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Church and Religion in Contemporary Europe

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Results from Empirical
and Comparative Research



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Why, at all, do we need Religion? Religion and Morality in Post-Communist Europe¹

Siniša Zrinščak and Krunoslav Nikodem

1. Revitalisation of religion in post-communism: causes and consequences

Continuing debates about the secularization process in Europe, and particularly about the impact of secularization on different aspects of individual and social life, got one another dimension after 1989. Up to then officially atheist part of Europe collapsed and religion generally got new, previously unimaginable possibilities of public acting. This process, usually marked as revitalization process, started to dominate both social life and scientific researches.

However, the story has been far from being clear. At least three parallel processes have been noticed and discussed.²

First, the revitalization of religion is clearly confirmed, at least on two basic grounds. The first one is connected with the role of Churches in public life. The pre-Communist time was not resurrected but (particularly dominant) Churches resumed much of their power lost after 1945. They re-established their official ties with states (in the case of the Catholic Churches by international agreements with the Holy See), they re-entered public schools, returned much of their properties and got big media attention. The second aspect was visible from the data on individual connections with Churches and/or religion. Although the base line was very different among different countries, they all noticed the trend of rising religiosity in the late 80s and early 90s. Although noticeable the revitalization trend did not occur in the same pace in different countries but, moreover, the striking thing is that differences in the level of religiosity among countries have remained so big, bigger than in Western Europe. Those who claim belonging to religious denomination range in 1999 from 97.6% in Romania and 95.7% in Poland through 70.0% and 57.7% in Bulgaria and Hungary respectively to only 33.5% and 24.8% in the Czech Republic and Estonia respectively. In the light of these data any speech about the revitalization for a large group of countries (even if it is, up to certain level, true) has become almost meaningless.

Third and apart from the limited revitalization in some countries, many researches pointed out contradictory aspects of the new social life of religion. According to the existing sociological literature these contradictory aspects can be further subdivided in different branches. The majority of approaches paid attention to adaptation problem: Churches generally want to awake their pre-communist position what is hardly possible in changed modern world. Confused expectations from the public complicates the picture: at the same

¹ Earlier versions of the paper were presented by S. Zrinščak at the ASR Annual Conference, San Francisco, 13-15 August 2004 and at the ISORECEA Conference, Budapest, 9-11 December 2004.

² This part of paper is based on numerous sources such as: Borowik/Babiński, 1997; Borowik, 1999; Borowik/Tomka, 2001; Marinovic/Jerolimov/Zrinščak/Borowik, 2004; Pollack, 2001; Tomka/Zulehner, 1999; Zrinščak, 2002; Zrinščak, 2004.

time the majority rejects political involvement and even public social role of Churches (epitomized in the phrase: priests should restrict their activities to Church buildings) but expect their involvement in public issues, such as rising poverty and inequality, rights of workers, etc. These contradictory expectations can be connected with very visible ideological (left-right) social division and debates about the proper role of Churches in modern world. The position of religious minorities in post-Communist Europe emphasizes the old dilemma: how to reconcile different social significance of certain religions with the principle of equality of all religions in a secular state. Third, expectation of quick secularization according to quick modernization of societies after 1989 and different social reforms they are undertaking is already shifting the scientific focus from the revitalization to further diminishing of social relevance of religion.

Expected secularization will certainly shape future debates about consequential impacts of religion in secularized Europe. Yet, this debate is both possible and needed in the light of the fact that many post-Communist countries are already today more secular (atheist?) in comparison to many Western European countries. It is, however, very interesting that these consequential aspects have been up to now more revealed by theologians than sociologists from Eastern European countries. Starting from the normative approach they have rightly noticed that "new religiosity" does not in many cases mean the rise of "true believers". New and welcomed public position of religion was immediately jeopardized by false believers and new threats coming from an increasingly secularized society. In communism so desperately dreamed liberty could be now even seen as a gift from a devil and the question spontaneously arises: why, at all, do we need liberty?

2. Gods, rituals and the moral order: the recent lesson by Rodney Stark

What does it mean to be religious? What difference does it make? Rodney Stark (2001) questions a widespread belief that religion functions to sustain moral order, and particularly that it is only through participation in collective rituals that people are bound into a moral community. Stark's work is based on four hypotheses he confirms in his analysis:

1. In many societies, religion and morality will not be linked;
2. This linkage will tend to be limited to more complex culture;
3. The effects of religiousness on individual morality are contingent on images of gods as conscious, morally-concerned beings; religiousness based on impersonal or unmoral gods will not influence moral choices;
4. Participation in religious rites and rituals will have little or no independent effect on morality.

Correlation between religion and morality (i.e. three moral statements researched inside the 1990 World Values Study) showed that moral statements are more linked to the importance of God than to the Church attendance but also that this linkage is particularly weak in post-communist Europe. The particular situation of Eastern Europe is explained in two following hypotheses:

1. Communist efforts to weaken the link between religion and morality will show up in substantially weaker correlations in the nonorthodox nations of Eastern Europe than found in Western Europe;
2. Within Eastern Europe, the more remote orthodox conception of God will result in correlations that are weaker in orthodox nations than in nonorthodox nations. In combination with the effects of Communist repression, this will result in a lack of any significant correlations between God and morality in the orthodox nations, except in Romania.

If religion can not demonstrate its power to sustain moral order in post-Communist countries does it mean that we are facing long-standing and not easily shaken effects of Communist order? Has post-Communist revitalization no power to change significantly this effect? What, at all, does religion serve in post-Communist societies?

3. Religion and morality in post-communism: are non-existent ties still present in the late '90s?

This paper does not have only intention to repeat Stark's study nine years later (and see whether some important changes happened concerning the role of religion in societies) but also to question crucial findings that religion is not capable to sustain moral order in contemporary European societies, Western and Eastern.

Stark's analysis is based on the 1990 World Values Study data which focused eight post-Communist societies: Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Slovenia, Russia, Bulgaria, Belarus and Romania. He restricted the analysis only on three moral statements that were judged as unjustified by a substantial majority in each nation: (1) buying something you knew was stolen, (2) failing to report damage you've done accidentally to a parked car, (3) taking the drug marijuana or hashish.

The European Values Study 1999/2000 on which data is based this analysis embraced 14 post-Communist countries.³ Therefore, it can serve as a reliable source of data in two senses: it focuses a wider range of post-Communist countries a decade after 1989, a decade in which a new social position of religion could have demonstrated significant social effects. Moral statements which were included in these two researches (WVS and EVS) are not completely the same but are very similar which allows a kind of comparison. Beside that, it is not clear why only statements that are found unjustified by a substantial majority in each nation should be taken into consideration. Religion should / should not and can / cannot demonstrate its affect on different moral statements, whether they are embraced by majority or not – only, in that case, we are not talking about one and unproblematic moral community, but different moral communities that interact with other social divisions of each society. Based on the 1999/2000 EVS data from 14 Western and 13 Eastern European societies the following analysis will focus the linkage between both the Church attendance and the importance of God and six moral statements. The Church attendance is measured by the four-point scale from (1) never to (4) at least once a week. The importance of God is measured by the ten-point scale from 1 (absolutely not important) to 10 (very important). Six moral

3 For basic information about the research and data see: www.europeanvalues.nl

statements are also measured by the degree of justification at the ten-point scale from 1 (never) to 10 (always) and they embraced both statements which are judged as unjustified by a substantial majority and statements which substantially divide societies:

- (1) claiming state benefits which you are not entitled to;
- (2) cheating on tax if you have a chance
- (3) taking the drug marijuana or hashish
- (4) married men/women having an affair
- (5) homosexuality
- (6) abortion

The further analysis is based on two steps. First, it will show and discuss the level of acceptance of each statement in different societies. Second, it will analyze correlations between two measures of religiosity and 6 moral statements in each society. Also, we checked the significance of correlation with the regression analysis and discuss the results, although the results are not shown here mostly because of large number of issues and size of the tables.

4. Moral statements: religious and/or cultural norms?

The table 1 shows the level of acceptance of different moral statements in 14 Western and 13 Eastern European societies by the mean value at the scale from 1 (never) to 10 (always).

Table 1: Mean value of acceptance of different moral statements

	(1) Claiming benefit...	(2) Cheating on tax...	(3) Taking hashish	(4) Having affair	(5) Homo- sexuality	(6) Abortion
Western Europe ⁴	2.41	2.51	2.16	2.40	5.40	4.79
Eastern Europe ⁵	2.30	2.61	1.52	2.70	2.88	4.37
Catholic countries ⁶	2.14	2.53	1.76	2.34	3.80	3.88

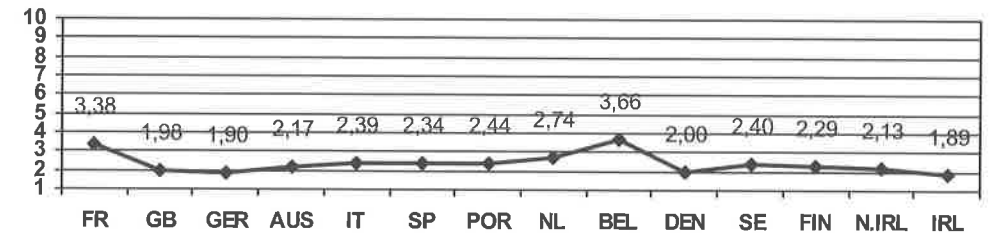
Graphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 show the same in more details for two statements, one for which differences between Western and Eastern Europe are the smallest (claiming state benefit which you are not entitled to) and one for which differences are the greatest (homosexuality).

4 Western Europe: France, Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Northern Ireland, and Ireland.

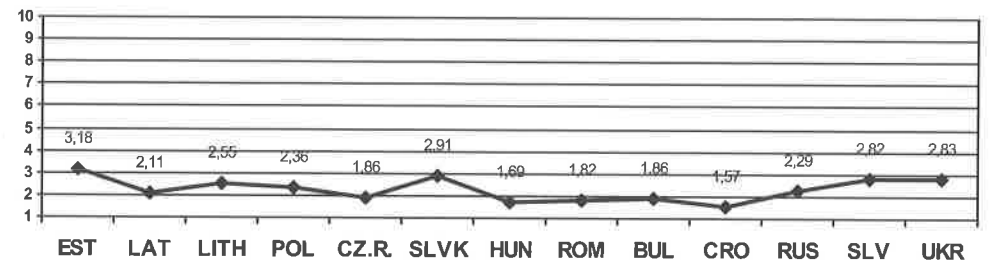
5 Eastern Europe: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Russia, Slovenia, and Ukraine.

6 Catholic countries are those with more than 70% of Catholics: Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Lithuania, Poland and Croatia.

Graph 1: Mean value of justification of the statement "claiming state benefit which you are not entitled to" on the ten-point scale from 1 (never) to 10 (always) in 14 Western European countries



Graph 2: Mean value of justification of the statement "claiming state benefit which you are not entitled to" on the ten-point scale from 1 (never) to 10 (always) in 13 Eastern European countries



Graph 3: Mean value of justification of the statement "homosexuality" on the ten-point scale from 1 (never) to 10 (always) in 14 Western European countries

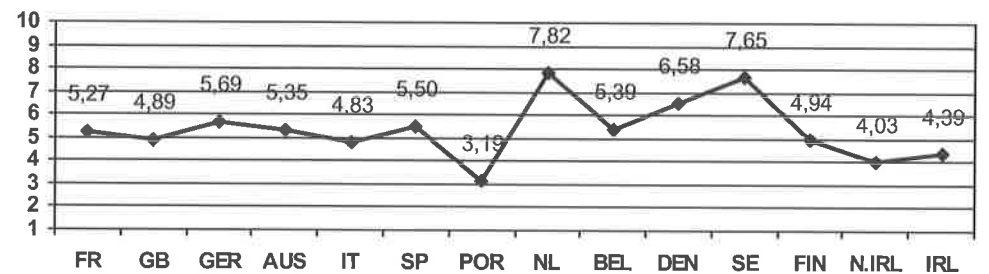
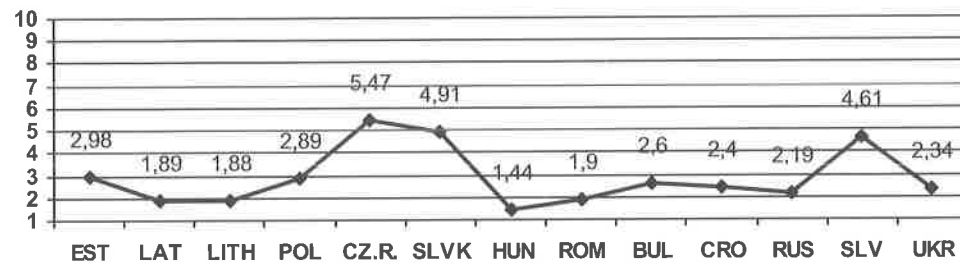


Table and graphs show some very interesting aspects of acceptance. Irrespectively of some country differences acceptance of the first four statements is generally low in all countries. Eastern Europeans are something more inclined to cheat on tax or to cheat their spouses but are less inclined to justify taking the drug marijuana or hashish. Differences are also not so big concerning abortion. Although this finding seems strange it should be noted that Communist regimes in the name of liberation of women allowed very liberal anti-abortion laws (except in Romania). The greatest and clear difference is shown in the case of homosexuality which is double more accepted in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe.

Graph 4: Mean value of justification of the statement "homosexuality" on the ten-point scale from 1 (never) to 10 (always) in 13 Eastern European countries



Another interesting thing is the position of the Catholic countries. They differ in first four cases from both Western and Eastern Europe, but not substantially. Again, the greatest difference comes from the last two statements, which cover moral issues which usually the Catholic Church finds as very important for its moral teaching. Well, in the case of homosexuality, the Catholics countries are above the mean for Eastern Europe, what is clearly not the case for abortion. That proves that the Catholic countries have some distinctive traits, but it proves also the fact that the distinctiveness is mediated by social circumstances. In two cases there are big differences between the Western European Catholic countries and the Eastern European Catholic countries. For taking the drug marijuana or hashish the Western European Catholic countries have the mean value of 1.99, something lower from other Western European countries (2.24), but higher in comparison to whole Eastern Europe (1.52), and particularly the Eastern European Catholic countries (1.38). Very similar pattern occurs in the case of homosexuality where the Western European Catholic countries have the mean value (4.65) double higher than the Eastern European Catholic countries (2.39). Interestingly, that is not the same in the case of abortion where both Western and Eastern European Catholic countries have mean values very similar (3.94 and 3.69 respectively) what is indeed lower than in all other countries.

Religion clearly affects justification of some moral norms. That is already visible from very crude analysis which notice differences between countries. However, some moral norms are found generally unjustified in almost all nations. Irrespectively of the long history in which religion played a role, it is obvious that some moral norms are today accepted whether or not individual is religious. They became cultural norms of the Western world.

4.1 Why and how is religion important?

Religious differences between countries, noticed particularly in the case of the Catholic countries, should be visible also inside each country. Religious influence is here measured by the correlations between two measures of religiosity (Church attendance and importance of God) with all six moral statements. The higher the negative value the strongest is the impact of Church attendance or importance of God on rejection of each statement.

Table 2: Pearson Correlations - Church attendance

	(1) Claiming benefit...	(2) Cheating on tax...	(3) Taking hashish	(4) Having affair	(5) Homosexuality	(6) Abortion
Western Europe						
France	-.127**	-.123**	-.161**	-.197**	-.217**	-.262**
G. Britain	-.072*	-.072*	-.099**	-.117**	-.103**	-.166**
Germany	-.076**	-.080**	-.120**	-.181**	-.163**	-.365**
<i>Austria</i>	-.078**	-.148**	-.206**	-.223**	-.250**	-.389**
<i>Italy</i>	-.060**	-.082**	-.386**	-.290**	-.263**	-.407**
<i>Spain</i>	-.077**	-.157**	-.290**	-.288**	-.346**	-.445**
<i>Portugal</i>	-.001	-.021	-.048	-.106**	-.067*	-.208**
Netherlands	-.061	-.180**	-.317**	-.233**	-.245**	-.357**
Belgium	-.081**	-.126**	-.162**	-.205**	-.172**	-.324**
Denmark	-.001	-.153**	-.182**	-.032	-.149**	-.197**
Sweden	-.014	-.090**	-.078*	-.114**	-.154**	-.230**
Finland	-.202**	-.284**	-.210**	-.243**	-.168**	-.346**
N. Ireland	-.149**	-.221**	-.266**	-.154**	-.176**	-.386**
Ireland	-.183**	-.140**	-.339**	-.228**	-.314**	-.340**
Eastern Europe						
Estonia	-.046	-.106**	-.077*	-.083*	-.067*	-.169**
Latvia	-.030	-.068*	-.066*	-.054	-.126**	-.134**
<i>Lithuania</i>	-.085**	-.149**	-.145**	-.235**	-.170**	-.367**
<i>Poland</i>	.068*	-.096**	-.237**	-.158**	-.254**	-.374**
<i>Czech R.</i>	-.056*	-.054*	-.036	-.119**	-.151**	-.301**
<i>Slovakia</i>	-.049	-.113**	-.177**	-.304**	-.278**	-.461**
<i>Hungary</i>	-.108**	-.163**	-.070*	-.198**	-.036	-.174**
Rumania	.039	-.007	-.019	-.117**	-.077*	-.183**
Bulgaria	.021	-.033	.057	.045	.112**	-.040
<i>Croatia</i>	.015	-.061	-.110**	-.177**	-.160**	-.329**
<i>Russia</i>	-.026	-.026	-.019	-.029	-.044*	-.149**
<i>Slovenia</i>	.064*	-.037	-.165**	-.208**	-.188**	-.342**
<i>Ukraine</i>	.011	-.036	-.061*	-.149**	-.033	-.189**

** Significant above 0.01; * Significant above 0.05; Catholic countries (with above 70% of Catholics) marked in italic

Two things stand out. The importance of God is generally better predictor of influence to moral statements than the Church attendance. The Eastern European countries have generally lower correlations than the Western European countries. These two conclusions resemble to conclusions Stark pointed out in his analysis.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations – Importance of God

	(1) Claiming benefit...	(2) Cheating on tax...	(3) Taking hashish	(4) Having affair	(5) Homo- sexuality	(6) Abortion
Western Europe						
France	-.062*	-.143**	-.181**	-.143**	-.162**	-.271**
G. Britain	-.164**	-.135**	-.192**	-.156**	-.153**	-.292**
Germany	-.061*	-.099**	-.094**	-.181**	-.178**	-.387**
<i>Austria</i>	-.100**	-.158**	-.223**	-.273**	-.261**	-.388**
<i>Italy</i>	-.112**	-.108**	-.319**	-.273**	-.201**	-.362**
<i>Spain</i>	-.153**	-.244**	-.330**	-.373**	-.287**	-.423**
<i>Portugal</i>	-.180**	-.152**	-.280**	-.233**	-.221**	-.181**
Netherlands	.037	-.141**	-.295**	-.217**	-.260**	-.407**
Belgium	-.024	-.125**	-.188**	-.193**	-.239**	-.338**
Denmark	.001	-.117**	-.188**	-.055	-.266**	-.304**
Sweden	-.028	-.098*	-.097*	-.071*	-.148**	-.293**
Finland	-.116**	-.256**	-.242**	-.234**	-.169**	-.322**
N. Ireland	-.146**	-.218**	-.326**	-.238**	-.201**	-.387**
Ireland	-.163**	-.151**	-.370**	-.274**	-.305**	-.389**
Eastern Europe						
Estonia	-.015	-.093*	-.083*	-.111*	-.090*	-.161**
Latvia	-.053	-.091*	-.075*	-.056	-.086*	-.148**
<i>Lithuania</i>	-.053	-.144**	-.113*	-.246**	-.146**	-.348**
<i>Poland</i>	.081*	-.107**	-.180**	-.191**	-.276**	-.435**
Czech R.	-.074*	-.142**	-.050*	-.150**	-.107**	-.250**
Slovakia	-.070*	-.149**	-.219**	-.301**	-.239**	-.429**
Hungary	-.118**	-.172**	-.119**	-.219**	-.094**	-.220**
Romania	.018	-.003	-.117**	-.190**	-.178**	-.191**
Bulgaria	-.023	-.109*	-.036	-.175**	-.062	-.160**
<i>Croatia</i>	-.068*	-.163**	-.209**	-.188**	-.222**	-.397**
Russia	-.037	-.035	-.030	-.076**	-.047*	-.137**
Slovenia	.064*	-.037	-.165**	-.208**	-.188**	-.342**
Ukraine	-.062*	-.087*	-.112**	-.126**	-.053	-.188**

** Significant above 0.01; * Significant above 0.05; Catholic countries (with above 70% of Catholics) marked in italic

Six moral statements that encompass a wider range of very different moral areas show that there is no unique relation between religion and morality. First two statements (claiming state benefit which you are not entitled to and cheating on tax if you have a chance), particularly the first one, have significantly lower correlations than other statements. Concerning the Church attendance correlations are not statistically significant among four Western and eight Eastern European countries and concerning the importance of God among four Western and six Eastern European countries. When correlations are statistically significant they are very weak. However, this is not the case for other moral statements, and particu-

larly for attitudes toward homosexuality and abortion. Here, religion has a strong impact. For abortion, correlations are high and statistically significant for all countries, except in one case (correlation with the Church attendance for Bulgaria).

Relations between religion and morality show also another interesting faces. Compared to previous data of general acceptance of different moral norms it is obvious that correlations are higher where and when some moral norms are not a part of social consensus in a particular country, or where particular religion pays much attention to it (abortion for example). General level of religiosity in each country should be also taken into account. The influence of the importance of God to claiming state benefit which you are not entitled to is statistically significant in all Catholic Western European countries and in two (although with lower correlation) of three Catholic Eastern European countries, but not in many other countries, such as the Netherlands, Sweden or Belgium. That could not be taken as a ground for conclusion that in these countries moral norms are not accepted by majority. However, in cases where different opinions exist, religion can have more influences, and that is the case not only in countries with higher religious monopoly: the level of influence (measured by correlations) for five moral statements (except the first one) is in the Netherlands (where, for example, acceptance of taking the drug marijuana or hashish or homosexuality is much more widespread)⁷ equal to other, usually more religious societies.

What to say about Eastern Europe? Correlations are generally lower than in Western Europe. There exist, of course, some important differences among post-communist countries. Correlations are very low and are not significant, especially in Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Russia, and Ukraine. These are, at the same time, countries with the low level of religiosity. Although not impressively, correlations are something higher in Romania, a country with a very high level of religiosity. The Catholic countries of Eastern Europe (Lithuania, Poland, and Croatia) have something higher and more significant correlations in comparison to other countries. Clearly, important differences exist, but there is not a simple or clear pattern. The same can be said about the possible impact of Communism. The unique political system had important differences and did not result with same consequences concerning the position of religion or its possible influence. The marginal position of religion which generally did not have much possibility to enter the public domain certainly has had an impact on how today religion operates in society. Well, the marginality of religion was much higher in Russia than, for example, in Poland or Croatia. At the same time, there is an impact of post-communist circumstances, like an evident social anomy (Sztompka 1999). Cheating on tax is rejected as immoral behavior, but at the same time the majority believes that their compatriots cheat on tax in a large proportion and are inclined to do the same if they found it "personally constructive", what can be understood as emergence of functional substitutes for lack of trust in major state institutions.

Finally, as already noticed, the importance of God is better predictor than the Church attendance. Personal and more thoughtful relations to God can better underpin some moral statements. Does it mean that the Church attendance is irrelevant for moral community? There are at least two reasons which call for a negative response. First, the Church attendance and the importance of God are highly correlated. These two measures of religiosity

7 For taking the drug marijuana or hashish the mean value of acceptance is in the Netherlands 3.08, compared to 2.16 for the whole Western Europe. For homosexuality the values are 7.82 (the Netherlands) and 5.39 (Western Europe).

are not identical, but are usually interconnected. Second, the Church attendance is relevant measure of religiosity and can indicate different roles Churches play in a particular society. If Church gatherings are not so able to underpin moral community they are, particularly in some societies, still able to underpin social community what is, in a way or another, a significant factor in overall functioning of each society.

Regression analysis (not shown here) mostly confirmed the correlation analysis. It also showed that religion simply does not play any role concerning attitudes toward claiming state benefit which you are not entitled to. The same can be said for cheating on tax. Correlations are in this case something higher, but R square is generally very low. Religious influence is higher in the case of other moral norms, the highest for abortion. Again, the importance of God is better predictor but in many countries both indicators of religiosity act in the same direction. For Eastern Europe percentage of explained variance is generally lower than for Western Europe. There are also noticeable exemptions. There are many cases where R square is higher than 10%, what means that religion has power in explaining negative attitudes toward some (im)moral behaviors. In the case of abortion that is true for 9 West European countries (Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, N. Ireland, Ireland) and 6 East European countries (Lithuania, Poland, Czech R., Slovakia, Croatia, Slovenia).

5. Influence of religion on family/private life and public domain: an alternative explanation

The analysis shows that religion has a different impact on moral attitudes: no impact on some public issues and significant on moral norms in the field of sexuality. It also shows that the impact largely depends on particular social circumstances in each country and that this impact can be, for those who remain religious, equally strong in countries with very different level of religiosity.

The need for look on different social areas in order to understand the possible role of religion was recently underlined also by the work of Halman and Pettersson (1999). Two their conclusions are worth mentioning here. First is that the impact of religion is higher on private family issues than on public issues.⁸ On the other hand the level of religious involvement and the impact of religious involvement on private and public issues seem to be unrelated. Or, more clearly: "To the degree to which the social issues we have investigated (family values, and political values, respectively) are contested and disputed, they should be unrelated to religious involvement in countries where the religious involvement is comparatively high. On the other hand, in countries where the religious involvement is comparatively low, the situation must be reversed. In such a case, the religious involvement might be more easily related to a specific view on contested social issues" (Halman/Pettersson 1999:59).

Although they focused different areas, both analyses suggest a distinction between public and private sphere. Religion is more important in private than public issues. Social

8 They analyzed acceptance of «non-traditional family values» (statements such as «whether or not children need both father and mother to grow up happily» etc.) and political views (such as «incomes should be made more equal» vs. «there should be greater incentives for individual effort» etc.).

community in contemporary Western societies is obviously based on some cultural norms that are accepted by majority. That does not mean that religion has nothing with these moral claims. But if one norm is accepted by majority, whether they are religious or not, religious differences become, of course, irrelevant.

Religion still matters, at least in some private family issues, such as marriage, divorce, homosexuality, relations between parents and children etc. The impact of religion, mediated by specific social circumstances, is very visible even in highly secularized European societies. On the contrary, there are many societies where, for example, rejection of homosexuality is widely spread, and in these societies many irreligious people can share, again as a social / cultural norm, the same attitudes as those who are religious – that is the case in many Eastern European societies. It is obvious that inside these circumstances the impact of religion will be even smaller that in societies in which these issues are highly contested, irrespectively of the general level of their religiosity. We can certainly conclude that the link between religion and morality largely depends on overall social circumstances that effect general acceptance or rejection of a particular norm.

As Stark suggested the importance of God is really more important as a predictor for acceptance / rejection for some norms than the Church attendance. But that should not be a base for any far-reaching conclusion. Although different, these two measures of religiosity are highly connected. The Church attendance (particularly in societies that still retain relatively high Church attendance) can have many social functions. Ireland, Poland, or Croatia, even Italy, are good examples. However, the problem still remains: what is the link between moral and social community? Some cultural norms, very important for society, are emancipated from religion. Religion still have a big impact, but on norms which are highly contested!

Particularities about Eastern Europe are confirmed also in this analysis. Religion plays a minor role with concerning different moral norms in comparison to Western European countries. Is that a base for conclusion about social irrelevance of religion? At least three reasons suggest different answer. First and because of great differences among countries it is impossible to speak generally about Eastern Europe. There are different lines which divide former Soviet bloc of countries, not only Catholic-Orthodox division. Three additional factors are important: different experiences of prosecution of religion, differences in religious monopoly and differences in how religion act as a possible factor in social / national / language unity of each society. Therefore, in some countries correlation are really low, but in some other they resemble to those found in Western Europe. That does not want to suggest that communist prosecution of religion does not have an effect, but want to analyze possible consequences in the context of other important social factors. Second, general acceptance or rejection of one norm is important factor in analysis. If, for example, in Hungary the mean value of acceptance of homosexuality is only 1.44 (i.e. widespread rejection of homosexual behavior) it is then not reasonable to expect any important influence of religion in this case. Third, post-communist social circumstances must be taken into account. Social anomy and moral disorder are evident phenomenon, even if they are not in every case revealed inside the question of a general attitude toward one moral norm. That kind of anomy can have serious effect also on the role of religion in a society.

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Religious Pluralism and Dimensions of Religiosity: Evidence from the Project Religious and Moral Pluralism (RAMP).

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1. The RAMP-project

The international research project 'Religious and Moral Pluralism'(RAMP) was designed to study the religious and moral diversity in Europe and its social and political implications. The initiators of the Ramp-project, Wolfgang Jagodzinski and Karel Dobbelaere, have invited the collaborators from 15 countries, who for a few years worked on its preparation. On the basis of research interests and experiences of scholars involved in the project several theoretical approaches were discussed as a framework for formulating specific hypotheses and their operationalization.

The first provisional questionnaire was designed in English and then translated in the different languages of the countries included in the study. After the return translation and pilot interviews some questions were modified and some dropped to fit an approximately 40-minutes interview consisting of core questions applied in all countries (unfortunately not in all cases) and a few country-specific questions at the end of the questionnaire. The questionnaire included several questions that have been used in other surveys to allow comparisons, but most of the questions were new. The details are specified in the Codebook ZA Nr. 3170 of the Central Archive for Empirical Research of the University of Cologne, involved in the planning and technical administration of the research as well as in cleaning of the data and making them available to other researchers (Dobbelaere and Riis, 2003).

The fieldwork was carried out in 1997-99. The interviewees (aged 18 and over) were selected by means of random sampling. The data have been collected in eleven countries (four countries has been dropped because of the lack of funding the research on the national level): Belgium (French and Flemish collapsed into one data set) 1662; Denmark 606; Finland 786; Norway 503; and Sweden 1032 (these 4 were sometimes collapsed into 'Scandinavia' because of relatively small numbers); Britain 1466; Hungary 1000; Italy 2149; the Netherlands 1004; Poland 1134; Portugal 1000; (total 12,342). The data set contained more than 160 core variables and was supplemented by a few additional variables in some countries (the largest set of these variables was applied in Britain). In some national samples certain categories of the population were over-represented. By introducing weight coefficients the over-sampling was corrected for giving a representative picture of each country.

On the basis of these data some country reports have been published as books in national languages (Gustafsson and Pettersson, 2000; Borowik and Doktor, 2001) or in English (Allievi et al., 2001) as well as several articles including special section in *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 13, 2002. The topics covered by these publications referred to various aspects of religious and moral pluralism such as religious syncretism (Dobbelaere et al., 2002), fundamentalism and New Age (Doktor, 2002; 2003), spirituality