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(Not) New Forms of Religious Experience in the World of Digital Technology

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify examples of religious activity taking place in the digital media space, which are often incorrectly referred to as new ones. Their digital associations and forms have contributed to attributing novelty status to them. Due to the limited volume, the article will only address the issues related to the analysis of religious practices shaped and aided by the changing media. It is a starting point for a broader discussion and in-depth analysis of the various forms of piety mediated by the contemporary means of communication.

KEYWORDS: religion, Catholic church, mediatization, religious games, religious applications, digital religion

STRESZCZENIE:

(Nie) nowe formy doświadczenia religijnego w świecie cyfrowych technologii

Celem niniejszej analizy jest wskazanie przykładów religijnych aktywności zachodzących w przestrzeni cyfrowych mediów, które często błędnie nazywane są nowymi. Do nadania im statusu nowości przyczynił się ich związek z komputerem i cyfrowa forma. Ze względu na ograniczoną objętość, w artykule zostaną jedynie zasygnalizowane kwestie związane z analizą praktyk religijnych kształtowanych

i wspomaganych przez zmieniające się w czasie media. Przyczynek ten jest punktem wyjścia do szerszego podjęcia tematyki i stanowi przyczynek do szerszych rozważań i pogłębionej analizy różnorodnych form pobożności zapośredniczonych przez media.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: religia, Kościół katolicki, mediatyzacja, religijne gry, religijne aplikacje, cyfrowa religia

Introduction

Every human activity undertaken in the real world is finding a more or less faithful reflection in the virtual world. Religion has a long established position in the world of the media. It is inextricably linked to the process of human communication and the media helps to carry out religious activity. Many religious phenomena are regarded today as new and unique to the digital media environment. But are they really new? It is noteworthy that most of these phenomena were already known long ago. The Internet and modern media have become a new religious space, but the religious practices are not new at all, although they are recognized as such by the fact that they are embedded in the world of new technologies. Virtual pilgrimages, religious games, or media-assisted prayer are phenomena supported by technologies that enable multimedia and interactive communication. But it was not modern technology that gave birth to them; it only contributed to their popularization in a new, digital form.

The current trends in the use of modern media in religious activity fit perfectly into the premise of the new evangelization, the essence of which is the search for new methods and means for proclaiming the Gospel. Contemporary religious practices should be considered in a strict cultural context, taking into account the paradigm of domination of digital solutions in the creation and participation in contemporary culture. People practice religion in new ways, however, this is merely a reflection of their needs in the context of the flowering of modern, digital culture. This is in line with McLuhan's theory that the media is changing the behavior of people. They also influence the ways in which people practice religion by modifying it.[1]

The Catholic Church entered the 21st century with a firm belief that modern technology is a tool that not only can be used, but must be used in evangelizing work. The people of the Church responsible for missionary

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1   M. McLuhan, *Zrozumieć media. Przedłużenia człowieka*, Warszawa 2004, p. 17.

activity use the knowledge and experience of various religious and scientific communities. The issue of migration of traditional religious practices to the world of the new media has been studied for many years by American researcher Heidi Campbell, whose area of interest includes a wide range of forms of religious topics, religious communities and church institutions in the new media.[2] In her research, she analyzed the use of religious applications and the impact of modern technologies and media on social and religious life.[3]

Today's popular phenomena, such as computer games[4] or Internet memes,[5] are influencing the perception of religion and the Church. The contemporary research largely focuses on the issues of the role of new media in religious practices as well as the perception of piety mediated by technologies by the faithful.[6]

The dynamic development of technology implies the creation of new virtual communication platforms. The boundary between the real world and the virtual world is fading. Facing the new challenges, researchers have been successively addressing the issue of the mediatization of religion

2   The researcher's work devoted to this subject includes the noteworthy *Making Space for Religion in Internet Studies*, "The Information Society", 21, 2005; *Spiritualising the Internet. Uncovering discourses and narratives of religious Internet usage*, "Online – Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet",1.1, 2005; *Religion and the Internet,* "Communication Research Trends", 25/1, 2006; *When Religion Meets New Media*, London 2011; *Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society*, "Journal of the American Academy of Religion", 80/1, 2012; *Religion and the Internet. A microcosm for studying Internet trends and implications*, "New Media & Society", 15, 2013; *Digital Religion. Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, Abingdon – New York 2013; *Surveying theoretical approaches within digital religion studies*, "New Media & Society", 2016.

3   H.A. Campbell, B. Altenhofen, W. Bellar, K.J. Cho, *There's a religious app for that! A framework for studying religious mobile applications,* "Mobile Media & Communication", 2, 2, 2014; K.J. Cho, H.A. Campbell, *Religious Use of Mobile Phones,* 2015; H.A. Campbell, S. Garner*, Networked Theology* (Engaging Culture): Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture, 2016.

4   Major publications on religion in computer games include G.P. Grieve, H.A. Campbell, *Studying Religion in Digital Gaming. A Critical Review of an Emerging Field,* "Online-Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet", 5, 2014; H.A. Campbell, R Wagner, S. Luft, R. Gregory, G.P. Grieve, X Zeiler, *Gaming Religion worlds: Why Religious Studies Should Pay Attention to Religion in Gaming*, "Journal of the American Academy of Religion", 2015.

5   Example works on this topic include: W. Bellar, H.A. Campbell, J.C. Kyong, A. Terry, R. Tsuria, A. Yadlin Segal, J. Ziemer, *Reading Religion in Internet Memes*, "Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture", 2, 2013; G.K. Aguilar, H.A. Campbell, M. Stanley, E. Taylor, *Communicating mixed messages about religion through internet memes*, "Information, Communication & Society", 2016.

6   The theme of experiencing faith and building a religious identity on the Internet, e.g. A. Spadaro, *Cyberteologia. Chrześcijaństwo w dobie Internetu*, transl. M. Masny, Kraków 2013.

by implementing modern methods of netnography, specific to digital envi-
ronment research.[7]

Digital representation – a new paradigm of contemporary culture

The development of the Internet has given rise to one of the greatest me-
dia revolution in the history of civilization. New ways of acquiring and
distributing information, as well as opportunities for unlimited time and
space of communication, have contributed to radical social and cultural
transformations. Along with the internet, man has entered the world creat-
ed by bits and by algorithms, disembodied and deprived of physical struc-
ture, into virtual worlds. Digital media have become an integral part of
everyday life. Two decades ago, there was a clear division between the real
world and virtual reality. Today, online presence is the default state, and
the Internet is an integral part of everyday human activity. Useful and in-
tuitive new media interfaces and their easy accessibility make using com-
puters and smartphones a natural activity, no more complicated than read-
ing a book or using a television remote control. Technology is becoming
more and more transparent today and the division of the world into real
and virtual is losing its meaning. The integration of online and offline
worlds is deepening. Networking, internet-based communities and digi-
tal-based practices are no longer treated as separate from real life.[8]

This shift of perspective has set new paradigms in the study of the re-
ligious activity in users of modern technologies. It is only the awareness of
the "reality" of the virtual world that will allow for a fuller understanding
and analysis of religious phenomena in the digital media. An important
aspect thereof that directs research is the individualization and personali-
zation of digital applications and network services. Contemporary media,
including the social media, are meant to foster the individual identity of
their users. Wendy Hui Chun Kyong in her latest book names new media

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7   More on research on religion in the digital environment: R. Tsuria, A. Yadlin-Segal, A. Vitullo,
     H. Campbell, *Approaches to digital methods in studies of digital religion,* "The Communication
     Review", 20/2, 2017. Netnography is an ethnographic science whose methods are based on ana-
     lyzing the behavior of users of the Internet. For more information on the origin and methodo-
     logy of netnography, cf. R.V. Kozinets, *Netnography. Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, Lon-
     don 2010, p. 1-2, 58 and

8   H.A. Campbell, A. Vitullo, *Assessing changes in the study of religious communities in digital reli-
     gion studies,* "Church, Communication and Culture", 1, 1, 2016, p. 83.

standards *n(you) media*, which perfectly reflects the modern trends of media support for self-realization of their users.[9]

Everyday digital reality implies significant changes in the religious life of modern societies. Forms of spirituality have changed deeply. The place of religion experienced in a community and institutionally controlled has been largely overtaken by spirituality based on individual experiencing faith.[10] People are looking for a personalized religious experience. This is a great challenge for the people of the Church, who now have the responsibility for the people's hearts and minds not only within the walls of churches and catechetical rooms, but also in the digital space where modern man seeks contact with supernatural reality.

Mediatization of religious practices, or Piety 2.0

For several centuries, couriers would travel thousands of miles to deliver valuable papal messages to dioceses scattered throughout the most distant corners of the world. Today, similar documents, encyclicals, and messages are published online. Words and images reach the faithful almost immediately. Information is spreading at a steep pace, and the particularly catchy types of it acquire millions of hits in a record time.

However, the distribution of content is currently only one of the many possibilities for the use of new media. Multimediality, interactivity, virtual reality, and other media technologies empower the computer network as a platform for religious practices that, although computer-mediated, are increasingly embedded in real life. Considering whether it is acceptable to use modern media in religious practices is no longer justified today. Rather, one should ask how to practice, so that these mediatized practices contribute to the fullest extent to the spiritual development of the faithful.

A dozen years ago, supporting prayer with texts displayed on the screen of the smartphone aroused controversy. Today, no one is surprised or even more so, upset by reading electronically recorded verses of the Holy Scriptures, litanies, or any other religious content. The widespread use of mobile devices in this respect is confirmed by the large number of mobile-enabled prayer applications, as well as the number of downloads and installations on users' mobile devices.[11] The acceptance of the media mediated prayer

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9   W. Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*, Cambridge, p. 171.

10   Cf. more: S. Nowak, A. Taszycka, *Gatunek wobec sacrum. Kryzys wiary, film grozy i kultura popularna*, "Studia Humanistyczne AGH", 9, 2010, p. 98.

11   Example webpage with descriptions of selected applications: http://www.diecezja.rzeszow.pl/2015/05/pismo-swiete-w-tablecie-i-smartfonie/ (9/12/2017). For more on mobile religious

by the Catholic Church is also confirmed by the practice of recommendation by confessors, as part of the penance, of reciting prayers and meditating assisted by mobile applications.[12]

Although in many social groups, devotional practices mediated by modern media are difficult to accept, it is worth noting that the mediatization of prayer took place centuries ago when printed prayer books began to circulate. Mobile applications that help the faithful prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation are nothing more than the digital version of the text of the examination of conscience printed in catechisms. In a way, they are an improved version, enriched with the functionality of digital media, such as filtering or personalization of content.[13]

The invention of the graphical interface in the 1970s has opened the possibility of creating so-called "second worlds", computer environments that are modeled on the real world, thus forming a new, immanent space – a creation of human imagination. One of the flagship examples is the environment of *Second Life*, which was extremely popular with computer users in the first decade of the 21st century. At that time, almost every ecclesiastical institution, parish, or shrine had a website, often designed in a professional way, using multimedia and interactive elements. In this way, the idea of digital pilgrimages, which are commonly called virtual pilgrimages, was born.[14]

The phrase "virtual pilgrimage" is associated directly with virtual reality, a concept closely related to the computer environment. Meanwhile, the association of the term "virtual" with only modern information and communication technologies is a mistake. This term has two meanings. On the one hand, it refers to things "created in the human mind, but presumably

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applications, cf. e.g. in: P. Padrini, *iBreviary as New Concept of Religious App*, [in:] *Catholic Communities Online*, M. Díez Bosch, J.M. Carbonell, J.L. Mico, eds. *Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture*, Barcelona 2015.

12 This information was obtained by the author of the text during a conversation with students of the Ignatianum Academy in 2017. The article concerns the Polish Jesuit-designed „Modlitwa w drodze" [Prayer on the Way] application. More about the Jesuit application: https://modli-twawdrodze.pl/inne/aplikacja/ (9/12/2017).

13 These applications (eg. *Confession: A Roman Catholic App, iConfess, Mea Culpa, ConfessIt* and many others) have a number of useful features, such as modifying and customizing the base of sins, saving the results of the examination of conscience, or adding notes. More on that: S.A.Q. Scott*, Algorithmic Absolution: The Case of Catholic Confessional Apps*, "Online Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet", 11, 2016, pp. 259-260, https://heiup.uni-heidelberg. de/journals/index.php/religions/article/view/23634/17360 (12/09/2017).

14 More on this topic: D. Smołucha, *Kultura religijna w cyberprzestrzeni. Obecność kultu Matki Bo-żej z Guadalupe w internecie*, Kraków 2016, pp. 159-163.

existing in reality or ones that may exist," on the other, virtual signifies "created on a computer screen, but so realistic that it seems real."[15]

Virtual pilgrimages became popular in the late twentieth century, but their origins should be sought already in the 15th century. They were born as a result of economic, political and financial needs. During this time, the journey from northern Europe to the Holy Land was expensive and dangerous, which largely limited the number of pilgrims. The spiritual pilgrimage became a substitute for traditional pilgrimages, which, due to the lack of physical movement of the pilgrim, were referred to as "armchair pilgrimage". The faithful, surrounded by maps and manuscripts made by pilgrims who took a traditional pilgrimage, traveled to sacred places in their minds. Taking the imaginary journeys to the Holy Land, assisted by paintings and sketches of holy places, became an alternative to actual travel. The virtual pilgrimage reflected new religious practices, based on the contemplation of images that became a powerful tool of meditative practice.[16]

The pilgrim's journals and records illustrated their experiences in detail and were invaluable in the spiritual pilgrimage. One of the first pilgrims to write their pilgrimage journals and adapt them to the needs of spiritual journey was the Dominican monk and writer Felix Fabri, born in 1437 in Switzerland.[17] The detailed journals of his journeys included descriptions of the hardships of travel, the practices and rituals in the Holy Land, careful descriptions of the chapels and other objects located on the route and at the destination of the pilgrimage. Fabri prepared his texts for various groups of believers, including for missionary nuns who, physically staying in monasteries, wished to spiritualize themselves into the "Holy Space", thereby "contemplating pious exercise". In 1495, Fabri developed a document known as *Sionpilger*, that supported the spiritual pilgrimages of the faithful to Jerusalem, Rome, and to the tomb of St. James in Santiago de Compostela.[18]

Trying to evaluate pilgrimages made ahead of the computer screen, it is worthwhile to refer to the ones from centuries ago in the privacy of the pilgrims' homes. Only the means have changed. Today, the spiritual journeys

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15 http://sjp.pwn.pl/szukaj/wirtualny.html (12/09/2017).

16 R.J. Engler, *Where His Feet Had Trodden: The Space of the "Eastern" Carpet in Hans Memling's Saint John Altarpiece*, "Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History", 2017, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00233609.2017.1321040 (12.09.2017).

17 About Felix Fabri, his life and work cf. K. Beebe, *Pilgrim and Preacher. The Audiences and Observant Spirituality of Friar Felix Fabri (1437/8-1502)*, Oxford, 2014.

18 M. Xiarhos, *Authenticity and the Cyber Pilgrim,* Journal of Religion & Society 18, 2016 https://dspace2.creighton.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10504/91849/2016-28.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (12.05.2017).

using texts and images are recorded on electronic media and enriched with moving images and sounds. But the purpose and method have remained the same.

Virtual pilgrimage-making can provide a deep spiritual experience to be an even more authentic religious experience than a traditional pilgrimage. It may happen that a pilgrim who has traveled the long way to the destination has emotionally remained in the circle of daily, mundane affairs. It is also true that the faithful can attain the mental state of detachment from everyday life and experience the transformative power of the pilgrimage without making a physical journey in the real world.[19]

Religious games and fun

The basic function of games is to provide entertainment to their users. The popularity of games is directly related to the natural tendency of the human being to play. Games bring positive associations, such as bringing in a good mood, relaxation, and providing emotional stimulation. In addition to undeniable ludic values, games are an excellent medium that can be used to promote and disseminate ideas and shape attitudes. Therefore, games have become one more means of proclaiming the Gospel in the world. Designed in a deliberate way, they promote specific values. Most of the religious games refer to their respective religions in their scripts. One of their main functions is to transmit values, along with ethical and religious ideals and instill them in the players.

The market for religious computer games today is one of the most rapidly growing segments of the gaming market. Today, video and computer games play the same role as board games.[20] Only the form and medium of content have changed. But, religion had been present in games long before the construction of the first computer. Games and fun, in many religions were considered as the entertainment of the gods. In Christianity, the connection of religion with games raises controversy through the fact of links between games and trade, gambling and low-value entertainment. One of the most obvious examples of dissonance between the realm of the sacred and the world of entertainment is the behavior of soldiers under the cross of the dying Christ, who cast dice on his robes. The relationship between Christianity and games is reflected in the words of the thirteenth-century

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19 Ibid.

20 Numerous board games have a direct connection to Christian tradition and doctrine. It is worth mentioning the game *Divinity* having the official imprimatur of the Catholic Church, or *Journeys of Paul* – a game that, like many other board games, has seen its digital counterpart.

German poet Reinmar von Zweter. In one of his poems, he wrote, "The devil created the game of dice". On August 10, 1452, preaching in Erfurt, John of Capistrano put a large pile of 3,600 board games, 40,000 sets of dice and a huge number of playing cards on the market. The crowded burgeons witnessed the burning of these "sinful luxury items" as the pious Franciscan called the games.[21]

However, already over two centuries later, board games became a tool for promoting religious ideas, and were enjoyed as such by both Catholics and Protestants. One of the games that has been described in detail in the literature is *L'Ecole de la Vérité pour les Nouveaux Convertis*. The game was created after the withdrawal of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 and was directed mainly to young women who converted from Protestantism to Catholicism. The gameplay was designed to indicate the superiority of the Catholic religion over the Protestant one.[22]

Although most games are designed to instill ethical values and religious ideals in the players, religious games should not be overlooked in the question of raising funds through their distribution by churches. An example of such a project, which was created mainly for this purpose, is *Episcopopoly*, based on a popular board game *Monopoly*. The fields, which real estate, stations, or hotels, occupied on the board of the original game were replaced by depictions of churches, cathedrals and basilicas. The counters used in the game are shaped like lambs and pigeons. Players buy land for the construction of churches, build church buildings, plan expenditures, have the opportunity to experience the role of the person responsible for managing the parish. The game was designed by members of the Anglican Church in 2004.[23]

Connecting religion with the secular sphere of entertainment takes place not only in the case of games. In the toy market one can find figurines and plush toys depicting Biblical characters, or building blocks and temple-construction kits.[24] Funding religious institutions through sales has already taken place since many years ago. Before religious bookstores were established, the Bible and pious books were sold in the doorstep trade. Later, pencils, lamps and other gadgets were added to the assortment.

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21 M. Fuchs, *Century of Play: 18th Century Precursors of Gamification*, "Kinephanos", Special issue Exploring the Frontiers of Digital Gaming: Traditional Games, Expressive Games, Pervasive Games, 4, 2016, p. 18.

22 Ibid.

23 R. Sachs Norris, N. Bado-Fralick, *Toying with God*, Wako 2010, p. 84-86.

24 More on this: R.L. Stein, P. Stein, *Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*, Abington, 2015, p. 61.

The invention of the moving image by the Lumière brothers has provided evangelizers with a new pastoral tool – religious films.[25]

It would be difficult to assess which of the wide range of these products were created mainly with the expected financial gain in mind, and which for the broadly understood promotion of Christian ethics and teaching. Although it seems reasonable to be concerned that the presence of religious themes in games and toys may trivialize the doctrine and religious values, there is a growing market for toys, games and applications strongly related to the sphere of the sacred. This is the result of the evolution of the relationship between religion and culture. Religions games reflect the specificity of contemporary culture in which fun and entertainment play an increasingly important role. In this context, the transmission of religious values through games and tools of play makes sense, because it meets the needs of modern society.[26]

It is worth mentioning that in recent years the way of thinking about games in a cultural context has been dynamically evolving. Games that were once associated with time-consuming, addictive pastimes, are now recognized as a teaching, rehabilitation, or a training medium (for example, games designed for intercultural training). In this context, also religious games have gained recognition as a medium that can positively influence the shaping of church identities and attitudes. Religious games also raise the interest of the scientific community. This has resulted in the appearance of several significant monographs devoted to religious and computer games in recent years.[27]

Gamification of religious practices

At the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, popular gamification systems began to be developed, mainly for mobile devices. Related to games, in principle, they are derived from games. These systems use game mechanics to modify human behavior and attitudes in non-gaming situations. The effectiveness of gamification systems is based on the pleasure of following the challenges the users face, and the typical game mechanics such as points or badges are a reward for making progress.

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25   More on this: H. Hendershot, *Shaking the world for Jesus,* Chicago 2004, p. 21.

26   N. Bado, E. Sachs Norris, *Games and dolls*, [in:] *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Popular Culture*, J.C. Lyden, E.M. Mazur, Eds. Oakland 2015, p. 278.

27   It is worth mentioning here such work as B. Bainbridge, *Of Games and God* (2013), H. Campbell, G. Price Grieve, *Playing with Religion in Digital Games* (2014).

Ranking lists motivate participants to continue competing and sustain the user's engagement.[28]

Gamification systems are excellent for marketing, education, and as a tool for recruiting employees. It would seem that it is difficult to find examples of using them in the sphere of human religiosity. It is obvious that religious activity is based on a different motivational system than the standard offered by gamification, at least for the reason that ultimately, religion refers to the relationship of man with God. Although the concept was established at the beginning of the 21st century[29] and is strongly associated with the functionality based on digital media, the playing mechanisms have been used in various areas of life many years earlier. Furthermore, gamification has been successfully used to arouse the religious zeal in the faithful, encourage the intensification of pious practices and doing good deeds.

Many activities similar to gamification were used in churches had been practiced more than two centuries before formulating this concept. Even the 18th-century German hermit and poet, Gerhard Tersteegen, can no doubt be called a specialist in gamification practice. The so-called pious lottery invented by him in 1722[30] was a game consisting of 365 cards, each of which contained quatrains and advice for believers.[31] The pious player chose one of the cards randomly each day, and then pondered the pious texts written on it.

Tersteegen's project was very successful because it used the popularity of the 18th-century lotteries, whose mechanisms he adapted to their own purposes. It possessed a gambling element, as the cards were randomly selected, thus raising the player's curiosity. In this way, Tersteegen created a system in which the faithful willingly engaged. The preacher also took care of the marketing side of the venture: he advertised his game as

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28 H. Routledge, *Why Games Are Good For Business. How to Leverage the Power of Serious Games, Gamification and Simulations*, London 2016, p. 24.

29 The concept of "gamification" was coined by the British computer game programmer, Nick Pelling. Although the term was coined in 2002, it came into widespread use only eight years later, along with the development of mobile web applications. A. Ursyn, *Challenges in Game Design*, [in:] *Gamification: Concept, Methodologies, Tools, and Application*, Management Association, Ed. Information Resources, Hershey 2015, p. 688.

30 The original name of the system was *Der Frommen Lotterie*.

31 For collected content published on the cards, cf. G. Tersteegen, *Geistliches Blumengärtlein inniger Seelen, oder: kurze Schlußreime, Betrachtungen und Lieder über allerhand Wahrheiten des inwendigen Christenthums, zur Erweckung, Stärkung und Erquickung in dem verborgenen Leben mit Christo in Gott: nebst der frommen Lotterie,* 1841, https://play.google.com/books/reader?id =HmNFAAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=pl&pg=GBS.PA431 p. 431-482, (22.09.2017).

a lottery with no risk of losing.[32] The pious lottery had all the qualities defining a gamification system. By introducing the elements of play instead of the tedious practice of copying Bible verses widespread in the 18th century, Tersteegen created an attractive activity, which the faithful willingly devoted their time to.[33]

Similarly, some systems have been used successfully for many decades, especially by catechists in religion classes. Children, especially younger ones, eagerly and passionately collect hearts, crosses and other symbols they draw in tables in special notebooks, in the fields corresponding to the following days of the month. Each symbol is assigned to a specific activity, such as a good deed or recitation of a fragment of the rosary. In many Polish churches, mobilizing children to attend Sunday Masses or other cyclical services is based on the mechanism of play. Each child receives a colorful sticker that they place on a board with prepared boxes. The scenes depicted on the stickers usually make up a picture story, of course, about a religious topic, which further motivates the systematic collection of subsequent stickers.[34]

It seems that the time of the greatest interest in gamification has already passed, which does not mean that there is a retreat from the mechanisms defining it. Numerous applications, though not explicitly referred to as gamification systems, offer evaluation in the form of points, status and ranking lists, or user performance charts. This last form fits well in religious applications, because one of the goals of a good Christian is self-perfection. Therefore, sooner or later, more and more applications for the faithful will be based on self-actualization, in which rivalry with other system users will be replaced by the fight against their own weaknesses and imperfections.

Final conclusions

Mediatization of religion is still not thoroughly investigated. It will stay so as long as the next innovative technologies and media keep emerging. Dissemination of each new medium implies the emergence of new religious phenomena, emerging at the level of new communications solutions. Looking historically, in these phenomena, religious traditions and

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32 M. Fuchs, *Century of Play. 18th Century Precursors of Gamification*, "Kinephanos", Special issue Exploring the Frontiers of Digital Gaming: Traditional Games, Expressive Games, Pervasive Games, 4, 2016, p. 19.

33 Ibid., p. 20.

34 http://grywalizacja24.pl/grywalizacja-na-religii/ (22.09.2017).

piety practiced many years ago can still be seen. Most of the mediatized religious practices are the logical consequence of those already existing outside the digital space.

Considerations on contemporary religiousness should also be based on comparative analysis of phenomena functioning in the real world in the context of contemporary culture and technology. Understanding the problems of religion in cyberspace will provide a better insight into the issues of traditional religion in the real world.[35]

The digital future of religion poses a series of important theological questions and issues requiring new arrangements and regulations.

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