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Between Repudiation and Acceptance. The Evolution of Social Attitudes towards the Baptist Church in Poland

Introduction

The evolution of social attitudes towards the Baptist Church in Poland is an interesting example that delineates mechanisms of functioning of a religious minority in societies spiritually dominated by one religion: the Roman Catholic Church for the Poles, the Evangelical – Augsburg Church for the German minority and the Orthodox Church for the Belarusians and the Ukrainians. In the introductory chapter I describe history of the Baptist movement in Poland in a nutshell. In the second chapter, I outline the rules of evolution of attitudes of religious majority toward religious minority. The empirical analysis of the attitudes of Lutheran, Orthodox and Catholic churches towards baptist in Poland from the second half of 19th century to the beginning of the 21st century will be presented in the third chapter. The paper is ended by ‘Conclusions’ (chapter fourth).

In the beginning, the baptism in the Poland arose within the German people¹. The first church in the Polish lands was established by Gerhard Oncken in Elbląg in 1844. In the 40s of the 19th century other Baptist German-speaking churches were founded in the regions of Dolny Śląsk, Pomorze or Warmia and Mazury.

¹ W. L. Wagner, *New Move Forward in Europe. Growth Patterns of German Speaking Baptists in Europe*, Pasadena 1978, p. 18-19. More on history of the Baptists in Poland, see: K. Bednarczyk, *Historia zborów Baptystów w Polsce do 1939 roku*, Warszawa 1997; K. Brzechczyn, *Rozwój baptyzmu na ziemiach polskich. Od nieformalnego ruchu religijnego do budowy kościoła*, „Zeszyty Filozoficzne”, 1999, no. 7, p. 41-59; L. Szenderowski, *Ewangeliczni Chryścijanie*, Warszawa 1982; H. Tomaszewski, *Baptyści w Polsce w latach 1858-1919*, Warszawa 1993; idem, *Powstanie i rozwój ruchu baptystów w Polsce w latach 1858-1939*, in: *Kalendarz Chryścijanina*, Warszawa 1983; K. Brzechczyn, *Kościół Chryścijan Baptystów w pierwszej dekadzie III Rzeczypospolitej*, „Baptystyczny Przegląd Teologiczny”, 2002, vol. 1, p. 11-26. On Baptist historiography in Poland, see: K. Brzechczyn, *Kościół Baptystyczny w Polsce w latach 1858-2008. Stan badań i postulaty badawcze*, in: *Kościół, polityka, historia. Ze studiów nad problemami mniejszości wyznaniowych w Polsce w XX i XXI wieku*, S. Dudra, O. Kiec (eds.), Warszawa 2009, p. 37-50.

The breakthrough moment for the development of the Polish Baptism was the conversion of Gotfryd F. Alf (1831-98), a Lutheran teacher of a Sunday school, who was baptised with other nine people in Adamów on 28 November 1858². Three years later, on 4 August 1861, Adamów was the place of the first Baptist church in ethnic Polish territories in the Russian partition. In the 70s of the 19th century similar churches were formed in the Mazovian region and in the Łódź region. Before World War I Łódź became the capital of the Baptism in the native Polish territories. In the early 20th century Łódź hosted three churches: two German, one Polish and Baptist charity and philanthropic organizations. In 1907 Łódź became the seat of a theological seminary which operated until 1911 when it was shut down by the Russian authorities. Before World War I, in the Congress Kingdom of Poland the number of Baptists amounted to 4.8 thousand members, gathered in 17 churches and 1.7 thousand members in four churches in the Wolyn region, which totalled 6.5 thousand believers.

The regaining of independence by Poland slightly changed the situation of the Polish Baptists. Although the March Constitution of Poland adopted by the Polish Parliament in 1921 guaranteed the freedom of religion and conscience to all people, but a lack of secondary legislation implementing the provisions of the act caused that the Baptists' rights in particular regions of Poland were affected by religious legislation of the states conducting the partition of Poland such as the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and Habsburg Austria. The best legal situation was encountered in the territories of the previous Prussian partition, where under the act of 7 July 1875 the Baptists were vested with the status of the so-called private law corporation permitted to register individual churches and conduct religious and social activities. The worst situation was in the lands belonged the former Austrian partition where the Baptists were treated as irreligionists as this Church was not vested with the status of the official denomination. Therefore, the Baptists were only allowed to conduct the so-called home services and did not have the right to carry out any public religious activities. In the Russian partition the Baptists acted under the decree of 17 October 1906 and had the status of the tolerated religion.

In 1923 at the Brześć Litewski Conference the Baptists united with the theologically-similar Church of Evangelical Christians and formed the Union of Evangelical Christians and Baptists registered by the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Religions. Unfortunately, the cooperation with the Church of Evangelical Christians survived until 1925. At this year the Baptists abandoned the Union of Evangelical Christians and Baptists but Evangelical Christians kept legal recognition of the state authorities. In 1927 the Baptists attempted to register the Union of Slavic Baptist Churches, however the ministry refused them, claiming that the adjective "Baptist" had been used by the previously registered Union of Evangelical Christians and Baptists. Following several refusals, the Baptist Church registered itself as the Baptist Mutual Aid Association in Poland. In 1938 the Union

² A. W. Wardin, *Gottfried F. Alf. Pioneer of the Baptist Movement in Poland*, Nashville 2003.

of Slavic Baptist Churches comprised 7015 members gathered in 86 churches. It established charitable organizations such as an orphanage in Brest, old people's home in Narewka and hospital in Łódź, ran the "Kompas" publishing house, financed the Theological Seminary in Łódź formed in 1924 and published the "Słowo Prawdy" monthly.

Besides the Union of Slavic Baptist Churches, in November 1928 in Poland there was registered the Union of German Speaking Baptist Churches comprising 8085 members gathered in 41 churches at the end of the mid-war period. The year 1931 witnessed the idea to establish one Evangelical-Baptist Church which would unite the Slavic and German Baptists and Christians representing other theologically-similar denominations. In 1937 this idea was approved by Slavic and German Baptist federations and churches from the identical Evangelical Christians' Mutual Help Association. The aim of this idea was to constitute in Poland one Baptist organization gathering approximately 16 thousand members. The relevant registration documents were filed but the authorities did not respond until the end of the Second Polish Republic³.

As a result of the wartime losses of World War II and the shifting of borders, the number of the Baptists fell to around 1.5 thousand. In May 1945 the Baptists together with other theologically-similar denominations founded one mutual denomination: the Polish Evangelical Church of Baptist Christians which was recognized by the state authorities as "the legal denomination" in 1946. At the same time, the relationship between the state and the Church was declared to be governed by a separate act, but it never happened in the times of the People's Republic of Poland. In the same year, all Evangelical denominations, except for the Baptists, abandoned the association. As a consequence of this abandonment the Church was renamed to the Polish Church of Baptist Christians.

In Stalin's times the Church was a target of political repressions, among others, the authorities closed the Baptist seminary in Malbork and forbade the "Słowo Prawdy" monthly to be published. In the period of the People's Republic of Poland the Baptist Church comprised around 2.5 thousand members, gathered in 50 churches. The considerable development of this denomination commenced after 1989. The breakthrough factor that stabilized the position of the Baptist Church in Poland was the regulation of its legal status⁴. On 30 June 1995, after four years' negotiations, the *Sejm* (lower chamber of the Polish Parliament) enacted the act regulating the relationship between the State and the Baptist Church and signed by President Lech Wałęsa on 25 July 1995. Pursuant to this act the Baptist Church was allowed to establish church funds, use tax credits, make endeavours to regain its property, and its organizational units were vested with legal capacity⁵.

³ W. Gutsze, *Cel i zadanie kościoła ewangeliczno-baptystycznego*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1938, no. 3, p. 69-72.

⁴ T. J. Zieliński, *Projekt ustawowej regulacji stosunków państwo-kościół chrześcijan baptystów w RP*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1994, no. 10, p. 21-23; idem, *Znaczenie ustawy o stosunkach między państwem a kościołem baptystycznym w RP na tle dziejów prawnych społeczności baptystów w Polsce*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1995, no. 9, p. 11-14.

⁵ Ustawa z dnia 30 czerwca 1995 roku o stosunku Państwa do Kościoła Chrześcijan Baptystów w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (Dziennik Ustaw RP no. 97, poz. 480), "Słowo Prawdy", 1995, no. 9.

Mechanism of evolution of social attitudes. An attempt at a model

Let us analyse the mechanism of the evolution of social attitudes towards the Baptism in Poland. I consider the term "social attitude" as a set of conducts, behaviours, opinions publicly manifested by a given member of a religious majority with respect to members of a religious minority. The social attitude only comprises such conducts and public opinions that motivate members of the religious majority to take individual actions necessary to realize the interest of a given religious group. This interest aims at attracting the largest possible number of new followers and limit its own losses. The requirement for the functionality of the social attitude towards the interest of the religious majority causes that the social attitude is a theoretical construction which at a given time is not fully expressed by any members of the religious majority. Usually the empirical social attitude of a typical member of the religious majority includes both functional conducts towards the interest of his/her religious group and dysfunctional conducts⁶.

It is possible to distinguish three kinds of attitudes expressed by members of the religious majority towards the religious minority. They are as follows: ignorance, repudiation and partial acceptance. The attitude of ignorance is a conscious lack of reactions to the presence of a religious minority. In this case, the religious minority does not exist in the religious majority's consciousness and conducts. The attitude of repudiation is when the religious minority is publicly criticized and is subject to reluctance. This type of attitude may oscillate from public criticism to physical constraints against religious dissenters. Whereas, the attitude of partial acceptance resembles the attitude of ignorance in its external manifestation. The presence of the religious minority does not stir up any negative behaviours, but it does not mean that some worldview theses of the religious minority are approved by the religious majority.

These regularities are analysed on a model basis. I assume that the evolution of the religious majority's attitudes towards the religious minority exclusively depends on "the balance of power" between two denominations measured by a number of worshippers spiritually affected by each denomination. Therefore, I omit such factors as, e.g. the division of the religion into the clergy and the laity, the influence of organizational structure of the denomination or the religious doctrine. Furthermore, I ignore external factors pertaining to the analyzed religious group such as civilization transformations, the social-political system and the social-economic system⁷.

⁶ In order to determine the relationship between the social attitude and the denomination's interest I use the analogy between the social consciousness and the social class' interest; see: L. Nowak, *Ideology versus Utopia. A Contribution to the Analysis of the Role of Social Consciousness in the Movement of Socio-Economic Formation*, in: *Theories of Ideology and Ideology of Theories*, P. Buczkowski, A. Klawiter (eds.), Amsterdam – Atlanta 1986, p. 24-52.

⁷ About the modelling method specified by the Idealizational Theory of Science, see: L. Nowak, *The Structure of Idealization. Towards a Systematic Interpretation of the Marxian Idea of Science*, Springer 1980; when making a list of simplification assumptions, on which this analysis is based, I am inspired by a model of the perfect confession society (P. Buczkowski, A. Klawiter, L. Nowak, *Religia jako struktura klasowa*, "Studia Religio-

Hence, let us consider that the society is spiritually dominated by one denomination. In a certain period – I assume that it finally depends on the random mechanism, e.g. a birth of religious leader's – a new religious proposition occurs in the analyzed society. Then, the members of the religious majority can take one of the aforesaid attitudes towards this new denomination: ignorance, repudiation and partial acceptance. However, on a mass-scale basis, after some time, this religious attitude that maximizes profits of the religious majority and minimizes their losses will become popular. In the beginning, a new denomination is able to attract only a few proponents. Because in the first stage the religious minority is supported by few followers the attitude of ignorance prevailed among members of majority. Ignorance is in accordance with interest of religious majority since the religious minority surrounded by the wall of ignorance is unable to independently occur in the social consciousness. The attitude of repudiation would be dysfunctional with respect to the religious majority's interest. The public criticism of the religious minority would only bring publicity to this new worldview offer and would cause that it would be considered in the public discourse as a more or less equal partner of the religious majority. It is not worth mentioning that the attitude of partial acceptance would be much more dysfunctional towards the interest of the majority as it would be considered as the recognition of the minority's ideas. Therefore, if the number of the religious minority does not change at the initial stage, it shall be subject to the attitude of ignorance.

At this stage of the presented analysis it is impossible to prejudge whether the religious minority goes through the barrier of ignorance. However, let us assume that despite widespread attitudes of ignorance, the number of the minority's members grew so considerably that the balance of powers between the denominations changes. In this case, the religious minority will exceed a certain threshold – let us call it the threshold of ignorance. Then, the attitude of repudiation which gradually popularizes among its members is in compliance with the interest of the religious majority. This attitude is expressed by the public criticism, dissemination of false stereotypes, ridicule, criticism, splitting up or even physical harassment against members of a given religious minority. As a result of spreading these attitudes a social emptiness occurs around a typical member of a given religious minority. This limits the number of conversions as its consequence is criticism and social isolation of the convert. In the social plan, the social bonds between members of a given denomination are tighten. This results in the external self-isolation of the minority which – looking further – blocks its further growth rate.

However, when a given religious minority manages to exceed another threshold – the threshold of repudiation (again, at this stage of the model analysis it is impossible

gica", 1987, no. 20). However, unlike the authors of the confession society model who stated that in the initial phase the society comprised the priests and the believers whose worldviews were not covered by any homogenous pattern. I assume that the society where a new denomination occurs is already dominated by one religious worldview. Moreover, contrary to the aforesaid authors, I omit the influence of the class division (access to spiritual production means) which treat denominations as – on a solidarity basis – social wholes where internal divisions are omitted in the first approach.

to determine what factors affect it) – any further withholding of the attitude of repudiation towards this minority would be dysfunctional towards the religious majority's interest. In this case, it is the religious majority's interest to popularize the attitude of partial acceptance which means withdrawing from any mass criticism which – as proved by the growth of its worshippers – the minority is able to cope with. Any further criticism would only result in any unwanted publicity and the growth of the minority's popularity. It appears that "dissenters" are not "moral monsters" and they can be tolerated in their surroundings, but it does not mean that their views are completely accepted.

In the summary of this chapter we ascertain that the development of social attitudes of the religious majority towards the minority fundamentally depends on the balance of power between two denominations. When a given religious minority is small, it is dominated by the attitude of ignorance, but when it becomes medium sized, it is repudiated and finally when it is large (but it still remains the minority), it is partially accepted. Therefore, let us analyze whether the evolution of the social attitudes towards the Baptist Church in Poland complies with the aforesaid approach. Further, we make an attempt to determine reasons for any possible deviations from such model characteristics of relations between the religious majority and minority.

Evolution of social attitudes towards the Baptist Church

Initial period: mid-19th century – World War I

The Baptists appeared in the Polish territories in the mid-19th century as a result of the spiritual awakening among the German Lutherans who were the direct religious surroundings of the Baptists. In this period, the development of Baptism was the most opposed by the authorities of the Lutheran Church. Its authorities took advantage of the fact that the Baptists were not legally recognized and considered this denomination as a sect. The attitude of the Lutheran Church's authorities towards the Baptists is the best expressed in the Evangelical consistory's opinion addressed to the authorities of the Russian partition: "The Baptist sect is dangerous and its rules violate the doctrine of Christian denominations. It particularly strives for developing itself through stating who is a worshipper and who should be baptised or not. Among their members they appoint teachers, the elders, by majority of votes, regardless of whether they have previously dealt with theology, they have prepared for such appointment and they do that without the authorities' knowledge and control"⁸.

They were also accused of demoralization of women, promiscuity, polygamy and incest⁹. It therefore comes as no surprise that on the basis of such opinions the authorities

⁸ It is quoted after: H. R. Tomaszewski, *Baptyści*, op.cit., p. 33.

⁹ It is quoted after: H. R. Tomaszewski, *Powstanie*, op. cit., p. 279.

began to persecute the Baptist churches: they prohibited them to gather in private homes, arrested pastors and deported them from the country. The social pressure was so high that in the 60s of the 19th century most members of the first Baptist church in the Polish territories of the Russian partition moved to the Wolyn region¹⁰. The Tolerance Decree dated 17 October 1906 ended the period of administrative persecutions against the Baptists.

Hence, the original feature of the development of the Baptists in the community of the German Lutherans was a lack of the ignorance stage and the immediate popularization of repudiation attitudes towards them. This anomaly resulted from historical circumstances: a small number of German minorities in the Polish territories of the Russian partition and Gottfried Alf, a person who laid the foundations of the Baptism in the Polish territories and attended a Sunday school at the Lutheran church. Persecutions did not hinder, however, the development of the Baptist Church among the German Lutherans. This growth was so high that prior to World War I the German Lutherans had to accept the presence of the Baptism in their nearest proximity.

In the beginning, in the Polish community religiously dominated by the Roman Catholic Church the Baptists did not manage to cross the threshold of ignorance – throughout the initial period the Polish people did not differ the Baptists from other German Protestant groups. After some time, however, the development of the Baptism among the Poles provoked the intensive attitudes of repudiation. The example of such typical conduct of the Roman Catholics is the reaction to the Baptists' activity in Nowa Wieś near Warsaw described by K. Bednarczyk, a researcher of the history of the Baptism in Poland. In the beginning, awakening meetings arranged by the Baptists did not provoke any reactions of the Roman Catholic Church's authorities. However, as noted by K. Bednarczyk, when: "These meetings became popular a local Roman Catholic priest became worried and began to persecute and harass. On Christmas Day of 1865 the house where the Baptists gathered was surrounded by an armed crowd who came to beat the Baptists. However, the door was locked and nobody dared to force it as the local authorities participated in that meeting. Similar events of spiritual awakening and persecutions concerned the Baptist missionaries in towns of Gąbin, Szymanów, Biezuń, Wojciechów and Stanisławów (...). Subsequently, in Wrzeszczewo and Wola-Budy"¹¹.

Mid-war period

In the mid-war period the Baptist Church was present in four national communities: German, Polish, Belarusian and Ukrainian¹². In that period, the Baptists' activity among

¹⁰ K. Bednarczyk, *Historia*, Warszawa 1997, p. 36.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

¹² Before World War II the Baptists tried to operate in the Jewish circle. The missionary work among the Jews produced marginal effects because Silberstein, a preacher of Jewish origin who cooperated with the

the Germans was the least opposed as a large number of the German Baptists caused that this national group finally accepted this Church. The acceptance of the Baptists was popularized by the previously regulated legal status of the Baptist Church in the Prussian partition and the origin of the independent Poland which caused that the Germans became the national minority. To some extent, it forced the Germans to accept the Baptists since any religious divisions would much more weaken the situation of this minority in the Second Polish Republic.

Whereas, in the Roman Catholic Church (Polish) and the Orthodox Church (Ukrainian and Belarusian) the development of the Baptism raised a strong objection and opposition. The attitude of repudiation may be analyzed at two levels: top and bottom. The top repudiation may be identified with the Baptist's negative image popularized by the Roman Catholic propaganda. Whereas, the bottom repudiation was a "spontaneous" reaction of the society to the conversion. This bottom and spontaneous reaction of ordinary people was strengthened by the Baptist's negative image popularized by the Roman Catholic propaganda. Firstly, I delineate the Baptist's image shown in the press and Roman Catholic publications and then I use the Baptists' reminiscences to reconstruct two model reactions of the society, Orthodox and Catholic, to the conversion from the Orthodox Church (or Catholicism) to the Baptism¹³.

The Baptist's public image developed by the Roman Catholic propaganda comprised four elements: historical, religious, social-political and social¹⁴. The Roman Catholic propaganda disqualified the genesis of the Baptists as it erroneously argued that its origin stemmed from the 16th-century movement of the radical Anabaptism of Thomas Múnzer. Therefore, the mid-war Baptists were associated with this radical reformer's extreme views who preached that: "The new God's Kingdom of thousand years, the Kingdom of the Saints, the pure Church of the chosen will renew the face of the earth. This Kingdom will become the oasis of peace, the private property will disappear, the "sinful marriage" will be abolished for the benefit of the community of women, the authorities will be useless as the moral law written by God in each man's heart is enough, as everyone becomes the saint... Baptists"¹⁵.

Therefore, the Roman Catholic polemicists claimed that the Baptists were the 16th century precursors of Bolshevism. Although, some of them admitted that the present Baptists were far from the views of their alleged ancestors, but: "They have a terrible tra-

Baptists, was beaten to death by his countrymen for "the betrayal of faith and country". Later, it was difficult to replace him with a properly educated man (see: *ibidem*, p. 327-328).

¹³ D. Melcer, *Życie bez Chrystusa i z Chrystusem*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1969, no. 12, p. 17-18; J. Ostaszewski, *I w starości nie opuszcza mnie*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1985, no. 11, p. 26-27; *Siedemdziesiąt lat życia i pracy Daniela Jaśko*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1974, no. 12, p. 23-25; L. Świrzydźkiuk, *Działanie łaski Bożej*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1976, no. 1, p. 26-27; N. Stasinkiewicz, *Wykielkowane ziarno*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1980, no. 7-8, p. 14-15; B. Tkaczuk, *Pół wieku z moim Panem*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1975, no. 7-8, p. 11-13.

¹⁴ More on this: K. Brzechczyn, *Katolicy wobec Baptistów. Wizerunek baptysty w katolickiej propagandzie religijnej okresu międzywojennego*, "Europa Wschodu i Zachodu", 2000, no. 4, p. 47-54.

¹⁵ X. I. Charszewski, *Najazd sekciarstwa na Polskę*, Włocławek 1923, p. 11.

dition hidden in their memories and able to revive under the influence of Bolshevism in its entire abomination and threat. The spirit of darkness living in the Baptist sect fettered in its evangelical freedom by conditions of lawful and cultural life may be freed by the spirit of earth unchained in Bolshevism"¹⁶.

There were seldom weighed any serious theological arguments against the Baptists. The most frequently, some individual rituals of the Baptist Church were criticized. The adult's baptism by immersion was deep disliked and misunderstood: "Hence, what is the reason for these comedies in which they immerse in water and bathe, whereas it is enough to pour water of a child's head at the baptism in order to meet Christ's wish revealed at the baptism"¹⁷. "Therefore, when they convert, they go to the river and baptize by immersing in water and then give new converts Masonic and Jewish dollars"¹⁸.

They were also accused of using unfair methods in their missionary activity and attracting worshippers through manipulation and deceit. It was said that in America the Baptists took care about unaware emigrants, assisted them to find jobs and, if necessary, lent money and then attracted them to their Church¹⁹. It was argued that the Baptists applied those unfair methods in Poland, where: "The workers are normally enticed to Jewish cinemas where they screen some movies as bait, and then their predicant preaches a Baptist homily and finished with joint singing. When the mood in the cinema is relevant, an alleged Roman Catholic apostate makes a speech about his misery in the Roman Catholic Church and happiness he found in the Baptist Church. At the end of the meeting they hand out some propaganda brochures to the workers and some clothes and sweets to their children"²⁰.

They were the most frequently accused of "buying people for dollars"²¹ and of their fanatic hatred towards the Catholicism, which was proved by the fact that the followers of this religion: "bury the crucifix under the threshold and deliberately tread this place, when they are leaving and entering their homes"²².

Traditionally, this religion was accused of being "a sect that serves the Jewish Freemasonry"²³. There were determined the personal and ideological relationships between them and the Jewish milieu. The denomination polemics referred to statistical data, claiming that "the data collected in previous years show that the number of the Baptists is declining"²⁴.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 13. On the real attitude of the Baptiststoward Bolshevik Russia see: K. Brzechczyn, *Obraz Rosji Sowieckiej na łamach baptystycznego miesięcznika "Słowo Prawdy"*, in: *Polski protestantyzm w czasach nazizmu i komunizmu*, J. Kłaczek (ed.), Toruń 2009, p. 85-95.

¹⁷ A brochure, *Sekty i sekciarze*, quoted after: *Więcej Prawdy!*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1929, no. 4, p. 3.

¹⁸ El., *W obronie Prawdy!*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1929, no. 2, p. 1.

¹⁹ W. Miś, *Heretycy – sekciarze. Kim są i do czego dążą?*, Stanisławów 1930, p. 40-41.

²⁰ J. Dajczak, *Sekty chiliaistyczno-judaistyczne w Polsce*, Lwów 1932, p. 17.

²¹ El., *W obronie Prawdy!*, op. cit., p. 1.

²² Ibidem, p. 5.

²³ Ibidem, p. 5.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 5.

However, the most developed was the social and political element of the Baptist's image. This argumentation emphasised that the plurality of religions infringed the integrity of Poland: "You do not need to be an orthodox son of the Roman Catholic Church – it is enough to look behind the eyes of a good citizen who takes care about its country's peace and reliable development and who trembles with shock when thinking about such a huge number of sects in Poland. History is the witness that sects were always a dynamite which the most effectively destroyed the unity of the nation and state and that was a source of chaos and the cruellest fights"²⁵. "Poland is developing, so it needs peace, especially the religious one. However, if sectarians forced us to fight, we will fight with sectarians for life or death as we are requested to do so by God, Faith, Christ and our Homeland. We will not allow our newly proclaimed homeland to be defiled with lie, deceit and sectarian hypocrisy"²⁶.

Therefore, the Roman Catholic propaganda called into question the Baptists' loyalty towards Poland: "In general, legal and illegal relationships of the Polish Baptists are not a positive social and national element because their attitude to the state is more vague than loyal in the sectarian activity programme itself"²⁷.

The permanent element of the anti-Baptist campaign was accusations against its worshippers of secretly favouring communism and disseminating Bolshevik leaflets at religious gatherings. This stereotype of the Baptist – Bolshevik so much rooted into the national and Roman Catholic milieus that it was regularly covered by the press. The state police was informed that the Baptists hosted some Bolsheviks who came directly from Russia and who under cover of the religious propaganda disseminated the communist ideology²⁸.

The moral and social element was the least developed part of the Baptist's image. It was argued that sects "spoiled customs" as "their most perverse debauchery was under cover of mysticism and God's revelation". Among them there were mentioned the Baptists, the Stundists and the Doukhobors who did not recognize the marriage and propagated free love²⁹. The Baptists were also accused of satisfying desires of their alleged founder, Thomas Münzer: the abolishment of private property, law, state power and marriage and the introduction of community-owned wives and property. According to one of the

²⁵ A brochure, *Walka z sekciarstwem*, quoted after: X. Nierzymyński, *Walka z sekciarstwem*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1931, no. 10, p. 5.

²⁶ A brochure, *Sekty i Sekciarze*, printed by: *Głosy Katolickie*, I am quoting after: *Więcej Prawdy!*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1929, no. 4, p. 3.

²⁷ J. Dajczak, *Sekty chiliastyczno-judaistyczne w Polsce*, Lwów 1932, p. 17.

²⁸ See: e.g.: L. M., *Policja Lwowska w walce przeciw chrześcijanom-Baptystom*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1926, no 1, p. 5; *Jaczejka wywrotowa w domu baptysty. Lech*, "Gazeta Gnieźnieńska", 1932, no. 26, p. 3; *Pod płaszczykiem sekciarstwa. Oszustwo i robota antypaństwowa*, "Gazeta Warszawska", 1930, no 59, p. 2; similar articles were also published in "Echo" paper in Białystok, see: A. Kircun, *Niefortunni krytycy wyznania Baptystów*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1939, no 4, p. 8-9.

²⁹ A brochure of Wilno archdiocese *Walka z sekciarstwem*; I am quoting after: X. Nierzymyński, *Walka z sekciarstwem*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1931, no. 10, p. 6; L., *Nasza odpowiedź*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1932, no. 3, p. 33.

publications: "The aim of the contemporary Baptists living in their sinful world is to accelerate the establishment of this paradise on the Earth through uprooting »idolaters« such as noblemen and priests, especially through deposing of the reign of Antichrist represented by the papacy"³⁰. This image was supplemented by news over and over published in daily papers about the Baptists' frauds: money defrauding, promises of tax credits, avoidance of military recruitment and the like. Therefore, it is not surprising that such controlled campaign of hate strengthened the grassroots attitudes of repudiation of ordinary worshippers.

Let us introduce the reaction of two religious milieus, the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic, to the conversion to the Baptism. In the Orthodox Church the Baptists were named the "Stundists" (German word *die Stunde* means an hour and this is a time of studying the Bible) and *perekinchyks* (weirdo in the Ukrainian language) which had the negative connotation. The Baptists services were very frequently disturbed and worshippers going to their churches were insulted. The gentlest reaction was when their families, acquaintances or friends laughed or mocked. If a given person still wished to convert, he or she needed to face much more resistance of his or her closest family – such person was threatened, persecuted or harassed.

The Baptist's closest family was under pressure of its own milieu – one Baptist mentioned that her father was almost willing to accept her decision but when he went to "the Orthodox church and met people who diversely spoke about dissenters, he made angry. He said about disgrace and shame brought on his family"³¹. The characteristic feature of the Orthodox model of repudiation was the subconscious conviction that the Baptists were not guilty of the charged acts and the conduct of an average Baptist that was much more ethical than the one of an average member of the Orthodox Church³². As a result, despite the vehement opposition, the development of the Baptism among the Orthodox people was much more dynamic than among the Roman Catholics.

The Roman Catholic model of repudiation was much more restrictive³³. The family did not laugh or mock, but it showed its wrath, anger, threatened to use battery, forbade to contact the Baptists and to keep Christian books. The minor Baptism-followers who lived with their parents had to meet with their co-religionists in conspiracy. In the Roman Catholic Church the conversion repercussions were much more serious. The Roman Catholic priests forbade those people who were influenced by heresy to study the Bible. The religious dissenters were harassed by administrative authorities and the police (the

³⁰ J. Dajczak, *Sekty chiliaistyczno-judaistyczne w Polsce*, Lwów 1932, p. 17.

³¹ L. Świrydziuk, *Działanie łaski Bożej*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1976, no. 1, p. 26.

³² J. Ostaszewski, *I w starości nie opuszcza mnie*, op. cit., p. 26-27; N. Stasinkiewicz, *Wykielkowane ziarno*, op. cit., p. 14-15; L. Świrydziuk, *Działanie łaski Bożej*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 26-27.

³³ I am based on following collections: S. Bednarczyk, *Za Jezusem na drodze życia*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1971, no. 4, p. 7-8; W. Czarniecka, *Próba mojego życia jeszcze trwa*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1975, no. 12, p. 10-12; O. Jastrzębska-Weick, *Pochodzę ze Zduńskiej Woli*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1991, no. 10, p. 14-15; B. Jeżowska, *O mojej mamie*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1991, no. 5, p. 13-14; J. Mackiewicz, *40 lat Zboru w Narwi*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1986, no. 1, p. 22-25; F. Słotwiński, *Wspomnienie*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1978, no. 11, p. 8-9.

range of those actions depended on local conditions as it was illegal and depended on contacts of the local church authorities with local representatives of the state authorities), discriminated at work, e.g. they got worse-paid jobs. The Baptists' children were haunted during religion classes. According to one of the parents, due to the fact that he was the Baptist his child had to write Roman Catholic prayers from 50 to 300 times and was beaten by a monk who taught religion. Those repressions ceased when the parents of the haunted children asked Marshal Piłsudski for help.

By comparing the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox model of repudiation, it needs to be said that in both cases the conversion resulted in cooling relations with friends and family, social isolation and emotional emptiness. However, there were considerable differences between them. In the Orthodox model of repudiation the conversion "only" meant breaking off relations with the loved ones, whereas in the Roman Catholic model the Baptists were also exposed to social and professional repercussions. This resulted from the dominant position of the Roman Catholic Church in the pre-war Poland and its opportunity to officially and unofficially affect the state authorities.

This repudiation present in both public and private spheres caused some socially-negative consequences for the Baptist Church. First of all, the distance and social distrust between the Baptist communities and the remaining Roman Catholic society deepened. On the one hand, the isolation of the Baptists obstructed the overcome of stereotypes and prejudices, but on the other hand it limited the growth of its worshippers. It was one of the *expressis verbis* aims of the Roman Catholic propaganda. The anonymous brochure "Sectarians – the Apostles of False" included some pieces of advice that forbade, under threat of sin, to purchase the sectarians' books, attend sectarian services and host them at homes. According to this brochure, first and foremost the orthodox Catholic should be faithful to the Roman Catholic Church's authorities³⁴.

The climate of suspicions in which the pre-war Baptist Church operated came upon a breeding ground of harassments and discrimination and acts of non-tolerance together with passiveness and a lack of reaction of local authorities: police officers, village mayors, prosecutors or doctors. It very frequently happened that the local police, being egged on by local Roman Catholic or Orthodox authorities, harassed through interrogating wandering preachers, seizing religious literature, charging them with fines or arresting. The most frequently acts of persecutions passively observed by the authorities or even supported by the police took place in the Małopolska Wschodnia. The especially severe punishment was when the local authorities hindered the Baptists from burying their deceased. The longest and the most severe persecutions took place in Lwów where the local police for almost a year, i.e. from November 1923 to September 1924 a dozen times dissolved services, seized the religious literature, charged with fines and arrested those

³⁴ *Sekciarze – apostołowie fałszu*, Poznań, (without date of printing) p. 5-6. Bishop B. Dembek advised the priests in the following way: "At the end of my homily I warn you that you should avoid sectarians and pray together with your parishioners for converting those who got lost". Idem, *Duszpasterz w przeciwdziałaniu sekciarzom*, in: *Pamiętnik kursu duszpasterskiego w sprawie sekciarstwa i innowierstwa*, B. Ciszak (ed.), op. cit., p. 164.

people who presided religious meetings. The witch-hunt against the Baptists who were presented as the damaging sect with Bolshevik inclinations conducted by the Roman Catholic propaganda was so effective that it eliminated the natural reactions of sympathy and solidarity with the aggrieved. The press associated with the Roman Catholic and national camp supported the massacres and batteries of "sectarians" by the Ukrainian peasants.

The period of Polish People's Republic

The post-World War II changes considerably affected the Baptist milieu. As a result of the resettlement of the Germans Poland was left by the German-origin Baptists. The border shifting caused the influx of Baptist repatriates from the East, including the Baptists, to few Baptist churches located in the native Polish territories. The Baptists originated from Ukraine, Belarus or from mixed families had majority in the Polish Baptist Church. Then, those Baptists were surrounded by the Roman Catholics, not by the Protestants (Germans) or the Orthodox Church (Ukrainians and Belarusians) as it used to be in the pre-World War II period. In the post-war period the direct repudiation of the Baptist Church was still maintained or even strengthened. This resulted from three factors: internal, religious-cultural and political.

For the Baptists originated from the eastern territories of Polish pre-war state (*Kresy Wschodnie*) migration involved in moving from the country to towns. That change intensified their feelings of strangeness and obstructed the adaptation to a new environment. Further, the national origin of the major Baptists from the East (most of them had Belarusian or Ukrainian origins or came from the mixed Polish and Belarusian or Ukrainian families) affected their more or less voluntary self-isolation or reinforced their belief that the best idea was to act among themselves. Another factor that amplified their self-isolation was the custom to solemnize marriages between the members of the Church and this fact caused that in this small community (around 2.5 thousand members) large, nuclear Baptist families were cognate with most of other families after a long time. In this case, the kinship was reinforced by relations of common worldview³⁵.

After World War II the Polish society became ethnically – and religiously – homogeneous. The stereotype of Pole-Catholic naturally revived, but it was not the stereotype any longer but it became the religious reality of this country. The wartime losses that affected the Protestant Churches: Lutheran and Calvinistic, were so huge that those religious communities were unable to revive to become a significant social factor in the post-war Poland.

The monopolistic position of the Roman Catholic Church on the religious market was reinforced by a character of the political system in Poland. The Roman Catholic

³⁵ A. Gutsche, *Powojenny baptyzm polski. Próba charakterystyki*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1997, no 3, p. 25-26.

Church's spiritual force and influence was only partly a result of the religious activity of this institution and to a greater extent it resulted from the social function played by the Catholicism. In the conditions of the communist system the Roman Catholic Church was a homogenous and organized social institution which was able to oppose the authorities. Naturally, the abandonment of the Church was considered as favouring communism and betraying the homeland. It was commonly believed that "all Protestant sects inspired by the Secret Service or the Department of Denominations weakened the Roman Catholic Church and objectively favoured the authorities". Thus, the political polarization which was more or less present for the entire period of the People's Republic of Poland did not foster the occurrence of serious and massive scale-acceptable world-view alternatives³⁶.

In the post-war period the aforesaid factors still maintained or even reinforced the attitude of repudiation. However, in comparison with the pre-war period, they were subject to some transformations. A hypothesis may be ventured that the Roman Catholic attitude of repudiation in the People's Republic of Poland resembled the "Orthodox" model in the pre-war Poland. The conversion usually downgraded family and social relations, but it did not result in any social and professional repercussions. This was caused by the political situation of the Roman Catholic Church which was in the opposition to the Marxist authorities and was unable to affect disobedient worshippers by means of administrative and political means.

Hence, the abandonment of Catholicism still stirred up family protests, degradation or even breaking off of social contacts³⁷. The hatred against the Baptists was considerably intensified by the widespread stereotypes. The Baptist ideology was called the "cat faith" and this denomination was considered as the sect. The Baptists were the most frequently identified with the Jehovah's witnesses or the Jews as the Baptist children did not attend religion classes. It was believed, e.g. that the cross was buried in the ground by the entrance to the Baptist chapel and hence anyone who crossed such chapel, had to trample on the cross. It is obviously known that the trampling of the cross is a deadly sin for the Roman Catholics and a barbarian act for each person raised in the European culture. Therefore, it is not surprising that a coincidental meeting with a Baptist was a shocking experience for an average Catholic: "I asked him whether he was the Jehovah's witness? He denied and said to be the Baptist. I was surprised a bit because his appearance and behaviour did not match my image of the Baptist. On the basis of what other people told me, I imagined that the Baptists were primitive old men who did not shave themselves and wore tatters. Whereas, I was standing in front of a handsome man who was dressed neatly"³⁸.

³⁶ On the denominational policy of the communist authorities in Poland, see: K. Brzechczyn, *Kościół mniejszościowe w polityce władz PRL*, "Przegląd Religioznawczy", 2008, no. 3, p. 133-142.

³⁷ S. Kapnik, *Kto szuka, ten znajdzie*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1975, no. 9, p. 11-14 and B. Merda, *Wspomnienie*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1978, no. 11, p. 11-14.

³⁸ H. Gutkowski, *Pan odpowiedział na moją modlitwę*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1990, no. 12, p. 25-27.

The existing stereotypes were supported by the Roman Catholic Church authorities. The characteristic event was a series of incidents held in October 1962 in Poznan which showed a real attitude of the Roman Catholic Church's authorities towards some non-Catholic denominations. In that time, there was opened the Polish Catholic Church. On 2 September 1962 and for many subsequent days women and men were standing by the entrance to the Polish Catholic Church and, as per the Polish Catholic Church's complaint filed with the Denominations Office: "They are accosting people entering and exiting the church for the whole day. They use insulting words as dissenters, they do not believe in God and the Holy Father, do not enter this church, go to the church in Fredry Street"³⁹. The authors of this complaint claimed that that incident was inspired by the Roman Catholic priests. The official reaction to these events was the letter dated 11 September 1962 signed by general vicar bishop Jedwabski. It reads as follows: "In response to numerous worshippers' inquiries, we hereby explain that the chapel recently opened near the parish church of the Holy Redeemer in Fredry Street is not the Roman Catholic chapel, but the religious dissenters' one. Moreover, we would like to say that according to the ecclesiastical law it is forbidden to visit chapels of other denominations and take part in services as it is a cardinal sin and subject to ecclesiastical punishments"⁴⁰.

Gradually, since the mid-60s the social climate towards the Baptist Church has changed. It consisted in gradually weakening the attitudes of repudiation and spreading attitudes of conditional acceptance. In those transformations, the most essential factor was a change (officially, at least) of the Roman Catholic Church's attitude after the Second Vatican Council and the beginning of the ecumenical dialogue with other denominations.

The organizational specificity of the Baptist Church is characterized by its independence and autonomy of individual churches of this denomination. Therefore, the influence of the ecumenical cooperation is the best illustrated by the activity of one typical church of this denomination such as the Church of Baptist Christians in Poznan. In this city, the ecumenical cooperation of all denominations was the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity held every third week of January, each year and participated by the Roman Catholics and the Baptists. This initiative commenced as early as the late 1960s. The representatives of various denominations cooperated one another in regional offices of the Polish Ecumenical Council. Another example of the cooperation was the mutual invitation to important celebrations, sending of Christmas and Eastern cards, wishes, invitations to discussions and lectures. The zenith of the ecumenical dialogue between the Baptists and the Roman Catholics was the 1970s. In that period, the then pastor of the Baptist Church, Stefan Rogaczewski, was invited to give a lecture at the Theological Seminary of Missionary Oblates. The Baptist music band was also invited to this seminary. The representatives of the Baptist Church were regularly invited to inaugurations of new

³⁹ *Pismo Dziekana Dekanatu Poznańsko-Zielonogórskiego Kościoła Polsko-Katolickiego w PRL (sygn. L.dz. 217/62) do Wojewódzkiego Wydziału do Spraw Wyznań w Poznaniu*, in: Archive of Baptist Church in Poznań.

⁴⁰ *Pismo Kurii Metropolitalnej (sygn. L. dz. 10094/62)*, in: Archive of Baptist Church in Poznań.

academic years arranged by the Theological Seminary of Christian Association. Moreover, the Scientific Circle of the Pontifical Faculty of Theology invited the Baptists to pray for the unity of Christians. The Dominican Order sent Christmas and Eastern cards. The Baptist Church had relatively the most intensive contacts with the "Więź" monthly. Its editorial office regularly invited the Baptists to its seminars and ecumenical wafer meetings. The result of the cooperation with the Roman Catholic milieu was the lecture of the famous Baptist evangelist from the USA, Billy Graham, held in the Dominican Church in 1978⁴¹. All in all, it may be said that the Roman Catholic and Baptist ecumenical cooperation has never gone beyond the official and occasional meetings and celebrations even in its most intensive period.

However, as a result of the ecumenical cooperation the Roman Catholics' social attitudes towards the Baptist Church were divided. On the one hand, the Roman Catholic Church's authorities officially commenced the inter-ministerial dialogue. On the other hand, the parties to this dialogue were distrustful, prejudiced and averse. However, those attitudes were much weaker than those occurring twenty or thirty years ago⁴². Some incidents were the burning of the Protestant copies of the Bible by priests or the prohibition to possess and read the "Protestant" Bible⁴³. The ecumenical cooperation managed to depreciate prejudices and alleviate the stereotypes about the Baptists and Protestants disseminated in the Roman Catholic circle. In the conditions of the initiated ecumenical dialogue it was much more difficult to name someone a sectarian and conduct a service with such person (at least once a year).

The significant transformations that eased to alleviate the attitude of repudiation also took place inside the Baptist Church as there grew up a new generation of the Baptists (turn of the 70s and 80s) brought up in the post-war Poland did not feel strange in a new environment and broke off with the free isolation of their parents.

Third Polish Republic

However, the most significant transformations, as a result of which the Baptist Church was partly adopted by the Polish society took place after 1989. The downfall of communism weakened the political polarization throughout the entire period of the People's Republic of Poland. The issue of choosing the denomination is presently a private matter, not a criterion of patriotism and loyalty to the homeland.

This new social and political situation was used by the Baptist churches which developed new social initiatives that reduced the social distrust and distance. Some of

⁴¹ K. Brzechczyn, *Historia Zboru Baptystów w Poznaniu*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1997, no. 10, p. 24.

⁴² I am based on the following collections: J. Czugałaj, *Wtedy zadziałał Bóg*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1991, no. 1, p. 24-25; M. Krasnowska, *Jak poznałam prawdziwego Boga*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1980, no. 3, p. 7-9; A. Nowakowski, *Takie jest Boże kierownictwo*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1980, no 5, p. 5-7.

⁴³ Alfred, *Czy spalić Pismo św.?*, "Słowo Prawdy", 1976, no. 1, p. 14-15.

such undertakings were, among others, the opening of the Wrocław Language Schools of the Church of Baptist Christians on 23 September 1989. In 1998 a similar school was opened in Poznań under the aegis of the Baptist Education Association registered in 2000. In numerous cities and towns such as Gdynia, Katowice, Krynica, Poznań, Warszawa, Wrocław there were established Christian bookstores which distributed the Protestant literature. The 1990s witnessed the foundation of Christian-led funds and organizations actively run by the Baptists. Some of them may be the "Słowo Życia" Fund helping children and teenagers and registered on 17 November 1990 or the student-oriented New Life Movement and the Christian Academic Association. The Baptist churches arranged open evangelizations held in public places. The specific tradition is the "March for Jesus" gathering several thousand participants held each year in Warsaw and Wrocław since 1992⁴⁴.

The edge of the Roman Catholic propaganda has also changed. In the mid-war period one of the key threats to the Roman Catholic Church was denominations belonging to the Evangelical (free church) movement of the Protestantism, whereas in the Third Polish Republic the Baptists and other significant Protestant denominations (e.g. Methodists), with some exceptions, are not pejoratively named "the sect". At present, the key threat to the Catholicism is the New Age ideology, Satanism, cult movements formed on the basis of the Far East religions, as well as numerous pseudo-religious movements associated the scientist ideology with the religious attitude⁴⁵.

The years 1989-2012 witnessed some civilization transformations. One of the side effects of laicization and secularization of the social life is the religious indifference, owing to which the choice of faith gradually becomes the matter of personal search, not the adopted custom. The general civilization development trends improve the acceptance of the Baptism's worldview as one more option available on the denomination market. The acceptance of the Baptism does not result, however, from the conviction that its worldview offer is superior or has a special value, but from the conviction about the superiority of the ideological pluralism, on behalf of which it is worth approving this Christian movement.

Conclusions

By making the model analysis of mechanisms of the evolution of the religious majority's social attitudes towards the religious minority I stated that the intra-religious

⁴⁴ See more: K. Brzechczyn, *Wpływ transformacji ustrojowej na Kościół Chrześcijan Baptystów w Polsce*, in: *Adaptacja przez transformacje*, Z. Drozdowicz, Z. Puślecki (eds.), Poznań 2001, p. 311-321; K. Brzechczyn, *Kościół Chrześcijan Baptystów w pierwszej dekadzie III Rzeczypospolitej*, "Baptystyczny Przegląd Teologiczny", 2002, vol. 1, p. 11-26.

⁴⁵ I am based on: M. Ibek, *Obraz sekt w polskiej prasie katolickiej na podstawie wybranych tytułów z lat 1989-1994*, "Nomos", 1996, no. 14, p. 59-103; partial analysis of the picture of sect in current Polish press: J. Drozdowicz, *Obraz sekt i nowych ruchów religijnych na łamach tygodnika „Polityka”*, "Zeszyty Filozoficzne", 1999, no 7, p. 125-131; Z. Drozdowicz, *Dlaczego pojawiają się sekty?*, "Zeszyty Filozoficzne", 1999, no. 7, p. 7-10; idem, *Sekty religijne w nowożytnej Europie*, Poznań 2000, p. 11-45.

relationships went through three phases: ignorance, repudiation and acceptance. However, in comparison with the model course, the historical evolution of attitudes towards the Baptists in the Lutheran, Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches shows some anomalies.

The specific evolution of attitudes towards the Baptist Church in the German milieu was a lack of the ignorance phase and the immediate implementation of the attitude of repudiation. Then, the evolution of attitudes was standard as the growth of the Baptist Church's members forced the German community in the Polish territories to accept this denomination.

The most similar to the model was reactions to the development of the Baptism in the Orthodox Church. The initial period of ignorance was followed by the repudiation and gradual acceptance – this may be proved by the dynamic growth of the number of the Baptists among the Belarusians and the Ukrainians. The political events such as the outbreak of World War II and the post-Yalta shifting of borders disturbed the further evolution of the Orthodox people's attitudes towards the Baptists, the majority of which moved to Poland.

The characteristic feature of the evolution of social attitudes towards the Baptists in the Roman Catholic Church was the extended repudiation stage. In the mid-war period the breaking off with the Catholicism resulted in, besides personal repercussions, social and professional consequences. In the period of the People's Republic of Poland the conversion to the Baptism did not cause any social and professional repercussions but it was hindered by the opposition attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards the communist system. The breaking off with the Church was "morally ambiguous" as it was considered as a symptom of cowardice, lack of patriotism and support of the communist system.

Another phenomenon was the nature of the transition from the repudiation phase to the acceptance phase. This transition did not result from the growth of members of the Baptist Church comprising about 3 thousand members in the period of the People's Republic of Poland, but it was affected by external factors omitted in the presented model analysis and concerning the dynamics of the cross-religious relationships in Poland. The change of the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church's authorities which was advantageous for the Baptist Church was made under the influence of the performance of the decisions of the Second Vatican Council which initiated the beginning of the ecumenical dialogue by the Roman Catholic Church. Other factors affecting the level of acceptance of the Baptism in Poland were the post-1989 political transformations and the secularization and laicization of the social life in Poland.

The membership of Poland in European Union weakened privileged position of Catholic Church and globalization processes limited influence of the state on social and economical life⁴⁶. However the limit of position of Catholic Church does not mean to

⁴⁶ On the attitudes of protestants churches towards European integration, see: T. R. Dębowski, *Kościół chrześcijański w Polsce wobec wybranych zagadnień międzynarodowych w latach 1989-2004*, Wrocław 2011, p. 111-129.

set up worldview pluralism. Superior position of Catholic Church is being replaced by other more dynamic worldviews (e. gr. based on gender ideology) allied with the authorities of Polish state and supported by European structures. The representatives of these worldview movements proclaim new 'cultural wars' and dominate public space. If these tendencies will deepen, despite of intentions and proclaimed by these worldview autho-declarations of freedom and emancipation, mechanisms of spiritual competition will lead to an intellectual marginalization of Baptist-like religious minorities. This is a conclusion drawn from the outlined model in which the most important condition of worldview pluralism is not a content of a given faith/worldview but "the balance of power" measured by the number of members and their social influence of worldview groups.