

СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ СТРУКТУРЫ, СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ ИНСТИТУТЫ И ПРОЦЕССЫ  
SOCIAL STRUCTURE, SOCIAL INSTITUTES AND PROCESSES



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Dynamics of people's attachment to the (orthodox) religion  
and the church in Serbia



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**Abstract.** In an overview manner the authors keep a close watch on the general socio-political conditions in Serbia in their long-term perspective, incorporating into this framework the results of research on the relationship of people with religion and the Church – in other words, their religiosity. They use two methodological approaches: historical and sociological analysis, and experimental results on indicators of religiosity, or people's attachment to the Eastern Orthodox religion and the Eastern Orthodox Church in Serbia. Composition of the article: after introducing and choosing a methodological approach, the authors analyze people's attachment to religion and the Church in various social systems over time, describing the religious structure. In the first phase, before World War II, the religious structure is described as stable with a Pro-Orthodox consensus and without problematic issues. In the second phase, after World War II – as a destabilized religious structure with an emphasis on the process of atheization. In the third phase, in the early 90s of the last century – as a (re)stabilized religious structure in the process of desecularization of Serbian society. Finally, at the present time – as a restored religious structure, established during the 90s. The article promotes a sociological approach to spiritual and socio-psychological phenomena, with all the disadvantages of this approach in relation to the study of the phenomena of religion and religiosity.

**Keywords:** religiosity; people's attachment to religion (church); Sociology of Religion; Atheization; (De)secularization; Religious Structure; Serbia

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Динамика привязанности населения к (православной)  
религии и церкви в Сербии

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**Аннотация.** Авторы, в обзорной манере, отслеживают общие социально-политические условия в Сербии в их долгосрочной перспективе, инкорпорируя в эту рамку результаты исследования связи людей с религией и церковью – иными словами, их религиозности. Они используют два методологических подхода: исторический и социологический анализ, и полученные экспериментальным путём результаты по индикаторам религиозности, или привязанности людей к восточной православной религии и восточной православной церкви в Сербии. Композиция статьи: после введения и выбора методологического подхода авторы анализируют привязанность людей к религии и церкви в различных социальных системах с течением времени, описывая религиозную структуру. В первой фазе, до Второй мировой войны, религиозная структура описывается как стабильная с проортодоксальным консенсусом и без проблемных вопросов. Во второй фазе, после Второй мировой войны – как дестабилизированная религиозная структура с акцентом на процесс атеизации. В третьей фазе, в начале 90-х годов прошлого века – как (ре)стабилизировавшаяся религиозная структура в процессе десекуляризации сербского общества. Наконец, в настоящее время – как восстановленная религиозная структура, установившаяся в течение 90-х годов. В статье продвигается социологический подход к духовным и социально-психологическим явлениям, со всеми недостатками данного подхода применительно к изучению феноменов религии и религиозности.

**Ключевые слова:** религиозность; привязанность людей к религии (церкви); социология религии; атеизация; (де)секуляризация; религиозная структура; Сербия.

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**Introduction (Введение).** To achieve an objective and a nuanced picture of people's attachment to religion and the church in Serbia the analysis must include the time perspective. The time dimension of the analysis enables monitoring the continuity or discontinuity of that connection, since it is the result not only, as some claim, of innate human individual

religiosity (*homo religiosus*), but also of changing social factors over time. Therefore, the title of this sociological paperwork does not emphasize religiosity itself as fluid and complex socio-psychological phenomenon, but also people's attachment to religion and the church as an even more fluid social phenomenon that depends more on the social

context than on individual pro-religious attitudes and feelings. The notion of people's attachment to religion and the church is more appropriate for the sociological approach since in the final analysis there is no question of a person's religiosity or what is „true“ religiosity – a question beyond sociologist competence – but about the dynamics, scope, and degree of „external“ visible connection with religion and the church to which sociological analysis uses various indicators to measure. Thus, regardless of individual personal religiosity, his or her objective social connection with religion and religious organization can be explored, and so obtaining a more precise and broader picture of that connection than one-sidedly declared religiosity of the individual. Namely, some individuals declare themselves to be non-religious, and even atheists who still establish a connection with a religious organization, most often by participating in traditional and socially desirable religious rites and events. Other individuals are subjectively religious but do not participate in the life of the religious community, which is only an extreme case of disconnection with religion and the church<sup>1</sup>. In other cases, there is an abundance of various connections that characterize the different scope and degree of bonds, and it is up to the sociological expertise to analyze these cases and present the results. Of course, it does not mean that the subjective attitudes of citizens and respondents about their religiosity in sociological research should be neglected or completely abandoned in the analysis. A broader picture needs to be set that includes the social context of individual religiosity. Sociological analysis is less interested in religion itself because the study of a religious phenomenon helps to describe and interpret social movements (Šušnjić, 1998I: 106).

In sociology, the personal and social connection with religion and the church can be studied with several indicators and usually by

dividing the indicators of conventional religiosity (attachment to religion and church) into indicators of religious identification, indicators of dogmatic beliefs, and indicators of religious ritual practice and association. Using the above indicators, we can accurately describe different attitudes of people towards religion and the church in a religious-confessional organization in all these dimensions as well as the interrelationship of it.

The time frame concretizes the socio-political, value-ideological circumstances in which religions and religious organizations exist. Obviously, these circumstances, sometimes crucial and sometimes less affect the existence, position, and duration of religious organizations, but also people's attitudes about religion and the church, whether these attitudes are driven by personal preferences and values or by desirable and non-affirmative collective values towards religion and the church. The sociological analysis aims to determine those circumstances and their influence on subjective notions, and the objective conditions of the existence of religion and the church.

Serbia is an example of a society in which the attitude of people towards religion and the church, and especially towards Orthodoxy, was mediated by favorable or unfavorable external, non-religious social circumstances in which the church existed. The church is also a social organism, so its social position is determined by the mass affirmative, hostile, or neutral moods of citizens, which again are formed within the social and ideological assumptions of social systems in time and space. At the same time, these circumstances do not refer only to internal factors, but also to foreign policy and geostrategic ones, whose existence and influence on the state and society in the Balkans is more the rule than the exception.

<sup>1</sup> The relationship between religion and institutions, Serbian sociologist of religion problematizes as follows- Any division into believers and non-believers concerning the institution does not make much sense,

because some believe and do not attend a church, and those who attend a church with little or no faith in heart and soul (Šušnjić, 1998I: 65).

Therefore, the basic conceptual framework of this text consists of three concepts: the notion of people's attachment to religion and the church, the notion of dynamics of that attachment conditioned by the objective conditions in which Orthodoxy and the Serbian Orthodox Church existed. The third notion is the notion of religious structure from a sociological point of view. The analysis of this structure is based mostly on the results of empirical sociological, socio-psychological, and public opinion research and differentiation of respondents into believers, indifferent, unbelievers, and atheists.

**Methodology and methods (Методология и методы).** Following the announced conceptual structure and goals of the paper, we define our methodology as observing the phenomenon of religious structure in a relatively long period by historical analyses of other authors (Radić, 1995), and during the observed period created sociological experiential records of religiosity and attachment to (Orthodox) religion and church. This period of observation of the mentioned phenomenon extends from after the end of the First World War to the present day. In the historical context, today's Serbia has passed the state-building path from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, i.e. the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and then so-called Socialist Yugoslavia (SFRY), then the state union of Serbia and Montenegro (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) to the today's Republic of Serbia. All these states and societies formed different socio-political and ideological frameworks for the life of the Serbian Orthodox Church and people's attachment to religion and the church. These circumstances contributed to the affirmation or stigmatization of religiosity and connection to the church, which had a significant impact on the religious structure.

*Religious structure in a time perspective.* Conventional connection of people with Orthodoxy and the Serbian Orthodox Church allowed us to get a perspective of several different general socio-political frameworks. In this context, the social position and the

social and spiritual influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the traditionally belonging to its religious-confessional space were essentially ambiguous, even opposed.

In that sense, the general religious situation was not unambiguous and unchangeable, but diametrically different, and we classified it with implicit abstractions, through two ideal-type patterns: in that sense, the general religious situation was not unambiguous and unchangeable, but diametrically different and classified with implicit abstractions, through two ideal-type patterns: one stimulating, which positively evaluated the religiosity and connection of people with the Serbian Orthodox Church and which implied its privileged social position, reputation, and national and cultural significance, and the other, which had a very disincentive effect on the religiosity of the people and the Serbian Orthodox Church in that it significantly worsened its social position, spiritual influence, and national significance and placed it on the margins of social life without the possibility of expressing, until then unproblematic, public implications.

On a time scale, the affirmative framework was a period before the First World War until the end of the Second World War; also, the period from the early 1990s to the present day. The hostile and disincentive framework was from the end of the Second World War to the end of the 1980s.

*1. Stable religious structure: pre-socialist traditionalism.*

Consensus about religion as a positive phenomenon and that one should profess oneself in a confessional (Orthodox) way and traditionally fulfill religious duties such as going to Sunday liturgy, baptizing children, getting married in a church, funeral, and celebrating Baptism, is widely accepted in historical terms until the end of the First World War 1918 and the foundation of the state of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. However, it seems that this affirmative period in the SOC extended to the Second World War considering the experience after its end.

Given the inferior experience of the Church from the mid-1940s onwards, the relatively good social position of Orthodoxy and the SOC until then is a general thing in itself. However, caution is needed when we speak about the period between the two world wars because the SOC was not in the same social position that it had until the First World War. However, as far as people's attachment to traditional Orthodoxy in Serbia is concerned, it is difficult to say that there are any essential changes between the two world wars in positive people's relation to religion and the church. True, such a conclusion is not based on some scientific i.e. empirical research on religiosity or people's attachment to religion and the church, since at that time such research did not even exist, but this conclusion relies more on the socio-political significance of religiosity in general for the social systems of that time and the prevailing spiritual climate in the culture.

Until World War I, the Serbian Orthodox Church had a privileged social position. Church relation to the state and *vice versa* relationship, is easier to understand considering the Serbian constitution of 1903 which defines Orthodoxy as an official state religion. At that time religious education is a compulsory school subject, public holidays are marked by church rites, and all religious officials are paid by the state in the same way as other civil servants. In such a social and cultural atmosphere, it can be said with certainty that people with Orthodoxy have been traditionally connected in many ways, and that religion and the Church are almost daily present in the life experience of a huge number of people, so Church significantly influences the consciousness, practical social life and behavior. Orthodoxy and the Serbian Orthodox Church were part of the official culture and they had the function of legitimizing the social order. In those conditions, atheism was a socially undesirable and proscribed phenomenon.

Between the two world wars, the social position of the Serbian Orthodox Church changed. It is no longer in the same legal and social position as before. From the position of the dominant and socially privileged church in

the Kingdom of Serbia, it moves to the position of equality with other religious organizations and communities in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia).

However, the social and economic position of the Church is not as endangered as it will be later during and after the end of World War II. In support of this is the fact that the Serbian Patriarchate was re-established (1920) and that the patriarch took a seat in the Royal Council, several Orthodox priests had mandates in the National Assembly (Vukomanović, 2001: 102). The founding of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia created a contradiction in the understanding of the basic state principle, which could not but affect the determination of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Radić, 1995: 324). These are two state principles from which the Serbian Orthodox Church decides for the one who sees the newly formed state creation as an expansion of the Kingdom of Serbia, and not as a community of South Slavic peoples. This contradiction in the understanding of the stated principles created a gap in the Serbian Orthodox Church between its traditional role of the dominant, national church, protector of the Serbian people and guardian of its Orthodox culture, and changed social and political circumstances in which other religious organizations appear equally on the social and religious scene and stands out for its social strength, size, organization, material security, education of the clergy and reputation – the Roman Catholic Church.

Despite the somewhat changed position of the Serbian Orthodox Church after the end of World War I, the conventional religious structure remained stable, the public importance of religion and the church was large, religious values were still wide-spread. The traditional connection of people with Orthodoxy was unproblematic and stable. The social function of religion and church were preserved.

2. *Destabilized religious structure: atheization of Serbian society.*

The religious situation and the social position of Orthodoxy and the Serbian Orthodox Church after World War II was fundamentally



changed. These are main religious changes, which did not occur under the influence of internal religious factors, but are in the closest causal connection with the social and political changes that began during World War II and those that occurred after its end.

The created socialist society in Serbia, as well as in other countries of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, radically changes the previous social, political, and cultural patterns. The newly established social framework was diametrically different from the framework in which religions and churches had existed until then. It was a new but unstimulating socio-political framework for Orthodoxy and the Serbian Orthodox Church. We will show that such a framework wasn't just a passing episode, but it was a relatively complete framework that will rule the cultural scene for the next half a century in socialist Yugoslavia.

Defining this framework as a long, we are not saying that it was one-dimensional and unchangeable, but it introduced stronger and weaker political pressure on church organizations alternately and recognizable as a process of imposing politically instructed atheism of society. Regardless of the mentioned phases, one fact is out of doubt: Religions and churches were socially marginalized and spiritually de-monopolized by the socialist state that violently promotes atheism even to the extent that this phenomenon can be called the hegemony of atheism in the culture of a socialist society. This sequence of social and political events affected the Serbian Orthodox Church and Orthodox religiosity in Serbia. This suffering religious institution after World War II was damaged not only in terms of personnel and material visibility but also in the general social and political framework of the new State. A new State, in its intended radical abandonment of the past, primarily dealt with traditional, religious values and practices in the cultural sphere, declaring them not only ordinary superstitions, but also an obstacle to the creation of a new socialist society.

The socialistic government has made religiosity itself a socially problematic, stigma-

tized phenomenon. Using legal regulations, socialist State managed to marginalize, de-monopolize, and depoliticize in the spiritual sphere and, through agrarian reform, economically weaken all religious institutions, including the Serbian Orthodox Church. Lost religious influence on the social and spiritual life, systematic forcing of atheism (most effectively through atheistic upbringing and Marxist education as a kind of substitute for abolished religious instruction in public schools) accelerate the process of separating people from Orthodoxy in orthodox homogeneous confessional areas stronger than in other churches.

The radical and violent break-up of the State with the Serbian Orthodox Church in the socialistic Yugoslav community marginalized its social and political role in defining Serbian national subjectivity and identity (Pačić, 1991: 164), systematically neglecting it and erasing it from collective memory and ritual recollection. So religious identity survives only among devotees and narrow, yet socially marginalized groups of believers, far from the mass and public expression.

The policy of the State towards the religious-church complex, defined under the primacy of party goals and interests over all others, was continuously directed towards the action of complete separation of religions and churches from the public or political sphere of society. The socialist solution to the religious question in the former Yugoslavia can be seen in the achievements of the civil revolutions. Legal separation of Church and State and freedom of religious expression were declared. In practice, however, behind that façade, there was a negative attitude towards religions and believers, so religious rites were threatened as an abuse of religious freedom, and so religious activity for political, unconstitutional purposes.

A described, non-stimulating, general socio-political pattern seemed quite disastrous for the church and people's attachment to religion and the church, in the long run. This new pattern manifested itself in many domains of the religious-church complex, from the general

in the former dominant social sphere to specific points, and it concerned the problematization of religious beliefs and church-ritual practice. The atheism of society from the 1950s will become more visible later in public opinion polls during the 1960s (Baćević, 1964; Yugoslav Public Opinion 1968). The results of the polls showed a significantly lower prevalence of religiosity in regions with a predominance of Orthodoxy (Montenegro, and so-called narrow Serbia) than in regions with a predominance of Catholics or mixed confessions. In later research, during the 1970s, there was a tendency for a further decline in religiosity and an increase in the non-religious population, especially in traditionally Orthodox confessional areas (Pantić, 1974).

Empirical research from the 70s to the end of the 80s of the last century showed that Orthodox religiosity is a specific case between other mono-confessional and mixed religious areas of socialist Yugoslavia. The peculiarity is reflected in the continuously low percentages of religiosity, beliefs, and ritual church practice and in the solidification of such a religious situation in the Orthodox dominant religious areas, primarily in the territory of Montenegro and so-called narrow Serbia. Namely, sociologically and statistically visible religious changes in Catholic and confessional mixed areas in the late 1970s completely bypassed the Orthodox religious space. So much that in scientific and sociological circles there was a wide-spread opinion that it was an unattractive space. The space where only traditionalism that reduces religiosity to customs and secularities is at work. The space where deadness rules, where religion is a matter of Museum (Đorđević, 1990: 72-73).

In the late 70s and early 80s of the last century, in the Roman Catholic areas of Yugoslavia (Croatia and Slovenia), specific changes in the religiosity of the population are empirically determined, leading to desecularization of society. At the same time, in the area of Serbia and Montenegro, there were recorded low levels in measured religiosity both valid for the general population and some of its segments – for example, youth. At the end of the 1970s,

only 3% of young people in Serbia showed interest in religion (Pantić et al., 1981), and with the same percentage in 1985 students of the University of Niš (Đorđević, 1987) also declared themselves as believers. In 1987, there were 10% of religious students in Belgrade. The research of classical and secular religiosity of the inhabitants of the narrower and area of Belgrade from April 1984 did not differ significantly from the above. Although, some indications of religious changes were noticed even then (Pantić, 1988: 67 et seq.).

Questioning the secularist thesis, empirical research of religiosity in 1982 (Djordjevic, 1984) in the Orthodox homogeneous area of the Niš region did not refute the previously known results of the people's connection to the SOC and Orthodox religiosity. This conclusion follows from the results of the research, whether they refer to religious identification, the presence of religious beliefs in the examined population, or the prevalence of church ritual practice. As the author himself states, it is not just that some types of religious consciousness and religious practice are problematic, but other types are in marked decline, almost to the point of extinction, especially when it comes to certain forms of religious practice that are institutionalized for each religious organization, even for the Serbian Orthodox Church, are inevitably elements of Orthodox religiosity.

Despite the atheism of society, some rites from traditional power rooted customs and habits of the population survived (such as the baptism of a child in the church, church burial of the deceased, a celebration of religious holidays, primarily characteristic of a rural spiritual and social milieu). On the other hand, the number of declared and above all real, attested believers has decreased, the regularity of religious practice of the population has significantly eroded. The mentioned research also revealed the process of dissolution of the dogmatic belief of Christianity: reduction of the influence of Orthodoxy and Orthodox religiosity in everyday life; the religiosity of marginal social strata, peasantry, and workers, people with lower education, while educated

and propulsive social strata are the most non-religious; and de-monopolization of the Serbian Orthodox Church by the official political system and the promoted atheistic cultural pattern. Typical believers came from agricultural or working classes, from rural or peripheral rural areas, from the female or older part of the population, from the politically passive inhabitants that were outside the course of socialist modernization of society (Đorđević, 1992: 11).

### 3. *Restabilization of religious structure: desecularization in Serbia.*

In the late 1980s, the socio-political context of socialist Yugoslavia was fraught with an evident social crisis, naturally, included hitherto generally accepted values. Sociological and primarily public opinion polls, still within the socialist Yugoslav state, reveal a change in religiosity and attachment of the population to religion and the church at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. That is the case even in the Orthodox homogeneous confessional areas of Serbia and Montenegro, and among the Orthodox population outside Serbia. Also, it was the case among predominantly Roman Catholic, and Islamic regions and also with diversified confessional areas. Although it was not only about religious changes but about broader social and political mainstream movements, in that religious changes were initially manifested in the intense, primarily identity attachment of people to traditional confessional organizations and the national corps in general. Based on the results of several representative studies on samples that included the youth and the general population, conducted in the 1980s<sup>1</sup>, conclusions are self-evident.

Thus, religiosity has been growing, albeit unevenly, since the late 1980s and early 1990s in all confessional and national affiliations in socialist Yugoslavia. So, it may be said that the trend established by previous research

on the least religious among Orthodox remains. In Serbia (with the provinces), the most religious are Roman Catholics (Hungarians and Croats) and Muslims (Albanians), however, it is also significant for the Orthodox denomination to detect a change in the religiosity of the population. In the late 90s, Orthodoxy was more strongly confirmed not only in the domain of the intellectual-representational dimension of religiosity, but also in ritual dimension, on an individual and social level. As later research shows, the trend of a stable increase in Orthodox religiosity continued in the coming years. The analysis of quantitative data indicates that significant religious changes were expressed through the religiosity of the young generation, especially from the Orthodox civilization circle. The youth is noticeably more religious than before. Young people are more religious than in the previous decade, which contributes to increasing and maintaining overall religiosity in the area. It is reasonable to assume that the values accepted in the process of primary socialization life are harder to relinquish. Another conclusion derived from these studies shows a stable trend of religious restructuring. In the mid-1980s, a decline in atheistic declaration within the non-religious population was discovered by researchers. At the end of that decade and the beginning of the next, they unequivocally noticed a cardinal decline in people's willingness to identify themselves with atheism. The so-called militant atheism was extremely rare.

Public opinion polls (time series based on the same methodology and quota samples) conducted by the Center for Political Science Research and Public Opinion of the Institute of Social Sciences (Belgrade) in the period after 1990 indicate the following. The increasing religiosity of the adults in Serbia from 35% to 42% in the period from 1990 to 1993 is not

<sup>1</sup> In 1989, the Institute of Social Sciences and the Center for Political Science Research and Public Opinion from Belgrade (Mihajlović et al., 1990) conducted a survey of the youth population in SFR Yugoslavia.

The public opinion poll was conducted in mid-1990 by the Consortium of Public Opinion Polling Institutions of the Former Yugoslavia and for the last time on a sample

of the Yugoslav adult population over the age of 18 (Pantić, 1991).

During 1989 and 1990, a study entitled "Social Structure and Quality of Life" was organized by the Consortium of Yugoslav Institutes of Social Sciences and conducted on a stratified sample in seven former Yugoslav republics and provinces (Vratuša-Žunjić, 1996; 1996a).



huge because it amounts to only 7% (without Kosmet region). Nevertheless, that visibly deviates from the religious situation in the mentioned area in the period 1975-1980. Namely, the self-assessment of the religiosity of adults in the so-called Central Serbia was around 25% (Pantić, 1993: 192). Also, these same data show the trend of increasing religiosity of the population in Serbia that continues, and stabilize at approx. 40% of religious adults. But at the same time, these and other studies show that the process of religious renewal has its limits and specifics and does not correspond to lay, ideological, and ecclesial lump sum assessments regularly overemphasizing the scope and intensity of that process.

Certain boundaries of the process of religious renewal during the 1990s are visible through several findings of the mentioned public opinion polls (Pantić, 1993: 194 et seq.). Two types of conclusions plausibly describe the religious situation in Serbia in the early 1990s. The first type referred to the statement about the further validity of some previously manifested secularizing tendencies detected by empirical research. The second type referred to the validation of some new propensity which was already noticed, but now is more pronounced so that they attributed to the elements of religious restructuring. Thus, religiosity remains a rural phenomenon as in the previous decade, and women are still somewhat more religious. The tendency of religiosity as a phenomenon that is proportional to the age of the groups of respondents in the research is still valid. Older respondents, both earlier and in the early 1990s, are by far the most religious of all other generations. Among the respondents older than 60, over 50% have a stated religious position. There is a negative correlation between religiosity and education level of the respondents. That has been determined by all previous research, also by this research. However, the majority of believers are farmers and housewives, and most of the non-religious are experts, especially officials, who are ideologically the most conformist. National

and confessional differences in the religiosity of the population of Serbia are still huge, and among those who declared themselves Yugoslavs, most of all are atheists.

The second type concerns the elements that indicate the process of revitalization of religiosity. For the first time, in cities, the number of religious, although insignificant, still exceeds the number of non-religious, forming a simple majority (38% of religious versus 31% of non-religious respondents). For the first time that non-religious minorities are also among men. Among respondents up to the age of forty, the same percentage of religious people (35%) appear. In the earlier period, the younger generations (up to 27 or 29 years old) were less religious than the respondents between 30 and 39 years old. Similarly, between the ages of 30 and 60, there are changes in the attitude towards religion, hesitation, or return.

As Pantić well notes, in this way, de-secularization took place in two ways in the early 1990s. Firstly, through the resocialization of persons who were previously non-religious or atheistic by their adoption of a religious position or their return to that position, with a large number of people thus expressing double-conversion during their lifetime. Secondly, the young generation adopts religious values without going through a state-instructed process of atheistic education. Indirect evidence of the de-secularizing process in Serbia in the early and during the 1990s is in the empirical confirmation that the connection with the church and the actual religiosity of the population in the multi-party system has significant political relevance. Some authors have characterized the affirmation of religious values and the public role of the Serbian Orthodox Church as the clericalization of contemporary Serbian society (Đorđević, 2005a; 2005b).

The table below shows the connections of people with religion and the church based on indicators. There is a visible tendency of religious changes in Serbia in favor of the de-secularization of society.

Table 1

Attachment to religion and church in Serbia in the 1990s compared to the early 1980s (rounded %)

Indicators/year of research	1982	1993	1999
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Positive confessional identification	88	97	94
Self-declared religiosity	24	71	59
Baptism of children	59	84	84
Celebrating religious holidays	58	93	87
Church burial of the deceased	-	92	86
Liturgy (all intensities)	7	26	48
Going to church (all intensities)	25	70	75
Prayer (all intensities)	24	78	60
Fast	24	58	58
Belief in God	17	46	-
Belief in Jesus Christ	15	57	-
Belief in the afterlife	5	28	-

Sources: For 1982, Đorđević's research on the religiosity of the Orthodox dominant Niš region (Đorđević, 1984); for 1993, Blagojević's research on the Braničevo Orthodox dominant region (Blagojević, 1995); for 1999, the study of the Institute for Sociological Research of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade on a representative sample of Serbia without Kosovo and Metohija (Radisavljević-Ćiparižović, 2006).

By generalizing these and other empirical data (compare Blagojević, 2005; Blagojević, 2008), it is possible to report several relevant conclusions describing the current process of religious change in Serbian society and the stable trend of religious restructuring since the early 1990s. Quantitative data analysis indicates significant religious changes: the willingness of people to identify themselves in religious terms has increased, the religiosity of the young (once the most non-religious generation) has increased, the number of people who declare their atheistic orientation, and a new recognition of their confessional affiliation and beliefs in God, has radically decreased. During the 1990s, changes in the religious consciousness of the population had quite practical consequences for the religious beliefs and behavior of a large number of people. The religious beliefs of Orthodoxy are revitalized, and more so as they are further from the eschatological character. The traditional attitude towards religion and the church, which has been the least problematic before, is even more prevalent. So, the majority

of the inhabitants of Orthodox homogeneous areas are traditionally associated with religion and the church. Some essential religious behaviors, such as prayer, attendance at liturgy, and fasting before church holidays, have also been revitalized to some extent.

#### *4. Relatively stabilized religious structure in Serbia.*

By the end of the 1990s, quantitative data showed that the revitalization of Orthodoxy takes place without any problems, especially the representative dimension of religiosity, and the attachment of people with religion and the church. However, other dimensions of religiosity are not so unambiguous. When we move from the plan of religious identification and beliefs in the dogmatic core of Christianity to the ecclesiology and religious association, then there is a lot of space for defining significant limitations of religious revitalization. All this additionally shows how the framework of the social environment strongly influenced the establishment of the religious-church complex in those dimensions that were socially important in the 90s and were (although not in every particular case) precisely social. All this additionally shows how the framework of the social environment strongly influenced the establishment of the religious-church complex in those dimensions that were socially important in the 90s and were (although not in every particular case) precisely of social character: collective identification, national mobilization, and national homogenization, and the shared resource of resilience and cultural protection.

Part of the answer to the ambivalence of

the revitalization of Orthodoxy in Serbia in the first decade of the new century contained in quantitative indicators from two representative studies for Serbia. Both refer to the research of human values, the first one in 2001 and the second one in 2008. In the tables that follow, the data are in percentage.

Table 2

Religiosity of the citizens of Serbia in 2001 and 2008

Attachment to religion and the church	World Values Survey Serbia (2001)	European Values Study Serbia (2008)
Self-declared religiosity	74,4	80,5
Orthodox denomination. identification	85,5	86,7
Belief in God	82,4	79,5
Belief in life after death	27,1	25,5
Belief in paradise	17,4	27,8
Belief in hell	18,1	21,8
Belief in sin	-	54,4
Belief in reincarnation	-	19,2
Visit to the church at least once a week	9,6	5,8
Visit to the church once a month	18,1	12,2
Daily personal prayer outside the church	18,1	12,3
Personal prayer outside the church at least once a week	18,7	18,7

Source: World Values Survey, The World Most Comprehensive Investigation of Political and Sociocultural Change ([www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org). Online Data Analysis); European Values Study ([www.europeanvalues.nl/](http://www.europeanvalues.nl/))<sup>1</sup>.

Table 3

Church attendance and prayers outside the church in Serbia in 2008

Frequency of church attendance	Percentage	Frequency of prayer outside the church	Percentage
More than once a week	1,6	Every day	15,9
Once a week	5,8	More than once a week	11,9
Once a month	13,8	Once a week	9,4
Only for major religious holidays	34,0	At least once a month	10,3
Once a year	7,5	Several times a year	12,4
Less than once a year	17,4	Less than once a year	16,1
Never and practically never	18,8	Never	19,6

Source: *European Values Study, 2008.*

<sup>1</sup> The fourth wave of European research on human values conducted in 47 European countries in 2008. including Serbia for the first time. On a stratified sample of 1512 respondents project realized by the Institute of Philosophy and Social Theory from Belgrade. The first wave of EVS research was in 1981 in ten Western European countries. The second wave followed in 1990, with the participation of the countries of Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe, as well as North America. The third wave followed in 1999 and 2000 in 32 European countries (Baloban, Nikodem, Zrinščak, 2014: 5-12).

Comparing these data with the data of studies carried out at the end of the last century, it should be stated that the religious structure in Serbia stabilized after the end of 1990 – at the beginning of the new century. In some representative dimensions of religiosity, such as religious self-declaration and belief in God, the data show an even more pronounced expansion of positive responses in as many as four-fifths of respondents. Therefore, we may freely say that the respondents' statements almost came close to the confessional declaration. That is a novelty because in the mid-90s of the last century, there was a significant gap between the very high confessional affiliation of the respondents in relation to a slightly lower affiliation in terms of personal religiosity and even less when it comes to belief in God, heaven and hell, the afterlife. However, the ambivalence of religion and church is demonstrated by data that refer to other religious beliefs from the dogmatic core of Christianity and to modern religious practice. Although there are some changes in these aspects of people's attitudes towards religion and the church, primarily in the practice of rituals with an intensity of at least once a month, the religious situation has not changed significantly since the late 1990s, so here we also note religious stabilization.

So, in the late 80s – early 90s of the last century in Serbia, “with another ideological impact”, the spiritual pendulum, after a few decades, clearly shifted from declared atheism back to declared faith. In this ideological restructuring, the religious structure gradually consolidated. During the first decade of the new century, we see the relatively restored stable religious structure followed by two characteristics. Firstly, declared religiosity and belief in the core Christian dogma spread to four-fifths of the respondents. Secondly, the church-ritual practice of the respondents is more widespread than in the mid-90s of the last century, but not so much that today it is possible to

speak about problem-free believers in the church in Serbia.

**Conclusion (Заклучение).** Thus, in a relatively long-time perspective, religious changes in Serbia at the level of measurable indicators are quite visible. Statistically important changes are observed in all aspects of the religiosity of Serbian citizens, but these changes have a different scale, intensity and range. The highest reach in the religious-confessional consciousness of the respondents and the least in ecclesiology as a regular and consistent adherence to the so-called religious duties. Recent data from sociological research on the religiosity of Serbian citizens partially confirms that. An extensive and systematic sociological study named *Religiosity in Serbia*, conducted by the Christian Cultural Center (HKC) from Belgrade in 2010 and 2011 on a representative sample of 1219 respondents, was published in 2011<sup>1</sup>. That, and the previously mentioned research, has shown that modern religious changes in Serbia in the direction of revitalizing religion have their internal limitations. Moving in our analysis from the level of general opinion about religion and the church, expressed in undivided sympathies, to deeper levels of religiosity and attachment of people to religion and the church, we see that revitalization of the religious and ecclesiastical is not without a problem. So far, sociological and public opinion polls in Serbia have not only shown a strong confessional, pro-Orthodox consensus, declared religiosity and faith in God. Also noted are: ideological syncretism, amorphousness of religious consciousness, the selectivity of belief in the dogmatic postulates of Christianity, and the problem of adequate practical religious behavior, even in the declared religious population. That is why many Orthodox theologians consider their believers to be lukewarm Orthodox believers whose faith has yet to grow, at the same evaluate them as sincerely.

<sup>1</sup> This representative study was carried out by HKC with financial support from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (offices in Berlin and Belgrade) and the Center for European Studies in Brussels in 2010, with additional research on three confessional subgroups (Islam, Judaism,

and Protestantism) in the first half of 2011. On the research itself and the research methodology, see: (Radic, Pavic, 2011; Pavic, 2011; Bigovich, Yablanov-Maksimovich, 2011).



Today, it is easier to provide an answer to the early nineties dilemma of whether people in Serbia are returning to religion and the Church: strictly speaking and considering a number of indicators of religiosity and the connection that people have with religion and Church, the undeniable return of religion and Church to public space is a more plausible claim than some anticipated renaissance of religiosity that was written about at the beginning of religious changes. It is more of a comeback of religion to the public scene than it is the return of people to religion and the Church (Cvitković, 2009).

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