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RELIGIOUS CHANGES IN MACEDONIAN SOCIETY

*„ Why not imagine
European public space
as ethical ... framework...?
Nilüfer Göle*

INTRODUCTION

Religion in the contemporary Macedonian society is specifically profiled. On the one hand, it carries its existence for decades on the margins of society, or the “private sphere”. On the other hand, religious collectivities make attempts to properly position themselves in the emerging social circumstances. The changing of the social structure contributed that Macedonian citizens, somehow overnight, become “more aware” of religion, trying to catch up with current events. The long existence¹ of religion in the private sphere, indirectly influences its acting on the public scene. Moreover, lengthy transition years and the changeability of the social actors on the scene, as well as, the situation within the religious groups, contributed significantly, that they are primarily oriented to the right-inclined political structures, while mostly colouring the national identity. In this context, the function of religion

¹ During the period of socialism, in Macedonian society the attitude towards religion changed, gradually reducing the “atheist restraints.”

is seen primarily through its role as protector of the national identity, strengthening its symbolic function.²

Clear revitalisation of religion in the Macedonian society can be seen through the process of deprivatisation of religion,³ or abandoning the private, often called the invisible sphere and its apparent and zeal expression on the public scene. Intensification of religious life in the religious collectivities themselves increasingly thrusts and enters the public domain, followed, for example, through their greater presence in the media, highlighting the place and position of religion in structuring the national collectivity, animating the issues about the return of the seized properties, then, religious education or religious science, as well as many other issues that are of interest to the believers themselves and the citizens in general. The public role of religion is obviously oriented towards its general ethical dimension and the need to devise, develop and implement engagement of religious communities in the spectrum of social activities.⁴

The issue of religion and morality is very complex, especially during the transition period, but in this paper, that is, project it was only partially researched. Often in public discourse the phrase that connects religion and morality is present, suggesting that religion should be a “source” of moral behaviour and help to overcome the present crisis of values. Modern religious polarisation of morality is based on the concept of public religion, suggesting that religion should provide adequate support to individual and public morality in society. Religious leadership, through its mission, in a pragmatic meaning of the word, gives an important input to the revival of the leading tenets of ethical conduct of religious collectivities. Spiritual leaders are often under the observation of the public eye, so that many times their behaviour is subject to articles in the media, it is commented on the social networks and the citizens and believers, more openly express their considerations, views and criticism of their actions. It is not seldom that critical tones pervade from the very religious groups, reflecting the different considerations and tendencies in them. In his review of the crisis in the Church, Professor Ratomir Grozdanovski states that “this crisis should make the Church more resistant, more

² Cacanaska, R., *The Religion in Macedonian Society*, YUNIR YSSSR Annual – Year XV, *The Sociology of Religion in the Former Yugoslav Republics*, Nis, 2008.

³ Casanova, J., *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago\ London, University of Chicago Press, 1994; Herbert, D., *Religion and Civil Society, Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World*, Aldershot, Ashagate Publishing Limited, 2003; Eder, C., *Post-secularism: A return to the public sphere*, Eurozine, 2006-08-17.

⁴ Casanova, J., *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago\ London, University of Chicago Press, 1994; Herbert, D., *Religion and Civil Society, Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World*, Aldershot, Ashagate Publishing Limited, 2003; Eder, C., *Post-secularism: A return to the public sphere*, Eurozine, 2006-08-17.

spiritual, more moral and strengthen the faith within, in its leadership, clergy and Eminence, then within the believers and finally before unbelievers. ... So, it should establish moral, ethical values and not as a theological-scientific or theological-educational knowledge, but concrete, practical life knowledge- faith and morality shown and proven in life.”⁵

Grozdanovski indicates that the church must practically demonstrate nurturing moral values ...⁶

Considering other self-critical signs of moral of religious communities, I believe that it is important, in public-opinion projects to see the attitude of the citizens, that is believers, towards the moral in their or other religious collectivities. It should also be noted that Macedonia has twice introduced and twice abolished religious science in primary schools. As a substrate for the subject religious ethics was offered, that is taught in primary schools as an optional subject.

Undoubtedly, the 2012 public opinion project must take the current developments in this area into consideration. Without a doubt, it is definitely the “miracle in the church St. Dimitrija” (St. Demetrius). Namely, on 8 April 2012, “according to the statements by church officials and a number of visitors to the church the *miracle* was that the frescoes in the church ... suddenly began to self-purify of deposits of soot and dirt, becoming significantly brighter. Special *self-purification* was observed on the halos of the saints, and on the wings of the angels ... red lines appeared that looked like bloody traces, i.e. as if the wings of the angels were bleeding.”⁷ This event was followed by numerous controversies and polemics, which somehow separated the Macedonian public, into those who thought it was a real miracle, as a message sent by God for the moral decline in society.⁸ In contrast to them, there was another category, which includes those who believe that it is not a miracle, but that it is the work of a human hand. To these two options, a third one was simply added, of those who do not have a clear position what exactly it is. The battery of

⁵ Grozdanovski R., Secularism and secularisation, Lecture at a one-day forum, with leading professors and scholar, on 25 June 2007, in Skopje, p. 10-11, http://www.rrgrozdanovski.mk/index2.php?option=com_content&tas... (accessed on 21 February 2013).

⁶ Grozdanovski, R., Ibid. page 10-11.

⁷ Zoglev, Z., and Cacanaska, R., Conflicting interpretations of the “miracle” in the Church “St. Demetrius” - Skopje - Analysis of the content of articles in the daily press of the Republic of Macedonia, paper for the International Scientific Conference entitled MODERNISATION, CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND SHOWING OF DIFFERENCES, Nis 2012, 113-135.

⁸ The Archpriest Zoran Stamenkovic from the church St. Demetrius says that this is a message from God.

„This is the finger of God, God’s miracle, and miracles have happened throughout centuries, they are happening today and will continue to happen. God directly or indirectly warns us humans. We are witnesses that today the human race is in a great moral decline. All moral values, what is positive, nowadays if you are a good person, honest, if you are fair in the eyes of today’s world, they call you simple, retrograde, and if a person does stupid or illegal things then he/she is smart and modern, unfortunately. (Radio Free Europe – 9 April 2012 - Purified frescoes - a magnet for worshippers)

religion-related questions included a question on the position of the respondents on the current self-purification of frescoes in the church “St. Demetrius”

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK ⁹

In the immediate creation of the concept regarding the research part of the changes that are occurring in the field of religion, in the 2012 public opinion project, the following research questions are emphasized:

1. How does it change or what is the trend of structuring believers by their personal religious identification? What is their practice by visiting a religious facility?

2. How does the relationship between religion and morality develop or modify? What is the confidence of respondents in religious leadership? What is the perception of respondents about how “ethical” religious leaders are? To what extent believers themselves respect the moral values taught by their religion?

3. What is the attitude of respondents to the “Miracle at St. Demetrius”?

Based on the established research interest I established a proper hypothetical framework:

1. It is assumed that after the conflict in 2001, according to the personal religious identification, the high rate of believers will gradually reduce. Religious practice will not adequately follow personal religious identification.

2. Religion will basically be a relatively weak foundation for development of morality, which can be seen by the respondents’ trust in religious leadership; perceived morality of the religious leaders, or to what extent believers respect the moral values taught by their religion.

3. It is assumed that the current “Miracle at St. Demetrius” will divide the public in the ones who are in favour and against it.

Generally speaking, religiosity in the Macedonian society was mainly researched through the confessional and personal religious identification, that is, through other key segments of religiosity, as visiting of a religious facility, practicing prayers and the like. Confidence was also partially researched within other projects, but empirical indicators of morality and religion represent a certain novelty. Issues of religion and morality are set in the five-degree Likert scale by measuring the intensity of agreement or disagreement with the given statements.

⁹ Issues of the survey sample and the data analysis are subject to a separate section.

THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE PAPER

Religion in European countries, as Dave says, is specific, reflecting the impact that the complex past has had thereon, and naturally the impact of the elements which it will acquire in the turn to the twenty-first century. What Europe and also the post-communist milieu, in which Macedonia belongs, is characterised by, is a high rate of specified nominal congregation, but a low rate of religious practice. Revitalisation of religion in Macedonian society, particularly clearly shaped the structuring of believers population in certain periods of very high rates of nominal believers, but of *traditionalism* in religious practice.

The basic theoretical framework of the area of religion is based on the concept of public religion. Deprivatisation of religion as a global trend suggests that “religion has abandoned its defined place in the private sphere and is transferred to the unidentified sphere of civil society, participating in the revitalised process of competition, interrupted legitimacy and marking of its boundaries again.”¹⁰ Public life of religion aspects active participation of religious groups, the level of state, political system and civil society. The state determines the legal frameworks of the life of “religion”. In the range of the political system “religious collectivities can fight for certain positions,” according to which they could affect the general political developments. Usually, the main determinant of the first two levels, indicates the basic defence and movement around the acquired privileges, while the third level is developed on the principle of social justice and defence of the human personality.¹¹

Based on the draft study, the issue about the role of religion in the sphere of morality can be partially problematised or tackled, specifically how religion affects the profiling of individual or public morality of citizens. In his paper Saving, Secularisation and Demoralisation Wilson places the focus on the phrase secularisation and demoralisation.¹² Referring to the empirical indicators of the religious map of Europe, Dave Grace claims that in European societies, religion has a relatively small role. Furthermore, Rodney Stark, as well, examines the role of religion in the creation of morality in contemporary society, through its violation through unacceptable patterns of social behaviour, indicating its relatively low impact. The Croatian sociologist Sinisa Zrnishchak goes even further, by asking the question: “If religion can not demonstrate its power to maintain the moral order in post-communist countries, does that mean that we are dealing with long-term

¹⁰ Casanova, J., *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago\ London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, page 65.

¹¹ Cacanaska, R., *Public Religion*, Proceedings dedicated to Vladimir Mitkov, Faculty of Law, Skopje, 2010.

¹² Wilson, B., *Salvation, Secularisation and De-moralisation*, *The Blackwell Companion to SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION*, Edited by Fen, K., R., Blackwell Publishing, 2001, page 39-51.

... effects of the communist order? Postcommunist revitalisation has no power to significantly change this effect? What is the purpose of religion in post-communist societies?"¹³

In this public opinion project, the relationship between religion and morality is analysed through the perception of citizens about the role that religious leaders have in creating the moral order in society, as carriers or exponents of the practical religious morality in society, and consequently their followers, as well.¹⁴ Therefore, it implies the great and important role of the clerical staff in the society which "is expected to reflect the moral standards, both in private, as well as public life ... because, if they "misrepresent" their flock may be disappointed."¹⁵ In four questions and in several intersections I will try, partially, in the domain of empirical data, to describe the impact of religion on the funding of moral life in the contemporary Macedonian society.

1. PERSONAL RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION

The initial idea of religiosity of the population in the Republic of Macedonia is obtained by the independent variable that is defined by the determination of their own religion. Usually the majority of respondents declare themselves as members of Orthodoxy or Islam, and by symbolic rates the belonging to the Catholic or other religious collectivities in the Republic of Macedonia is followed. Only 3.3% of respondents said that they do not belong to any religious collectivity. Confessional identification has an obvious symbolic and identity framework, which is due to the traditional religious life of the Macedonian population and, above all, the need to identify a **family** religious milestone.

Religious self-identification of respondents is a key segment of religiosity in general. In terms of their attitude to religion, 77% of respondents identified themselves as believers, while the modality something between believer and unbeliever was chosen by 18.4% or for unbeliever less than 5%. The rates of self-determination

¹³ Zrniscak, S., Why, at all, we need Religion? Religion and Morality in Post-Communist Europe, a paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, San Francisco, California, August 14, 2004, page 2.

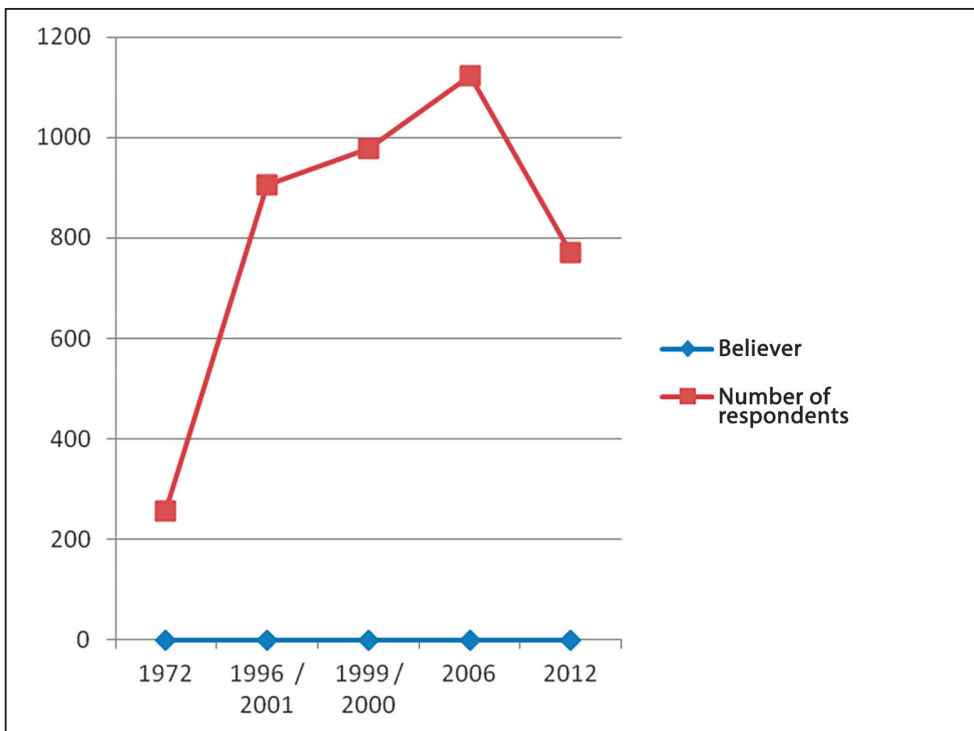
¹⁴ Just as an illustration I would cite the answer to the question addressed to the President of the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities, Valentina Bozhinovska, that "the public often has the feeling that the religious leaders lose their basic function, and from religious leaders they turn into heads of ethnic communities . "Among other things, she states tha "religious leaders are not amnestied from the national individual feeling, but in the future they must not be in the role of politics and politicians ... " (Press 24 - Interview with Bozhinovska: 2012 was a year of test for the religious coexistence, 5 January, 2013 - accessed on 27 February 2013- <http://press24.mk/story/make-donija/intervju/intervju-so-bozhinovska-2012-beshe-godina-na-test-za-verskiot-sozhivot>)

¹⁵ Davie, G., Religija u suvremenoj Evropi - mutacija sjecanja, Golden marketing – Tehnicka knjiga, Zagreb, 2005, page. 9.

of the individual “attitude” toward religion are found as religious nominal rates, indicating the self-perception of citizens about their attitude towards religion.

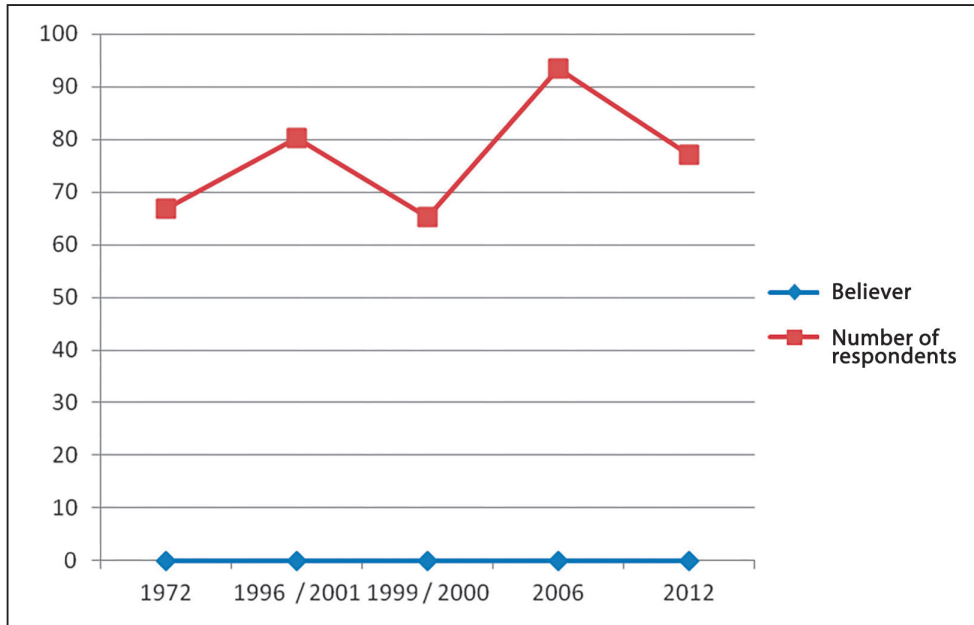
The data for this type of question can be compared with corresponding ones from the previous studies, which are part of a research project conducted in ISPPi. The comparison shows that in the seventies in the Polog region there was a relatively high rate of believers¹⁶, which is increased by ten percent in the post-communist period. The transition process in the pre-conflict period (2001) has the lowest rate of believers in the researched period (65.13%). However, after the period of the conflict in 2001, the rate of believers grew extremely rapidly and peaked at 93.5%. In the last survey of 2012, that rate is reduced and stabilised at around 77%. Through the movement of the rates of personal religious identity, the profiling of religion in the Macedonian society can be largely sketched, while defining the pulse of the central event in the post-socialist period, the conflict of 2001.

Chart No 1: *Produced by the number of believers in different periods of research (1972, 1996, 2000, 2006 and 2012)*



¹⁶ It should be taken into consideration that this project only refers to Dolni Polog. Moreover, this is the first sociological research on religion in Macedonia.

Chart No 2: Produced by the number of believers in different periods of research (1972, 1996/2001, 1999/2000, 2006 u 2012).



When comparing rates of religious self-identification with the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Macedonia is among the highly religious countries, recording similar rates in countries such as: Moldova (77.1%), Poland (76.5%) and Croatia (76.5%), significantly separating itself from the neighbouring Serbia (68.2%) and Bulgaria (52.2%).¹⁷

Another important dimension, clearly visible from the data, is the process of overflow of the undecided in the believers structure in 2006 and later re-filling of the same category with 18%. In simpler terms, as the category believer grows, the modality of the undefined is reduced. Hence, in the research in 2006 it has the lowest rate of 3.4%, and the largest in the pre-conflict period, at the end of the first decade of the transition period 25.6%.

¹⁷ Ančić, B., Zrniščak, S., Religion in Central European Societies: Its Social Role and People's Expectations, Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe 5 (1): 21-38, page 38.

Chart No 3: Produced by the number of undecided respondents (something in between) in different periods of research (1972, 1996/2001, 1999/2000, 2006 and 2012).

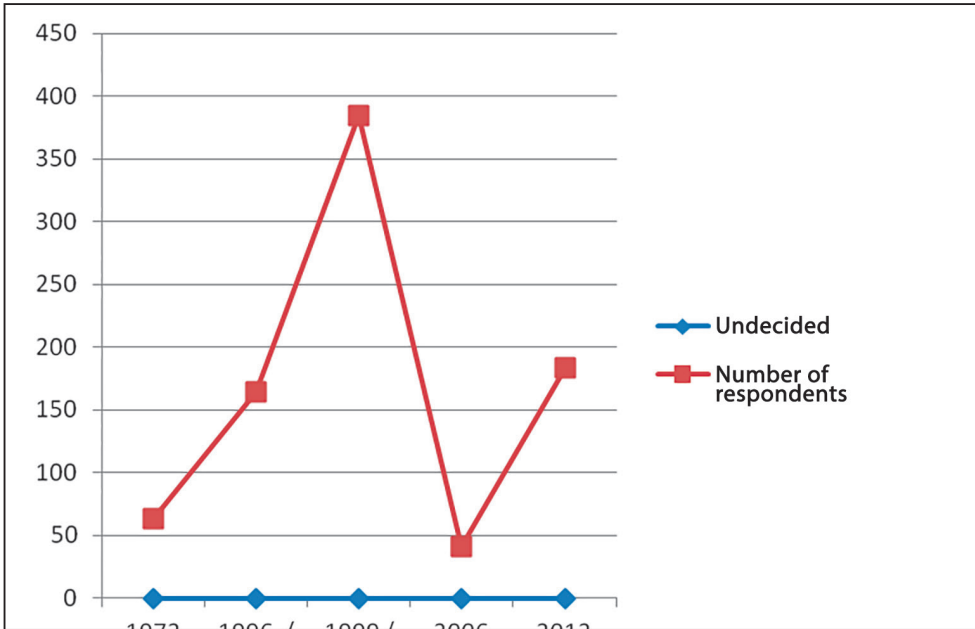
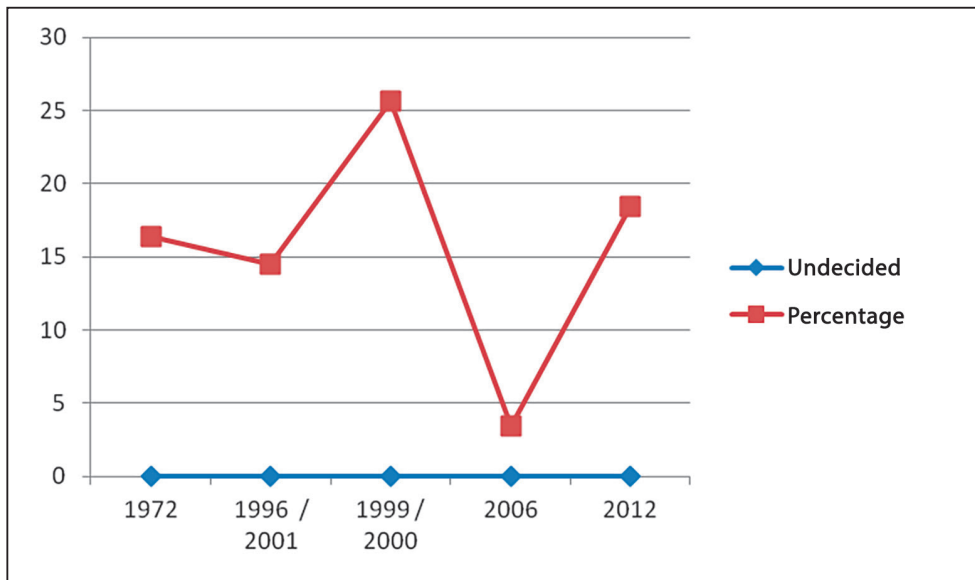


Chart No 4: Produced by the rates of undecided respondents (something in between) in different periods of research (1972, 1996/2001, 1999/2000, 2006 and 2012).



What is striking in the intersection of data is that as the level of education from primary to higher grows, so does the rate of believers. 100% of those who have not completed primary education classified themselves as believers, while those with higher or university education have the lowest rate of believers (70.4%).

These data to some extent confirm the real effect of the atheist ideology or it is confirmed that the processes are changing slowly, and in the new social circumstances “the assumption to a certain extent continues to be valid,” as it is typical of modernism, that as the educational process develops, as science evolves, the rate of believers will gradually decrease. To a certain degree these data are in favour of this thesis, but the contemporary tendencies need to be more complexly explored. Indicative and noticeable is the approach of young professionals with higher education in religious collectivities, however, their effect should be further, perhaps, separately investigated.

The rates for personal religious identity also reflect regional characteristics, separating the region of Skopje as a region that has the lowest rate of religious identification (63.6%). Definitely higher is the rate of believers who support the party that is part of the government (83.1%), in contrast to the supporters of parties that are not part of the government, and the rate of whom reaches nearly 13%.

By analysing the results concerning the dimension of religiosity on the average frequency of visiting religious facilities, as an important indicator of the religiosity of the population, most impressive is the fact that most respondents go to religious facilities during major holidays (39.3%) and a little less go sometimes (36.3), while 12.6% of respondents do not remember going or do not go to religious facilities. Only 11.8% or 118 respondents said that they regularly attend religious facilities of their collectivities.

Table no. 1: *Data from the treated question “How often in average do you go to church / mosque / religious facility?” - Public opinion in Macedonia - 2012*

	Age					Total
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-65	Above 65	
1 Yes, I go regularly	11,1%	13,4%	8,9%	14,9%	10,2%	11,8%
2 Sometimes	36,5%	34,7%	40,9%	33,0%	36,7%	36,3%
3 Only during major religious holidays	39,7%	42,1%	39,9%	37,2%	36,7%	39,3%
4 I don't remember	4,8%	5,0%	3,9%	2,8%	4,7%	4,2%
5 I don't go at all	7,9%	5,0%	6,4%	12,1%	11,7%	8,4%
TOTAL	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

As for this indicator, Macedonia is closest to Moldova (12.2% of believers go to church every Sunday)¹⁸ and “follows” European trends, noting relatively high rates of self-determination as believers, but with significantly lower rates of regular religious practice. Macedonian believers, according to this indicator of religiosity, could be described to believe, but not to belong¹⁹. The religious practice of the Macedonian congregation is associated with the central events celebrated in the life of every human being, and the celebration of major religious holidays.

It confirms our hypothesis that by the gradual distancing from the conflict in 2001, the rate of worshippers will reduce, according to the personal religious identification. The manoeuvring, according to the data, takes place through the modality of the undecided ones or those who define themselves between believer and unbeliever. The practice of believers population in Macedonia does not follow the footsteps of personal religious identification. Only 11.8% of respondents regularly attend religious facilities. The occasional or attending of religious facilities on the main religious holidays is dominant.

2. RELIGION AND MORALITY

The multidimensional relation of religion and morality was only tackled in a part of the short battery of questions about religion in this project. It is based on research on: trust of the respondents in religious leadership, the respondents’ perception of how “ethical” religious leaders are, as well as the critical attitude of the believers themselves to that how much they personally respect the moral values taught by their religion.

a) Trust in the religious leadership

A fragment that can offer principal bases for the citizens’ attitude towards spiritual leadership is the question of trust that citizens have in religious leaders, as a frontal part of the religious collectivity. According to empirical indicators, available from other surveys as well, citizens of Macedonia, in comparison with the other non-religious institutions, believe in religious communities the most.²⁰ But here we especially raise the question how much confidence respondents have, not generally to the religious collectivity, but only to the religious leadership. The answer which dominates the question of trust that respondents have in the religious

¹⁸ Ibid., page 38.

¹⁹ Davie, G.,Ibid, page 59-85.

²⁰ Cacanaska, R., Social Capital in the Macedonian Society, Yearbook of ISPPi, XXXIV, No. 1 – 2010, page 49-61.

leaders concentrates on the answer – I neither believe, nor disbelieve 35.8% , that is, more than a quarter of respondents have expressed very little trust in religious leaders. 23.2% of respondents do not trust religious leaders at all.

Table No. 2: Crossing the question “How much do you believe religious leaders?” with the religious affiliation

Religious affiliation						
	Orthodox	Muslim	Catholic	Other	I do not belong to any religion	
1. Very big trust	58	71	5	1	0	135
%	9,4%	22,5%	29,4%	6,3%	0,0%	
2. Very small trust	197	58	6	5	9	275
%	31,9%	18,4%	35,3%	31,3%	27,3%	
3. I neither believe, nor disbelieve them	202	134	2	7	13	358
%	32,7%	42,4%	11,8%	43,8%	39,4%	
4. I do not believe them at all	161	53	4	3	11	232
%	26,1%	16,8%	23,5%	18,8%	33,3%	
TOTAL	618	316	17	16	33	1000

Pearson Chi-square: 67,2804, df=12, p=,000000

The intersection of data showed a noticeable trend, according to which, as the level of education increases the “amount” of the trust that participants have in the religious leaders declines. The intersection of these two variables defined statistical significance. I would also mention that housewives and farmers have the greatest confidence in religious leaders. 43.9% of respondents who are employed in the public sector, claimed that they neither trust nor distrust the religious leaders.

Table No. 3: *Crossing the question “How much do you believe religious leaders?” with education*

	Incomplete primary education	Primary education	Highschool education	Higher and university education	
1. Very big trust	9	36	68	22	135
%	33,3%	27,1%	12,6%	7,3%	
%	0,9%	3,6%	6,8%	2,2%	13,5%
2. Very small trust	5	29	146	95	275
%	18,5%	21,8%	27,1%	31,6%	
%	0,5%	2,9%	14,6%	9,5%	27,5%
3. I neither believe, nor disbelieve them	7	42	191	118	358
%	25,9%	31,6%	35,4%	39,2%	
%	0,7%	4,2%	19,1%	11,8%	35,8%
4. I do not believe them at all	6	26	134	66	232
%	22,2%	19,6%	24,9%	21,9%	
%	0,6%	2,6%	13,4%	6,6%	23,2%
Total	27	133	539	301	1000
	2,70%	13,30%	53,90%	30,10%	

Pearson Chi-square: 43,0775, df=9, p=,000002

Statistical significance is obtained from the intersection of personal religious identification with confidence that respondents have in the religious leadership.

Table No. 4: *Crossing the question “How much do you believe religious leaders?” with personal religious identification*

	Believer	Not a believer	Something in between	
1. Very big trust	130	1	4	135
%	16,88%	2,17%	2,17%	
2. Very small trust	222	7	46	275
%	28,83%	15,22%	25,00%	
3. I neither believe, nor disbelieve them	258	9	91	358
%	33,51%	19,57%	49,46%	
4. I do not believe them at all	160	29	43	232
%	20,78%	63,04%	23,37%	
TOTAL	770	46	184	1000

Pearson Chi-square: 79,3483, df=6, p=,000000

It is indicative that most responses focus on the answer I neither believe, nor disbelieve, not only from the category of those that defined themselves as non-believers, but among believers, as well. Distrust that believers have is a clear signal, which can also be recognised in the specified paper of the deacon Grozdanovski.

b) Moral integrity of religious leaders

By the following question I tried to collect data on the position of the believers to the moral values of the religious management simply asking them to express the intensity of their agreement or disagreement with the statement that their religious leaders have the highest moral values promoted by their religion. The response rate of the “central position in the scale” dominates, according to which they neither agree nor disagree with the above statement. However, 26.2% of respondents disagreed with this statement, while only 10.7% agree that their leaders have the moral credibility. It is peculiar that 30.4% of the Orthodox respondents expressed “distrust” in the moral values of their religious leaders, while this rate among respondents of Muslim affiliation is 16.8%.

Table No. 5: *Crossing the question: “Would you say for yourself that you are: ...?” with the degree of agreement with the statement that: “My religious leaders have the highest moral values promoted by my religion?”*

	I disagree	...	...	...	I agree	
1. Believer	166	160	228	115	101	770
%	63,36%	72,40%	80,28%	91,27%	94,39%	
2. Not a believer	32	5	7	1	1	46
%	12,21%	2,26%	2,46%	0,79%	0,93%	
3. Something in between	64	56	49	10	5	184
%	24,43%	25,34%	17,25%	7,94%	4,67%	
TOTAL	262	221	284	126	107	1000

Pearson Chi-square: 90,0381, df=8, p=,000000

Statistical significance is obtained by crossing of personal data of religious identification with the degree of agreement with the statement which directly relates to the practical conduct of religious leaders. More than notable is the critical attitude of the believers towards their leadership, which is expressed by their lowest rate of agreement with this claim. Or in general, from 1000 respondents only 107

stated that their religious leaders have the highest moral values promoted by their religion.²¹

c) Validity of moral norms

However, somewhat different are the answers to the question of the respondents' perception of the importance of moral values taught by religion. Half of the respondents agreed that (theoretically) moral values taught by religion are very important.

Table No. 6: *Crossing the question of personal religious identification with the degree of agreement with the statement that: "For me, moral values taught by religion are very important?"*

	I disagree	...	...	...	I agree	
1. Believer	33	26	108	162	441	770
%	54,10%	52,00%	62,07%	75,00%	88,38%	
2. Not a believer	14	6	9	6	11	46
%	22,95%	12,00%	5,17%	2,78%	2,20%	
3. Something in between	14	18	57	48	47	184
%	22,95%	36,00%	32,76%	22,22%	9,42%	
TOTAL	61	50	174	216	499	1000

Pearson Chi-square: 132,459, df=8, p=0,00000

There is statistical significance in this crossing of the questions, emphasising the importance that religion generally has on providing foundation to the morality in the society. I primarily interpret these answers as theoretical elaboration. Moreover, 71.2% of Albanian respondents believe that moral values that Islam teaches are very important, while only 40.9% of members of the Orthodox religion believe that moral values of their religion are important to them. The highest rate of respondents indicating the importance of moral values is found in the Polog region, and it is the

²¹ Usually, in the opinion surveys, interviews or focus groups, people who declare themselves unbelievers, yet often have their own opinion or considerations on the faith/religion of their family or close ones, and otherwise consider it to be their benchmark. In the project "De-secularisation of Macedonian society", in the interviews with a dozen respondents who identified themselves as unbelievers, the reference to their religion of origin is notable, which they often called my religion, although they actually declare themselves unbelievers.

lowest in the Southeast region. For housewives and students moral values taught by religion remain very important.

d) The actions of the believers ...

In the last claim of the religion fragment I has asked respondents to express their intensity of agreement or disagreement with the statement, if believers do not act as their religion teaches them. The critical review of the respondents may be perceived by the highest rate of responses (28.2%) which is with “middle intensity,” according to which the respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement offered. However, slightly lower is the rate of respondents who agree that believers do not act according to what their religion teaches them. The crossing of these two variables has a statistical significance.

Table No. 7: *Crossing the question of personal religious identification with the degree of agreement with the statement: “I think that believers do not act as their religion teaches them?”*

	I disagree	...	...	...	I agree	
1. Believer	87	79	221	173	210	770
%	79,82%	81,44%	78,37%	73,31%	76,09%	
2. Not a believer	7	1	13	3	22	46
%	6,42%	1,03%	4,61%	1,27%	7,97%	
3. Something in between	15	17	48	60	44	184
%	13,76%	17,53%	17,02%	25,42%	15,94%	
TOTAL	109	97	282	236	276	1000

Pearson Chi-square: 25,6939, df=8, p=,001186

There is a greater rate of Albanians (31.9%) that express this attitude regarding their religion, whereas that rate is slightly lower in Orthodox respondents (27.0%). Education is an important indicator of the intensity of the agreement or the disagreement with this view, which is statistically significant.

Table No. 8: *Crossing the statement “I think that believers do not act as their religion teaches them “ with education*

	Education				Total
	Incomplete primary education	Primary education	Highschool education	Higher and university education	
1. I disagree	25,9%	17,3%	11,7%	5,3%	10,9%
2....	11,1%	16,5%	9,1%	7,6%	9,7%
3....	40,7%	30,1%	27,8%	26,9%	28,2%
4....	11,1%	23,3%	24,3%	23,6%	23,6%
5. I agree	11,1%	12,8%	27,1%	36,5%	27,6%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Pearson Chi-square: 53,2891, df=12, p=,000000

Based on the presented data, it may be indicated that respondents are aware of the importance of religion for morality, but in the sphere of the practical understanding of the proclaimed and respected moral norms there is a deviation. Therefore, it can be indicated that religion is not an important source of moral values. This connection is more theoretical than real.

3.The miracle in “St. Demetrius”

Among other things, the deviation from moral standards, in 2012, indirectly marked the miracle with the self-purification of the frescoes in the church “St. Demetrius” in Skopje. In the battery of questions about religion, I asked respondents to state their position regarding the self-purification of the frescoes in the Skopje church “St. Demetrius”, in terms of which 56.6% of respondents simply do not have any particular opinion. The current event, followed by debates and controversy in the media and the general public, was not enough, for more than half of respondents to have their own opinion. 23.1% of them expressed their scepticism indicating that it is a creation made by a human hand, and the smallest percentage of respondents, only 20.3% believe that it is God’s creation.

Table No. 8: *Crossing of personal religious identification with the question of what you think is the self-purification of the frescoes in the church “St. Demetrius”?*

	Creation of God	Creation made by a human hand	I don't have any particular opinion	
1. Believer	179	160	431	770
%	88,18%	69,26%	76,15%	
2. Not a believer	3	27	16	46
%	1,48%	11,69%	2,83%	
3. Something inbetween	21	44	119	184
%	10,34%	19,05%	21,02%	
TOTAL	203	231	566	1000

Pearson Chi-square: 47,8744, df=4, p=,000000

The statistical significance is expected, according to which, 27.8% percent of Macedonian respondents were in favour of the fact that it is God's creation, and only 2.8% of the Albanian respondents believed that it is a miracle of God.

Table No. 7: *Crossing the question: “regarding the recent event connected with the self-purification of the frescoes in the church “St. Demetrius” you think that it is ...” with ethnicity*

	Ethnicity				Total
	Macedonia	Albanian	Turkish	Something else (Serbian, Roma, Vlach)	
Creation of God	27,2%	2,8%	7,7%	26,0%	20,3%
Creation made by a human hand	18,3%	36,7%	12,8%	24,7%	23,1%
I don't have any particular opinion	54,5%	60,5%	79,5%	49,3%	56,6%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Pearson Chi-square: 90,0775, df=6, p=,000000

The current event, which received strong media support, divided the believers' tissue, or the general public, into groups in favour and against the event. However, although this event at times in the media obtained its "explanation" and "therefore" regarding the moral decline in society, yet great part of the public remained reserved thereto, noting that they do not have their opinion. The hypothesis was partially confirmed, by the empirical indicators of this phenomenon.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Religion is a dynamic category, on which social conditions have a great influence. However, the change in the social circumstances contributes for some elements of religion to change, but the changes in certain trends progress very slowly.

The public role of religion suggests that religion goes from the private to the public sphere and that religious collectivities have an active part in the work of the public space and that it precisely affects the general profiling of religion. On the basis of the indicators obtained, the stabilising of the structure of believers may be pointed out, through the prism of the personal religious identity of 77%. The high rate of worshipers, according to their personal religious identification is not complemented with an appropriate degree of religious practice.

The relationship of religion and morality, that is, the influence of religion on morality in the society is relatively small, clearly sketching through the little trust that citizens have in spiritual leadership. The image is supplemented by data on the perception of citizens about their morality, and the evaluation to what extent they possess the highest moral values. Not less interesting is the perception of citizens regarding the actual behaviour of believers, or whether they act as their religion teaches them.

The division, or lack of opinion on the current occurrence in the church "St. Demetrius", indicates the creation of groups in favour and against the event, but also clearly profiles the shaping of the largest category of respondents who based on their views did not join any of the two groups.

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