of community at the meetings is emphasised as being a New Testament spirit. At one renewal worship service held in Gothenburg in 1984, it was noted that “intercessors stood at the foot of the choir stairs with groups of worshipers gathered around them. There was a buffet-style communion table and then intercession for all who desired it”. (RAF Blad, 1984/3) The Oasis

Movement's leadership have intentionally allowed the intercessors' positions to be easily seen in the meeting hall. When individual participants see others go forth for intercession, confession or healing, this can inspire them to do likewise and lessen their shyness. The Oasis Movement has had great success in using this arrangement.

Intercessors are chosen after being recommended by other active members of the Oasis Movement. In an article published in 2011, "Personal intercession", the deacon Inger Gustavsson from the town of Helsingborg discussed the question of why one should seek intercession. "God already knows everything". She justifies intercession by referring to biblical texts, especially Matthew 18: 19–20. (Oasblad, 2011/2) The ritual of intercession is therefore entirely based on the Bible.

Large numbers of people usually approach to receive intercession. The Christian newspaper *Världen idag* reported that after a speech at the 2015 summer meeting in Jönköping, "people rushed in to receive intercession. Shyness does not seem to be characteristic of Oas' followers. People rushed up at the evening meeting on the second day as well to receive intercession. It felt as if the entire congregation rose up to go forth". The reporter Sara Andersson noticed an obvious collective feeling of affinity in her conversations with the participants at the meeting. Several had said, "One gains such strength from gathering together". (Världen idag, 24 July 2015) This feeling has also been noticed at the meetings and obviously explains why people do not draw back from seeking intercession in others' presence. Children also go forth to receive intercession as the writer Charlotta Ljungdahl noted at the 2009 summer meeting in Borås. (Oasblad, 2009/3)

### *ANOINTMENT WITH OILS*

Anointment with oils is not only done during healing worship services but also during other forms of intercession, as shown in the previous section. The Pentecostal evangelist Birger Skoglund described an experience he had in 1998 at a mission station in northern India where a pastor held a large flask of oil used for anointing in his hand. He justified this by using examples in the Old Testament. Skoglund also mentions his participation at an anointment at Åh diocese centre (Oasblad, 1998/4) The real breakthrough for this ritual was at the 2000 summer. meeting in Lysekil. A station was set up where the clergyman Bengt Pleijel sat. Such long queues resulted that extra clergymen had to be brought in from other stations both indoors and outdoors. This is another example of how new rituals arise spontaneously and impulsively without previous planning. This also occurs, as has been seen, with confession and healing worship services.

The Oasis leadership was inspired by this spontaneous interest for anointment with oils. In 2002, Berit Simonsson noted how the Oasis leadership had devoted itself to theological deliberation about the usage, "how, where, by whom and why it should be employed". The clergyman Johan Herbertsson from Lund presented a long historical summary about this use in the same issue. He emphasised that oil has a deep symbolic value in the Bible, “partly for the spirit of God but also for life, health and blessing”. Jesus’ apostles anointed the sick with oil to cure them (Mark 6: 13 and James 5: 14). Luther also stressed the importance of anointment with oil and believed in its effect on health. He even worried about a lack of expectation in the result. (Oasblad, 2002/3) This historic foundation for the usage is seen as being very clearly confirmed both in the Bible and with Luther.

**Figure no. 9** – Intercession and laying hands on the persons’ head in Sofia Church Jönköping, 2015.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

**Figure no. 10** – In the first row several clergymen are anointing participants with oil in the forehead at the summer meeting in Kungälv, 2014.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

*PILGRIMAGES*

The pilgrimages arranged by the Oasis Movement to Israel “in Jesus footprints”, to Egypt in Mose’s footprints or to Turkey to follow Paul’s footprints are meant to strengthen the participants’ personal experiences of biblical events in these places. History thus becomes even more vivid and influential on the participants’ future lives. As a writer named Åsa reported after a trip to Israel in 2013, “Now that I’m back home again in Gothenburg, I give thanks to God for that week in Israel. The week has strengthened my relationship to God and has given me a greater desire to wander in Jesus’ footprints here at home too”. (Oasblad, 2013/4)

An invitation for a trip to Israel in 2015 stresses “Bible instruction, daily mass and prayers”. One does not travel merely to see or hear about biblical sites but also to conduct religious rituals in this area. Outdoor communion is celebrated in a slightly primitive manner. Standing in the River Jordan, participants affirm their baptism when a clergyman blesses them. By the healing pools of Bethesda, prayers are offered for sick people who are anointed with oil. Pilgrimages of this kind are arranged each year by the Oasis Movement and the travel agents King Tours, with Oasis inspirators and Åke Danielsson as guides (*https://www.kingtour.se*). Youth Oasis arranges its own trips to Israel.

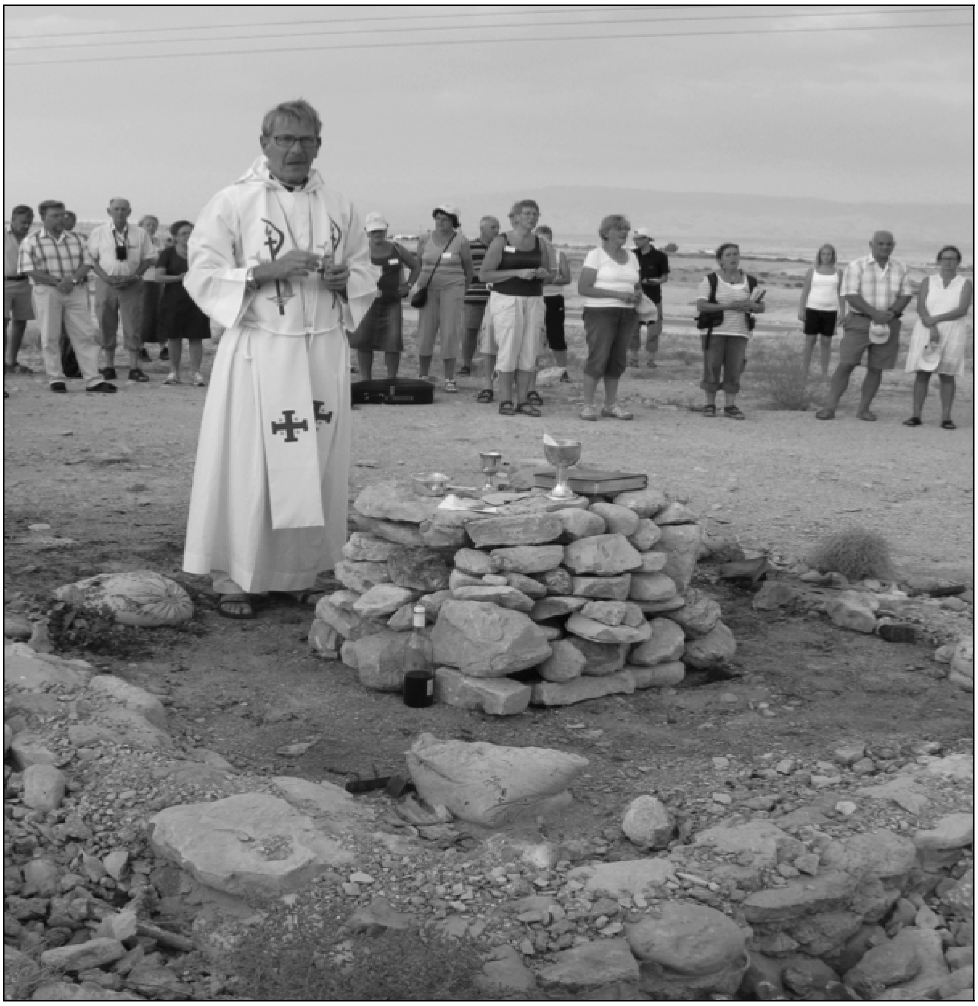

**Figure no. 11** – The clergyman Åke Danielsson leading communion service in the desert on a pilgrimage to Israel, in 2008.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

**Figure no. 12** – Participants in a pilgrimage in 2008 affirming their baptism in the River Jordan in Israel.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

Through pilgrimages the Oasis Movement join a recent trend in Sweden and abroad. (Ahlbäck, 2010; Margry, 2008) A national organization, “Pilgrim in Sweden”, has been founded to “further Swedish pilgrimage tradition in a Christian perspective” (*http://www.pilgrimisverige.se*). A pilgrimage centre in Vadstena has also been established (*http://www.pilgrimscentrum.se/*). The Oasis Movement thus adopts the popular term “pilgrimage” while giving it a content of its own. Whereas modern pilgrimages outside the Oasis Movement try to reconstruct and follow mediaeval ideals from Scandinavia and Europe, the Oasis Movement emphasizes the experience of being at biblical sites. To do that, one must travel to Israel, Egypt and Turkey, the “Lesser Asia” of the New Testament.

**Figure no. 13** – Berit Simonsson giving instruction in Nasaret from the Bible during a pilgrimage to Israel, in 2008.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

*PROPHESIZING AND GLOSSOLALIA*

The ability to proclaim prophetic speech is specified as one of the spiritual gifts of grace in 1 Corinthians 12: 4–11 and 14: 4–5 and 29ff. When the clergyman and theological advisor Bengt Pleijel wrote in 2008 about the prophetic calling, he was precise about affixing to the Bible. Because both false and true prophets exist (Mathew 7: 15), they must therefore be verified. (Oasblad, 2008/3) In keeping with what is written in 1 Corinthians 14: 29, the Oasis Movement has set up a "prophecy verification group" who wear green neckbands. Anyone wishing to proclaim a prophecy is required to contact this group who then decides whether or not to allow public proclamation of the message. At the 2015 Jönköping meeting, two prophecies were presented by being read aloud by a member of the "prophecy verification group", and not by the person who presented the message. A prophecy is considered to be a greeting from God but does not necessarily deal with the future.

**Figure no. 14** – "Prophecy verification group" with green neckbands in Jönköping, 2015.

**Photo: Anders Brogeby.**

Prophecies can be linked to glossolalia (speaking in tongues) although Paul does not accord them the same respect as prophecies. (1 Corinthians 14: 4–5) Glossolalia is in Sweden no longer seen as being specific to the Pentecostal Movement since Paul describes it as one of the gifts of grace. In an issue of the *Oasblad* Bishop Bo Giertz (1949–1970), who was held in great esteem in conservative and High Church circles, points out that this Gift of Grace played a large role in the ancient church. He emphasised that "when it is real, it adds to the certainty of belief, intensifies a love of God and the joy of salvation". "We should rather plead than fear it". (Oasblad, 2003/3) The theological advisor Staffan Ljungman posted an article, "What is spiritual baptism?" on his website, noting that this often, but not always, ties in with glossolalia as discussed in the New Testament's Apostles' Acts. Glossolalia cannot be controlled nor concerns all. "Some few are given palpable signs of spiritual confirmation through glossolalia or other Gifts of Grace, while others receive additional joy and candour in faith".

*SONGS OF PRAISE AND FLAGS*

Songs of Praise are established fixtures at all Oasis meetings to express joy in the presence of God and optimism for the future. Obvious emotions are expressed in song and movement. As Berit Simonsson emphasised in 2013, “songs of praise are among our most important activities as Christians! They are not merely an ‘introduction’ to sermons. We never sing a song of praise because we want to or are in an extra good mood”. Songs of praise are instead based on the New Testament’s Revelation 4: 11 and 5: 12, namely that “The Lamb is always worthy of praise and thanks! And therefore how you feel at the moment does not matter!”. (*Oasblad*, 2013/2) One should note that songs of praise are given equal status as preaching, previously of more importance in revival circles. This was because the Word was considered fundamental rather than humans achievements as in the form of Songs of Praise.

Songs of Praise are led by a song group on the platform with participants at the meeting taking part, often with raised hands. Because the focus of a Song of Praise is on God and Jesus, this is not a performance by the song group but instead it is a collective manifestation. Therefore these songs and music are not applauded, as has become more usual in the Swedish Church after performances of song and music. Applause in the Oasis Movement can, however, occur after a lecture or to thank those who have arranged meetings and conferences.


**Figure no. 15** – Singing songs of praise at the 2015 summer Oasis Meeting in Jönköping. Many participants lift their hands.

**Source:** ***https://www.oasrorelsen.se/nyheter/605-sommaroas-i-joenkoeping*** **(retrieved 1 September 2015).**

While singing Songs of Praise many participants wave large flags fastened to long poles. Handkerchiefs were used before flags became popular. The first time participants were able to order their own flags in both adult and children's sizes was in 2003. (Oasblad, 2003/3) As early as 2001, the dance leader Kristina Andersson (married Rage in 2004) wrote about using flags in "the rehabilitation of dancing", as she put it. (Oasblad, 2001/1) Such rituals arise simply. The different colours symbolize spiritual and liturgical significance. Berit Simonsson states that green means growth, red flags emphasise Christ's atonement, gold symbolizes the heavenly world, blue describes penance and white means purity. A large flag bearing a symbol of the biblical Lion of Juda is considered a tribute to Jesus. The colours are thought to correspond to those in the Tabernacle as described in the Old Testament (Exodus 26 and 28) according to the dance leaders Kristina and Norwegian born John Egil Rage. The New Testament also mentions waving with palm leaves (see reportage with Kristina and John Egil Rage in the Christian paper (Dagen, 22 July 2009). Kristina Rage has enlarged on flags and dancing in an issue of *Oasblad*, 2009. A banner is a sign or a symbol. Psalms 20: 6 describes the raising of a banner as a symbol of victory from God. (Oasblad, 2009/2) Waving flags is thus seen as being not a recent idea, but firmly established on biblical examples. Flags can be used by any participant in the meetings. Nothing is considered to be correct or incorrect when flags are used or color symbols are interpreted in keeping with the basic Oasis principle about individual's free choice (see below).

**Figure no. 16** – Many, but not all participants wave large flags of different colours during singing of Songs of Praise at the Kungälv summer meeting in 2014.

**Photo: Anders-Petter Sjödin.**

Shoulder bands in different colours are not linked to the liturgy and relationship to God as are the flags' symbolic colours. They are instead practical aids to orderliness at the various rituals. Orange indicates prayer leaders, red shows worship hosts, and green the "prophecy verification group". Lilac indicates "confession pastors" and "oil pastors". These bands are not described in the *Oasblad* and need not be historically established since they do not have an expressed spiritual or liturgical meaning.

### *DANCE*

Dance, flags and Songs of Praise are closely linked to one another. The Oasis leader Carl Gustaf Stenbäck wrote in the first *RAF Blad* about the two-week-long visit of Dawid Watson's dance team from England in the spring of 1984. "This team presents the Christian message in song, drama and dance. It is neither a performance nor an appearance. The team leads the congregation in song. The dance is like the soprano voice in a choir. It lifts the Song of Praise and makes it richer and more beautiful". (RAF Blad, 1984/1) This is a clear indication of how dance is not a performance for an audience, as has always been declared by the Oasis Movement. Dance is instead related to the glory of God and inspiration from the Holy Ghost.

Another choir from York in England visited in the fall of 1984. Its congregation had experienced revival and renewal during the previous fifteen years. This included dance as an element in Songs of Praise. A partaker in Gothenburg described his meeting with the English choir thus: "The seminar I attended worked with dance. We learned how to prepare a sacred dance. Dance, like all other congregational work in York, was combined with prayers and phrases from the Bible. We began by praying together". Each partaker was given a biblical text from the Book of Psalms and then assisted to shape its content. "Praising God in movement was a fantastic experience". (RAF Blad, 1984/3)

After 1984, dance was not discussed again until 1994. The dance pedagogue and deacon Mia Rydberg from Gothenburg wrote an article entitled "Dancing to the glory of God". She showed there that dance is not unknown in the Old or the New Testament. Several biblical texts were quoted as proof, such as Exodus 15: 19–20 and several texts in Psalms. Luke 6: 23 was also quoted. Using her own experience of different forms of dance in the church since 1987, Rydberg said that "the movement begins in my heart, within me, and is expressed by the body in order to praise the Lord. Movement and dance can also help me to open up my inner being and take part with the whole of myself in Songs of Praise and worship". (Oasblad, 1994/4) "The Christian Dance Fellowship of Sweden" was formed in 1993 and has several points of contact with the Oasis Movement. (Oasblad, 1997/4) In 2001, the dance leader Kristina Andersson (married Rage in 2004) wrote a lengthy article entitled "The rehabilitation of dance". It is not "adding something new to make the church more attractive and gain new members". She regretted that "dance had been neglected in Western worship services for nearly the past 500 years". She pointed to the positive statement by the Church Father Augustinus (354–430) about dance in a spiritual perspective. This was affirmed by the dance historian Eva Helen Ulvros who also pointed out that Augustinus in addition described degenerated version of dance. The Church Fathers in the ancient church saw dance during worship services as an expression of the adoration of God, referring to angels' dance in Heaven. (Ulvros, 2004: 52 p.) King David also spoke often about dance in Psalms. (Oasblad, 2001/1) These opinions expressed by Kristina Andersson/Rage are typical for the Oasis Movement. Something new is never created for its own sake. Instead, there is a wish to return to and rehabilitate rituals that are deeply established within older biblical and church tradition.

**Figure no. 17 –** Dancing, singing and waving hands on the platform at Jönköping, in 2015.

**Photos: Hanna Simonsson.**

Kristina Rage wrote in 2009 and 2010 two detailed articles on the liturgical dance to the glory of God. She referred to the "dances of praise" mentioned in both the Old and the New Testaments, although most of her examples are taken from the Old Testament. "Approval of songs of praise, music and dance is found in Psalms 149 and 150". According to Kristina Rage, all forms of dancing should be free and unregulated in order to suit different people who wish to dance. "When we dance before the Lord, we can use all the steps, hops and movements we know or can be inspired to". (Oasblad, 2009/2, 2010/2) This follows the Oasis Movement's often expressed ideal of freedom.

**Figure no. 18** – Dancing hand-in-hand and singing in Jönköping, in 2015.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

*INDEPENDENCE*

A distinctive feature of the Oasis Movement is contained in the expression liturgical independence. No regulation is advised except for that found in the individual's own decision and choice. Photographs often show some participants raising their hands during Songs of Praise while others do not. (*Figure no. 15*) Some wave flags or take part in holy dances and others refrain. In 2003, Berit

Simonsson wrote of the concept of independence in the article “Independence is the best feature” where reference to biblical sources is a vital part of historical validation. She writes, “The Bible is unusually fresh and innovative about such matters too. Independence means belonging to Jesus, and yes, independence is won by being His slave”. (Oasblad, 2003/3)

A ritual in which independence is especially noticeable concerns the sign of the cross, which the theological advisor Staffan Ljungman commented on in 2009. Making the sign of the cross is confirmed by Luther who speaks of using this sign during personal devotions morning and evening. At the same time, Ljungman points out that “one is not a better Christian by making the sign of the cross or a poorer one by not doing it”. (Oasblad, 2009/3) It is thus a spiritual aid but not decisive for personal Christian belief.

## THE OASIS MOVEMENT’S OWN HISTORY

Thus far this work has shown how the Oasis Movement seeks to point to historic origins for its theology and for the rituals that have been rediscovered and reintroduced. This history ranges back to biblical texts. To a certain extent, Luther is also held up as a model concerning confession, glossolalia and the sign of the cross, which have been excluded by the Swedish Church.

What importance has the Oasis Movement’s own history then and how is this manifested? An obvious feature, as has been previously shown in connection with confession, healing, flags and anointment with oils, is that the first example of a new ritual’s appearance is often emphasized as being spontaneous and without conscious planning. The idea is to show that anything can occur quickly and spontaneously due to the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. It is not a matter of coincidence.

A more complete two-part history, “The Oasis Movement – how did it start?” was written by its first leader Carl Gustaf Stenbäck. (Oasblad, 2002/2–3) He began by asking, “How long has the Oasis Movement existed?” Charismatic revival in the Swedish Church began to grow in the 1970s without any historic founder. An important inspiration in Sweden was G72, an ecumenical meeting held in Gothenburg in 1972. It was led by the bishop of Gothenburg, Bertil Gärtner, and the leader of the Pentecostal Movement, Lewi Petrus. This meeting resulted in the founding of many prayer groups in various parts of Sweden where Stenbäck encountered the revival movement. In the late 1970s, Bishop Helge Fosséus retired and returned from South Africa. Having encountered the revival movement, he supported a proposal to found the Reference Group for Revival in Gothenburg diocese, called REF 1983. Stenbäck was the convenor. Bishop Bertil Gärtner then asked REF to arrange revival weekends in Gothenburg diocese. The first Nordic leadership conference was held at the Åh diocesan centre in 1983 with around

100 participants. There the Reference Group for Spiritual Revival in Sweden, or RAF, was founded. A leadership group of seven persons was appointed with Stenbäck as chairman. The Norwegian OASE Group was clearly influential, as is shown in my introduction to this paper. In 1984, the English clergyman Dawid Watson was invited to Gothenburg with his song, dance and drama group. Stenbäck affirmed that “its fruits are present in the excellent singing and dancing at Oasis meetings”. Individual historic events do have obvious consequences over time when a seemingly insignificant start-up manages to thrive and develop. This history continues in today’s society.

At a Nordic leadership conference held at Åh diocesan centre with the Norwegian OASE Movement, it was decided to call the Swedish association Oasis too. This took place at the turn of the year 1989/1990 (Oasblad, 1990/1). The Norwegian OASE movement has, in other words, inspired the Swedish Oasis Movement in several ways. The Oasis Movement had its greatest contact area in Gothenburg diocese to begin with. This was partly due to Bishop Bertil Gärtner’s support and partly to the clergyman Bengt Pleijel’s efforts at Åh diocesan centre. This has been and still is an important meeting place for smaller Oasis Movement meetings in the fall and spring. The first summer meetings were held for several years in Hunnebostrand, Varberg and Lysekil on the West Coast.

After Stenbäck’s historic survey, which covered the period up to 2002, the leader of Children’s Oasis/Youngsters Lennart Henricsson wrote a similar historical review in 2009 at the tenth anniversary of the Children’s Oasis/Youngsters. He looked at the past and also peered into the future. “It is gratifying to see that God has set a certain ‘change of course’ for Children’s Oasis/Youngsters. We used to play mostly for children who were believers. We will, of course, continue to do that but now we also play in places where very few know about Jesus. At many of our concerts over 70% of the audience comes from ‘non-believing’ settings. Sometimes we play at the marketplace in some town. There we meet even more who as yet don’t know about Jesus. It’s so wonderful! When we give concerts at a marketplace etc. we usually call this ‘Cross-fire’. We think it sounds a bit tougher. Cross-fire is also a website for children”. (Oasblad, 2009/2) This external change which reaches new groups of listeners is the reason for changing the name from Children’s Oasis to Youngsters and Cross-fire. “A name like Children’s Oasis is one that a cool guy or girl think sounds a bit corny so they choose to stay home instead, and we don’t want that. When a name keeps people from learning about Jesus, then that name has to be changed” (*http://www.youngsters.se*). Willingness to change external details in a new age is obvious even when the inner spiritual core remains unaltered. “The spirit in everything we do is and will continue to have Jesus as its star, as is very clear in our texts,” says Henricsson at the end of his presentation. (Oasblad, 2009/2)

## OSCILLATION BETWEEN CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The Oasis Movement is not a static organisation but one in continuous change. Some new rituals have arisen suddenly and spontaneously, often at summer meetings, but their roots are firmly planted in biblical examples. There is an obvious continuity in this regard. If something new begins, it is willingly accepted as a sign of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Changes are obvious in the ecumenical focus where boundaries have successively widened to include different Christian movements and churches, but not Islam. The faith movement Word of Life was not accepted at first. Nor was the Catholic Church included, but in this case a gradual development towards more cooperation has taken place both in Sweden and internationally.

Children's Oasis was started in 1999 to answer children's needs and in that way strengthen the goal of future interest among newcomers who adopt the Christian faith. Openness and willingness to adjust to the surrounding modern society was shown when the name Children's Oasis was changed to Youngsters and Cross-Fire to strengthen the preconditions for and the likelihood of appealing to modern children and youths. The idea of future engagement is also a reason for the Youth Oasis beginning to arrange its own confirmand instruction. Activities for children and young people indicate optimism for the future, rather than sorrow over negative spiritual developments due to secularisation. Interest in including socially vulnerable people and offering them spiritual guidance at meetings became more noticeable with the start of "The Broken Camp" in 2013.

The Oasis Movement aims to use modern technology with the continuous emergence of new media for spreading the spiritual message. These include rich use of modern musical instruments, the Internet, web-radio, web-TV, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and swiping for collection payment. These new methods help create networks and contacts between the meetings. In 2014, 2,200 people "liked" the Facebook page (*https://www.facebook.com/oasrorelsen*). Four televised worship services gave an excellent opportunity for reaching out to a wider audience in 2014. Bible instruction was posted on the Internet several years ago with Bengt Pleijel as instructor (*http://www.bibelskolan.com*). He presented this instruction for the first time in an *Oasblad* published in 2000. (Oasblad, 2000/3) Sound bites from previous Oasis meetings can be accessed digitally. Berit Simonsson and Hans Weichbrodt's lectures on Old Testament figures have later been presented for sale on CDs. Berit Simonsson has been especially interested in female figures such as Ruth and Esther. All lectures held at the summer meetings are also available on CDs and are sold after these meetings. Sound bites from previous meetings are also available.

An obvious basic principle in the Oasis Movement is the idea of renewal on a historical foundation. This concerns transforming history for a new age: adhering to the basic fundamentals of the Bible (and of Luther) and bringing them into a new age. There is in this way an oscillation between continuity and change. In an interview Berit Simonsson stated that since the Swedish Church has abandoned its traditional theological policy and departed from its historical basis, the Oasis Movement takes over and protects previously accepted values. In addition, the movement rediscovers older rituals now disregarded within the Swedish Church and whose roots are found in the Old and New Testaments. The independence emphasised by the Oasis Movement for its members concerning the practicing of various rituals (see above) suits contemporary individualism that resists coercion and conformity.


**Figure no. 19** – Great emphasis is placed on using the modern musical instruments set up on the platforms of major meetings of Adult Oas, Youth Oasis and Youngsters, in 2015.

**Photo: Hanna Simonsson.**

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*http://www.youngsters.se*

# DEMONS AND EXORCISMS IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MIND-SET: PROBING THE WESTERN DEMONOLOGICAL MENTALITY

ALEXANDRU RUSU*

**ABSTRACT**

This study presents a general overview of Roman Catholic demonology and exorcism traditions. The cultural aspects, traditions, and belief structures comprising the collective mentality of early and then Catholic Christianity are examined. In approaching the phenomena this paper sets out to address, it is deemed necessary to demythologize demonology and exorcisms utilizing a qualitatively grounded research method that reflects upon and reveals, by way of comparison, the central aspects of these twin phenomena within the Roman Catholic doctrine.

**Keywords**: mentalities, imaginary, religion, demonology, exorcism, Christianity.

## INTRODUCTION**

In the Hebrew tradition God afflicted an individual with a demon as punishment. And only God could remove the demon. What is reflected in the early Christian Testaments deviates from this tradition: demons inhabit individuals for unknown reasons, from unstated sources and are driven out, at first, by Jesus and subsequently by his mother Mary and disciples. Thus, from the earliest days of Christianity demons and their exorcism have played a role in Christianity. This paper examines that role and the way demons and exorcisms are conceptualized through the centuries in Catholic Christianity.

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The exploration of cultural imagery is a challenging task. The collective imagination is difficult to approach due to the antiquity of written records and in many instances the lack of written records. Although an indirect approach, making use of oral histories, is possible, the methodological challenge remains delicate. Charting collective mentalities and exploring the imagery of past societies, be it in terms of demonology, magic, witchcraft, or exorcism, is more or less approximate and does not depend upon the number of sources utilized or upon the authors' vocabulary. (Muchembled, 2002: 224) Thus, a combination of indirect and direct methods (consulting written texts) is used to arrive at an understanding of how the collective mind-set of people across the ages imagined demons, possession and exorcism. Jacques Le Goff has pointed out that the imaginary is made out of images and visual representations, while historical sources encapsulate, at their core, the essence of the "imaginary". As products of the imaginary, literary and artistic works can lead to the creation of a history of one image or another. Regarding the images of demons and their exorcism, it has to be acknowledged that "the imagery is different when it comes to us in written form rather than in records of words spoken or monuments or images". (Le Goff, 1988: 2) Without doubt demonological imagery, in the collective mind-set, has been represented and perceived very differently from the period of the primitive Church and early Christianity to current times.

Few ideas have captured human imagination through the centuries as much as have the belief in demons, their possession of people and attempts at exorcism of these demons. To fully understand why these beliefs persist, it is necessary to understand the frame of mind of the early Christian believers.

## THE DEMONOLOGICAL FRAME OF MIND DURING EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Underpinning both ancient and modern Christian conceptions of demons, possession and exorcism lay the exorcisms performed by Jesus. The episodes are well-known, such as, the temptation of Jesus by the Devil for forty days is described in rich details in the pages of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Although Jesus, due to His divine nature, could have rejected the Devil from the very beginning, He nevertheless allowed the Devil to remain nearby and even dialogued with him. The gospels report that the two had several discussions during the forty days, and that Jesus successfully resisted the Devil's temptations. The events that consecrated Jesus as an exorcist followed these temptations in the wilderness, that is to say, publically performed exorcisms.

Some miracles performed by Jesus, as described in the New Testament, refer to casting out demons or devils from people believed to be possessed. Both the Orthodox and the Catholic renditions of the Bible, despite their differences, present in similar fashion the events of these exorcisms. An example suffices to highlight

these similarities. Both Orthodox and Catholic Scriptures, in the *Gospel of Matthew* (Mathew 9: 32–34), depict the same scene, only the wording differs slightly: "After they had gone away, a demoniac who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, 'Never has anything like this been seen in Israel'. But the Pharisees said, 'By the ruler of the demons he casts out the demons'"[1]. The final case of demonic possession which Jesus encountered unfolded during the very time of the Last Supper. According to the Gospels, Judas had been possessed by the Devil. But Jesus did not exorcise Judas. On the contrary, He spoke to him with kindness, telling Judas, "Friend, do what you came to do". In this act perhaps Jesus wished to provide a lesson and an example to the other apostles about everything He had taught them to that moment. (Papini, 2009: 88) The exorcisms performed by Jesus are mentioned in three of the four Gospels. In the *Gospel of John* there is no remark in this sense, although it is hardly imaginable that John was not aware of the exorcisms performed by Jesus, given the fact that roughly a quarter of Jesus's miracles mentioned by the New Testament refer strictly to exorcisms. (Valdez, 2006)

Reading the New Testament reveals how exorcisms were performed at that time. In many ways, the exorcist's procedure during the early Christianity appears described over simplistically. The command addressed to the demon or demons to be cast out was enough to perform a successful exorcism. Jesus and his apostles performed exorcisms and according to testamentary sources, anyone could perform exorcisms without needing approval from religious authorities. (Branişte and Branişte, 2001) During this period, there was no ritual structure nor specific prayers designed to cast out demons.

In addition to the writings of the New Testament with direct reference to exorcisms, other texts have been discovered that, from a Roman Catholic theological point of view, are outside of the scope of official Church doctrine. This is the case of the *Apocrypha* (*i.e.*, the apocryphal gospels and other writings of unknown authorship or doubtful authenticity). One of the most important collections of apocryphal writings was compiled by Mario Erbetta (1966), an Italian monk who, in addition to old Greek and Latin, was also familiar with several oriental languages such as Coptic, Syriac, Arabic, and Armenian languages. (*Evanghelii apocrife*, 2007: 13) Erbetta wrote the following definition of apocryphal writings: "the apocryphal of the New Testament are books not included in the canon, but which through their title as well as through other means, claim or suggest a canonical authority, while their literary genre imitates or transforms new testamentary forms and types" (Evanghelii apocrife, 2007: 14 – the author's

[1] Unless otherwise specified, all biblical quotations are from *The Bible*, New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition – NRSVCE (2008).

translation). These apocryphal writings, as they appear for instance in the 2nd century The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* shed light upon, and reveal a plethora of lesser known details of Jesus' and his mother's lives. These are writings which fit into the pseudoepigraphical literary genre, as the narration is given by a famous person from a previous epoch. Authentic historical elements introduce a doctrinal syncretism into which pagan elements and superstitions, developed within popular Christianity, are inserted. (Buzalic, 2010: 149)

These *Apocrypha* works are teeming with a rich demonology, as Evil is personalized from a "devil" conceived of as a fallen angel and God's opponent who is transformed into the "Devil" as a sui generis, autonomous entity. This principle of evil evolved into a personalized Devil who at first accomplishes distractive missions, together with other rebel angels, and later becomes the main suspect and simultaneously the culprit for the cases of demonic possessions in Christianity. The leader of these fallen angels is distinguished as having a more clarified status, in the end receiving his own identity under the names of "Satan", "Belzebuth", or "Lucifer". (Buzalic, 2010: 149)

Apocryphal writings also contain episodes of demonic exorcism. The Arabic gospel of Jesus's childhood describes exorcisms which detail the way in which they were performed. Mary, Jesus's mother, is placed in the role of the exorcist, who through her sheer presence near the sight of a possessed person succeeded in casting out the demons. Even the manifestation of an emotion of compassion determined a demon to run away. The story is related in the episode of the "possessed woman", in the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*: "And when the Lady Mary saw her, she pitied her; and upon this Satan immediately left her, and fled away in the form of a young man, saying: Woe to me from thee, Mary, and from thy son". (Arabic Infancy Gospel: 14) Another episode from the same gospel relates just as unusual an exorcism: "And the son of the priest, his usual disease having come upon him, entered the hospital, and there came upon Joseph and the Lady Mary, from whom all others had fled. The Lady Mary had washed the cloths of the Lord Christ, and had spread them over some wood. That demoniac boy, therefore, came and took one of the cloths, and put it on his head. Then the demons, fleeing in the shape of ravens and serpents, began to go forth out of his mouth. The boy, being immediately healed at the command of the Lord Christ, began to praise God, and then to give thanks to the Lord who had healed him. And when his father saw him restored to health, 'My son, said he, what has happened to thee and by what means hast thou been healed?' The son answered: 'When the demons had thrown me on the ground, I went into the hospital, and there I found an august woman with a boy, whose newly-washed cloths she had thrown upon some wood: one of these I took up and put upon my head, and the demons left me and fled'". (Arabic Infancy Gospel: 11)

These two accounts illustrate a kind of exorcism which is different from that performed by Jesus, who exorcized demons by ordering them to be cast away. But in these accounts of exorcism an indirect, wordless, action drew away the demons. One can note that these first exorcisms, recounted during the times of early Christianity, cannot be found in the neo-testamentary, “canonical”, writings, either Orthodox or Catholic. Even so, a simple reading of these writings be it even by persons lacking formal certification in Roman Catholic or Orthodox theology, cannot but confirm or endorse the “official” aspects of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic dogmas. That is to say, the fervour with which relics are received and venerated by the faithful for their healing powers is well known in both churches. Like the possessed boy in the story who placed a cloth on his head and cast out the demons, so it is that relics are believed to perform such acts.

Another aspect to which we need to refer is the image of the Devil, the main suspect and simultaneously the culprit for the cases of demonic possessions during early Christianity. Neither the New Testament nor the apocryphal literatures provide us with a physical image of the devil. These texts do not attach a face to the idea of the devil. It is not until the imagination of the Middle Ages and afterwards, during the post-medieval period, that visual representations of the demonic evil appear.

## THE DEVIL AND EXORCISM IN MEDIEVAL AND MODERN IMAGERY

The initial imagery of demons, the Devil, possession and exorcism was rather primitive. And thus interaction with the Devil was rather simplistic, as it occurred either through simple dialogues or through attempts to cast him away as a result of positive emotional communication. (*i.e.*, such as the pity and compassion felt by the Virgin Mary) In time exorcism became formalized rituals under the purview of the clergy.

Beginning in the 3rd century A.D., exorcisms were performed by persons ordained to carry out these tasks by way of *hirotesie*. After the 4th century A.D., exorcist priests officially became professional exorcists, a tradition that has been maintained within the Roman Catholic Church, but not in the Orthodox tradition. After Constantine’s conversion to Christianity in 313 A.D., measures were taken against paganism. In 325 Constantine personally lead the Council of Nicaea, while the Church thrived throughout the Empire. Simultaneously, new superstitions emerged, along with new adorers of Satan, while the fathers of the early Church seemed to have foreseen the situation. Tertullian, for instance, denounced some forms of the cult of the Persian god Mithra, in which he recognized “the deceits of the Devil who imitates some divide realities” (Duquesne, 2009: 55) Origen, likewise, points out in his work *Contra Celsum* “the various demons upon the earth, to whom different localities have been assigned, each one bears a name appropriate to the several dialects of place and country”. (Origen, *Contra Celsum*: XXIV)

The perception of exorcism changed with the beginning of the medieval period. The emergence of “the other religion”, *i.e.* popular religion, in which believers deviated from the canonical practice imposed by the church, creates the expectation of an immediate divine presence in the world. A *psychology of miracles* is born, a particular frame of mind engrained in the popular religion which survived basically unchanged to the present day. This popular religion, nascent during early Middle Ages, is characterized by magical patterns of thought and behaviour expressed in various superstitions referring to certain days of the week, people, and animals that were associated with harmful outcomes. Part and parcel to these “popular religions” were incantations and exorcisms practiced in sacred or damned places. (Nicoară and Nicoară, 1996)

The documentary records surviving from the Middle Ages are so overwhelmingly rich with examples of these “popular religions” that some scholars turn away from them, considering them unreliable. (Papini, 2009: 99) Along general lines, a theological and cultural model of Antiquity perpetuated itself at least until the beginning of the medieval times. Latin and Byzantine authors patterned their thought upon the same ancient culture, as both Christian theology and spiritual literature have drawn on the same legacy of Christian ancient tradition. Alongside these superstitions grew another idea of evil in the world. Famous authors of the Middle Ages, from Gregory the Great in the West to John of Damascus in the East, have articulated a “philosophy of evil”. Gregory the Great concluded, starting from the prologue of the *Book of Job* that demons act only with God’s permission, while the power of the rebellious angels is also made possible by divinity. (Buzalic, 2010: 228) Moreover, Gregory attempted to give a divine interpretation of natural disasters, asserting that when calamity struck it was God’s punishment of sinful people, and not the work of the devil. Placing divine punishment and human sinfulness at the root of epidemics that ravaged the medieval world, Gregory thus tried to counter the popular explanation embraced by the masses which considered Satan as responsible for these calamities. As Nikos Matsoukas emphasized, “the conception according to which Satan was the cause of the outbreak of plagues, which was sowing a paralyzing fear among people, was determining most people to resort to typical or improvised exorcisms”. (Matsoukas, 2002: 138)

The year 1054 was a milestone in the changing conceptions of exorcism. The Great Schism between the West and East determined the emergence of new approaches towards the cases of demonic possessions, foreshadowing the articulation of new imaginary structures concerning demons and exorcisms. Roman Catholic theology viewed demonic possession as the outcome of the departure from the canonical principle of good Christian practice. Anyone who deviated from official religious practice could be suspected of being possessed or in contact with demons or Satan himself. The list of characteristics that could suggest the presence of demons (*i.e.*, the demonic possessive symptomatology) was slowly established. In 1580 Jean Bodin wrote the infamous handbook for hunting down witchcraft. Guy Patin's allegation that Bodin wrote the handbook only to demonstrate that he believed in witchcraft, is an example that cannot raise too many questions since it is impossible to either confirm or reject his accusation. The famous *Rituale Romanum* was in use by Catholic exorcists by 1614. (Catholic Church, 2004)

During the famous witch trials of the second half of the 1500's, inquisitors strongly believed in the idea of contracting with the Devil. In 1584, a case of witchcraft made waves in Baden-Baden, in which the judge had tried to find out if a pact had been signed between the accused and the Devil, and if so, had she signed with her own blood or with ink. (Duquesne, 2009: 137) Countless times, judges pronounced the accused as guilty. This was the case with N. Remy, who sentenced to the stake between two and three thousand "witches" between 1576 and 1606. In the same period, the zealous activity of Archbishops Carlo and Federico Borromeo led to the systematic persecution of Devil's allies in the Lombardy's Alps. Moreover, in 1645, in Essex, two witch-hunters, inquisitors J. Stearne and M. Hopkins extensively used torture, considered to be the best method of extracting information, to force confessions. In general, torture or the threat of torture greatly increased the number of people accused of witchcraft. The confession made in 1631 by Jesuit priest F. Spree is indicative in this sense. Torture, he deplored, "has brought to the surface unprecedented malefic drives, but not only in Germany, but in all nations resorting to it. If we haven't yet confessed we are all witches, this is because we haven't yet been tortured". (Delumeau, 1986: 316–317) One thing is beyond doubt, namely that under torture or even under the threat of torture, any confession can be easily extracted. In England, torture was less put to use in comparison to continental Europe, but there were nevertheless situations when people presented themselves out of their free will and denounced themselves to judges. There were also cases in which people confessed incredible relationship with the bad spirits. Perhaps the most intriguing category is represented by those who, denying the most compelling of evidence, were stubbornly confessing crimes they did not commit. These spontaneous confessions were accepted by the judges only if they were put down in writing and translated in their familiar language, *i.e.* the language of demonology. In this regard the declaration of an enlightened inquisitor is illustrative. Alonso de Salazar y Frias tried to demystify witchcraft in the Basque country by signalling the importance of collective psychology of sermons in influencing people's demonological imagination. He claimed that people can fall prey to credulity by listening to the sermons delivered by monks such as was the case in Olagiie, near Pamplona, even if the confessions referring to nocturnal gatherings and witches flying through the air were provoked by the edict of pardon issued in 1611. (Delumeau, 1986: 317–318)

A *cause célèbre* of demonic possession, as revealed by the documents of the time, occurred at Loudun, France, in the year 1633. The demons invasion of the abbey where the poor Ursuline nuns were living gained instant fame due to the newly introduced ritual of exorcism. In contrast to previous times, at Loudun the exorcisms were put to show in the public square, visible to everyone who wanted to take part in the spectacle. (Duquesne, 2009: 142) The history of this exorcism reveals other interesting aspects, shedding light upon the political and religious stakes of the affair, as well as pointing to the possible existence of collective psychic disorders. (Duquesne, 2009: 143) The one called to exorcise the nuns of Loudun was Father Jean-Joseph Surin. He was a devoted Jesuit, a professional exorcist who rose to the occasion. His only problem was that the Devil turned against him, according to the letter he sent to Father d'Attichy, a fellow Jesuit from Rennes, dated May 3rd, 1635 (Papini, 2009: 95) The Infernal Devilish Trinity, made out of Leviathan. Lucifer, and Belzebuth troubled father Surin, who confessed that "I have very little freedom of action. When I desire to talk, I am forced to remain silent; I cannot take part to the communion; at the table I cannot lift a bite to my mouth; during confession I forget suddenly all of my sins; and I feel the devil hovering over me as if he is at home. When I wake up, he is already here; at the morning prayer, he cast away the thought from my head as he wishes; when my heart starts to open up, he fills it with anger; he puts me to sleep when I desire to remain awake; and in public, speaking through the mouth of that possessed woman, *he brags that he is my master, and I cannot argue against*…". (Papini, 2009: 96 – the author's translation) Probably because, impelled by the demons, as well as based on what he had written in his letter to Father d'Attichy, Father Surin jumped from the window and broke a leg. Papini considers this a clear example of demonic possession. Adopting a more sceptical stance than Papini, it may be suggested that even the departure of the demons a couple decades later cannot constitute solid proof that in the case of Father Surin one is dealing with a categorical case of demonic possession. The French historian Michel de Certeau, himself a Jesuit scholar as well as a Catholic theologian, investigated the curious case of Loudun and advanced his own interpretation. De Certeau pictured the image of a society that expels its anxieties caused by these events to the "theatre of the possessed and the exorcists", suggesting that it is possible that the imagination of those who believe in demonic possession create similar effects as in the case of Loudun. (Nicoară, 1995)

In line with the medieval Catholic collective mind-set, the Devil benefited during these times as people made offerings in attempts to appease him or even to subdue him for their own purposes. There is even the image of men entering into a contract with the Devil as materialized in the form of a document signed by both parties involved. "Henri Estienne, a 16th century typesetter, humanist, and encyclopaedic scholar, relates the case of a woman who lit up a candle for the Archangel Michael, then lit up a candle for the devil accompanying her: to the saint, to do her will; to the devil, not to do her harm: double duality, as one could put it". (Duquesne, 2009: 106) The witchcraft trials, sermons, and catechisms of the 16$^{th}$ century tried to induce, deep in the collective mind-set, the difference between God and Satan, between saints and demons. Fear of some dangers persisted, while the proclivity towards certain practices and rites, deviant to the ecclesiastical canon, had pressed this form of witchcraft labelled as "pagan" towards clandestine status. (Delumeau, 1986: 106) In reality, it is a false clandestine status, since the ecclesiastical power came to more or less accept these magic behaviours and rites which predated Christianity. The Church kept the right to condemn these practices and did so only when the Church lost its control. This magical thinking which is engrained in the medieval western Church is well suggested in a writing re-issued in 1779 in Venice. In this volume there are to be found more than one hundred "absolutions, benedictions, conjurations, and exorcisms" all of them referring exclusively to material life: blessings of herds, wine, bread, oil, and also exorcisms against worms, rats, snakes, and every varmint animals. (Delumeau, 1986: 107)

The image of magicians provides an interesting problem, since their ultimate aim was to capture one or more demons in order to subject them into their servitude. These ambitions can be considered remnants of an older period of magical thinking, (Papini, 2009: 130) one which pre-existed Christianity. On the other hand, the problem of witches and of the possessed is of a different nature. Curiously, all images of the Devil portraying him as servant to man present the former in a rather positive light, as a trustworthy companion. Various dramatic creations offer the image of Satan as subject to human will, for a limited amount of time. Famous figures or ordinary mortals try to tempt the tempter. The pact is signed by both parties almost always with the blood of the mortals and necessarily there has to be at least one witness to the transaction. Such pacts are witnessed in *The Devil's Slave* published by Antonio Mira de Amescua in 1612 to the much more celebrated Goethe's *Faust*. (Papini, 2009: 131) Christopher Marlowe, in his *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, is among those who revealed to us the exact content of the contract:

> "*Mephistopheles*: Faustus, I swear by hell and Lucifer to effect all promises between us made. *Faustus*: Then hear me read them: On these conditions following. First, that Faustus may be a spirit in form and substance. Secondly, that Mephistopheles shall be his servant, and at his command. Thirdly, that Mephistopheles shall do for him and bring him whatsoever [he desires]. Fourthly, that he shall be in his chamber or house invisible. Lastly, that he shall appear to the said John Faustus, at all times, and in what form or shape whatsoever he pleases. I, John Faustus, of Wittenberg, Doctor, by these presents do give both body and soul to Lucifer, Prince of the East, and his minister, Mephistopheles; and furthermore grant unto them, that twenty-four years being expired, the articles above written inviolate, full power to fetch or carry the

said John Faustus, body and soul, flesh, blood, or goods, into their habitation wheresoever. By me, John Faustus."

With the curtailment of the witchcraft trials during the 18th century, the judicial records, which could offer us a better image of the profile of the cultural imagery, suffer a contraction. A more salient collective mind-set of the elites takes shape, as the one pertaining to the popular masses is more and more lost in the background. In this context, there are situations in which authors prefer to self-censor in order to avoid unpleasant consequences. Authors learn to conceal things or situations, without exposing their own stand on the issue as previously noted about Guy Patin's allegation that Jean Bodin wrote the infamous handbook for hunting down witchcraft only to demonstrate that he believed in witchcraft.

In his book, *A History of the Devil from the Middle Ages to the present*, Robert Muchembled mentions that the literary scholar Daniel Mornet discovered an important collection of books in French private libraries between 1750s and 1780s, of which most titles treated occult sciences and magic. Mornet hypothesized from his discovery that most lawyers, physicians, and notaries (the owners of these private book collections) believed in the Devil. This conclusion, which also implies that some forms of adorations existed, is hazardous to say the least. Methodological caution should prevail when approaching such delicate questions. In the case of the book collections compiled by the privileged classes, it has to be taken into consideration that many books were bought only for the sake of adding them to the collection, without the slightest interest in reading them. We also have to consider such purchases as investments into cultural capital which could be bequeathed. The topics of demons, witchcraft, and exorcisms also encounters periods when they are out of cultural interest. The literary mentioning of the Devil is at its peak between 1720 and 1739, a period considered to be the epoch of the great demonological polemics. The projection of the Devil in the collective memory passed through periods when it was of utmost interest, but also through times when the Devil was a subject of less interest. In this sense, during the 1740s the mentioning of the Devil in the literature drops sharply, with 248 mentions in 30 titles, while 22 authors do not even refer to him. During the 1760s, the fascination with the demonical will again gain full momentum, with 623 mentions in 49 titles. (Muchembled, 2002: 227) *Devil upon Two Sticks* (Le Diable Boiteux) published in 1707 by Alain Rene Lesage portrays the demon, Asmodeu, as a prisoner in a magical jar. Let loose by a student, the Asmodue takes the latter with him into the heavens, somewhere over Madrid, and shows him the interiors of the houses by lifting the rooftops of the buildings. Asmodeu desires to show his gratefulness for being released from the jar and thus wants to marry the student to a rich girl, which will eventually lead to a curious fashion of conjuring up other demons. This story illustrates an evolution in attitudes towards demons, as miracles would be re-invented. The demon kept captive inside of a jar foreshadows the literary image of the genie in a bottle. Unleashed by someone, the genie puts himself in the service of his liberator, even if the genie is nevertheless capable of all kinds of bad jokes, only to try to tempt him into signing a devilish pact that will send his liberator into hell. Lesage's vision is followed by the story of Antoine, count of Hamilton, in which a witch wishes his monstrous son to marry the daughter of her sibling, "an honest magician". Eventually, she changes her plan and plots a malign marriage between herself and the pretender of her nephew. The author set the stage for the never-ending battle between good and evil, but without referring to either to the Devil or to any satanical pact. Nevertheless, the words used by the author ("cursed", "infernal" and "ethereal" addressed to the witch) suggest the connection to magic and witchcraft. At the end the battle is won by the good magician, and it turns out that they were not siblings. Hamilton's story suggests a type of exorcism that was apparently attributed especially to the educated categories that were somewhat ambivalent in their attitudes and beliefs concerning witchcraft around the1720s.

Another aspect of the religious mind-set of medieval Catholic Christianity is that of the attitude towards the clergy. There was contempt for the higher clergy which did not generalize to the lower order priests. The increased secularism and privilege of the higher clergy and the extreme de-classification of the lower clergy can account for this. A latent hatred of the privileged clergy could always be felt among the people living with the routine of a completely externalized and rigid religion devoid of a truly spiritual ideal. The degeneration of the clergy did the rest. Higher social classes as well as the lower ones have made jokes for centuries about the figure of the libertine monk and that of the fat and lazy friar. The more a preacher loudly condemned the sins of his own order, the more he was listened to by people. Immediately after the preacher unleashed his charges against priests, Bernardino of Siena said, the listeners instantly forget everything else, as there is no better way of keeping their attention awake when people are sleepy, too hot or too cold. (Huizinga, 1993: 282–284) Therefore, the clergy had great interest in diverting attention from itself towards a "theatre" of the possessed and the exorcists, and especially towards a "witch-hunt" by pointing the finger towards the enemy of the Church, *i.e.* the Devil as well as towards his possible accomplices. In relation to cases involving witches, what remains unclear is why the Church resorted to the radical solution of torture and burning at the stake rather than exorcism of the demons as method of fighting the Devil. One possible answer can be provided by the material interest of the Church. That is to say, in cases of exorcism, the possessed person would retain her property and wealth, whereas if the witch was tried and burned at the stakes, her material wealth would be divided between the local Church and the inquisitor who handled her trial. Therefore, there may have been a material interest in the Church's preference for the radical solution of burning at the stake over the "softer" solution of exorcism.

Throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, within the Catholic realm, a cosmic battle was being fought by the Church against the Devil. The appearance of satanic cults, within which the dark forces were conjured and adored, lead to papal encyclicals and synod decisions regulating responses to Satanic worship and exorcism. The technique of exorcism was designed in such a manner as to be deployed with maximal efficiency. A diagnostic of demonic possession was needed, and for this to occur, the Church needed the help of the medical profession and of the newly created craft of psychology. However, this collaboration between the Church and the medical profession occurred only during the late 19th century, when psychology as a field of study and therapeutic technique took shape in Central and Western Europe. A clear diagnosis was needed in order to establish if it is mental disorder or demonic possession, while the suspicion was grounded upon the fundamental principle according to which "In primis, ne facile credat, aliquem a daemonio obsessum esse" [At first, we should not believe easily someone who says that he or she is possessed by demons]. (Matsoukas, 2002: 140) A Western theology of demonology and exorcism thus gradually took shape, offering us the picture of a blending between narratives and visual representations within the frameworks set by theological interpretation. (Matsoukas, 2002: 140)

## MODERNITY AND THE RECESSION OF DEMONOLOGY

In the aftermath of the "scientific revolution" started in the 16th century generated by the great discoveries of Copernicus and Galilei in astronomy, deeply furthered by breakthroughs of Descartes, Newton, and Darwin in later centuries, a decline of the demonic theme became evident by the middle of the 19th century. With this moment in time, public attention focused more on the dark side of human personality than upon the Devil. The fight between the secular scientists and the traditional Church which opposed the desacralizing of life through science trapped ordinary people between the Church, which labelled them as non-believers, or scientists who saw them as naïve and superstitious.

The polemic generated around the question of hypnotism, at the end of the 19th century, is indicative of the cultural tension between the two opposing sides. The work published in 1899 by Charles Helot under the title *Le Diable et l'Hypnotisme* clearly states that at the basis of hypnotism there can be nothing else than a demon. Ernest Florent Parmentier claimed in his book *La Sorcellerie devant les temps modernes*, that until recently the agents of the Devil talked through the mouths of witches, and now it is believed that spirits talk through the mouth of the medium. He considered the second possibility to be reasonable, due to the activity of certain psychic forces. This is only one of the countless polemics generated between believers and rationalists, many of them ending up in courthouses, where cases of witchcraft were judged. (Muchembled, 2002: 260) By 1892, the courts were already reluctant to take legal action against hypnotism, although many considered it to belong to the class of diabolic practices. The mentality had changed in the direction of perceiving these practices as somewhere between charlatanism and medicine than as having to do with the Devil. (Muchembled, 2002: 260)

At the fin de siècle, the Roman Catholic Church becomes the target of a violent anticlerical offensive, for which the soothsayers, among others, are blamed. As a reaction, the Roman Curia accuses the Devil once again, by diabolizing the spiritualist movement and using a "pastoral of fear" as it had successfully done during the previous centuries. In 1891, Abbot Brulon wrote than the Devil has nothing to do with the stories concocted by the soothsayers, and instead accepted some of the hypotheses advanced by the psychiatry of the time regarding the role of the unconscious in cases of demonic possession. This is a time when Satan gets his fair share of publicity in sermons and newspaper articles from the Catholic press. Infernal images become more and more frequent, while a literature of dreadfulness takes definite shape. In the *Catechisme en images*, published in Paris, in 1908, Satan thrones over the Infernal realm, holding a fork in his hand, while the damned are pushed towards the brink of a gigantic and tall wall from which the demons throw down their victims, reminiscent of many Medieval paintings. In the Inferno, various diseases correspond to specific sins: a turkey cock eats off the body of the vainglorious, who are forced by a demon to kneel in the front of the master of the underworld; a toad forces the avarice to walk under the burden of a huge moneybag; a goat deals with the lewd; enviers are bitten by snakes; a pig surveys the insatiable who are condemned to eternal hunger and thirst; a lion rules over the angry ones, who lacerate each other encouraged by little devils; a turtle guards the lazy ones, who are tied to beds of ember and are being stung by horrible scorpions. (Duquesne, 2009: 187–188)

Belief in Satan had to overcome new obstacles everywhere. This is a period when a new idea gains credit, which places the eternal battle between Good and Evil in the human soul. Man's consciousness becomes the new battleground over which the cosmic war between the two opposing principles is now being fought. This radical new idea was advanced by Sigmund Freud, the Austrian neurologist, considered by Catholic theologians to be, together with Friedrich Nietzsche, "a master of suspicion". A convinced atheist, Freud did not refrain from studying religion, which he assimilates in his diagnosis of "obsessive neurosis". This is the path that led him to his understanding of demonic possessions. After reading *Malleus Maleficarum*, the infamous 14$^{th}$ century handbook of demonology, Freud came to the conclusion that the demon actually represents repressed desires and drives, especially those of sexual nature. Moreover, demonic possession could be explained in terms of the repression of one's frustrated desires. The stories with witches are in fact echoes of a perverse infantile sexuality; while the witches' broomstick is, according to Freud, "probably the Great Lord Penis". (Freud, 1950 [1892–1899]: 242) The following quote captures the essence of Freud's thoughts on this subject: "For us, demons are bad, forbidden desires, emerging out of repressed and rejected drives; We simply project in the outer world the image that the Middle Ages has created out of these psychic creations; and we leave them develop within the inner life of the sick, in which these images establish themselves". Against this backdrop the fierce and bitter polemic between the Church and psychoanalysis is easily understood, especially considering the fact that by internalizing Evil, some people believed that the Devil resided within their inner selves. (Duquesne, 2009: 189–190)

During the 19th and 20th centuries, the image of the demon and of demonic possessions in Western culture recedes into an imagery which becomes accessible to all social classes. Satan and his accomplices start to infiltrate in everything man now imagines or concocts. An early example is provided by the cinema, a machine of creating or recreating life. Technology, trickeries, and illusions allow for displaying on screen what the book can only suggest. This change, which was already apparent during the 19th century, became abundantly clear in moving pictures. The cinema does not abandon the Devil, or perhaps, the Devil did not renounce the cinema. The Devil now becomes a movie star. A suggestive example is the moving picture directed by Ken Russel, *The Devils*, inspired from the story of the Loudun's possessed nuns, which brings into sharp focus the political stakes of the affair as well as the details of the ritual of exorcism. A richer imagination is shown by Roman Polanski, who directed in 1969 the moving picture *Rosemary's Baby*, in which a young woman becomes the victim of a satanic sect. After she gave birth, the sect takes the child away from her, who is considered to be the outcome of the mother's copulation with Satan. Another iconic movie for the genre in case is, without doubt, William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* which hit the screens in 1973. These movies reflect the shift which occurred in Western demonological imagery, Satan is not what he once was. He is no longer the snake tempting Eve nor a dragon or monster from the Medieval period. Satan became subtler, as he is now detected even in the field of publicity as a symbol of force and cleverness. He cleans and unclogs pipes, and to benefit for all this, one should only buy a "little devil". Moreover, introduced in the beverage market were alcoholic drinks advertised as "dangerous", bearing names such as "Satan" or "Lucifer". Some bag carriers could be named "devils", and toys as "diabolos". Devils are also entertaining: they now amuse spectators at the circus, while the internet is populated with devils under every imaginable guise. Satan has changed his visual identity. In one way, he had lost the religious dimension when Baudelaire, among others, has invoked "the beauty of the devil, or better said, his charming grace and youthful dare". (Dequesne, 2009: 194–198) In his much celebrated *Flowers of Evil* (Fleurs du mal), Baudelaire goes so far as to write a poem entitled "The Litany of Satan" in which the poet arduously conjures the "wisest and fairest of the Angels" to have "pity on my long despair!" Baudelaire's fascination with the Devil is also evident in his famous saying, that the Devil uses the cleverest trick in trying to convince us that he does not exist.

The image of evil as an individual and psychological phenomenon sharpened during the mid-20th century. The existence of the Devil has been called into question more and more forcing the papacy to re-assert his existence. The doctrine of Devil's existence was re-affirmed by Pope Paul VI in 1972, by Pope John Paul II in 1984 and 1998, and by the Roman Catholic Church's Catechism published in 1992. All these are indicative of the will of the Church to cling to a topic as important as it is controversial. At the same time, too much insistence on the reality of Satan is not desired. This is why religious authorities and theologians have navigated with great caution between these dangers, all the more so as the number of requests for an exorcism has increased, in a society where individuals are ever more interested in carefully monitoring themselves. Despite the fact that Paul VI had suppressed the order of exorcists in 1972, the function has not disappeared. A new exorcism ritual has been developed by the Catholic Church and introduced as official in January 1999. Until then, the temporary framework concerning performing exorcisms had been in place since 1991. This ritual protocol recommended the involvement of physicians and psychologists in the process of exorcism, but with the utmost discretion. Gabriele Amorth, an exorcist from the diocese of Rome, re-asserts the existence of the Devil and the necessity of addressing the problem with caution and care. He also confesses that he personally had only 84 cases of authentic demonic possession out of the 50 000 cases that were brought to his attention. The role of the exorcist in the Catholic Church is significant and is, in part, continued by the Church in order to provide the faithful with a credible alternative to charm breakers or fortune tellers who would abuse the faithful's credulity and force them to pay for the services offered to them. It is an argument that reveals the deep commitment towards a practice of conjuring that symbolizes the traditional image of evil.

In 1989, a survey conducted in France by a journalist working at the news magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur* revealed that the fight between the exorcists and the charlatans is far from being equally sided. According to the data collected by the French fiscal authority, 40 000 fortune tellers are visited by 10 million people each year. They were charging fees varying between 200 and 1000 Francs per session. There were also some 30 000 healers or sorcerers, not including practitioners of the growing field of alternative medicine. Moreover, the TV show "Media Medium" hosted by Didier Derlich and broadcasted by RTL was being followed by over 2 000 viewers before being suspended on March 31st, 1989. In 1985 alone, 540 000 copies of printed materials were issued for those interested in the horoscopes, out of which 170 000 were copies of the publication *Horoscope*. Around that time, in France there were 49 000 physicians, 38 000 priests, and 4 300 psychoanalysts. It is ironic that exorcists account for only a dozen professionals scattered all across the dioceses of the Hexagon. Father Lambey, the head of French exorcists in 1977, observed that the irrational had made spectacular advances since 1955, the year he entered priesthood. He stated that he received up to three "cursed" people per week, as compared to twenty per year in the past. Those approaching him were asking to cure them of impotency, emotional stress after being abandoned by their spouse, or curing cows which dried out of milk.

People were certain that someone else had put a curse on them. Many of these individuals sought the help of the priest only after they could no longer pay the fees of fortune tellers. These stories only highlight the survival of the old magic mentality. When personal efforts fail, an intermediary becomes necessary, and when the "best" of these fails too, the last resort is the exorcist of the diocese. This situation is not limited to peasants from rural areas. Urban dwellers, who have become the majority of population in modern societies, are just as impressed by the irrational.

Depending on the number of those who believe or not in the existence of the Devil, or in other entities pertaining to occult practices, sociologists have noticed that a strong religious integration prevents the adhesion to everything related to the irrational. This is probably why the Catholic Church has recently chosen to revitalize the belief in the reality of the Devil, in its attempt to regain the souls who find themselves tempted by all sorts of esoteric doctrines. (Muchembled, 2002: 290–293) Revitalizing the old bond between the fear of the Devil and the love of God, the Church struggles to keep its flock from fleeing towards alternative belief-systems and ritual practices.

The belief in the phenomena of possession, and generally in irrational phenomena, seems to be widespread in apparently educated milieus, as in the urban areas, for instance. A survey conducted in France, an importance fief of Catholicism, in 1981, on a sample of 2,500 respondents, revealed that 23% of the upper classes believed in sorceries, while 24% of the students from Montpellier, responded that they believe in the existence of the Devil – an answer rather specific to the rural area than to the university educated urban France. When a case of demonic possession is associated with sorcery and Satanism, mass media takes care to stress with amazement that it happened in Paris or another major urban settlement, considering that a large metropole should be the centre of absolute rationalism. Nevertheless, satanic sects, which worried the exorcists when they first gathered in France in 2006, seem to attract young persons from urban environment, sometimes linked to neo-Nazi movements. Highly interesting are the results of research conducted by ethnographer and psychoanalyst Jeanne Favret Saada, who during the 1960s spent 30 months in the region of Bocage-Mayenne for the purpose of studying sorcery practices. Over her extended research, she gathered a large number of accounts, but the Devil or his agents did not appear once. Without entering into too much detail, suffice it to mention that the scenario followed a typical pattern. The process usually started with people accounting in magical terms the troubles they faced, although these problems may be of strictly natural causes. They tended to believe they were the victims of sorceries even though the difficult situation they found themselves in had nothing to do with magical practices. The victim of the situation sought the help of the only person who could help, the "charm-breaker" who happens to be the local priest. Nothing close to a witches Sabbath could be found in the field. The answers provided by the first locals interviewed by the researcher were negative: "There are no charms anymore", "Charms are stories for the old times", "Go out there and meet them, they are backward people". Out there does not necessary mean a remote village. "Backward" people probably exist everywhere, and the proof of this is represented by the esoteric books that fill the shelves of urban libraries and bookshops. The presence of the Devil seems to have been diluted, as if humans could do without him, but, they do not seem to manage without the supernatural and the irrational. (Duquesne, 2009: 202–206)

The belief in demons, witchcraft, the Devil, possession and exorcism migrated to the American continent with the first European settlers early in the 1600's. These beliefs have been a part of protestant Christianity in America since the earliest settlers arrived. Historically, the most notable incidents of witchcraft and possessions in North America occurred in and near Salem, Massachusetts from February, 1692 until March 1693. (Hutchinson, 1936) That belief continues into modern times. Recent surveys conducted in the Western world have shown that it is not Europeans who are most fascinated with demons, but Americans. Fifty-seven per cent of Americans believe in the existence of the Devil (*Figure no. 1*) and 51% believe in the possibility of demonic possession. (*Figure no. 2*)

As the wave of secularization has swept across Western Europe, German society seems to be the most affected by it in terms of intensity of believing in demonic possession. One public opinion poll conducted in 1983 revealed that only 14% of the German respondents believed in hell, while only 8% of them believed that the Devil is a real, existing entity. (Goodman, 1988: 125) A more recent study conducted in German society has shown that magical thinking has further decreased in the Western mind-set. As the data presented in the table below shows, only a small per cent of German respondents believe that good luck charms do bring good luck or that fortune tellers can foresee the future. Along similar lines, very few of the respondents trust in the healing powers some faith healers claim to possess and in the idea that a person's star sign at birth can affect the course of that persons' future. Data show that the great majority of German respondents turn out to be rather sceptical of good luck charms, fortune telling, faith healing, and horoscope.

*Table no. 1*

**Magical thinking in German society, N=1.595**

| Intensity of belief | Good luck charm (%) | Fortune telling (%) | Faith healing (%) | Horoscope (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Definitely true | 6,7 | 4,0 | 5,4 | 4,8 |
| Probably true | 22,8 | 14,5 | 22,6 | 19,8 |
| Probably false | 28,5 | 26,0 | 24,7 | 27,6 |
| Definitely false | 42,0 | 55,0 | 47,3 | 47,8 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

**Source: GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences**,
ALLBUS/GGSS 2008 (German General Social Survey 2008). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne.
ZA4600 Data file Version 2.1.0, doi:10.4232/1.12345.
*https://dbk.gesis.org/DBKSearch/SDESC2.asp?no=4600&tab=3&db=E&dab=0*
(last accessed 19 November 2015)[3]

[3] The survey was conducted between March and August 2008, using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) on two stage disproportionate random sample in western Germany (incl. West Berlin) and eastern Germany (incl. East Berlin).

Another survey conducted in 2013 on British and American societies, has shown a widening gap being established between two very different cultures. The results of this opinion poll are detailed in the figures below[4].

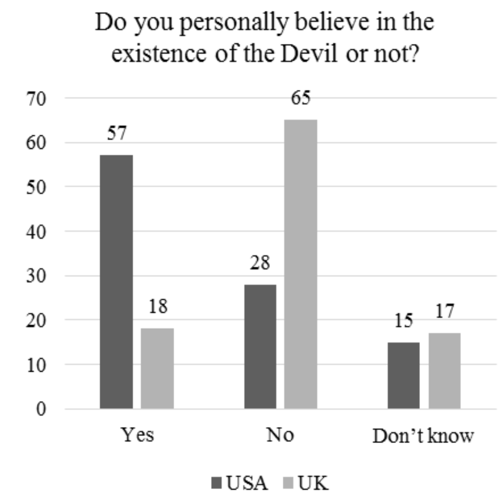


**Figure no. 1** – The reality of demonic existence.

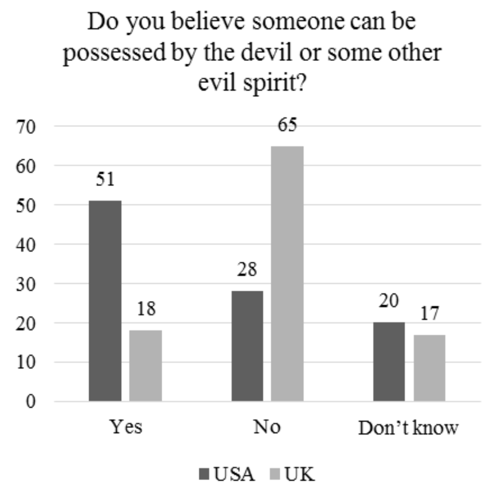


**Figure no. 2** – The possibility of demonic possession.

**Source: YouGov.uk 2013 opinion poll: Beliefs about the Devil and Possession.**
*https://yougov.co.uk/news/2013/09/27/18-brits-believe-possession-devil-and-half-america/*
(last accessed 19 November 2015)

The data clearly show that Americans believe in larger numbers in the existence of the Devil (*Figure no. 1*), in the possibility of demonic possession (*Figure no. 2*), as well as the frequency of this type of possession (*Figure no. 3*) than people in the United Kingdom. For instance, 57% of Americans believe that the Devil exists, as opposed to only 18% of British people who believe the same. Along the same lines, more than half of Americans (51%) believe in the possibility of demonic possession, while their British counterparts are much more sceptical (only 18% of them do believe that the devil can possess a human being). These results are consistent with other public opinion polls, which show the very large popularity enjoyed by demonic beliefs in the United States. One year earlier, another poll conducted in the U.S. by Public Policy Polling (October 2012) pointed out that 63% of Americans aged between 18 and 29 years old "believe in the notion that invisible, non-corporeal entities called 'demons' can take partial or total

[4] The survey was conducted in September 2013, on a total sample of 2,919 adult subjects, out of which 1,919 respondents were British and 1,000 American. The margin of error is 3% for a 95% confidence interval. The numbers in the figures represent per cent (%).

control of human beings" (Wilson, 2013). We can safely conclude from these results and the long history of belief in demonic possession that the Devil has crossed the Atlantic, and settled comfortably into American popular imagery.

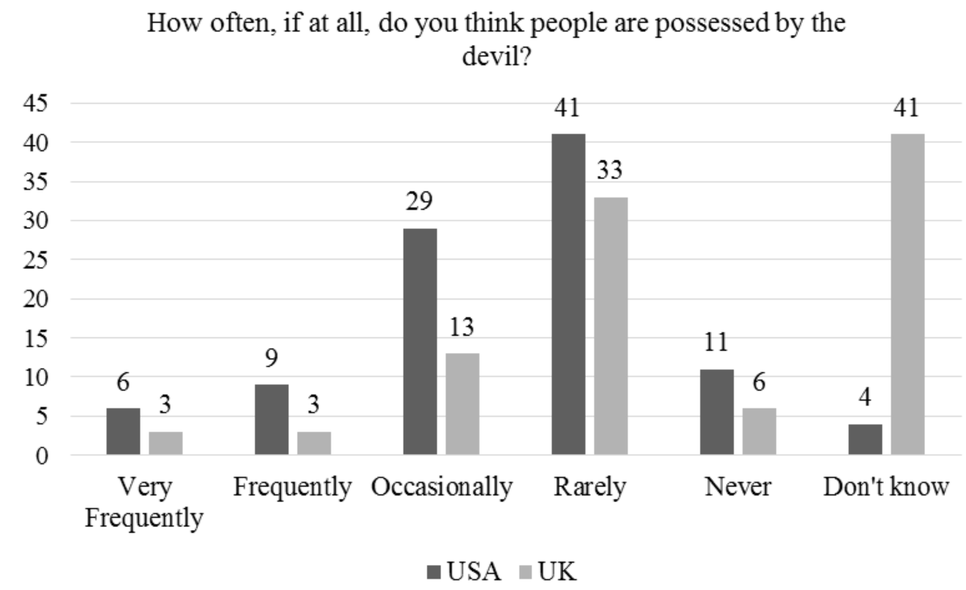


**Figure no. 3** – The frequency of demonic possession.

**Source: YouGov.uk 2013 opinion poll: Beliefs about the Devil and Possession.**
*https://yougov.co.uk/news/2013/09/27/18-brits-believe-possession-devil-and-half-america/*
(last accessed 19 November 2015)

**CONCLUSION**

The paper has explored the ebbs and flow of the Western demonological imagination from the time of Jesus to the present. It has been shown that the demonological frame of mind is a constitutive part of the Christian worldview, in which an eternal battle of cosmic proportions is being fought between the Devil and his agents on the one side and the Church on the other side. How this battle has been framed in the minds of Christians over the past twenty centuries has changed several times. The response to the existence of the Devil, demons and possession has changed with the evolution of human understanding of these phenomena. However, Catholic demonological conception remained grounded upon the paradigmatic acts of exorcism performed by Jesus himself, as related in the new-testamentary sources. Soon after Jesus' crucifixion another, more indirect type of exorcism appeared in the Christian culture, as exemplified by the acts of Virgin Mary and the emergence of holy relics. Later an exorcist profession was established within the Church, which during the Middle Ages reached its peak of influence, as expressed by the great witch-hunts conducted by the Inquisition. With modernity, the Western obsession with the Devil and the fascination with the obscure and the occult take different shape, as the importance of the Devil recedes in the cultural imagination in Western society. Despite recent statements of the Roman Catholic Church that the Devil does exist, secularization has decreased the influence of the Church in everyday life and has altered traditional beliefs about evil and its source. If we are to accept Baudelaire's statement that the Devils' cleverest trick is to make people believe that he does not exist, then perhaps his trick has been successful.

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# THE TRADITION OF MAY DEVOTIONS TO THE VIRGIN MARY IN LATGALE (LATVIA): FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT

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**ABSTRACT**

An important role has been allocated to the Virgin Mary since the very beginnings of Christianity. According to the calendar of the Roman Catholic Church, May is dedicated to honouring the Virgin Mary. Due to her human origins, she has become an intermediary between people and God, capable of influencing the decisions of her son Jesus Christ, and providing assistance to people of her own accord. Together with God and Jesus Christ, she is considered to have extraordinary, saintly qualities in Latvian Catholic communities.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the tradition of May devotions began to spread widely in Catholic territories in Latvia. Currently the services are usually performed by womenfolk in the rural environment. Every evening or on weekends in May, people gather to pray and sing in churches, cemeteries, at crossroads, or in the centre or the edge of villages where crucifixes are located.

**Keywords:** May Devotions, Virgin Mary, Latgale, Catholicism, Jesuits, crucifixes.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the Calendar of the Roman Catholic Church, May is dedicated to the honouring of the Virgin Mary. The tradition of May devotions in the present form – honouring the Virgin Mary over the entire month of May – can be traced back to the late 18th century in Rome, where Father Latomia of the Roman College of the Society of Jesus made a vow to devote the month of May to Mary to counteract infidelity and immorality among students. The practice spread from

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Rome to Jesuit Colleges and thence to nearly every Catholic Church adhering to the Latin rite. (Golweck, 1911: 542) This vow had been carried out in practice in many Catholic territories in Eastern Europe as well, through the Jesuits' colleges, schools and rural missions. Using current geographical terms this would be in Lithuania, Poland, Belorussia, Russia, and Latvia. Nevertheless this tradition did not establish roots in every place due to varying historical circumstances.

The tradition of May devotions is still widespread in Latvia today. For Catholic communities, which are located mostly in Latgale (the eastern part of Latvia) and in isolated places in Augšzeme (the south-eastern part of Latvia) and Kurzeme (the western part), May is a time when prayers and songs are devoted to the Virgin Mary. Every evening or on weekends, mainly in the rural environment, womenfolk gather to venerate the Virgin Mary in churches, in the villages, at crossroads and at cemeteries where wooden crucifixes are located.

This publication contains an analysis of the tradition of May devotions, emphasizing the historical background, the development and an explication of the tradition nowadays. The study is based on historical sources, scientific publications and fieldwork materials.

## ROOTS, SOIL, AND JESUITS

From the second half of the 16th century, after the Council of Trent (1545–1563), there was an active period of Counter-Reformation and Re-Catholicisation in Europe. It was a time rich in pilgrimages, miraculous experiences, and the missions of different orders, especially of the Jesuits. In some regions, for example, in Eastern Europe, the activities of Catholics continued at a high intensity until the 19th century.

In 1534, Ignatius Loyola established the Jesuit order with six like-minded fellows, including Francis Xavier. Pope Paul III approved the formation of the *Societas Jesu* in 1540 by a bull. (Pollen, 1912: 81) The Jesuits very quickly attained popularity among both simple folk and noblemen as well. Twenty years later the order was influential at the Council of Trent, which was organized due to the spread of Protestantism and the need for moral and administrative reforms within the Roman Catholic Church. The Jesuits took part in the final session of the third period in 1563 when the Council approved notions dealing with purgatory, the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics and images of saints, and indulgences. (Oxford Dictionary, 1998: 1639) The affirmation of these notions provided tools to the Jesuits in their later missions promulgating the religion. Catholicism became understandable for common folk through the usage of St Francis Xavier's relics, water of St Ignatius Loyola, and the various images of saints. The grandeur of their missions, spiritual performances and pilgrimages gave an advantage to Jesuits in the battle for brains and souls not only against the

Protestants, but other Catholic orders as well. Jesuits provided a substantial contribution to the consolidation of the vernacular or *home* religion in Europe, which was usually intermingled with experience from the local religion and prior practices. Trevor Johnson writing about the popular religion in Germany and Central Europe in 1400–1800 noticed that through sacraments, Jesuits taped into a vast reservoir of popular religious culture. Prayers, charms, conjurations, blessings and exorcisms were a vital ingredient of popular techniques of protection against disease, disaster and sorcery. (Johnson, 1996: 198)

After the Livonian War (1558–1583), the current territory of Latvia was divided into Catholic and Lutheran lands. In 1582, Polish King, Stephen Bathory arrived in Livonia with the Jesuits Piotr Skarga, Martin Laterna and Jan Vincery. (Kleijntjenss, 1941: VII) In 1583, the first Jesuit school in Riga was established and the Bishopric in Cēsis was founded. After that, Jesuit mission centres in Riga and in the current central part of Latvia were opened. (Kleijntjenss, 1941: XI) Jesuit Antonio Possevino, who was an adviser to King Stefan Bathory resided in Riga at this time as well. In the following centuries, Livonia became an area of Jesuit pastoral, economic and political activities and influence. The interchange of personnel from the Jesuit Order between other European countries ensured the circulation and transfer of spiritual practices from other Jesuit mission points and schools.

After the Polish-Swedish War (1600–1629), Latgale (called *Inflanty* or *Polish Livonia*) was separated from the other Latvian regions. The western and central part of Latvia came under the rule of the Kingdom of Sweden, whereas the eastern part remained in the Catholic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In 1621, the Jesuits were expelled from Riga (this had happened before, in 1587), but they periodically returned to the city despite the prohibitions. (Kleijntjenss, 1941: XXIII) In 1625, the residence in Cēsis was closed and the Jesuits were expelled from the central part of Latvia by the Swedish authorities. (Kleijntjenss, 1941: 283) The Jesuits moved to other missions in the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia (the southern part of today’s Latvia) and to Polish Livonia where the mission of Dinaburg (today Daugavpils) had existed since 1630. (Kleijntjenss, 1940: 243–260)

French scholar Luis Chatellier pointed out that the first half of the 18$^{th}$ century was the golden age of missions in Europe. (Chatellier, 1997: 89) In Eastern Europe, the golden age of Jesuit missions lasted until the first quarter of the 19$^{th}$ century when they were banished from the Russian Empire. In 1772, Latgale was incorporated into Tsarist Russia, which already included Vidzeme. At the end of the 18$^{th}$ century, the entire territory of Latvia was divided into the Governorates of Livland, Courland and Vitebsk of the Russian Empire. In 1773, the activities of the Jesuit Order were discontinued by a bull issued by Pope Clement XIV. However, Catherine II did not promulgate the papal bull in the Russian Empire, of which

Latvia was a part. As a consequence, the activities of the Jesuits were not hindered in the territory of Tsarist Russia. Hence, many Jesuits from other European countries, in which their activities had been banned, migrated to the territories which today are Latvia, Lithuania, Belorussia, and Russia. Their brought with them their experience and religious beliefs and ritual practices, which they attempted to cultivate in the new territories. One of these practices was the May devotions to Mary, which soon found a place in Catholic Latvia.

In 1814, Pius VII re-established the Jesuit Order (Oxford Dictionary, 1998: 1924.), but in 1820 Jesuits were expelled from the Russian territories, because of the Tsar's decision to sustain the position of Orthodoxy and to further the Russification of non-Russian speaking nations. It is thought that the late 18$^{th}$ century and the first quarter of the 19$^{th}$ century was the time when the tradition of May devotions commenced in the Latvian Catholic community. After the banishment of the Jesuits, the new practice was continued by the people without the direct involvement and physical presence of the Jesuits. In future years the Jesuits sustained Catholic traditions by publishing books, which were sent into the territory of Latgale. In the circumstances of Russification and the oppression of Catholicism, the tradition of May devotions also gradually gained the character of resistance.

## CATHOLICISM, CRUCIFIXES AND THE VIRGIN MARY

From the end of the 12$^{th}$ century, the current territory of Latvia came under the influence of Catholicism by degrees. In the 13$^{th}$ century, the territory of today's Latvia and Estonia formed the Confederation of Livonian countries, which at the beginning was a union of Catholic lands. St. Mary became the patron of Catholic Livonia and gradually entered the people's religion, traditions and their everyday lives. (Lielbārdis, 2015: 94–95)

Even though the Latvian tribes had already formally accepted Christianity in the late 13$^{th}$ century, customs from the pre-Christian era as well as customs introduced by Catholicism endured together into the 18$^{th}$ century. (Adamovičs, 1933: 467) The syncretism of religions still exists today, though to a smaller degree. For example, customary religious events are maintained and observed on the same calendar dates. Historically, Catholicism continued to exist in the entire territory of Latvia until the 1620s, when the first Lutheran congregation was founded in Riga. In later years, there was a battle for dominance between the two confessions for influence and property, especially in the City of Riga. In rural regions, which became Lutheran territory, the syncretism of Catholicism and pre-Christian religious was maintained, as the change in religion in most cases was formal. In Lutheran territories, the people continued to observe the sacred Catholic cult up to the 18th century. Many churches, chapels and sacred sites dedicated to Catholic saints (*e.g.* the Virgin Mary, St. Anna, Jesus Christ, St. Anthony), continued to exist. Moreover, most of the significant festival days were named after Catholic saints. The spring and the autumn markets, for instance, which were very popular, retained saints as patrons.

In contrast to the previously mentioned territories of Vidzeme and Kurzeme, Catholicism has endured in Latgale throughout nearly all of the period from the 12th century until today, even though in the first centuries this was purely a formality. In Latgale, Catholicism became not just the primary religion, but it also had a significant role in the development of the national identity. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, when national consciousness had awakened in Latvian society, the inhabitants of Latgale often called themselves Catholics, *i.e.* substituting their national identity with membership in a religious confession. (Adamovičs, 1934–1935: 21610; Brīvzemnieks, 1991: 93) This kind of positioning of themselves by the people of Latgale was made possible by the fact that until the founding of Latvia as a state in 1918, Latgale had been separated from the other territory of Latvia since the early 17th century. Catholicism was one of the most significant factors forming Latgale's cultural and societal singularity and sense of being different.

Some of the visual evidence, which indicates regional differences and can still be noticed today, is the presence of crucifixes in the Latgale landscape. The origins of crucifixes in Latvia, like elsewhere in Europe, are connected with the spread of Catholicism, especially with Jesuit missions in towns, villages and isolated hamlets. Luis Chatellier noted that the most novel and essential thing that the missionaries brought was the cross in the most literary sense of the word. From the end of the 17th century, the ceremony of planting a cross assumed increasing importance in the procedure of a mission. (Chatellier, 1997: 108) The crucifix was planted at the end of the mission, which usually lasted from 7–9 days, but could also be longer. The cross, which on average was 2.5 metres high, marked the particular territories and people's belonging to Catholicism. In Latgale, crosses can be found in the centre or at the outskirts of villages. They are often located along the main road or at crossroads, giving travellers a place to stop, rest and spend some time in prayer.

There are two types of crosses in the architecture of Latgale today: ones are free standing crucifixes, while others are little open cross shelters or chapels with a crucifix in the centre. The first type of crucifix was traditionally made of wood, with or without a cover over the image of Jesus. At present metal and concrete crosses can be encountered as well. The little cross shelters were traditionally made of wood, but in some places, for example the Viļāni neighbourhood, one can find small open stone buildings with columns.

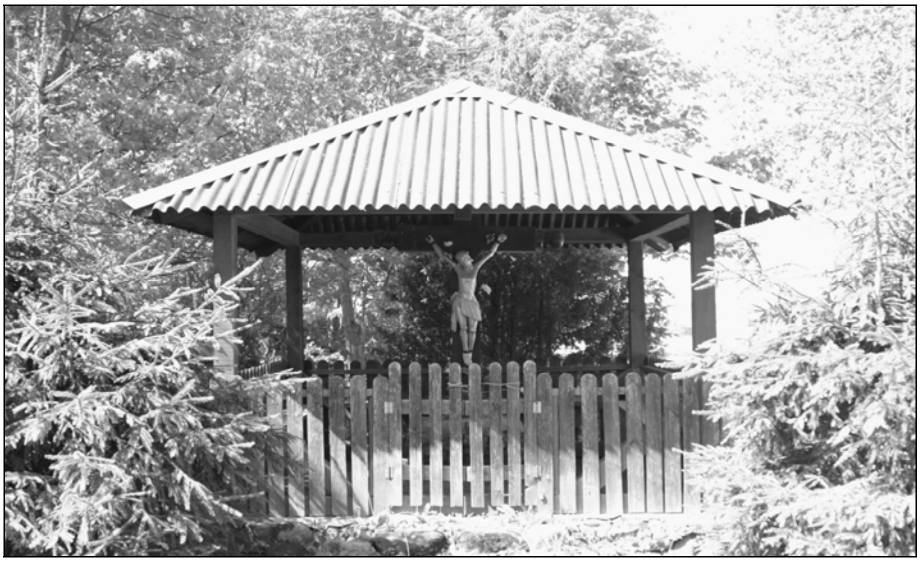

**Figure no. 1** – A cross shelter made of wood, Sakstagals neighbourhood, 2014.

**Photo: Aigars Lielbārdis.**

Today crucifixes are frequently decorated with artificial flowers, which remain there throughout the year. However, in May, people bring real flowers with them when they gather around a cross. The decoration of crucifixes with flowers was already common elsewhere in Europe in the 17$^{th}$–18$^{th}$ centuries. (Chatellier, 1997: 115) Both the free standing crosses, as well as the crucifixes in shelters, contain images and sculptures of the Virgin Mary located next to Jesus, which indicate their significance and role in Catholicism. The Virgin Mary is considered pre-eminent among the saints. (Oxford Dictionary, 1998: 1047) The veneration of the Virgin Mary is widespread in Catholic societies due to her origins as a human, the fact that she is an intermediary between people and God and that she is able to influence the decisions of her son, Jesus Christ. (Power, 2011: IV) During the performance of the May devotions through songs and prayers devoted to the Virgin Mary, women pray for the fulfilment of wishes. The Virgin Mary helps people overcome their sufferings and sorrows in life. In 2013, a participant and performer of the May devotions in Šķilbēni Parish, Valentīna Keiša, said: "Mary is a mother to us all. She assists us in all of our troubles. We turn to Jesus through Mary". Mary is prayed to for the tasks at the farmstead in spring, for good health, and children pray to her for their parents. It is thought that the Virgin Mary is able to understand human needs more deeply than other saints, especially those of women. In the Catholic tradition, the Virgin Mary protects women, especially in times of pregnancy and birth. In Latvian folklore, the functions of the Virgin Mary are merged with the pre-Christian goddess Laima and the former partly assumes her functions because the areas of patronage are very similar.

**Figure no. 2** – A cross shelter made of stone, Viļāni neighbourhood, 2014.

**Photo: Aigars Lielbārdis.**

**BOOKS, TRADITION AND PERFORMANCE**

It is thought that the tradition of May devotions began in Latgale at the turn of the 18th–19th centuries. The commencement of the tradition, like elsewhere in Europe, was connected with the Jesuits who were active in the territory of Latgale until 1820. The Jesuits introduced and spread the tradition, but after they were banished from the Russian Empire, monks from other orders and priests continued the devotions. The ritual reached its height in the mid-19th century when guidelines and descriptions for the performance of the tradition were published in prayer and song books, as well as in separate publications. Prior to the early 20th century, the tradition, like other Catholic religious activities, was restricted in Tsarist Russia and conducted semi-secretly. It is considered that the tradition was most widely and openly practiced after the nation gained its independence and until World War II, *i.e.* the 1920s to 1940s. In most cases the May devotions continue to take place without the presence of a priest, which makes this a folk tradition, a folk religious practice, which has been passed down through the generations until today.

The banning of the Jesuits' activities in the Russian Empire, including Latgale, was one of the first and most significant steps for reducing the influence of Catholicism and to weaken its positions in the regions traditionally considered to be Catholic. The influence and the power of the Jesuits were known from their achievements elsewhere in Europe. Missionaries methodically traversed entire regions, from the big cities to the smallest villages, reaching everyone individually. Such missionary activity had not been seen since the early centuries of Christianity. (Chatellier, 1997: 85) In addition, the Jesuits published Church literature in the Latgalian orthography, founded and ran schools as well as missions and used a dialect of the local language in their communication with the community. This also strengthened the community's self-confidence and may have created the desire for self-determination, which was not expedient for the government of the Tsarist nation.

Books of a religious nature helped people learn to read in their native language, but in Latgale there was a restriction on printing from 1864–1904, which banned the issue of books in Latin letters in the Latgalian orthography. The use of the national language was also restricted in schools and the state administration, especially starting from the 1880s. In this way, religious activities in Latgale served not only in strengthening identity and language, but also manifested themselves as resistance to the existing governmental system. During the printing ban, books with Latin letters were published outside the Russian Empire, for example in Konigsberg, and were brought in as contraband. The publication dates on the title pages of books published during the printing ban, were shown as being before the printing ban and the place of publication was also shown as being elsewhere.

The prayer book with the largest circulation was *Pilniejga gromata lyugszonu uz guda Diwa Kunga ikszan tryjadibas winiga, wyssu swatokas Jumprawas Maryas un Diwa Swatu* [Complete Prayer Book in Honour of the Trinity, the Blessed Mary and God] (Pilniejga gromata, 1857), which was republished many times. The place of issue was shown in this book as Vilnius, while the date of publication as 1857. This bypassed the censor, allowing users of the book to avoid confiscation.

The first known description of the May devotions in the Latgalian orthography was published in 1843, in a separate publication named *Gromatynia kolposzonas Jumpraway Maryay por maja mienesi* [Book of Worship of the Virgin Mary in May]. (Gromatynia, 1843) The publication included lessons and sequential instruction for those practicing the tradition of May devotions:

"Anyone who wishes to worship the Virgin Mary during that month [May], should do so. On the evening before the first day of May [*i.e.* 30 April] the gathered should recite the Rosary or the Litany, or 7 prayers to the Virgin Mary. After this, one person should hold 12 notes or leaflets [*znaczkenia*] from the first chapter in their hands, each should take one: each note will announce the type of worship which should be done all month". (Gromatynia, 1843: 4) The notes will show the kinds of prayer which must be said all month (2nd and 4$^{th}$ note), that one must get up from sleep without tarrying (1$^{st}$ note), avoid telling lies (7$^{th}$ note), avoid gossiping (9$^{th}$ note), not to eat breakfast or lunch on Saturdays (10$^{th}$ note), that one must go to church every Sunday and must recite Ave Maria 7 times next to the icon of Mary and kiss the ground 7 times, etc. (Gromatynia, 1843: 5–7) There are 12 notes in total.

This is followed by teachings for each day, which must be done during the month of May: "Each day, one note must be taken from the second chapter. The note will reveal how one must worship the Virgin Mary throughout the day". (Gromatynia, 1843: 4) The book contains a section to be read for each day or teachings about some miracle in the life of the Virgin Mary, which is to be followed by prayers. This should be done if there is time, and if one can't fulfil what has been set on some day and it is omitted, then this is not a sin. (Gromatynia, 1843: 5) In the notes that are to be performed each day – prayers at various times, the Ave Maria and Pater Noster (1$^{st}$, 2$^{nd}$ and 3$^{rd}$ note), which must be recited lying in the shape of a cross (8$^{th}$ note), one must be on one's guard not to unnecessarily mention God's name (4$^{th}$ note), and not to stare in the direction that one really wishes to all day (10$^{th}$ note). (Gromatynia, 1843: 7–8) There are 12 notes in total as well.

The reading dedicated for each day consists of *teachings*, which commence with a question, for example, "Why should one love God and worship him?" This is followed by answers to the question: enunciations about everyday events, which are short stories where the shepherd, the Devil, God, the bishop, the sinner, the soldier, Jesus Christ, the monk etc. are portrayed. Equally present in each story is Mary who helps people who have passed away enter into heaven or she rescues one from incarceration etc. These same texts can also be found in the previously mentioned "Complete Prayer Book in Honour of the Trinity, the Blessed Mary and

God" (Pilniejga gromata, 1857: 618–659) which was the most widely spread 19th century prayer and song book, and was an important precondition for introducing the tradition into the wider community, and so that the practice of the tradition would be similar in different places.

Concepts about religion and deities were created through these short stories, telling of the presence of God, the Devil, Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary in people's everyday lives. An understanding of deities was developed in vernacular religion through a simplified Catholicism. Even though religious activities adhered to by the populace often differed in both form as well as understanding from official church practice, the final result was that knowledge about the content of Christianity in society was kindled. The May devotions can be counted among the traditions of home religion too, as they were mainly performed without the presence of an official church representative, and continue in the same way today.

In the Soviet period, until the 1980s, religious activities were combatted, banned and the state repressed ordinary people and priests. In the first years of the Soviet era, religious conviction and activities were often adequate reasons for a person to be jailed or deported to Siberia, thus Catholic traditions were practiced secretly. To reduce the influence and presence of religion in the Soviet period, many village crucifixes were destroyed, while cultural centres, crash repair workshops and warehouses were set up in churches. The situation changed in the 1980s, and with the regaining of an independent state in 1991, religious confessions also gained "freedom".

As confirmed by the author of this article's field research and the documentation of the May devotions since 2004, the tradition is now observed mainly in the rural environment and in small towns. Each evening after the day's work or just on weekends, people gather at crucifixes out in the open, at crucifixes in cemeteries and by churches, or come together in churches where they together dedicate prayers and songs to the Virgin Mary. Usually they are older generation females, with men appearing more rarely. The Rosary is recited first, then a Litany to Mary, which is followed by 10–15 different songs dedicated to Mary. The session lasts for about an hour. At the end of the session, the notes are brought out. They determine the tasks and prayers to be said in the coming days in worship the Virgin Mary. The performance of the tradition of May devotions still follows the guidelines, which were stated in the first publications. However, with the drift of people from the countryside to the city, and especially the limited participation by the younger generation, there is less overall observation of the tradition.

**Figure no. 3** – May devotions performance at Makuži, 2014.

**Photo: Aigars Lielbārdis.**

The tradition of May devotions is a musical performance, as songs devoted to the Virgin Mary take up most of the performance time. Latgale is rich in vocal polyphony and the tradition of May devotions is also called the "May song singing". The knowledge and experience of singing in voices is passed down through the generations. The parallels in the musical material can be found in religious as well as folk songs, even though both the texts and the functions of the performance differ. In the "Complete Prayer Book in Honour of the Trinity, the Blessed Mary and God" (Pilniejga gromata, 1857) one can find more than 20 songs, which are dedicated to the Virgin Mary, with almost all of them having a different melody. Some of the melodies of the songs dedicated to Mary are similar to the melodies of folk songs, which have no connection with any Catholic practice. But, this happened because the Jesuits offered the melody of a folk song, which was already familiar, for the teaching of some text or song with spiritual content. As a result, the religious text gained a traditional musical melody and a manner of vocal performance. The May devotions are not only a religious practice, but also provide musical pleasure to the singers and listeners who take part or are present.

## CONCLUSION

Granted the fact that the tradition of May devotions only began in the late 18th century in Rome, and presume that the tradition was already known in Eastern Europe at the turn of the 18th–19th centuries, then only 20 years were needed to bring the tradition to life in the territory of Latgale. But this time was sufficient if one takes into account the Jesuit Order's discipline, methodology and the perseverance of the monks in maintaining the Catholic tradition. (Wright, 2004: 56) In addition, in the late 18th century after the discontinuation of the Jesuit Order's activities elsewhere in Europe, many of them arrived in the territory of the Russian Empire, including Latgale. In this way the Jesuits gained additional personnel for their work in the missions and schools. After 1820, when the Jesuits were driven from the Russian Empire, the tradition of May devotions which they had started was continued by monks and priests from other orders and, most importantly – by the common folk without the presence of church representatives.

One of the reasons for the popularity of the Jesuits was the fact that they attempted to involve the community in religious activities – pilgrimages and open air theatricals. The tradition of May devotions is also an example – prayers are recited together, songs are sung, notes are drawn out, a practice which is looked at with humour today. The reason for the merriment could be, for example, if one were to draw a note which forbade them from imbibing strong alcoholic drinks for the entire month of May (6th note). In this way the tradition offers a religious experience, musical pleasure, and the community is brought closer together through the time spent together.

The presence of crucifixes in the cultural and natural landscape of Latgale and Augšzeme is a centuries old legacy of the Jesuits. Initially the crucifixes were mounted to mark a place and community, denoting that it adhered to Catholicism, but later they became places of prayer and gathering. Like elsewhere in Europe, there was a diversity of crucifixes and this diversity continues to exist in Latgale, in terms of form, materials, placement and artistic execution, though all are united by similar functions. The crucifixes are "used" mainly in the month of May when the people come together in the evenings in smaller or larger groups and perform the May devotions.

Other events were celebrated too in the Middle Ages during May in Europe and in Latvia – the "May Count's Festivals", but a connection with the worship of Mary cannot be identified with them. In May, it is more likely that a general and across the board desire to decorate or to be decorated with flowers in spring can be discerned. This was already a familiar aspect in pre-Christian religions, and therefore the tradition of May devotions were successfully assumed into the culture of Latgale as well. Crucifixes as well as icons and statues of Mary are decorated with flowers. The tradition took root successfully despite the restrictions on Catholicism and the threat to the language under the conditions of Russification.

The designation "Catholic" during the 19th century in Latgalian society, included not just belonging to a different religion, but also one's national identity. In turn, the Latvian language form or High Latvian dialect spoken in Latgale made them different from the rest of Latvian society.

The image of the Virgin Mary also helped the tradition to take root. From the beginnings of Catholicism, it had taken a more and more significant role in the culture of Latvia, replacing, intertwining and taking over the functions of Laima, the deity of the Latvian pre-Christian religion. In addition – the image of the Virgin Mary continued a tradition from the Middle Ages in the religious concepts of the mid-19th century – that deities are present in the daily lives of the community, take part in solving everyday problems, at times becoming angry, jealous, offended or very happy. Deities had human features and weaknesses. The barrier between reality and religious experience was broken down through the legends and stories of various sacred miracles. The simplification of the images of various saints and deities can be linked with the minds of people at the time. Their understanding of the connectivity of things, which was maintained in this kind of model in later centuries, created and strengthened the home religion, which continued to distance itself even more from the official practices and position of the church.

Economic conditions and migration have contributed to the gradual disappearance of the tradition of May devotions from its traditional rural environment, as fewer and fewer people participate in the sessions and the younger generation take part more and more rarely. The tradition is also declining because its performance requires musical skill, knowledge and experience, which have not always been passed on to the younger generation. But, official church events, without necessarily meaning to, also contribute to the decline in the performance of the tradition in the open air next to crucifixes. May devotions are broadcast on the radio throughout the month of May. As a result, those people who practice this tradition no longer travel to the crucifixes, but sit next to the radio at home instead and worship the Virgin Mary in this way. This means that the tradition is in flux and is gaining a new form of existence, and therefore – it is alive.

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# CONFESSIONAL AFFILIATION OF ROMANIANS: A HISTORICAL AND STATISTICAL PERSPECTIVE

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**ABSTRACT**

By means of statistical analysis, this article aims to provide the reader with a general view of the evolutions and tendencies registered in the structure of the Romanian confessional system, over an extended period of time (1859–2011). According to the 1992, 2002 and 2011 census data, the Orthodox Church continues to be the dominant Church in Romania. However, there is also a tendency towards diversification of religious preferences among the population, in consensus with the general influences of secularisation and globalisation.

**Keywords**: confessional affiliation, religious congregations, religions, sects, religious associations.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF STATISTICS IN UNDERSTANDING THE RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON

The advantages of taking a quantitative approach to the religious phenomenon have already been emphasised in the heyday of the sociology of religion, by prestigious names as Gabriel le Bras, Emile Poulat, Henri Desroches a.s.o. All of these researchers underlined the value of quantitative studies, both in better understanding each distinct religion through evaluation of the numerical following and vitality thereof, and in providing evidence of changes in the religious structure and religiosity Therefore, statistical and cartographic analysis of the population is absolutely necessary in order to understand the various social situations. The Romanian sociologist Dimitrie Gusti was fully aware of this when

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he described censuses as "a living inventory of a nation's social phenomena and social facts at a given moment. It is in any case a quantitative expression, an initial, serious and positive scientific expression of society that may be used as a foundation on which to build any scientific or political construction". (Gusti cited in Alexandrescu, 2007: 7) Statistical, empirical data represents a solid basis on which the researcher can construct their entire scientific and imaginative framework.

Another not insignificant aspect worthy of mention concerns the difficulty of gathering this data, due to the subjectivity of some of the census agents, not to mention the rapidity with which social changes often occur (change of address, occupational or confessional mobility, etc.), under which circumstances data becomes obsolete so rapidly that it is often out of date even before it has reached the centralisation and processing phase. What we have tried to emphasise thus far is the fact that, while providing partial and, up to a point, even superficial data (not in the sense of imprecision, but in the sense of insufficient for complete analysis of a social issue), religious statistics are indispensable for any serious, thorough researcher and represent a good example of what one French sociologist called "the fruitful alliance" between the exact sciences and the humanist sciences. (Le Bras, 1956: 21)

## THE BREAKDOWN OF THE CONFESSIONAL LANDSCAPE BEFORE 1990

The first general statistical survey in France was performed in 1831 and included only vague data on religions, in the context of the sums allocated to them from the State budget. The following censuses, of 1841, 1851, 1861, 1866 and 1872 progressively increased statistical understanding of nineteenth century French religion and constitute even today valuable documentary sources for sociologists studying religion. (Poulat, 1956: 26)

According to our documentation, statistical information of a religious nature was available for the Romanian Principalities even before the 1848 Revolution. In an almanac from 1838, for instance, there are detailed information relating to the existing monasteries at that time, their number, incomes, monks/nuns, livestock, etc. (Almanah, 1838) Another almanac shows that, only two years later, the number of monasteries had risen rapidly, from 50 to 70. (Almanah, 1840: 165) At the institutional level of the church, we observe a steady increase in statistical records, especially following affirmation of the autocephalous nature of the Romanian Orthodox Church. (in 1885) This is proven by the decision, taken by the Holy Synod in 1888, to create an "ad-hoc committee to get a general overview of the Romanian parishes, as well as the necessary ecclesiastical staff..." (Raportul, 1888: 2) The value of the report completed by this committee is exceptional, given that it offers a complete inventory, in over 500 pages, of every parish in every county, including the total number of parishioners, priests and deacons.

However, all of the aforementioned cases only offer sporadic and partial data. The unification of the principalities, on 24 January 1859 (a date which also coincides with the Romanian society's wholesale entry into modernity, in all respects, including the statistical field), occasioned the first official and complete population census. The general census undertaken in 1859 remained the reference and comparison point for the subsequent censuses that followed in 1899, 1912 and 1930. The successive data gathered by these censuses allow us to observe developments and changes in the confessional landscape over a long period of time.

A first comparative analysis referring to the faith of Romanians was made, at the turn of the 19th century, by Leonida Colescu. His work, *Analiza rezultatelor recensământului general al populației din România din 1899* [Analysis of the Results of the General Census of the Population of Romania in 1899] deserves to be brought back to the attention of researchers and re-evaluated on its own merits. (Colescu, 1944)

According to the data of the 1859, 1899 and 1912 censuses, the Orthodox Church maintained its majority status throughout the whole survey period, at 94.89%, 91.52% and 93.09%of the population, respectively. The second largest faith group, although far removed in terms of actual numbers, was Judaism, at 3.03% in 1858, 4.48% in 1899 and 3.33% in 1912. Islam gained numerically, from 1321 (0.03%) followers in 1859 to 44 732 (0.75%) in 1899 and to 46 406 (0.64%) in 1912.This fact is to be explained by the territorial changes resulting from the War of Independence of 1879, and the assimilation of counties with majority Turkish and Tatar populations. The situation of the Lipovans, also present in Dobrogea, is similar, showing a numerical increase from 8 375 (0.19%) in 1859, to 15 094 (0.25%) in 1899 and 21628 (0.64%) in 1912. Only Armenians and Protestants saw a fall in numbers. The low number of those identified by the "other religions" field, should also be noted, which leads us to suspect a narrower range of faiths, with the majority of believers being drawn towards the large traditional, historic religions, something which might well be expected in the era in question. There is a tendency towards confessional diversification and an increase in the number of those identified as "other religion", but only up to a certain point. (*Table no. 1*)

The Great Unification of 1918 was a high point in the history of the Romanian people which resulted in massive territorial and demographic changes. This led to changes in the ethnic and confessional structure, in the form of an increase in the number of ethnic minorities. In Dobrogea, the number of Turks, Tatars and Bulgarians increased considerably with the addition of the 'Quadrilateral' region (southern Dobrogea); Banat brought in significant numbers of Swabians, Hungarians, Croats and Slovenians; Crişana-Maramureş, a large number of Hungarians, Jews, Germans, Czechs and Slovaks; Bucovina – Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Jews, Germans and Polish; Transylvania – Hungarians, Saxons and Jews.

*Table no. 1*

Breakdown of the population by faith from 1859–1912.

| Religion | Year | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1859 | | 1899 | | 1912 | |
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| **Total** | 4 424 961 | 100 | 5 956 690 | 100 | 7 235 320 | 100 |
| **1. Orthodox** | 4 198 862 | 94.89 | 5 451 787 | 91.52 | 6 735 444 | 93.09 |
| **2. Jewish** | 134 168 | 3.03 | 266 652 | 4.48 | 241 088 | 3.33 |
| **3. Catholic** | 45 154 | 1.02 | 149 667 | 2.51 | 157 938 | 2.18 |
| **4. Protestant** | 28 903 | 0.65 | 22 749 | 0.38 | 24 727 | 0.34 |
| **5. Armenian** | 8 178 | 0.18 | 5787 | 0.10 | 6 985 | 0.10 |
| **6. Lipovan** | 8 375 | 0.19 | 15094 | 0.25 | 21 628 | 0.30 |
| **7. Muslim** | 1 323 | 0.03 | 44732 | 0.75 | 46 406 | 0.64 |
| **8. Other religion** | – | – | 222 | –0.01 | 1 104 | 0.02 |

**Source: Sorin Negruți, "The evolution of the Religious structure in Romania since 1859 to the present day" (2014): 39.**

From a legal perspective, the situation regarding the coexistence of all these faiths was regulated under the Law on the general arrangements for religions [*Legea pentru regimul general al cultelor*] of 1928. This guaranteed freedom of religious belief and practice but at the same time also maintained unequal statuses for the religious groups, which it divided into three categories: ***1.*** The "dominant" Orthodox Church; ***2.*** The "historic" religions: Byzantine Catholic (the "primary" of these), Roman Catholic, Calvin Reformed, Evangelical Lutheran, Unitarian, Armenian Gregorian, Jewish and Muslim; ***3.*** "Tolerated" or accepted religious associations. This last category included Baptists, Gospel Christians and Seventh-day Adventists, which were frequently called "sects"[1] (*secte*) and operated subject to Law no 21/1924 on legal persons. Other religious groups, as the Nazarenes, Bible Students, Millenists, Reformist Adventists, Harvesters, Pentecostals and Inochentists were "completely forbidden". (Gheorghe, 2005)

All of these changes were first documented in the 1938 census. (Recensământul, 1938) This census was truly historic and remains a fundamental

[1]In this article the word "sect" is taken in its non-pejorative, neutral sense, as defined by the DEX 2009: "a religious community that has broken off from a larger religion (Christianity, Islam, Buddism, etc.) in order to practise an independent rite based on its own doctrine". (*https://dexonline.ro/definitie/sect%C4%83*)

point of reference and source of information regarding the socio-demographic structure of the Romanian population at that time and Romanian society in general, at the turn of the century. The census was coordinated by Dimitrie Gusti and one of its priority objectives was to record the breakdown of the population by "origin" (by ethnic group), according to mother tongue and religion. As a reflection of these changes, Orthodox numbers fell from 93.09% in 1912 to 72.59% in 1930. However, an increase in the range of faiths professed was observed: Byzantine Catholics (the Byzantine Catholic Church in communion with Rome), Baptists and Adventists are mentioned for the first time; notably, also for the first time, record was made of citizens identified in the categories "No religion" or "Religion not given", each with a weighting of 0.04%. (*Table no. 2*)

*Table no. 2*

Religious adherence of the Romanian population in 1930

| **Romania Total** | **18 057 028** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| **Orthodox** | 13 108 227 | **72.6** |
| **Byzantine Catholic** | 1 427 391 | **7.9** |
| **Roman Catholic** | 1 234 151 | **6.8** |
| **Calvin Reformed** | 710 706 | **3.9** |
| **Evangelical Lutheran** | 398759 | **2.2** |
| **Unitarian** | 69 257 | **0.4** |
| **Armenian Gregorian**<br>**Armenian Catholic** | 10 005<br>1 440 | –<br>– |
| **Lipovan** | 57 288 | **0.3** |
| **Adventist** | 16 102 | – |
| **Baptist** | 60 562 | **0.3** |
| **Jewish** | 756 930 | **4.2** |
| **Muslim** | 185 486 | **1.0** |
| **Other religions and sects** | 7 434 | – |
| **No religion and free-thinkers** | 6 604 | – |
| **Not given** | **6 686** | – |

**Source: *Romanian general population census,* 1938 (Recensământul, 1938: xxiv).**
**(Note: "–" represents a percentage lower than 0%; the original names of the religions have been used)**

Under the Communist regime (1945–1989), freedom of religion was guaranteed under the Constitution of 1948; however, in accordance with "party requirements", censuses held during that era did not include questions regarding citizens' religious identity. The Law on Religions [*Legea Cultelor*] promulgated on 4 August 1948 by the Communist state, legally recognised the following faiths as religions: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Reformed, Augustana Evangelical, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Baptist, Unitarian, Old-rite Christian, Seventh-day Adventist, Muslim, Gospel Christian, Jewish, Armenian Gregorian. (Chivu-Duță, 2007: 18) All other religious organisations (as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Reformist Adventists, Bethanists, Stylites, Nazarenes, the Romanian 'Lord's Army' [*Oastea Domnului*] etc.) were qualified as "sects" and outlawed. All religious associations and foundations were also banned. In 1948, the decision was taken to disestablish the Byzantine Catholic Church and annul the Concordat with the Vatican.

## CONFESSIONAL STRUCTURE OF ROMANIA AFTER 1990. NEW STEPS TOWARDS RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Religious pluralism is one particular attribute of democracies that are progressively consolidating, as politics is separated from religion and societies and states become secular. In Romania too, after 1990, there were significant changes in the religious and faith landscape; a reconstruction of the religious landscape, such that today the most diverse religions coexist: some with territorial or ethnic roots, others more recent arrivals, hoping that they have found fertile ground here for their missionary endeavours. The state has adopted new religious legislation in accordance with democratic principles and rules, thus creating itself the premises for real religious pluralism. These laws are included in: The Romanian Constitution, certain provisions of the Penal Code (Viața religioasă, 2005: 115, 116), the Law on Religions no 489 of 2006 (*http://www.culte.gov.ro/detaliu-legislatie/vrs/IDleg/18*) and other legislative acts (Emergency Orders, Government Decisions etc.). From a strictly legal point of view, as per this legislation, the main players in the Romanian post-revolution religious landscape are the main recognized religions (numbering 18) and the religious associations. (numbering 21)

Religious associations are new religious structures, with legal personality, which may comprise a minimum of 300 members, Romanian citizens resident in Romania, who have formed an association with a view to professing a religious belief. These associations are established by court ruling, based on a favourable opinion from the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs. (Gheorghe, 2008)

Besides the religions and religious associations, other organisations exist and other religious activities take place, which are not legally recognised; some of these have submitted files to the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs for approval, pending which they operate as non-governmental organisations or associations.

There have been three censuses in the 26 years that have elapsed since Romania's political regime change: these were conducted in 1992, 2002 and 2011; all were coordinated and carried out by the National Institute of Statistics. The results obtained provided researchers with a vast, accurate, unified statistical database indispensable for painting a statistical picture of our nation of the last two decades. However, this picture would clearly be incomplete without information regarding the confessional structure of the population. (*Table no. 3*)

*Table no. 3*

Breakdown of the Romanian population by faith 1992–2011

| Religion | Year | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1992 | | 2002 | | 2011 | |
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Total | 22 810 035 | 100 | 21 680 974 | 100 | 20 121 641 | 100 |
| 1. Orthodox | 19 802 389 | 86.81 | 18 817 975 | 86.79 | 16 307 004 | 86.54 |
| 2. Roman Catholic | 1 161 942 | 5.09 | 1 026 429 | 4.73 | 870 774 | 4.62 |
| 3. Reformed | 802 454 | 3.52 | 701 077 | 3.23 | 600 932 | 3.19 |
| 4. Pentecostal | 220 824 | 0.97 | 324 462 | 1.50 | 362 314 | 1.92 |
| 5. Byzantine Catholic | 223 327 | 0.98 | 191 556 | 0.88 | 150 593 | 0.80 |
| 6. Baptist | 109 462 | 0.48 | 126 639 | 0.58 | 112 850 | 0.60 |
| 7. Seventh-day Adventist | 77 546 | 0.34 | 93 670 | 0.43 | 80 944 | 0.4 |
| 8. Muslim | 55 928 | 0.25 | 67 257 | 0.31 | 64 337 | 0.34 |
| 9. Unitarian | 76 708 | 0.34 | 66 944 | 0.31 | 57 686 | 0.31 |
| 10. Jehovah's Witnesses | – | – | – | – | 49 820 | 0.26 |
| 11. Evangelist | 49 963 | 0.22 | 44 476 | 0.21 | 42 495 | 0.23 |
| 12. Old-rite Christians[2] | 28 141 | 0.12 | 38 147 | 0.18 | 32 558 | 0.17 |
| 13. Old-style Christians[3] | 32 228 | 0.14 | – | – | – | – |
| 14. Evangelical Lutheran (Presbytarian Synod) | 21 221 | 0.09 | 27 112 | 0.13 | 20 168 | 0.11 |
| 15. Serbian Orthodox | – | – | – | – | 14 385 | 0.08 |
| 16. Romanian Evangelical | – | – | 18 178 | 0.08 | 15 514 | 0.08 |
| 17. Augustana Evangelical | 39 119 | 0.17 | 8 716 | 0.04 | 5 399 | 0.03 |
| 18. Jewish | 9 670 | 0.04 | 6 057 | 0.03 | 3 519 | 0.02 |
| 19. Armenian | 2 023 | 0.01 | 775 | 0.004 | 393 | 0.002 |

[2] Old-rite Christians (or 'Stylists') are a religious group that broke away from the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1924 because they disagreed with its adoption of the Gregorian instead of the Julian calendar.

[3] Old-style Christians (of the Old-rite or Lipovan church) are Russians who fled the tsarist empire at the turn of the 18th century because they did not accept the reforms imposed by the patriarch Nikon, and who took refuge in Romania, initially in Suceava and then in Tulcea and Brăila in particular.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20. Other religion | 56 129 | 0.25 | 89 196 | 0.41 | 30 557 | 0.16 |
| 21. No religion | 26 314 | 0.12 | 12 825 | 0.06 | 18 917 | 0.10 |
| 22. Atheist | 10 331 | 0.05 | 8 524 | 0.04 | 20 743 | 0.11 |
| 23. Not given | 8 139 | 0.04 | 11 734 | 0.05 | – | – |
| 24. Unavailable | – | – | – | – | 1 259 739 | 6.25 |

**Source: The 1992, 2002 and 2011 *Population and housing census* (Recensământul, 1992, 2002, 2011).**

Regarding these censuses, we shall first of all make a few general observations. The Old-style Orthodox Church was only included in the first census, thereafter being categorised as a legal association; the Romanian Evangelical Church was in the opposite situation, as it was not included in the first census; the Serbian Orthodox Church, on the other hand, was only included in the last census, as was the case with the Jehovah's Witnesses organisation; it is therefore impossible to confirm rising or falling numerical trends in any of these cases. Another observation that should be made is that the 2011 census, in accordance with European regulations, gave citizens the possibility not to declare their religious identity. Information on religious adherence is thus unavailable for 1 259 739 citizens (6.25%), which also contributes to difficulties in interpreting the results.

The Romanian Orthodox Church, the dominant church for Romanians, saw a decline in its congregation, a fact not without significance, especially when these losses are expressed in absolute figures: 19 802 389 (86.81%) followers in 1992, 18 817 975 (86.79%) followers in 2002, 16 307 004 (86.45%) followers in 2011. The same trend towards a fall in numbers may also be noted in the other traditional religions: Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran or Unitarian, but also in the case of neo-protestant religions (although these have seen lower rates of fall. However there is one notable exception: the Pentecostal Church; the only religion with rising numbers: 220 824 (0.97%) followers in 1992, 324 462 (1.50%) followers in 2002, and 362 314 (1.92%) followers in 2011.

The population identifying its faith as 'other religion' varied considerably during the period analysed, rising from 56 329 (0.28%) in 1992 to 89 196 (0.44%) in 2002, only to fall significantly over the next nine years to 30 557 (0.15%). These numerical variations might be explained by the changes that have come over the religious structure of Romania throughout this time frame: the inclusion of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Armenian Church as religions in the last census. It may also be assumed that this field would also record foreign citizens with various, possibly exotic religions, who have been naturalised in Romania since 1990.

Even under the difficult conditions of Communist repression and atheist propaganda, the religiosity of Romanians remained constant. Furthermore, after 1990, Romania was swept by a wave of religious growth, against a background of general enthusiasm in society generated by the political regime change, a situation emphasised by a decrease in the number of religiously unaffiliated: from 0.17% in the 1992 census to 0.10% in the 2002 census (a value identical to that of the 2005 World Values Survey – Voicu, 2006: 112). The period between 2002 and 2011, however, saw an increase in the number of unaffiliated: those “without religion” rose from 12 825 (0.06%) in 2002, to 18 917 (0.10%) in 2011, while atheists rose from 8 524 (0.04%) in 2002 to 20 743 (0.11%) in 2011. We believe that possible interpretations of this trend might potentially identify the multiple disappointments of the population in the repeated failures of the transition and sometimes also in relation to the Romanian Orthodox Church. Relative to the vast majority of the population, who identified themselves in all three censuses as belonging to a religion (predominantly Orthodox), the percentage of atheists and of those without religion, although increasing, remains statistically insignificant.

## CONCLUSIONS

All of these new realities are suggestive of the dynamisation and diversification of the Romanian religious landscape. Despite this vitality, however, we can speak of real confessional stability, at least in the case of the great historical, traditional religions, where the mechanism of upholding the religious model inherited from one or both parents is known to work more effectively. The last three censuses offer a vast fund of statistical data, a fund which, despite its extraordinary wealth, still remains underexploited. The data relating to religious affiliation between 1992 and 2001 indicates a slow but steady decline in numbers for all religions (with a single exception), a decline which accelerated in the period 2002–2011. Orthodox Christianity, even if the number of believers is seeing a slight downward trend, remains by far the most important religion for Romanians, both numerically and symbolically. In Romania – a majority Orthodox country – the Orthodox faith continues to be an essential defining element of national identity, affirming its specificity. The advance of secularisation and globalisation, however, raises serious challenges, concerns and questions for theologians and the Orthodox Church, as well as for society as a whole. Democratic societies, which include Romania since 1990, encourage religious pluralism and religious diversification, but also incur a risk for the great historical and traditional faiths. The statistical data tends to affirm the notion that Romanian society has not remained intact in the face of globalising trends and the free movement of material and symbolic goods. The emphasis on pluralism, confessional diversification, the individualisation of religion, progressive dissociation from faiths and so on, indicate emerging changes, both within the confessional structure and at the deeper level of religiosity.

(*Translation from Romanian by Irina Stahl*)

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# HAS ROMANIA BECOME A SECULAR SOCIETY?

IRINA STAHL*

**ABSTRACT**

The article examines the question of secularization of Europe, and in particular of Romania, by using multiple international data sets. Secularization has been defined separation of the state government and religious authority resulting in a decrease in church attendance, a diminished trust in religious institutions, a lessening of religions' importance in society, an increase in religious diversity with a concomitant decrease in group cohesiveness, and the rise of situational ethics and moral relativism. Several theories of secularization are explored in an effort to determine the presence of a secular continuum. Although there may be an increase of secular behaviours in member states of the European Union, a claim of growing secularism in Romania is not supported by an examination of the multiple data sets.

**Keywords:** secular, secularization, church attendance, religiosity, scientific rationalism, Romania.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the ground-breaking work of Harvey Cox (1965) there has been on-going discussion about the secularization of societies in Europe and North America. Cox defined secularization as a process in which religious faith, as embodied within religious organizations (churches), loses societal and cultural influence and relevance. These loses are to be understood on a continuum from the absolute of religion as the sole provider of political, cultural and societal dicta to the opposite extreme of total separation of state and religion in all matters political, cultural and societal in the wholly secular city.

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Cox (1965: 21–44) discussed this process as an historical event dating from the early Christian Church when rulers were accepted as divinely installed. When this divine authority was removed from governmental leadership the process of secularization commenced. Thus, the separation of church and state is the antecedent or first step on the continuum to development of the secular society. Even this antecedent is on a continuum. Although rulers may no longer be seen as divinely appointed complete separation of state from church is rare. Many nations have official state religions, recognize religious organizations with tax exemptions, state provided financial assistance, religious education, official public recognition of religion and god (*e.g.* prayer to open and close legislative sessions, swearing to God to fulfil governmental duties, and legal currencies with religious slogans, are but a few examples).

Secularization theory states that the need for religion decreases as a result of modernization. As science explains the natural world around us the need for supernatural understandings is lost. Scientific rationalism, which has brought forth the modern period, has replaced peoples' need for the "religious". (Berger, 1967; Martin, 1978; Bruce, 2002) Thus, secularism within a society may be measured not only by the degree of religious influence within the political arena; it may be gauged by decreasing church attendance, the rejection of institutionalized traditional morals or value systems, and the adoption of more individualized decisions about what is right and wrong behaviour. A consequence of this rejection of traditional morals and values leads to situational ethics and moral relativism while the boundaries of acceptable behaviour expand as the individual makes decisions without the guidance of an accepted authority or the social pressures of community. Group cohesiveness weakens as greater value is attached to the individual's values than to the societal collective. Diversity increases in religious expression as well as socially acceptable behaviour. Secularism, as defined in this manner, does not necessarily result in a lack of religious faith while it may witness a decrease in traditional religious practice. Cox has noted that much of the developed world has entered a new post-modern era in which secularization has accelerated. (Cox, 2009: 5) Characteristic of this post-modern era theory is not the growth of atheism, as might be expected, but a general lack of religious perspective and an unwillingness to judge one idea or value as superior to others.

The modern philosopher, Charles Taylor (2007) defines secularism as having three conditions. First is the institutional separation of the Church and the State with religions removal from the public space. Second is the decline in practice of religious rites followed by a change in the "condition of beliefs" and in the "social imaginary". By these terms Taylor means the individualization of religious ritual practice and the imagery both evoked by and found in the rituals. Taylor views secularization as a positive value promoting great diversity with its inherent movement towards a personal connection with religion with one's own expression of that relationship with one's unique social imagery.

Considerable attention has been given by theologians, philosophers, historians and sociologists in their attempts to define, understand, and articulate what is meant by secular and secularization. Furthermore, much has been written about the secularization of the nations of Europe as they move towards greater unity and homogeneity as members of the European Union (EU). Indeed a primary purpose of the creation of the EU was to foster unity of thought and behaviour resulting in an homogenous Europe in as much as such a goal is obtainable. (Rabier, 2008) This article seeks to test various definitions of secularization theory in relationship to Romanian society in the context of the EU in an effort to determine if and to what degree Romanian society has become secularized.

## METHODOLOGY

The *Standard Eurobarometers* (EUB) provided an initial starting point for this inquiry into the religious practices of Romanians and other European peoples and the surveys provided useful information relevant to this study. However, several of the research waves did not include questions about religious matters. Therefore, in addition to the Standard Eurobarometer surveys significant information was also acquired from the *Atlas of European Values* (AEV) and the *Romania Institute for Evaluation and Strategy* (IRES) reports. Other multi-national and cross-national surveys, such as the *World Population Review* and the *International Religious Freedom Report*, were employed to provide further data. Various periodic reports derived from all of these surveys offered valuable insight and information useful to the current investigation as they had been developed from the primary data sources. Both original data from these sources and composite documents were drawn upon in a meta-analytic research design. Existing reports, complete with charts and graphs, were reviewed for topic relevant data and when needed, data from these sources were compiled to reveal previously unreported interpretations.

Each of the surveys and reports used was constructed upon different conceptual frameworks and system architectures containing different sets of assumptions and definitions. (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, 2010) The differential nature of conceptual frameworks is an inherent shortcoming in meta-analytic analysis which is more than compensated for by the aggregated data. The broader use of data from available resources aided in generating a more comprehensive, and ultimately, a more insightful description of current religious practices, and the beliefs and religious values held by Europeans in general and specifically of Romanians.

Several broad questions were examined in the context of three theories within the larger theoretical construct of secularization in an effort to address the principle query of secularism in Romania. These broad questions included: the issue of separation of the state and religious organizations (churches); Cox’s statement that religious faith loses societal and cultural influence, and relevance to people; and, scientific rationalism obviates the need for people to explain events and nature when science provides the answers.

Data are stated in simple percentage values accompanied by graphic representation for ease of comparison. When percentage differences of 3 or more points are found the difference can be considered statistically significant (SS) due to the sample size. Linear regression analysis was calculated to determine the interaction of gender, age, and education relative to church attendance in Romania.

## THE STATE AND SECULARIZATION

Secularism is the condition in which the culture/society/people move away from formalized and institutionalized rituals established by church leaders as the only or right way to practice their beliefs. (Cox, 2009: 34) It is conceptualized as an historical process in which religious manifestations are removed first from the political arena. (Cox, 1965: 21–44) This, of course, is just the initial step on a continuum of behaviours towards a secular society. Cox maintains that secularization began when political leadership was no longer seen as divinely ordained and the head of state was no longer also the head of the religious faith. For Cox one measure of secularization is the degree to which the state and church are separate. Complete separation of state and church is rare if indeed at all possible. Most western and certainly European nations do not consider the head of state as the head of the church and, if this is the single measure of separation of the two then, in one sense they are secular. However, a closer look at the laws and governmental practices which, in many instances are widely accepted, may demonstrate a degree of integration of church and state. Several nations in Europe have officially recognized state churches, provide financial assistance by means of direct monetary disbursements or through preferential tax considerations and exemptions, require religious oaths at legal proceedings and induction into governmental positions, allow for the recognition of marriages by the church, and also recognize religious holidays nationally. Additional examples might readily be identified but the sample list servers as sufficient to support the argument of a continuum of separation.

Romanian law is quite specific in its recognition of religion. It has established a three-tier system of recognition: religious groups (Rom. *grupări religioase*), religious associations (Rom. *asociații religioase*), and religions (rom. *religii*). Religious groups are defined as groups of persons who share the same beliefs but are not legal entities and do not receive tax exemptions or support from the state. Religious associations, defined as groups of individuals who share and practice the same faith are recognized as legal entities and must be registered in a religious association registry. Registration as a religious association requires a minimum of 300 citizen members. Religious associations do not receive government funding but receive limited tax exemptions. Religious associations are eligible to receive “religion” status only after 12 years of continuous activity and a minimum membership of 0.1 percent of the population, currently approximately 19,000 people. These criteria were adopted in 2006, and since then the number of religions recognized by the law has remained at 18[1]. Groups recognized as religions under the law are eligible for state support based on their proportional representation in the census. They have the right to establish schools, teach religion classes in public schools, receive government funds to build places of worship, partially pay clergy salaries with state funds, broadcast religious programming on radio and television, apply for broadcasting licenses for denominational frequencies, own cemeteries, and receive tax-exempt status. Under the law, state-provided funding is determined by the number of adherents. (International Religious Freedom Report, 2014: 3)

## CHARLES TAYLOR’S CRITERIA

The loss of reliance upon religion and the church can be measured, according to Charles Taylor’s criteria (Taylor, 2007) by a change in the conditions of beliefs and the social imaginary. Conditions of beliefs have been examined by researchers and include questions about the role of religion in society, trust in religion for guidance, belief in God, and belief that religious organizations have the ability to help people in need. The findings in these studies proved valuable in testing Taylor’s criteria.

### *THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN SOCIETY*

Examination of responses to the EUB 66 (p. 42) survey question about the place of religion in society reveals that 46% of all Europeans think religion plays too large a role in society, while 48% disagree. Men are more likely to believe that the place of religion is too important, while a majority (51%) of women disagree. (*Figure no. 1*) These differences are statistically significant. Age is a key variable in this question, as is education, and again are statistically significant. The greater one’s educational level and age, the more likely one is to disagree with the belief that religion plays too important a role in society. Although these differences in the

[1] These include: the Romanian Orthodox Church, Orthodox Serbian Bishopric of Timisoara, Roman Catholic Church, Greek Catholic Church, Old Rite Russian Christian (Orthodox) Church, Reformed (Protestant) Church, Christian Evangelical Church, Romanian Evangelical Church, Evangelical Augustinian Church, Lutheran Evangelical Church, Unitarian Church, Baptist Church, Pentecostal Church, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Armenian Church, Judaism, Islam and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

overall European aggregated data vary by only a few percentage points, the differences between the twenty-five member states of the European Union (EU 25) varies from 20% to 81%. The average agreement percentage across the EU 25 stands at 46%. Romania, then not yet admitted to the EU, reported a 37% agreement. Hence, 49% of Romanians do not believe religion plays too big a role in society. The high agreement in Cyprus to this question may be explained by the conflict with the Muslim part of the island in which there is no separation of state and religion. Thus religion is involved in the political conflict. In Finland religion is integrated into the state, while religious freedom was denied under communist rule in Estonia and Bulgaria.

| **Agree/disagree** | EU 25 | Males/Females EU25 | Romanians | | High/low EU25 member |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Agree** | 46%* | Males 49%<br>Females 43% | 37% | | Cyprus 81%<br>Estonia and Bulgaria 20% |
| **Disagree** | 48% | Males 45%<br>Females 51% | 49% | | Finland 74%<br>Cyprus 17% |
| ***Totals may not be equal to 100% due to "don't know" responses** | | | | | |

**Figure no. 1** – Answers to the survey question: "The place of religion in our society is too important?".

**Source: EUB 66, tables, p. 459 pdf.**

*TRUST IN RELIGION*

Another possible measure of movement towards secularism is the level of trust given to religious institutions. Theory states that as society becomes more secular, individuals trust increasingly on their own judgement and less on traditional institutions to provide behavioural guidance or to establish moral principles. Social conventions change while individual preference and personal values dominate the social landscape.

Between 2006 and 2008 (EUB 68: 54) the level of trust accorded to religious institutions increased by 2% points, from 44% to 46%, which is not considered statistically significant. (NS) (*Figure no. 2*) These numbers do not demonstrate a high level of trust throughout the EU. Romanians however, are very positive about their religious institutions with 77% expressing trust in them. This level of trust is unparalleled in Romania as its population does not place similar levels of trust in trade unions or political parties. The Danish people also rated their trust level at 77% with Austrians at 65%. Romania's neighbour, Bulgaria, reported a trust level of only 26%, similar to that of Sweden, with a level of trust of 24%, the lowest in the EU.

| Trust/Distrust | 2006 EU25 | 2008 EU27 | 2008 Romania | 2008 High/Low EU27 member state |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Trust** | 44%* | 46% | 77% | Denmark 77%<br>Sweden 24% |
| **Distrust** | 45% | 42% | 16% | Slovenia 66%<br>Denmark 16% |
| ***Totals may not be equal to 100% due to the "don't know" responses.** | | | | |

**Figure no. 2** – The level of trust accorded to religious institutions in the EU.

**Source: EUB 68, tables, p. 221 pdf.**

Additional data from the *Atlas of European Values* demonstrates a growing confidence in the church in the years from 1990 to 2008. (*Figure no. 3*)

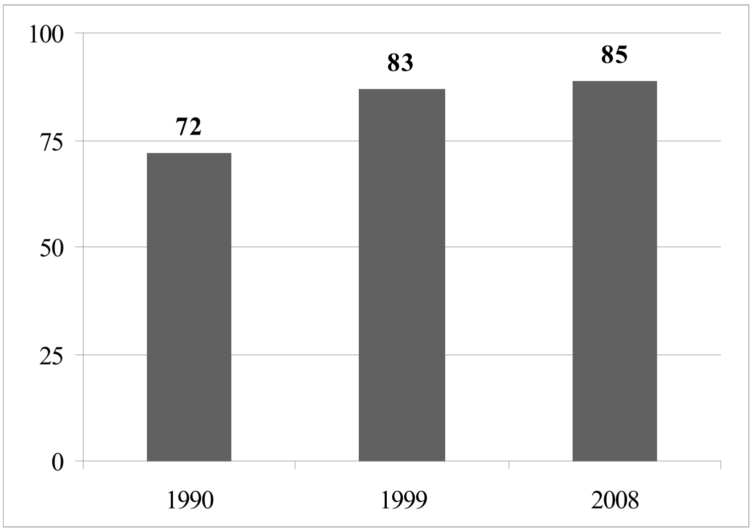


**Figure no. 3** – Percentage of Romanians that have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the church.

**Source: AEV,**
***http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=205&year=2008&country=RO***
**(last accessed 11 January 2016).**

Trust in the church's and religion's ability to help can also been seen as a function of peoples' belief that churches are giving adequate answers to people's family problems and meeting their spiritual needs. According to the *Atlas of European Values*, in 2008, 61% of Romanians said that churches in their country were giving adequate answers to family problems (*http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=116&year=2008&country=RO*). The Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (IRES, 2013: 24 pdf) reported that 71% of Romanians believed their churches were providing adequate answers to family problems, 72% and 88% felt that the church was addressing moral issues and social problems respectively. This represents an increase from 53% in 1990 and a further increase from 2008 when a reported 61% of Romanians believed the church was providing adequate answers to family problems (*http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=116&year=2008&country=RO*). These increases are statistically significant. Further evidence of trust in the church is seen in the peoples' belief that the church is meeting their spiritual needs. Between 1990 and 2008 this belief grew 9% (*Figure no. 4*) which is also a statistically significant increase.

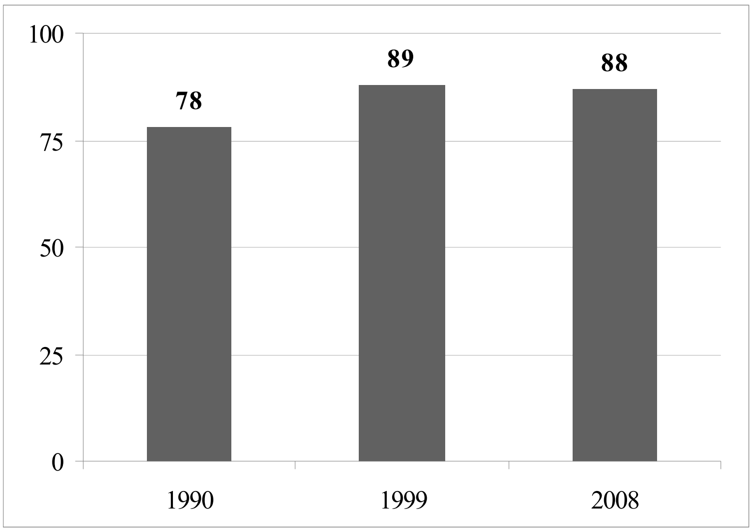


**Figure no. 4** – Percentage of people that say churches in their country are giving adequate answers to people's spiritual needs, in Romania.

**Source: AEV,**
***http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=117&year=2008&country=RO***
**(last accessed 11 January 2016).**

*INCREASED DIVERSITY AND CHANGES IN BASIC RELIGIOUS BELIEFS*

Both Cox (2009: 54) and Taylor (2007) associate secularism with significant changes in the condition of beliefs. This change involves increased tolerance of a widening range of diverse beliefs and social imaginary, and has a positive correlation with a decrease in shared religious beliefs and social cohesion. If social cohesion is evaluated, in part, by shared religious beliefs then indications that Romanian society has not become secularized can be seen in the *International Religious Freedom Report*. (2014, p. 2)

The Romanian Orthodox Church remains the dominant religious institution in the nation with 86% of the population claiming its membership. This represents approximately 18.7 million of Romania's approximately 21.7 million[2] inhabitants in 2014. In all totalled the national government has officially recognized 17 additional religious faiths (rom. *religii*) with combined memberships approaching 1.7 million people. Thus, the collective membership in organized religious institutions exceeds 94% of the Romanian population reflecting social cohesion and shared religious values. Further evidence of the continuation of shared religious beliefs is presented in *Figures 5* through *7* below.

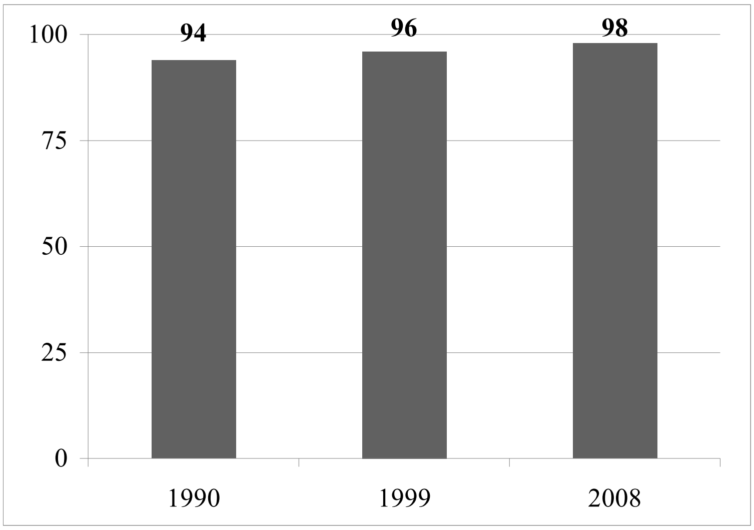


**Figure no. 5** – Porcentage of Romanians who profess a belief in God.

**Source: AEV,**
***http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=119&year=2008&country=RO***
**(last accessed 11 January 2016).**

[2] Total membership in Romanian churches has been decreasing as a function of the decrease in the Romanian population. The *World Population Review* published by the United Nations reports there are 1200 more deaths than births and 599 out migrations daily in Romania. In 2014 the officially stated population stood at 21 595 302. On 14 January 2016 the population was reported as 19,152,981 (*http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/romania-population/*).

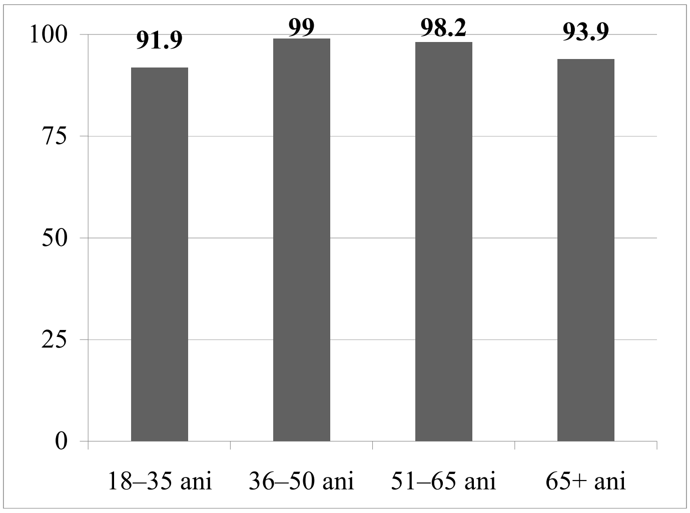


**Figure no. 6** – Percentage of Romanians who profess a belief in God by age cohort.

**(Note: average = 96.3%, male believers = 93.8%, female believers = 98,7%)**
**Source: IRES (2013), p. 28-29 pdf.**

When Romanians were asked if they believed there was a God (see *Figure no. 5*, above) an overwhelming portion of people responded "yes" beginning with the first survey in 1990. These results were recently supported by the results published by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy. (IRES, 2013: 28–29 pdf) Analysis of belief in God by age and gender revealed that women at all ages are more likely to express a belief in God than are men. Of note is the youngest (ages 18–35) and oldest (ages 65+) age categories demonstrated statistical differences (SS=.01) by gender while individuals between these age categories revealed no difference. The average across all age categories for male expression of belief was 93.8% compared with 98.7% for females (SS=.01). Despite these differences which are statistically significant and not statistical artefact, one must be cognizant of the overwhelming percentages of Romanian believers in all categories by age and gender.

The average percentage of Europeans who expressed belief in God was 74%, with the Czech Republic reporting the lowest belief rate (36%) and Malta the highest rate (99%) (*http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/wereld.php?ids=119&year=2008*). It is important to note that significant differences in the belief in God were witnessed in the various age groups and by gender. Similar results were found in relation to belief in heaven: Romania, 84%; EU, 47% (*http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=122&year=2008*) and hell (*http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=121&year=2008*).

Belief in life after the death of the physical body was also measured. Seventy-four percent of Romanians believe in life after death compared with Malta (87%), Czech Republic (30%), and the average of the EU. (53%) (*http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=120&year=2008*) (*Figure no. 7*)

| **Country** | Belief in God | Belief in heaven | Belief in hell | Belief in life after death |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Romania** | 98% | 84% | 81% | 74% |
| **EU 27averege** | 74% | 47% | 35% | 53% |
| **Highest EU member state** | Malta 99% | Malta 90% | Malta 85% | Malta 87% |
| **Lowest EU member state** | Czech Republic 36% | Denmark 20% | Denmark 9% | Czech Republic 30% |

**Figure no. 7** – EU member states societal religious beliefs in 2008.

**Source: AEV**, ***http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/zieeuropa.php?year=2008*** **(last accessed 11 January 2016).**

*DECLINE IN THE PRACTICE OF RELIGIOUS RITES*

Cox (1965, 2009) and Taylor (2007) share the observation that secularization of society gives rise to a decline in the performance of religious rituals. It is concluded that people attend religious services less frequently, pray less often and cease in the performance of ritualistic behaviours (*e.g.* lighting candles, fasting, making the sign of the cross etc.). It is difficult to measure some of these behaviours, but church attendance, frequency of prayer and participation in pilgrimages to shrines and relics have been measured objectively and by field observation.

The question about the growth of secularism in Romania is confounded by the conjoining of church attendance with religious belief *i.e.*, "if one does not go to religious services one is not religious and does not value traditional moral principles". In this model attendance at religious services has been considered an indicator of a 'shared faith' both within a family and in a community. However effective this model may be in the assessment of faith in Western Europe it is inappropriate in the context of Orthodox Romanian society where church attendance is not considered in the same strict obligatory manner one finds in other religious faiths in Western Europe. Church attendance rates are low in Northern and Western Europe, especially in the Nordic nations of Sweden, Denmark and Finland with an average of only five church visits annually. Romanian attendance rates are slightly less that the rates found in Poland, the Slovak Republic, Ireland,

and Northern Ireland where people attend church about 30 times a year. In Malta church attendance is recorded at nearly 60 times per annum. (Moore, 2014: 214–215)

*Figure no. 8* below shows church attendance in Romania by gender, age and level of education through linear analysis. Low educational attainment is the control baseline against which middle and high educational levels are evaluated. Low educational attainment was defined as having completed the required years of schooling without further advancement. The Middle level included some advanced education without completion and/or a technical education. Higher education was everything beyond the Middle level. The analysis results show that the low-educated person attends church more often than people within the middle level of education at a rate of approximately 1.5 visits more per year. Given the assumptions of secularization one might expect such a finding. Further one would then likely predict that people with the highest levels of education would attend church services even less frequently than those in the Middle level of education. However, the highly educated person attends church at the same rate as the low educated person.

| **Variable** | | *B* | SE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age** | | –0.121 (SS=.001) | 0.033 |
| **Gender** | | 1.179 (SS=.001) | 0.187 |
| **Education level** | **Low (reference base)** | 0 | 0 |
| | **Middle** | –1.498 (SS=.001) | 0.246 |
| | **High** | –0.296 (NS) | 0.287 |

**Figure no. 8** – Linear regression of yearly church attendance by gender, age and education.

**Source: IRES (2013), p. 28–29 pdf.**

Eighty-two percent of Romanians reported that prayer had a great or very great value for them. (IRES, 2013: 65 pdf) And additionally, pilgrimages to shrines and relics have been increasing in recent years. At least 26% of Romanians have gone on a pilgrimage, with 21% having done several pilgrimages (IRES, 2015: 17 pdf) and more and more travel agencies have special offers for religious tourism.

## SCIENTIFIC RATIONALISM

Great thinkers of the Middle-Ages challenged religious doctrine and often defied church edicts and authority as they explored new understandings of the natural world. These individuals ushered in what was later named the Age of Reason. As the church lost more and more control of the political landscape the modern sciences began to flourish; mankind experienced a new freedom to question the structure of the physical world around them and eventually the social and moral conventions of culture. By the mid-19$^{th}$ century the advancement of science eroded much of the traditionally held beliefs about creation, the solar system and the natural order of the universe. One theory of secularization states that the need for religion is inversely related to modernization. As new scientific discoveries are made in the modern era there is less need for the supernatural to explain the natural. Scientific rationalism, which made the modern period possible, has replaced peoples' need for the "religious". (Berger, 1967; Martin, 1978; Bruce, 2001)

In keeping with the tenets of this secularization model the need for the supernatural is lost, or at the very least diminished, as scientific knowledge expands. The rationalism argument maintains that the greater the educational level the more rational the individual and the less reliant one becomes on religion. (Blau and Duncan, 1967) One measure of reliance on religion posited within secularization models is church attendance. Thus, one would expect individuals with higher levels of education to be least likely to believe in God, attend church or acknowledge the power of charms to offer protection. *Figure no. 8* above has already demonstrated this is not the case in Romania. Low-educated persons attend church more often than people within the middle level of education at a rate of approximately 1.5 visits more per year. However, the highly educated person attends church at the same rate as the low educated person.

Belief in the supernatural has not been lost in Romania, but expressions of this belief have been modified with modernisation and the introduction of new technologies. Religious icons, for instance, serve as an example of how modern technologies have altered but not lessened their use. Now, in addition to traditional icons, hand painted on linden wood according to specific instructions, there are the more popular and much less expensive mass produced plastified paper and photographic icons. Accessible to the public, these new types of icons are also very popular. Easy to get and to carry, they are a constant presence in many Romanians' lives today. These icons kept in wallets, purses or pockets, attached to the windshield of the car and hung on house walls.

Religion is very important for a large percentage of Romanians and continues to influence their daily lives. *Figure no. 9* below demonstrates the extent of belief and influence.

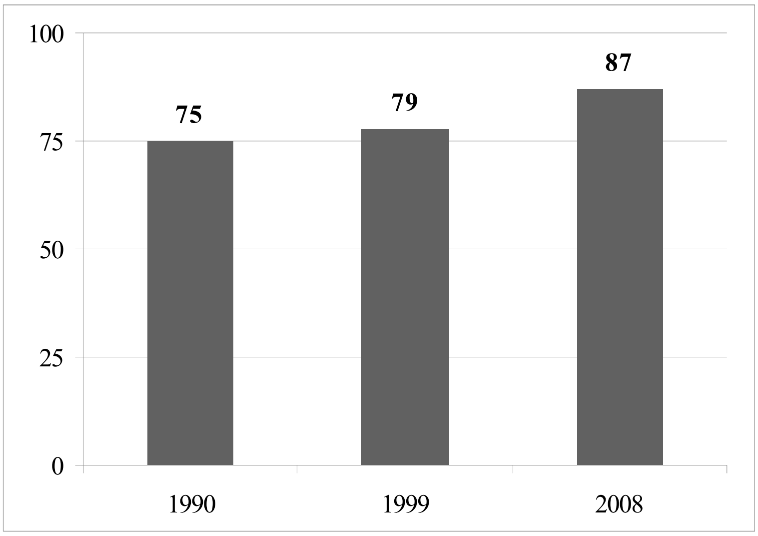


**Figure no. 9** – Percentage of Romanians who say religion is very or quite important in their lives.

**Source: AEV**, ***http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=6&year=2008&country=RO*** **(last accessed 11 January 2016).**

**CONCLUSION**

While much of Western Europe appears to be largely secularized Romania seems to have, for now, avoided headlong movement along the continuum of secularization. As this paper investigated each aspect of several secularization theories the evidence failed to support the notion that Romania was greatly secularized. To be sure religious expression is changing but the criteria of secularization discussed herein provide scant evidence of the degree of secular changes witnessed in much of Western Europe. Europe has become secular but remains religious. This is because in multiple nations people no longer identify as church attending members, but they maintain that they have religious faith. (Halman, Sieben and van Zundert, 2011) Although the number of individuals who identify themselves as atheists has increased in recent decades (Voas, 2009: 155) in general, Europeans, whether church attenders or not, still advocate religious values. Romania is not alone in this maintenance of the more traditional values and behaviours of its religious heritage. It appears to be joined by Malta, Poland, Ireland, Turkey and Italy.

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*Regulating Customs* – the 12th Annual International Conference of the SIEF Working group "The Ritual Year", Findhorn (Scotland), 8–12 January 2016.

The 12th annual international conference of the SIEF Working group "The Ritual Year" took place in Findhorn, Morayshire, Scotland, 8–12 January 2016 under the general title "*Regulating Customs*". The academic event was organized by **Thomas McKean**, with **Frances Wilkins**, **Athanasios Barbalexis** and **Marlene Hugoson** on the committee, under the auspices of the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen,

Each annual conference of The Ritual Year working group has its own specific features and uniqueness. The Findhorn one was fated to be exceptionally unusual because of several obstacles, including its chronotope. For the first time, the scholars met up in early January (which actually made it impossible for several regular members to attend), in the days ideally fit into the local ritual year. The dates correlate with the main ritual attraction of the region – The Burning of the Clavie at Burghead (*http://www.burghead.com/clavie/*), a nearby fishing village and site of a major first-millennium Pictish fortification. The Clavie is a fire festival marking Aul Eel (Old Yule), 11 January, according to the Julian style before the 1750 shift to the Gregorian in Scotland. A detailed lecture on the Clavie, its history, and recent development, was delivered by Tom McKean on the eve of the event and after the end of the conference, delegates had a wonderful opportunity to see preparations for the festival in the village, to take part in it in the evening, and to celebrate the Old New Year in the local pubs.

The very venue of the conference, The Findhorn Foundation, apart from giving the scholars an opportunity to experience the local Scottish atmosphere, was most interesting from an ethnographic, religious, and folkloric point of view. The Foundation was established in 1964 as a place for spiritual growth; it has its own complex history (https://www.findhorn.org/), with many events related to the ritual year integrated into its calendar. We were fortunate to hear an introduction to the Foundation and its history from an associate, **Peter Vallance**.

The conference schedule was very busy, containing some 25 papers encompassing ethnography, cultural anthropology, sociology, history, religious studies, folklore, and linguistics, organized into panels: "Transitions", "Regulation and Control", "Adaptations", "Negotiating Oppositions", and "Creating Identities, Creating Traditions". Scholars from England, Scotland, the USA, Israel, France, Slovenia, Croatia, Russia, Romania, Thailand, Estonia, Lithuania, and Greece dealt with field research data from many regions and many time periods, from ancient to modern.

Several papers were dedicated to classical study of the ritual year, like **McKean**'s above-mentioned presentation on the Clavie, with impressive field data and historical evidence. **Fiona-Jane Brown**, in her paper, "The Fisherman's Luck: The Seaward Clavie and its Variants", focused on the non-calendrical version of the local fire festival in the center of which is the belief that burning a clavie (or "witch") is an effective remedy against bad luck. The ritual is accepted to be directly functional, and the very word clavie may be connected with the Gaelic word *cliabh*, possibly meaning "basket" (used for holding fishing lines), or "torch". The paper contained oral narratives from those who used to take part, and also offered analysis of the negative attitudes of the post-Reformation Church of Scotland towards these activities. **Nancy McEntire**, in "First Footing in the North of

Scotland, Past and Present" founded on historical sources and her own experience, showed the wide and still regulated range of rules, practices, and beliefs associated with the first house visit in the early hours of 1 January in the Orkney Islands. The list of undesirable visitors is still well known in the vicinity, as are the necessary ritual artefacts – a piece of coal, bread, and whiskey are obligatorily brought in the house. **Irina Sedakova**, in "Days of the Week as Regulators: Saturday and Sunday in Slavic and Balkan Rituals and Folklore", analysed two scenarios of regulation. Being born on a Saturday is thought to determine aspects of the baby's future life, attitudes to him in the community, and ascribes him a certain character. Another case is St. Nedelya (Sunday, St. Domenica) as a regulator of domestic work, as depicted in the unique poetics of the ballads. She does not punish those who work on "her" day, but instead she suffers herself, thus exploiting the emotion of compassion. Indigenous theoretical insights were discussed in the paper read by **Emily Lyle**, "Controlling the Magic Moment of First Sunrise". The cosmic vision of the Sun as equal to a God(s) fits into the ritual year and in Scotland marks both 1 May (Beltane) and Easter Sunday. This is an excellent example of how ancient customs are incorporated within a Christian ritual sequence, which leads to debate between practitioners, "the officials of the church" and the "people". Such interplay was discussed in several other papers, as well.

**Elizabeth Warner**'s "'I Love the Russian Birch Tree': The Troitsa (Trinity/Pentecost) Festival and the Evolution of a Russian National Symbol" made an attempt to discover the roots of the stereotypical connection of the birch tree with Russian identity. Starting from the Christian Orthodox customs of bringing birch trees into the church for Pentecost and simultaneous folk religious girls' rites with birch branches, Warner underlined the significance of the Trinity as depicted by Andrei Rubliov on the famous icon. To these elements she added poetic images of the birch-tree in the poems of Sergey Esenin and the expanding role of visual representation of this tree on various artefacts, including recent graves.

**Lidija Nikocevic**'s paper, "The Bellmen of the North Adriatic Area: Local Tradition as World Heritage", brought in very important theoretical and practical issues. What happens to a traditional festival after it has been put inscribed in UNESCO's representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, as happened with the Croatian Carnival of Bellmen in 2009. The performers themselves stand in the face of pressure from outsiders who offer innovations and social diversification of the festival. Will it stay "authentic" or will it be commercialized by officials and used for various new purposes (*e.g.*, tourism), a question facing most of the examples of intangible cultural heritage on the list.

**Cozette Griffin-Kremer**, in "Regulating Lily-of-the-Valley Festivals on National and Local Levels", investigated the development of the May festival in local communities under the regulation of city administrators. A survey carried out in Rambouillet resulted in a brochure, which advises on exactly how to celebrate the May floral festival, so as to meet the festive needs of citizens along with commercial and touristic needs. According to Griffin-Kremer, such regulation is part of the interplay between the town administration and the performers.

**Kobi Peled** focused on a detailed analysis of a Palestinian wedding ritual conducted on the so-called "Brides' Stone", near a village well. The young bride was seated on the stone surrounded by elder women who sang songs and drew water for her. This rite was examined in light of van Gennep's rites of passage between girl and married woman. The original stone being no longer in existence, it was reconstructed as part of a project honouring the cultural memory of local inhabitants. Similar processes of re-establishing rituals were depicted as taking place in other cultures. In "Traditional Ritual Responses to Contemporary Misfortune: 'Youth Kurban' and the Regulation of Social Life in the Post-Socialist Bulgarian Village", **Petko Hristov** acquainted the audience with one renovated Balkan tradition. The Kurban is a ritual, including the sacrifice of a sheep and a common meal, which aims to bring fortune and well-being to the whole village, but in its renewed form it has developed into three separate feasts with different purposes and actors. Hristov examined this "invented tradition" in Eric Hobsbawm's terms, a perspective frequently drawn upon in the papers dealing with innovations and transformations of tradition.

**Suzy Harrison** talked about "The Development and Management of Transnational Tradition: The Case of Diwali in Leicester", a multilevel study which covered the issues of migration and economics, multiculturalism and urban studies, as well as an ethnographic analysis of the Diwali festival and its growth in Leicester, with three official sources of regulation. It seems that the theme of "a foreign festival in new surroundings" is very relevant for the modern humanities, as demonstrated by **Flore Muguet**'s paper "Bhakti Fest to Burning Man: The Will of Deconditioning from Customary Practices" used field research from two huge American festivals, which are perceived by participants as the start for a new year, as a ritual which purifies them, and brings in spiritual enlightenment via individual seminars combining esoteric practice, psychotherapeutic methods, and traditional Eastern rituals.

The Church(es) and evolving ecclesiastical, folk religious festivals were studied in several papers. **Cristina Clopot**, in "Regimenting Change in Rituals for Russian Old Believers in Romania", undertook a brief comparison of modern life-circle church rituals with old-time ones. The contemporary rhythm of life, migration and inter-confessional, international (Russian-Romanian) weddings have led to a great deal of change in the firmly-regulated Old-Believers' practices. The rituals lose some of their components, reduce the significance of some ritual acts and are less strict regarding the time of their performance. **Skaidrė Urbonienė**, in the paper "Religious Feasts and the Soviet Regime: The Case of Cross-Days and May Devotions", investigated the religious practice of Lithuanian Catholics, who have lived through rigid regulation during the Soviet atheistic period. Due to bans, the May devotional feasts changed the venue and the character of the performance, turning it from a public event to home altar celebrations, while the days dedicated to the Crosses have almost faded, since they can be performed only in the open air near the established crosses. **Marion Bowman** discussed "Roman Catholic Pilgrimage to Glastonbury, 1895–2015: Contestation and (Re)negotiation", offering a well-structured account of historical changes in the forms, routes, and modes of pilgrimage, as well as in the very objects of glorification in Glastonbury. Multiculturalism, healing agendas, and being in motion are at the core of Catholic pilgrimage as observed by Bowman in 2015.

An invented fire feast, "The Night of Ancient Bonfires/Ancient Lights – Muinastulede", in its development after its establishment in 1992 in Estonia and neighbouring countries, was scrutinized by **Mare Kõiva** and **Andres Kuperjanov**. The need to celebrate, to create visual effects, and to pay respect to pre-Christian traditions are the internal sources of regulation of the now very popular summer fire festival.

As in previous Ritual Year conferences, Wicca, Neo-Paganism and New Age practices were tackled in several papers. **Arunas Vaicekauskas** presented on the Lithuanian Neo-Pagan, "Ramuva Movement and the Revival of the 'Pre- Christian' Ritual Year: Precedent, Motives, and Regulations", examining the role of one person, Jonas Trinkūnas, in turning the Neo-Pagan folklore movement into a confessional community of native religion. **Nicolle Sturdevant**, in "The Marriage Ritual", also looked into the individual role of the neo-pagan celebrant, who leads the bride and groom through the rituals necessary to becoming a married couple. **Athanasios Barbalexis** read the paper "Sweeping the Worlds Clean in Modern Scotland: The Celebration of the Wild Hunt" which was based on his own participation in a new year ceremony under personal spiritual regulation of a local shamanic practitioner, Andrew Steed. **Morgana Sythove** in her lecture "Wicca – A Modern Religion in an Old Robe" gave a detailed insight into the historical sources of the famous world pagan movement, developed in the 1950s by Gerald B. Gardner. She defines this newly established movement as drawing on archaic traditions of witchcraft, but regulated by modernity.

**Daša Ličen** and **Jurij Fikfak** delivered a lecture on "Communitas and Rituals: Networks and Mediations: The Ljubljana Reading Society (1861–1941)", in which they focused on "beginning" as a ritual, which in turn gives birth to other rituals and a chain of feasts. They draw attention to the organization of intellectual societies as an important form of regulating the process of nation-building and of shaping Slovenian identity. **James Deutsch** presented a paper, "From the 'Great Race' to 'Shopping Alone': Thanksgiving Customs of Consumption on Black Friday and Cyber Monday", in which he regards consumers' activity as a ritual and as part of a tradition. The will to socialize, belief in supernatural powers, joyful emotions, connections between generations, and continuity all are present in the ritual practice in Black Friday shopping, in spite of the fact that it has begun only recently, in the twentieth century.

**Teri Brewer**'s closing paper, "Stepping Back from the Ritual Year: Time, Tide and Tradition in Rural and Urban Rites and Their Study", brought together many of the themes emerging from the conference, discussing rural ritual year practices that have been transferred to urban settings. As local knowledge, narrative, and social structure entwine, we encounter micro-perspectives which enrich our understanding of both the local picture and larger patterns.

All the papers were followed by questions and discussions, which continued during coffee breaks and other gatherings. Apart from those mentioned above, issues included the role of the shift from Julian to Gregorian calendars in different countries and churches, the validity and relevance of Eric Hobsbawm's ideas of invented tradition, the methodologies of contemporary study of rituals, etc.

The second night of the conference, we heard four papers delivered by Elphinstone Institute's MLitt students, all of them linked to the conference theme. **Wirujana Prasansaph** discussed "The Adaptation of Loy Krathong Festival in Aberdeen" and offered an analysis of a local Aberdeen version of this celebration, a traditional Thai event showing gratitude to the Goddess Ganga. Prasansaph drew attention to adaptations relating to the chosen day of the event, to higher levels of visual expression of Thai identity, and to awareness of supernatural issues. Finally, she outlined reasons for these transformations ranging from local circumstances to urban "outsider" regulations which inform the practice in Aberdeen. **Maia Daniel**, in "Sugar Skulls in Scotland: The Cultural Appropriation of *Dia de los Muertos*", spoke on innovations in Halloween guising related to the Mexican Day of the Dead; **Jennifer Porath** analysed "The Witches of November", comparing the mythologies of the two weather phenomena, in Michigan, USA, and in Scotland; **Tallen Sloane**, in "Pilgrimage in a Bottle: Understanding Contemporary Healing Pilgrimages to Lady Well", discussed local awareness (or lack of it) around the ancient holy well, along with new practices and healing powers attributed to water from it.

The students also performed the folk play "Galoshins" traditionally performed in Scotland on Hagmonay, the New Year, using a text collected in Selkirk in the Scottish Borders by American collector James Madison Carpenter in the 1930s.

On the final night, conference participants had an opportunity to listen to traditional Scottish storytelling and a selection of Gaelic and Scots from songs from Peter and Sue Vallance, along with Elphinstone MLitt student, Anne Greig, and Tom McKean.

Following the formal conclusion of the conference, our day-long excursion around Morayshire left members with a wide range of impressions – natural and cultural – breath-taking in their beauty. Our first stop was Burghead, where we met with Dan Ralph, the Clavie King, and visited his workshop and the ancient village well, surrounded by the sea and the dramatic Scottish landscape. Then it was onward to Pluscarden Abbey and Elgin cathedral, with its ornately carved Pictish stone, in company of former Elphinstone Institute student, Richard Bennett. Our penultimate stop was Glen Moray distillery where we were chilled by a visit to the warehouse and warmed by a whisky tasting. Our final stop was the Burning of the Clavie as it processed through the streets of Burghead, finishing off in its traditional conflagration atop Doorie Hill, led by Dan Ralph and the Clavie Crew – a night never to be forgotten.

The next meeting of the SIEF Working group on "The Ritual Year" is scheduled for March 2017, in Göttingen, Germany, at the 13$^{th}$ SIEF Congress, where several panels on Ritual Year topics will be organised.

*Thomas McKean,*
*Irina Sedakova*

ION PETRICĂ, *Religiozitatea şi instituţiile sociale în România* [Religiosity and social institutions in Romania], Iaşi, Editura Institutul European, 2013, 137 p.

In Romania, systematic research in the sociology of religions began in the period between the two World Wars, under the excellent auspices of what is known as the Sociological School of Bucharest, led by Dimitrie Gusti, following which, not very long afterwards, the school was closed by the communist regime. As was also the case in the other states in the communist bloc at that time, the sociology of religions was diverted from its legitimate purpose to become a propaganda tool, with sociologists becoming party ideologists. Today, 26 years after the political regime change that followed the events of December 1989, we feel that laudable progress has been made in this field, but that this progress remains, unfortunately, insufficient. In this context, the publication of Ion Petrică's volume entitled *Religiozitatea şi instituţiile sociale în România* [Religiosity and social institutions in Romania] is all the more praiseworthy and appreciated.

How religious are Romanians? How secularised is contemporary Romanian society? What are the dimensions and particularities of this phenomenon at the level of Romanian society? What is the place and the role of the Orthodox Church in the current Romanian social context? These highly topical questions, currently very much on the minds of Romanian researchers in the field, are also tackled, directly or in passing, in this volume. However, the book particularly explores the theme of collaboration between the Orthodox Church and the State in the area of social assistance (child protection). The author – both sociologist and theologian – has an advantage in this endeavour, in the sense that he is both a servant of the Orthodox Church in a state institution and an employee at a County Directorate of Child Protection (DGASPC). The book therefore has the quality of bridging the gap between the sociology of religion and that of social assistance, an aspect that is clear even from the beginning in the construction of the work's main chapters.

We cannot overlook the fact that, in his capacity as a professional practitioner in the field, the author demonstrates (should we say?) exaggerated optimism, in our opinion, when he asserts that he has chosen to address these specific themes (in reference to the concrete nature of the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the State in the field of child protection), since "this is one field in which the reform of the entire system has been achieved in a very unique and extremely efficient way, such that, today, Romania has become a model for many European states" (p. 86). We will not push the point, as this is a delicate subject capable of drawing us away from the arena of the strictly scientific and into that of social and political debate.

The first part of the book is exclusively theoretical and is dedicated to general themes in the sociology of religion, such as "Classic and Contemporary Sociological Approaches to Exploration of the Religious Phenomenon" (Chapter I) or "Religiosity and Contemporary Social Assistance" (Chapter II). Later on, Chapter III – "The Church and Social Involvement in the Romanian Public Sphere", and Chapter IV – "Child Protection in Romania. Development of the System over Time", draw a connection between the general theme presented in the first two chapters and the concrete ways in which the Romanian Orthodox Church contributes to providing and improving social services in the field of child protection. The Bibliography is one of quality, extensive, coherent, and as up to date as it could be; the author shows a real capacity for selecting and systematising the vast range of bibliographic resources that he has explored.

The main merit of the author's approach is that he leaves behind the strictly theoretical aspects of this issue, taking it further, into a realm much more prone to capture the reader's interest; one

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which is truly practical and pragmatic and which takes the form of two studies, one undertaken at a national level and another one undertaken at a regional level (Chapter V – "The relationship between DGASPC and Church at a Romanian National Level"). In terms of methodology, we shall not dwell on technical details, but it should be mentioned that both studies were undertaken to impeccable scientific standards, in terms of the working instruments used, the concept operationalization procedures, and the processing and interpretation of empirical data.

In the case of the first study, undertaken at a national level, questionnaires were completed in the 47 specialist institutions in each county in the country, the results of which revealed the precise situation concerning the following aspects: 1) the presence of **priests** (employed or volunteers) in over 70% of public child protection institutions; 2) the presence of **churches**, chapels or other places of worship within 34% of DGASPCs, as well as the massive attendance (66%) at local church services by institutionalised children; 3) the existence of **official documents** (partnerships or collaboration agreements) or **unofficial collaboration** on the basis of unwritten agreements, between DGASPCs and local church institutions (parishes, archpriestships, archbishoprics, metropolitanates, etc.) in each county, with the exception of Vâlcea county.

The second study was undertaken in Caraş Severin county, on a sample group of 112 DGASPC employees. Its objective was to test the hypothesis of a direct correlation between the religiosity of the employees and the efficiency of their activities. The results obtained confirmed that, firstly, the more religious employees manifested more social involvement and community commitment than those who were less religious, and secondly that numerically speaking, the majority of employees were very religious. In the author's opinion, this data is consistent with the values recorded at a national-level, offering sufficient grounds for concluding that "beyond the formal institutional engagement of the Church in specific social work activities, the community involvement of social workers also depends on their own personality profile, in which religious variables play a remarkable motivating role. Thus, public policies should reconsider religious variables as personal and institutional resources, as well as their inclusion in all organisational diagnoses and interventions, as they are liable to optimise the activity specific to this social territory" (p. 118).

Probably the first ever study into religiosity in Romanian social assistance institutions, *Religiozitatea şi instituţiile sociale din România* confronts us with a new and original scientific action. It illustrates the cooperation between the Orthodox Church and the State in contemporary Romania, in the field of social assistance, and offers specialists broad possibilities for interpretation of the Church's presence in the public sphere, the religiosity of Romanians and the secularisation of the Romanian society.

*Manuela Gheorghe*
(Translation from Romanian by Irina Stahl)

## TATIANA MINNIYAKHMETOVA and KAMILA VELKOBORSKÁ (eds.), *The Ritual Year 10. Magic in Rituals and Rituals in Magic*, Innsbruck, Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, 2015, 598 p.

The tenth volume of The Ritual Year series reunites papers presented at the 10th annual conference of the Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF) Working Group on The Ritual Year, that took place in Innsbruck (Austria), 25–27 September 2014. The imposing volume brings together fifty-seven studies dealing with the conception of magic and magical rituals performed throughout the year and their correlation with religious ceremonies. It also presents articles dealing with contemporary magical practices represented in the year cycle and in the everyday life of practitioners of magic. The task of dealing with this large number of articles was well managed by the editors, Tatiana Minniyakhmetova (Research Fellow, Institute for History and European Ethnology, University of Innsbruck, Austria) and Kamila Velkoborská (Independent Researcher and Assistant Professor, University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic).

The volume is divided into eleven chapters, of which the first two are dominant, with nearly 40% of the total contributions. In the first chapter, "The Ritual Year and Magical Features", articles dealing with magical rituals performed at specific moments during the year are regrouped. Special attention is given to Christian celebrations and their relation with magic or what is considered to be magic at times. The opening article by Emily Lyle (founder of The Ritual Year Working Group and honorary chairman since September 2014), deals with the Indo-European pagan times cosmology, in which space and time were equally important and the year was divided according to eight key points. The study is the result of a ten years' interest in creating a model of the year cycle, started in 2004, when The Ritual Year working group was created, and maturated now, in this synthetic study. In the following article, Terry Gunnell (co-chair of The Ritual Year Working Group) discusses the nature and background of rituals and prayers used by the contemporary Icelandic Ásatrúarfélag, a society which involves the active worship of the Old Nordic gods. Leading the readers further South, Evy Johanne Håland compares ancient and modern Greek festivals and rituals around the year, revealing the importance of fertility magic in ensuring the harvest for bothancient and modern farmers. Referring to another Mediterranean society, Marlene Mifsud Chircop looks into the transformative ritual in Good Friday processions in contemporary Malta. Cozette Griffin-Kremer choses to write about doing things rightways and three times, with a particular focus on May Day and maying in the British Isles. Other articles in the chapter, signed by Katya Mihaylova, Bożena Gierek, Anna Multari, Aigars Leilbārdis, Alessandro Testa and Billy Mag Fhloinn, discuss Polish and Coptic magical rituals, belief in catholic saints in Latvia, carnivals and propitiatory magic in Italy and Czech Republic, and also sacrificial magic in the Irish ritual year.

Chapter two, "Symbolism of Fire, Food, Ritual Objects and Magical Spaces" treats the issue of magic in relation to fire, food, beverages, various objects and space. Irina Sedakova (co-chair of The Ritual Year Working Group) writes about the magico-religious symbolism of the candle in the Slavic calendar rituals. Also writing about fire is Tatiana Minniyakhmetova, who discusses the importance of ritual fire in the annual cycle of the Udmurt calendar customs. Urszula Wilk analyses the process of *Las Fallas* in Valencia, a festival which ends each year in March with the burning of giant statues, while Katarina Ek-Nilsson discuss Swedish traditions about bread and bread baking. Other contributions by Mojca Ramšak, Sergey Rychkov, Natalías Celia Sánchez, Konrad Kuhn, Nadezhda Shutova, Andrey Khudyaev and Kincső Verebélyi deal with wine and toast, magical poppets in the Western Roman Empire, carnival masks from an alpine region in Switzerland, Udmurt sacred space, spatial structure of magical rituals in North Eurasian people and the sacred space of the household, in Hungary.

Changes in various traditions involving magic are discussed in the third chapter, "Innovations in Traditions", bringing together the contributions of Iris Gareis, who writes about the Peruvian ritual year, Aida Rancane, who discusses the motifs of sacrifice in the context of present-day search for spiritual experience in Latvia and Skaidre Urboniene, who writes about the destruction of crosses and shrines in Soviet times in Lithuania and the magical elements in the stories which accompanied these acts of violence.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to divination and fortune-telling. Vilmos Voigt writes about rebus, Agnes Christa Tuczay about necromancy, Žilvytis Šaknys about marriage divination in Lithuania, Ksenia Klimova about fortune telling in modern Greece and Nina Vlaskina about types of divination used by Don Cossacks.

Astral objects, plants and magic in healing strategies are discussed in the papers found in the fifth chapter. Mare Kõiva and Andres Kuperjanov analyse the symbolic rites involved in healing strategies as well as incantations; Oksana Tchoekha writes about lunar magic in modern Greek traditions; Georgi Mishev discusses magical healing practices using ash from Starosel, Bulgaria; Aleksandra Ippolitova discusses the particular ritual of circumscription, involved in collecting plants and described in Russian herbals from the 17th till early 20th century; Svetlana Sidneva writes about magic herbs in modern Greek and Italian calendar customs.

Chapter six deals with shamanism, neo-shamanism, paganism and neo-paganism, as well as with Wicca in old and new traditions. While Snjezana Zoric writes about the performance in Korean shamanic rituals, Meret Fehlmann develops the image of seasonal neo-pagan rituals in popular culture. Kamila Velkoborská addresses magic as practiced by the Brotherhood of Wolfes, a group of Czech pagan practitioners; and Joanna Malita with magic in everyday life of Polish Wiccans.

Articles by Eglė Savickaitė, Laurent Sébastien Fournier (board member of The Ritual Year Working Group) and Josip Zanki, in chapter seven, discuss various approaches to magic, each author from a different perspective: the one of Lithuanian students, French traditional game players and West Balkan artists.

The eighth chapter provides the reader with articles on sorcerers, witches and magic practices. Marina Baiduzh writes about the image of the witch in contemporary Russian beliefs and practices, Raluca Betea about the magical beliefs of stealing animal milk in Romanian villages in Transylvania during the 18th–19th centuries. Based on German sources, mainly trial records, Johannes Dillinger compares two sets of magical beliefs that had to do with the economic aspect of magic: treasure hunting and the belief in Drache, a household spirit. Yana Sivilova analyses a world-spread anecdote in which pottery breaking has a specific symbolic value.

Magic and rituals in family tradition are the subjects of chapeter nine: Rasa Paukštytė-Šaknienė writes about godparenthood in Lithuania, Guzel Stolyarova about magic in the Russian population of the Mari region, while Nadezhda Rychkova deals with magic as communication in family rituals of Russians in Tatarstan. Oksana Mykytenko discusses today's widespread practice of attaching padlocks to bridge railings and throwing the keys into the water, from the viewpoint of the Slavic tradition which considers the padlock and the key as attributes of wedding.

The tenth chapter, "Beyond the Threshold and Magic Value", explores magic involved with the communication between living and the dead. Éva Pócs writes about the communication between the living and the dead during the winter solstice in Central Eastern European beliefs. Irina Stahl (secretary of The Ritual Year Working Group) presents the case of a ritual developed around nine miraculous graves from a Catholic cemetery in Bucharest. This ritual, started sometime in the beginning of the 20th century, combines Christian and magic elements and persisted through the communist era despite the efforts of authorities to curtail it. The purpose, persistence and origin of the ritual are presented along with a history of the graves. Starting from the example of Joan Didion's book *The year of Magical Thinking,* Ruth Neubauer-Petzoldt discusses the rituals and magical thinking in autobiographical literature of mourning.

The last chapter is a collection of studies based on new field research. Yulia Krasheninnikova discusses magic beliefs and practices of Holy Thursday in modern traditions of peasant population of the Russian North. Ekaterina Iagafova and Valeria Bondareva write about traditional festive rituals in modern Chuvash culture. Iryna Koval-Fuchylo writes about Ukrainian calendar laments. The last article in the volume is an original contribution by Dorothy Clark Graden, who describes the way her art is inspired by prehistoric magical rock sites.

The volume closes with a listing of The Ritual Year Working Group's activities through the years (inaugural meeting, conferences, publications) and some photos taken during the last meeting, in Innsbruck, in 2014.

The studies in the 10th volume of The Ritual Year series stand out by the large variety of fieldworks and documented cases discussed in relation to magical practices and beliefs. The great wealth of information in this volume provides opportunities for future comparative studies which could shed light upon each other, as predicted by Arvind Sharma in his "reciprocal illumination" theory (Sharma, 2005).

*Irina Stahl*

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## TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITIONAL RITUALS

**Guest Editor Irina Stahl**

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*RELIGION IN ROMANIA*



*ACADEMIC LIFE*



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## S O M M A I R E




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## *LA RELIGION EN ROUMANIE*



## *VIE ACADÉMIQUE*



## *COMPTES-RENDUES ET NOTES DE LECTURE*