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PROTESTANTISM IN MACEDONIA TODAY

Ruzhica Cacoska

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Abstract

Protestantism arrived in Macedonia in the second half of the nineteenth century. Since then, a number of Protestant communities were established and their current membership is relatively small. The United Methodist Church in the Republic of Macedonia is considered to be traditional and is listed as such in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. The contemporary Protestant structure is composed of 12 Evangelical-Protestant churches. The subject matter of this paper is a sociological research on the Protestant communities in Macedonia and it will focus on key issues related to the structure and functioning of their communities, their mutual cooperation, and their cooperation with other religious communities.

Key words: Protestantism, tradition, religious communities, structure, cooperation.

Introduction

The feeling of a direct responsibility of the individual to God
is almost wholly a creation of Protestantism.
John Stuart Mill

In contemporary Macedonian society, there is a total of 12 Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities. In the Unique Court Register of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups, 10 are registered as churches, one as a center, and one as a community.

The Evangelical Protestant religious communities in Macedonia have been present for a long period, starting from the second half of the nineteenth century. The American missionaries were the first to establish Protestant communities and churches. Later, the tumultuous historical

events in the Balkan region resulted in a transition of the Evangelical-Congregational communities and churches under the administrative management of the Methodist Church of Vojvodina. In the following periods, new Evangelical-Protestant collectivities appeared in the religious scene in addition to existing ones. During this period, various Protestant missions arrived in Macedonia, which in turn, led to the creation of new collectivities. Today, the number of collectivities is 12, and the number of believers according to their estimate is around 7,000.

The cooperation between the Evangelical Protestant churches would be later realized by the formation of the Alliance of Protestant and Evangelical Churches of the Republic of Macedonia. After the termination of the operation of the Alliance, new conditions were created and the Evangelical Protestant Initiative was established.

1. Evangelical and Protestant Religious Collectivities in Macedonia

According to the available database,¹ in contemporary Macedonian society, there are the following Evangelical Protestant churches and religious groups:²

- 1) United Methodist Church in Macedonia
- 2) Christian Baptist Church "Good News"
- 3) Christian Church "God's Voice"
- 4) Church of God in the Republic of Macedonia
- 5) Evangelical Church in the Republic of Macedonia
- 6) Evangelical - Congregational Church

¹The data are taken from the Unique Register of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups, and they are also available on the website of the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups and Religious Almanac of the Republic of Macedonia <http://www.kovz.gov.mk/?ItemID=625A03A44FFB9A479DA77DF1C5CD4E3E> <http://www.kovz.gov.mk/>, accessed on September 4, 2017.

² Christian Movement New Hope, registered as a religious group with a specific mission.

- 7) Christian Center in the Republic of Macedonia
- 8) Christian Church "The Word of Hope"
- 9) Free Evangelical Church "Good News"
- 10) Evangelical Protestant Church "Glasnost"
- 11) Christian Church Oasis in the Republic of Macedonia
- 12) Christian Fellowship "Trinity"
- 13) and The Anglican Congregation in Skopje.

Statistical Indicators Related to the Evangelical-Protestant Religious Collectivities

The creation of a database for statistical indicators³ on the religious affiliation of the population of the Republic of Macedonia started with the census of 1991.⁴ For the first time, the census of 1991 collected data on religion among the population.⁵ After three years, the following census was held in 1994⁶, and another census followed in 2002. Since the census in 2011 was terminated, only data from the three censuses stated above will be presented here.

³This paper uses statistical data in the format as given in the source material. Moreover, the collection of statistical data for each census is conducted under different categorizations, which in a certain respect are not comparable and therefore are given in separate items. For example, in the 1991 census, Protestants and Jews are placed in the group of "other religions," and the atheists were added to this group, as well. In the 1994 census, there are separate columns for: Protestants, remaining, other and without religion, members of religion that is not listed, not a believer, no answer is provided, unknown and Christians. But the census of 2002 avoided this categorization and preserved the categories for members of the following religions: Orthodox; Islamic; Catholic; Protestant and other. Therefore in the synthetic tabular presentation there are certain overlaps or repetitions, but they are made in order to maintain the authenticity of the secondary data sources.

⁴ The census in 1991 was boycotted by the most of the Albanian population. Therefore, in the same decade, after only three years a new census was implemented. <http://www.stat.gov.mk/OblastOpsto.aspx?id=31> (Accessed on 14 January 2014)

⁵ Dušan Bubevski, (2001), "Some aspects of the socio-economic structure and the problems of the population in the Republic of Macedonia", in the study of the research "The socio-economic structure and the problems of the population in the Republic of Macedonia", implemented in 1997/1998, ISPPi, Skopje, p. 25.

⁶ The census in 1994 is called irregular and it was funded, monitored and approved by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. The smaller numbers of the population compared to 1991 are due to the adopted new census standards, under which persons who were absent from Macedonia for more than 12 months are not listed. This census does not include the population of the municipalities of Centar Zupa and Debar. In the tables of religion the results of the census are provided, while for the item nationality estimates were made and entered. As a result of that, there are small differences that are apparent in the tables for religious or national affiliation.

Table No. 1 – Religion of the population of the Republic of Macedonia, presented in absolute figures and percent

	Religion	Census – 1991	<i>Census –</i> <i>1991</i>	Census– 1994	<i>Irregular</i> <i>census –</i> <i>1994</i>	Census – 2002	<i>Census –</i> <i>2002</i>
1.	Orthodox	1.355.816	66,66%	1.283.689	66,3%	1.310.184	64,78%
2.	Muslim	611.326	30,06%	581.203	30,0%	674.015	33,33%
3.	Catholic	10.667	0,49%	7.405	0,4%	7008	0,35%
4.	Members of other religions (Protestants, Jewish, etc.) and atheists	56.756	2,79%	/	/	/	/
5.	Protestants	/	/	1.215	0,1%	520	0,03%
6.	Others	/	/	/	/	30.820	1,52%
7.	Members of religions not stated	/	/	2.786	0,1%	/	/
8.	Not religious	/	/	5.641	0,3%	/	/
9.	No response	/	/	22.891	1,2%	/	/
10.	Unknown	/	/	1.804	0,1%	/	/
12.	Christian	/	/	28.400	1,5%	/	/
	Total	2.033.964	100,0%	1.935.034	100,0%	2.022.547	100,0%

Source: State statistical office of Macedonia

Table No. 2 – Statistical data and estimations

Верска заедница	Попис	Попис (%)	Адресар
Православни	1,310,184	64.78	2,000,000
Муслимани	674,015	33.33	900,000
Католици	7,008	0.35	17,391
Христијани (не е наведено која заедница)	15,862	0.78	904
Протестанти	520	0.03	
Адвентисти	487	0.02	5,000
Баптисти	102	0.01	100
Евангелисти	272	0.01	1,000
Евангелисти-методисти	1,303	0.06	5,000
Реформисти	28	0.00	
Јеховини сведоци	1,105	0.05	1,100
Припадници на еврејската заедница	71	0.00	208
Хари кришна	40	0.00	200
Не е наведена вероисповедта	433	0.02	
Не се верници (атеисти)	3,524	0.17	
Не се изјасниле	1,377	0.07	
Непознато	6,216	0.31	
Вкупно	2,022,547	100.00	2,930,903

Source: Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, (2008/2009),

Address Book of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups in Macedonia, Skopje.

Due to the absence of official statistics, different estimates have been made in counting the religious population of Macedonia. In 2008, the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (hereafter MCIC) estimated that the religious collectivities provided for membership in activities, and the reserved categories of believers from previous censuses were partially entered. According to the estimates of the religious collectivities themselves, in Macedonia in 2008, there were a total of 6,100 believers in the Evangelical Protestant churches. Only estimates were made by three collectivities (the United Methodist Church – 5,000 believers, the Christian Baptist Church “Good News” - 100 believers, and believers of the

Evangelical Church – 1,000, although in the assessment by the community itself, a figure of 2,000 believers was given). There were no estimates in this address book for three Evangelical Protestant collectives (Evangelical Congregational Church, which did not give an estimate of the number of its believers; the Christian Center which had an estimate of 250 believers; the Church of God which gave an estimate of 300 believers and a precise estimate or figure from the Evangelical Church).

This overview of the existing statistical base and certainly, the estimates of the religious collectives show the need to specify the categories for making a register of the believers of the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities. In order to make an appropriate register of the religious population, we should make an appropriate methodological and categorical framework in which the specifics would be expressed, so a more precise picture of the actual conditions would then be provided.

The need to present and appropriately register the believers of the Evangelical Protestant religious collectives during the preparations for the census of the population of Macedonia in 2011 was manifested by the Evangelical Protestant Initiative. Namely, this was an informal, non-binding initiative that was organized in order to achieve a certain common interest. That year, "the majority of the churches agreed and called for their membership to declare themselves in the census as Evangelical Protestant Christians."⁷ Having the provided in mind, by different categories of religious population from the previous censuses, it is necessary to specify them and of course, to compare them with data from the Unique Court Register of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups in Macedonia.

⁷ Jovan Jonovski, *History of the Evangelical and Protestant Churches in Macedonia*, (Skopje: Izgrev.2017), 238.

Theoretical Background

Sola Gratia

Sola Fide

Solus Christus

Soli Deo Gloria

Sola Scriptura

The Lutheran Reformation that originated in the German region, the Calvinism in France, Switzerland and Scotland, the Reformist movements in England and the Anglicanism were all of key importance for the creation, development, and expansion of Protestantism. Free churches, which originated from various reformed churches, also exerted a significant influence on Protestantism, and they gradually became independent in the period after the Reformation (Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal churches, etc.)⁸

Starting from this definition of Protestantism,⁹ as a term that covers all Christians who have accepted the following views in their religious declaration: a) The Bible is the only source of revelation; b) the study and interpretation of the Bible takes place on the basis of personal reasoning; c) the number of rituals is reduced to a minimum; and d) everything covered by the term religious life is communicated in the national language,¹⁰ we could talk about the

⁸ C. Patridge, *The World's Religions, New Lion Handbook*, (Skopje: Mladinska kniga, 2009, 325.

⁹ The notion of Protestantism (which has Latin origin and comes from the word *protestatio*) unites the members of the Luther's Reformation, and the word means "public, solemn or compulsory declaration." In the late Middle Ages, Protestantism was marked with a negative connotation, associating the declaration against someone, that is, associating the hostility against the "papacy" and the Roman ecclesiastical authority in general.

¹⁰ Aleksandar Birviš, "Plodovi protestantizma," in *Kultura, Journal for Theory and Sociology of Culture and Culture Policy* (Belgrade), 13-14, 1971: 124-137.

conditionally separated contemporary Protestantism in Macedonia—also separated from the Bogomil Movement—which in spite of certain similar characteristics, still has its own identity.

When studying contemporary Evangelical-Protestant communities in Macedonian society, the turning point to note would be the period before and after the independence of the state. Consequently, each period has its own characteristics. The characteristics of the religion in the period after the independence or in post-communism are certainly the processes of revitalization.¹¹ This include the revitalization and strengthening of the position of religious subjects, that is, those which are historically present, majority denominations, which can be monitored at the level of a religious community, and at the individual level, through religious beliefs and individual practice. De-privatization of religion, i.e., the presence of religion on the public stage tends to be reflected directly and very clearly through its significantly larger representation in the media; like the activities and the vast space they also have on social media; displaying aspirations to "religious education" and adapting to the changing social conditions; undertaking certain activities in the sphere of social policy; reclaiming their confiscated property; expressing their views on various issues of interest to the community; etc.¹² Striking is the process of de-secularization, which is mostly displayed in the rise of confessional and religious self-identification.¹³

One of the characteristics is “a high rate of specified nominal population of believers, but a low rate of religious practice. Revitalization of religion in Macedonian society, particularly

¹¹ In the Constitutional Act of the Republic of Macedonia, churches, religious communities and religious groups are part of the non-profit sector. They have the opportunity to establish religious schools, as well as to act in the sphere of social policy, by opening social and charitable institutions. The Constitution lists the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic Religious Community in Macedonia, the Catholic Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Jewish Community.

¹² Ruzhica Cacanaska, “Religious Polarization in Contemporary Macedonian Society,” Chapter VIII in the book, *The Role of Religion during the Yugoslav State Crisis*, Ed. by Branislav Radeljić, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 121-123.

¹³ Srdjan Vrcan, *From the Crisis of Religion to the Religion of Crisis: Contribution to the Debate on Religion in Contemporary Crisis*, (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1986).

clearly shaped the structuring of believers in the population in certain periods of very high rates of nominal believers, but of traditionalism in religious practice.”¹⁴ Empirical records determine the religious population, according to their personal religious identification, as being highly religious. Religious practice, however, seems not to "follow" individual religious determination. Namely, in terms of practice, Macedonian believers were predominantly defined as "customary," only practicing the most important religious holidays (which become non-working days), and celebrating the main events of their life.

The postulate of the contemporary Macedonian religious configuration is based on the period after the independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991. In addition, we should keep in mind that key changes of the social organization have contributed to significant changes in the positioning of religion within it. Namely, “the changing of the social structure contributed to Macedonian citizens, somehow overnight, becoming *more aware* of religion, trying to catch up with current events.”¹⁵ Since the independence of Macedonia to the present time, the number of religious collectivities has increased, visible changes in their composition or structure have been noted, and in the section of the religious denominations, internal divisions and disparities have left an important mark. It is also evident that missionaries and the creation of their own nuclei of religious denominations seem not to have a tradition in this region.

Religious denominations of the Evangelical Protestant doctrinal framework are currently experiencing a "boom" as seen in the formation of a dozen of religious communities in recent years. In the period after the country's independence, the more liberal mission¹⁶ has contributed

¹⁴ Ibid., 125.

¹⁵ Cacanaska, "Religious Changes in Macedonian Society," *Facta Universitatis*, Series: Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and History, Vol. 15, No 1, 2016, <http://casopisi.junis.ni.ac.rs/index.php/FUPhilSocPsyHist/article/view/1703/1288>, Accessed on 12.03.2017.

¹⁶ "Mission" refers to "sending" and has traditionally been associated with the efforts of religions to spread to *new* areas. (R. L. Montgomery, *Introduction to the Sociology of Missions*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2.

to the encouragement and creation of new group Protestant communities. Also of key importance is the "deposit" created by the traditionally present Evangelical-Protestant communities. Some believers of the existing Evangelical Protestant religious denominations have gradually emerged as active founders or missionaries of new churches and communities.

The empirical base has collected and processed the creation, operation, and perspectives of the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities in contemporary Macedonian society through interviews with representatives of their leadership, which will be analyzed (2017).

In this paper, I wish to also highlight the issue of the public role of religion. According to that role, two important questions address contemporary Macedonian religious life, that is, the engagement of religious communities in the sphere of morality and of course, in the social sphere. Often in public discourse, a connection is made between religion and morality, suggesting that religion should be a "source" of moral behavior and should help overcome the present crisis of values. Contemporary religious polarization of morality is based on the concept of public religion, suggesting that religion should provide adequate support to individual and public morality in society.¹⁷

Viewed through general history, the significant role of religious communities in the social sphere is characteristic. The pragmatic question that usually arises is whether the vulnerability of certain categories of populations is crucial for them to join and remain in a particular religious collectivity. However, this paper only opens the question of the total engagement of the Evangelical-Protestant religious communities to help marginalized and social categories in society, in the sense of the public role of religion. Indeed, it adds to Casanova's assertion that religious organizations of all kinds can and should act in the public space, among

¹⁷ Cacanaska, "Religious Changes in Macedonian Society," <http://casopisi.junis.ni.ac.rs/index.php/FUPhilSocPsyHist/article/view/1703/1288>, Accessed on 12.03.2017.

other things, as part of social policy. In this sense, religious communities and faith-based organizations appear as important factors that participate in social policy. We should also take Beckford's claim in account,¹⁸ who seeks in religion the solution to social problems in society.

Protestant Missions in Macedonia

Evangelical-Protestant communities in Macedonian society have their own specific history. The "echo" of the sixteenth century of Western Europe reached the Macedonian population at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the official establishment of diplomatic relations between America and the Ottoman Empire. In Constantinople, in 1831, American missionaries established the first missionary station in the-then Empire. The opening of the first missionary center created opportunities for planned action and the spread of Protestant ideas, primarily among the Christian population.¹⁹ The Constantinople missionary station, from its very formation, developed a series of activities, covered in three directions: literary, educational and evangelistic.

Protestantism came to the Balkan region in 1831 through American missionaries, who founded their first missionary training center in Istanbul. British missionaries were also present in Macedonia from the Church of Scotland and the Bible Society, but the founders of Protestantism in Macedonia were the American missionaries sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, founded in 1810-11. Its central body consisted of members of the Congregational Church, the Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Church of America. The opening of the first missionary headquarters in the Ottoman Empire made possible planned activities and the dissemination of Protestant ideas, primarily among the Christian population.

¹⁸ J. Beckford "The Sociology of Religion and Social Problems," *Sociological Analysis*, 51 (1), 1990: 1-14.

¹⁹The missionaries worked primarily in Christian-dominated areas, since Muslims who converted into Protestantism were punished with death.

In Macedonian society today, there are some traditional Evangelical Protestant religious communities, but a majority of them are more recent, i.e. they appear in the aftermath of the independence of the country. There is a total of 12 religious collectivities, of which one or two have existed since the nineteenth century, while others were predominantly formed in the twentieth century and some at the beginning of the twenty-first century. One of the evangelical churches in Macedonia is the International Church, which is part of the Evangelical Church. Their services are in English and a significant number of its attendees are foreign citizens residing in Macedonia. The work of the Anglican Congregation in Skopje, which is part of the Church of England Diocese in Europe, should also be taken into account. In this context, we should mention the religious movement New Hope, which is dedicated to working with students, but through the existing Evangelical Protestant churches.

Missions in Macedonia²⁰ were typically carried out through three key models. It is interesting to note that almost all of the Evangelical Protestant communities have used these three models or practiced one or another model of church planting at certain times. More specifically, one model seems to dominate in a particular period, which later influences another.²¹ The kind of model of church planting to be used also depends on the conditions in which the church planting takes place. The following are the main approaches/models of church planting:

The **parachute** model is characterized by “a planter [moving] into a new location to start a church from scratch. The planter begins with little support and few connections within this new area. The planter and their family are *pioneering* new territory.”²² In the 1980s, some of the missionaries came to Macedonia and came into contact with mostly

²⁰ In support of the missions, the following book (practicum) is published in Macedonian: Ferguson Dave and John Ferguson, *Exponential (How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missionary Church Movement)*, Sonderwand, 2010.

²¹ Church Planting Models, <http://church-planting.net/church-planting-tutorial-church-planting-models/>, accessed on 11 September 2017.

²² Ibid.

young people, with whom they relatively quickly formed their own church nuclei. This is the case with several Evangelical Protestant churches.

The practice of a **sponsoring church or organization/mother church** takes place when “an existing church or church planting organization provides the initial leadership and resources to get a new church started including the selection of the church planter.”²³ It is important to bear in mind that “the new church is autonomous, the sponsoring organization often has significant influence in the new church.”²⁴

These conditions occur because after a certain period of time, the church community reaches a certain number of believers and can act independently. However, it is important to keep the relationship with the church from which it originates, as it continues to cooperate and exist independently. However, bonds can be created that are extremely important for joint action (like the Evangelical Protestant Initiative) and for help in more important activities. There are few such churches in Macedonia but their number is also increasing.

The third model of **collaborative network/partnership** involve the churches that Are “an organization (or many organizations) committed to church planting work together to plant churches. These informal alliances are referred to as collaborative or partnership networks. Planters often get many of the benefits of the “sponsoring church” model but with increased autonomy in decision making.”²⁵ Starting new churches, in addition to self-supporting work of the missionaries and home worshippers devoted to missionary activities to the creation of new churches, requires funding, proper literature, and other tangible assets. In this context, for the creation of new churches, these networks or partnerships often provide appropriate literature, technical assistance, and financial resources in order for the new church to “stand on its own feet.” Later, it gradually becomes independent and begins to live through its own resources. More recently, church planting in Macedonia is characteristic to the cooperation that the Evangelical Methodist churches have, and that is particularly achieved through education of prospective preachers. For example, the launch of the first online Bible school of the Institute for Spiritual Growth in Macedonia is to start next year. Their partner organization is the Indigenous Training Ministries.²⁶ The Cru organization, however, is active in working with a student organization.²⁷ “A group of American missionaries came to Macedonia . . . A part of Cru’s U.S. Campus Ministry, a group of eight came to tell students about Jesus and develop a Macedonian Christian group at the campus.”²⁸

The trend on the creation of new churches, particularly in the last decade, is becoming more specific due to the need for churches to be smaller and above all, functional. When a particular church or collectivity grows to a certain number (let's say, 40 believers), then it

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Indigenous Training Ministries, Inc. <http://www.revc.org/>, accessed on 20 September 2017.

²⁷ Cru is a caring community passionate about connecting people to Jesus Christ. <https://www.cru.org/>, accessed on 20 September 2017.

²⁸ A. Bring, “Being Macedonian Matters,” <https://www.cru.org/communities/locations/europe/macedonia/being-macedonian-matters.html>, accessed on 20 September 2017.

considers the creation of a new church. It is thought that in this way, the churches following this format will be able to become much closer to the believers and to the potential believers and sympathizers.

Methodological Framework

I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them.
James P. Spradley

Based on insight from the available secondary database (from different sources) and the review of relevant literature, the following research questions were formulated, which serve as a guide for collecting primary data:

1. What is the structure of the believers of the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities?
2. What is the origin of the believers in the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities?
3. According to the representatives of the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities, what is the public role of religion in the contemporary Macedonian society?
4. Is there cooperation between Evangelical Protestant religious communities and others?

The research design of this paper is cross-sectional,²⁹ since the collection of empirical records takes place in a precisely determined time interval (September 1-21, 2017). The collected empirical evidence enables the creation of a "proper representation in depth" for the Evangelical Protestant religious communities by the surveyed population.³⁰

²⁹ A. Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, (Oxford University Press, 2012), 59.

³⁰ W. L. Newman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, (Pearson New International Edition, Seventh Edition, Pearson Education Limited, 2014), 44.

In this paper, the methods used to collect empirical data were an individual online interview and a telephone interview. The sample was purposely stratified and the respondents were persons from religious communities who were in a certain leadership position or were representatives or preachers of the same.³¹ The sample was composed of 12 respondents, from ages 29 to 70, and all were citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. The prepared interview was sent to 12 representatives of religious communities. Ten interviews were completed and returned in the expected time interval. Only men were interviewed in the sample. Out of this number, three interviewees completed secondary education, and the rest completed higher education that were mostly theological. As for their place of residence, nine interviewees lived in Skopje, and only one interviewee lived in Strumica. The interviewees gave their oral informative consent in advance when asked. All interviewed persons were guaranteed anonymity, as well as adequate protection of the given information, meaning their storing, processing and interpretation, and presentation.

Regarding epistemology, it should be emphasized that this paper's goal is to acquire a contextual perception and understanding³² of the main topics (categories) of the research questions. The analysis of the qualitative database was focused on the perceptions and interpretations, i.e., the experiences of the interviewees in relation to the defined categories in the research questions. During the interpretation and presentation of the qualitative empirical database, the author, at his or her own discretion, synthesized and presented certain questions as synthetic indicators, while other *points* from the responses of the interviewees are indicated in their original format (as recorded). The quotes of the interviewees here are used as proof of their

³¹ The working population for the sample is taken from the list of churches, religious communities and religious groups, posted on the website of the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups, <http://www.kovz.gov.mk/?ItemID=625A03A44FFB9A479DA77DF1C5CD4E3E>. Accessed on 4.03.2017.

³² Ibid., 28-31.

attitude, illustration, and opportunity to better understand the key notion of change, which are in function of the findings and conclusions of the paper itself. However, we should keep in mind that diversity prevails in the responses, i.e., the originality of the vocabulary used and the presentation of the attitudes and experiences. However, in order to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, the author has made minor corrections on the presentation of the data. On certain topics (categories), there is saturation or a greater degree of repetition, while in others, the degree is smaller. Concluding observations refer to the surveyed population.

Empirical Results and Discussion

Things do not change, we change.
Henry David Thoreau

Based on insight from the secondary database, we get an initial picture of the emergence and development of Protestant communities in Macedonian society. According to the available empirical database, in contemporary Macedonian society, there is a total of 12 Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities. They are mostly determined as churches, in terms of their structure.

According to the number of believers, a small proportion of religious communities have more than 1,000 believers, as per their estimate. The data obtained from the interviewees are shown below in the table. For religious communities that were not interviewed, their official figures that were given in other documents are shown.

We should also take into consideration the character of some of the current missions in Macedonian society, which are largely determined for church planting of new churches, where the number of believers is about 40. In fact, it is considered that establishing many churches as

possible, when the conditions are met, is a better solution for covering the Macedonian space in order to reach as many people and families as possible.

There is no entry of data for the Anglican Church because it is a church dedicated to working with its believers in Macedonia, and of course, there are also believers from Macedonia who do not belong to this church (they are most often believers of the United Methodist Church.³³)

Table No. 3 – Estimations related to the number of believers in Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities

	Religious evangelical-protestant collectivities	Estimation – 2008	Estimation – 2008 %	Estimation – 2017	Estimation – 2017 %
1.	United Methodist Church	5000	65.4%	4000 ³⁴	59.2%
2.	Christian Baptist Church – Good news	100	1.3%	100	1.5%
3.	Christian Baptist Church – God’s Voice	-	-	100	1.5%
4.	God’s Church	300	3.9%	300	4.4%
5.	Evangelical Church	2000	26.1%	1500	22.2%
6.	Evangelical-Congregation Church	-		450	6.7%
7.	Christian Centre	250	3.3%	No figure ³⁵	

³³The service on September 17, 2017 was led by the superintendent of the United Methodist Church Wilfried Nausner.

³⁴ In his interview, the representative emphasized that they are in a phase of counting and that he believes that their faithful number about 4,000 pilgrims.

8.	Christian Church – The Word of Hope	-	-	100	1.5%
9.	Free Evangelical Church – Good News	-	-	30	0.4%
10.	Evangelical –protestant Church - Glasnost	-	-	40	0.6%
11.	Christian Church - Oaza	-	-	100	1.5%
12.	Christian Community - Trinitas	-	-	35	0.5%
	Total	7650	100,0%	6755	100,0%

Source: Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, (2008/2009), Address Book of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups in Macedonia, Skopje and Sociological research - Protestantism in Macedonia, ISJPR, Skopje, 2017.

When comparing the two estimates of the believers, as given by the representatives of those religious communities, there is a noticeable decline in the number of believers (895) over nine years. This decline is striking in the two largest religious communities. On one hand, the multiplication of religious collectivities or church planting results in the creation of new churches with a relatively small number of believers.

For the decline in the number of religious collectivities, the interviewees most often indicate migration, pointing first to the decrease of the number of residents, particularly of the young. The general migration flows, especially the migration of young people, seem to have left a stamp on the religious population of the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities in Macedonia.

³⁵ The interviewer did not specify a number for his fellow believers and is not taken into account in this table.

a. Religious Practice of the Believers

One of the key issues in the sociology of religion is the structure of the religious population in relation to the personal religious identification and of course, the religious practice. This research analyzes the religious practice through a three-fold classification of levels of religious practice and of course, the category of supporters. This thematic unit was covered by several questions that stratifies the religious population into several categories.

Based on the answers to the questions posed in the interview, in regards to the religious practice of the believers in the religious communities themselves, we can break the believers down into the following categories:

1. Active believers (who go to church every week or more often)
2. Semi-active or occasionally active
3. Inactive or passive
4. Supporters.

According to the answers of the interviewees from the 10 Evangelical-Protestant religious collectivities, for most of them, their believers were essentially active. A majority of active believers regularly or attend the regular services at least once a week. The number of active believers, compared with the total number of believers, is generally greater in the more recent religious collectivities, unlike those that have existed for a much longer period. Another interviewee suggested that about half of his believers were active. We should emphasize that in smaller religious communities, a greater number of their believers are active and are regularly present in the weekly services. At the same time, they are engaged in various activities that, as projects, are prepared and realized by their religious collectivity. According to the response of

one interviewee, the weekly services in his community were attended by about 10 percent of their total number of believers or more. Two interviewees did not provide an appropriate answer.

For almost all interviewed representatives of religious communities, work in smaller groups was very important (defined as domestic communities), which gather in their homes during the week. At the same time, some of the preachers pointed out that they often have activities related to the study of particular Bible themes at home, that is, in smaller domestic communities.

The number of semi-active believers is usually noticeable on major holidays, when their number is far greater. Therefore, one of the interviewees stressed that "then the very object [space] is too small to receive all believers ... but only then." However, the rate or the number of semi-active members seems to play a significant role in traditional religious communities, where going to church on major holidays is part of family tradition. Semi-active believers, however, are not well-represented in the Evangelical-Protestant religious communities established in recent times.

Passive members, nominally declared as believers of a particular religion, are also more present in the larger and older religious collectivities. The number of passive members in these collectivities is significant and they attend church only at significant events in their lives that they celebrate in church (such as a baptism, wedding or funeral). However, there is also a certain number of passive believers in the recent Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities, but it is far smaller.

Specific to the Evangelical Protestant religious communities is the visit of supporters to Sunday services, and sometimes to other events and activities. For some particular religious communities, the regular attendance of a particular group, who are not believers, but are present,

is characteristic. At the same time, according to one interviewee, some of them go, then return, some do not appear, and new ones also appear. Another interviewee emphasized that various activities were organized by his religious community in order to introduce their faith to friends, relatives, and colleagues. Of these, about 10 percent have attended Sunday services in the capacity of supporters at least once. Other interviewees have pointed to relatively small numbers, while one emphasized that their future believers were among their supporters. Some supporters need a longer period of time to see who they were and to approach them, concluded another interviewee. One of the interviewees emphasized that they have up to 50 supporters attend their services.

b. Origin of the Believers

Regarding the origin of the believers in the Evangelical Protestant religious communities, three modalities are listed:

- Protestant
- Origin from other religious non-Protestant communities, and
- Unknown and atheists.

Regarding the processed responses of interviewees, it should be noted that among the traditional Protestant religious communities, the number of believers originating from Protestant families is around 80 percent. However, that rate is far smaller in other Protestant collectivities or is not represented at all.

Most believers of the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities are of Orthodox origin (from 30 percent to 95 percent), while the number of believers of Muslim origin is significantly smaller. Some are atheists, that is, they do not have their own religious affiliation.

Table No. 4 - Origin of believers in Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities

	Religious Evangelical-Protestant collectivities	Estimation – 2017	Protestant	Orthodox	Muslim	Non religions	Unknown
1.	United Methodist Church	4000 ³⁶	80%	20%			
2.	Christian Baptist Church – Radosna vest	100	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Christian Baptist Church – God’s Voice	100	-	90%	-	-	10%
4.	God`s Church	300	-	-	-	-	-
5.	Evangelical Church	1500	3.5%	95%	-	-	-
6.	Evangelical-Congregation Church	450	10%	30%	30%	20	10%
7.	Christian Center	No figure ³⁷	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Christian Church – the Word of Hope	100	10%	90%	-	-	-
9.	Free Evangelical Church – Good News	30	20%	80%	-	-	-
10.	Evangelical –protestant Church - Glasnost	40	-	60%	5%	35%	-
11.	Christian Church - Oaza	100	-	Orthodox and un-known			
12.	Christian Community -	35	10%	80%	-	-	10%

³⁶ In his interview, the representative emphasized that they are in a phase of counting and that he believes that their faithful number about 4,000 pilgrims.

³⁷ The interviewee did not specify a number for his fellow believers and is not taken into account in this table.

	Trinitas						
	Total	6755	100.0%				

Source: Protestantism in Macedonia, ISJPR, Skopje, 2017.

For the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities, especially among the Roma population, the migration of believers from one to another religious collectivity is typical. One preacher that was interviewed noted that this was a normal phenomenon. He explained that when believers feel another church can take them faster to the goal, they move there. According to another interviewee, migration tends to occur because young believers are looking for a suitable place (company, type of celebration, opportunity to be involved in the community activities, seeking spouse), type of religious services, and character of leaders. The same interviewee noted that if there is a theological disagreement, the individual will leave the given religious community. As other interviewees have noted, there is also migration due to disappointment and conflict. One of the interviewees associated the migration from one to another Evangelical-Protestant community with the stability of the personality. Another interviewee recommended that the believer should choose a community (church) in which he will invest himself personally and will be the generator of the growth of the same, in good and bad. Two other interviewees recommended that in case of the migration of believers from one church to another, it is necessary that the leaderships of the two churches should agree on it or discuss it. These interviewees noted that if someone leaves a religious community due to a conflict, the two sides should be encouraged to come to a dialogue and reconciliation. Only one interviewee stated that there was no migration of believers in his religious community.

c. Public Role of the Religion

Religion in the 1980s “went public” in a dual sense. It entered the “public sphere” and gained, thereby, “publicity.” Various “publics” – the mass media, social scientists, professional politicians, and the “public at large” – suddenly began to pay attention to religion. The unexpected public interest derived from the fact that religion, leaving its assigned place in the private sphere, had thrust itself into the public arena of moral and political contestation.

Jose Casanova

Regarding the public role of religion, we posed a question in our interviews on the role of religion in public morality and the sphere of social policy. When it comes to morality in general, the need for religion to give its own support, its foundations and of course, to take care to embody them, are stressed. Often, when linking religion and morality, it is suggested that religion should be a "source" of moral behavior and help overcome the contemporary crisis of values. In this paper, representatives of the religious communities have spoken about the engagement of their communities in the social sphere (assistance to the vulnerable and marginalized groups in the society).

Regarding the public role of their religion, most of the Evangelical Protestant religious communities clearly noted their role in the social sphere, indicating a series of activities such as opening and operating folk cuisine, other types of humanitarian activities, sharing packages and visits, and work with vulnerable categories of their society. They also specifically underlined their role in the field of morality, through the power of personal examples.

One interviewee emphasized his many years of work in the social field and of course, his great experience and numerous other positive examples. He also pointed to the educative side in carrying out all these activities. According to one interviewee, “Helping the vulnerable categories” is “a part of the Christian life.” Another interviewee wrote: "We are trying to give and do our best to make our society better both morally and materially, and above all spiritually."

A third interviewee emphasized: "The religious community is responsible to teach biblical morality, ethics and practical application of biblical truth ... to be an example in practicing Bible standards and transmitting them to our believers and to influence the society..." His role in the social sphere was explained through a number of various activities: "visits and assistance to homes with orphans, delivery of food packages to socially endangered families in most of the municipalities, completing the education of nurses, aid in food, clothing, organizing tribunals and public appearances with the invitation of motivational speakers who have a certain disability (e.g. Nick Vuicic)." He also emphasized that their church specifically devotes itself to public morality "through regular instructions, but ... we also use the media for placing the basic values in and about the life."

In his interview, one interviewee described their role as "partners of the civic initiative *re-tweet meal*, and every Friday we open the premises of our church for cooking food," which are then shared. Two interviewees expressed their readiness and their preparations to personally get involved in these types of activities soon.

To summarize the analyzed answers about the role of the religious collectivities in undertaking activities in the social sphere, I would like to emphasize that the respondents consider it to be an extremely important social sphere, in which they are included and show good results. Regarding the morality issues, they have noted their role, saying that they should demonstrate a "practical example" in society.

d. Cooperation between the Evangelic Protestant Religious Communities and Others

In this thematic unit, the interviewees were asked about their attitude regarding the established Evangelical-Protestant cooperation, the formation of a joint initiative, and whether it

should be deepened. It was also important to see their experience and of course, their attitude towards the cooperation with non-Protestant religious communities in Macedonia.

According to the answers of the interviewed representatives, regarding the cooperation with other Evangelical-Protestant religious collectivities, generally speaking, the positive impulse was noticeable and of course, they saw the need for the established cooperation to be further deepened. An interviewee stated that "this cooperation and the formation of joint initiatives is something quite natural considering that most churches are much related and close ... the joint appearance for various initiatives is quite natural and in time it will deepen." Another interviewee pointed out that "the formation of joint initiatives is not only of interest to the Evangelical Protestant community in the Republic of Macedonia, but in the interest and well-being of all the citizens." A third interviewee explained that "the Evangelical Protestant Initiative is a phenomenal work that is highly needed. But what is significant is that this initiative exists and functions beyond formality, it is based on good mutual relations and growing trust, which promises it's deepening." The next interviewee also expressed a positive attitude, and he explained this by noting "we all have the same goal, to show people the way ... so there should be no rivalry between the Churches." In that spirit, the next interviewee stressed "every form of cooperation is useful and must be deepened." Only one of the interviewees expressed skepticism regarding the deepening of the cooperation between the Evangelical Protestant churches.

The cooperation of the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities with other religious collectivities in Macedonia is relatively small. Keeping in mind the responses of the interviewees, it is noticeable that it is either absent or reduced to a minimum. There is a desire, but it is not realized, according to one interviewee. Only one person that was interviewed listed

some activities in relation to the cooperation with the non-Protestant religious collectivities in Macedonia.

To briefly summarize this topic, the cooperation between Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities is indicated to be dominant, but there is also a willingness to extend it to other religious collectivities. Also significant is the general positive perception of the interviewees about the cooperation in the existing Evangelical-Protestant initiative, as well as the need to further deepen it.

Concluding Remarks

The Evangelical Protestant religious communities in these regions have been present for a long period, starting from the second half of the nineteenth century. The American missionaries were the first to begin the establishment of Protestant communities and churches. Missionary activities resulted in the formation of numerous communities and churches, both in the past and present. As a result of the active missionary activities in these regions, today in Macedonia, there are 12 Evangelical Protestant collectivities, with less than 7,000 believers. The missioning takes place through the key patterns of church planting and the connection of the Macedonian communities with different networks, organizations, and communities to achieve a more successful mission. In each church, there is a particular missionary framework or organization.

Evangelical Protestant religious communities are traditional and contemporary. Half of the registered Evangelical Protestant religious communities are Pentecostal. The origin of believers in these communities is Protestant among the believers who have been present for a longer period, while conversion from existing religious collectivities is significant for the religious communities that were formed later.

Regarding the public role of religion, the interviewees emphasized that moral values should arise from the religious resources of the religious communities. As for the role of religious communities in their engagement in the social sphere, the attitude that the Evangelical Protestant religious communities in Macedonia are particularly and significantly involved in this extraordinarily important sphere is prevalent. The need for cooperation of the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities is an important segment of their current and further action.

Taking into account the limitations during the preparation of this paper, hopefully this research can be a small contribution to the ongoing discussion on contemporary Protestantism in Macedonia and in this direction, it can give its modest contribution to the conceptualization of future research.

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PROTESTANTISM IN MACEDONIA - TODAY

(Sociological Research)

Skopje - 1.11.2017

ИСТИНУТ ЗА
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INTRODUCTION

- In the contemporary Macedonian society there are a total of **12 Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities** in total. In the Unique Court Register of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups, 10 are registered as churches, one as a centre and another one as a community.
- These **Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities in Macedonia have been present for a longer period**, starting from the second half of the nineteenth century. During this period, various Protestant missions cross into Macedonia, which led to the creation of more new collectivities.
- The number of believers according to their own estimation is around **7000 believers**.

Table – Estimations related to the number of believers in Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities

	Religious evangelical-protestant collectivities		Religious evangelical-protestant collectivities	
	Estimation - 2008	Estimation - 2008 (%)	Estimation - 2017	Estimation - 2017 (%)
1. United Methodist Church	5000	65.4%	4000	59.2%
2. Christian Baptist Church – Good news	100	1.3%	100	1.5%
3. Christian Church – God's Voice	-	-	100	1.5%
4. Church of God	300	3.9%	300	4.4%
5. Evangelical Church	2000	26.1%	1500	22.2%
6. Evangelical-Congregation Church	-	-	450	6.7%
7. Christian Centre	250	3.3%	No figure	-
8. Christian Church – The Word of Hope	-	-	100	1.5%
9. Free Evangelical Church – Good News	-	-	30	0.4%
10. Evangelical – protestant Church - Glasnost	-	-	40	0.6%
11. Christian Church - Oasis	-	-	100	1.5%
12. Trinity - Christian Fellowship	-	-	35	0.5%
Total	7650	100.0%	6755	100.0%

- The Anglican Congregation in Skopje
- Christian Movement New Hope – Skopje as a religious group with specific mission.
- Christian Center "Love"

Comparing the two estimations of the believers, given by the representatives of the very religious collectivities, it is noticeable the decline in the number of believers (895) in nine years. This decline is striking in the two largest religious collectivities. On the other hand, the multiplication of religious collectivities or church planting results in the creation of new churches with a relatively small number of believers.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK Research Questions

- What is the structure of the believers of the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities (according to their religious practice)?
- What is the origin of the believers in the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities?
- What is the public role of religion in the contemporary Macedonian society?
- What is the cooperation between Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities and others?

The method used to collect empirical data is **on-line individual and telephone interview**.

The sample is purposive stratified and the respondents are persons from the religious collectives who are in a certain leadership position in the collectivity or are representatives or preachers of the same. The sample is composed of 12 respondents. 10 interviews were completed and returned in the expected time interval. Only men are interviewed in the sample.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

- Theory of secularization / Revitalization of religion
- De-privatization and public role of Religion (H.Casanova)
- Crisis of religion (S.Vrcan)
- Missions as a diffusion of religion (H.Casanova)

Protestant missions in Macedonia

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious practice of the believers

- Active believers (who go to church every week or more)
- Semi-active or occasionally active
- Inactive or passive
- Supporters.

According to the answers, the believers are basically active. The number of active believers, compared to the total number of believers, is generally greater in the more recent religious collectivities, unlike those that exist for a longer period. The number of semi-active believers is noticeable on major holidays, when their number is far greater. The number of semi-active members plays a significant role in traditional religious collectivities, where going to church on the major holidays is part of the family tradition. Semi-active believers are relatively little represented in the Protestant religious collectivities established in recent times.

As passive members, nominally declared as believers, they are also more present in the larger and older religious collectivities. The number of passive members in these collectivities is significant and they attend the church only at the most significant events of their life that they celebrate in the church (such as baptism, wedding or funeral).

Specific for these religious collectivities is the attendance of the supporters to week services, and sometimes to other events and activities.

Table – The Origin of the Believers in the Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities

Religious Evangelical-Protestant collectivities	Estimation - Number of believers 2017	The Origin of the Believers				
		Protestant	Orthodox	Muslim	Non religious	Unknown
1. United Methodist Church	4000	80%	-	20%	-	-
2. Christian Baptist Church – Good news	100	-	-	-	-	-
3. Christian Church – God's Voice	100	-	90%	-	-	10%
4. Church of God	300	-	-	-	-	-
5. Evangelical Church	1500	3.5%	95%	-	-	-
6. Evangelical-Congregation Church	450	10%	30%	30%	20	10%
7. Christian Center	No figure	-	-	-	-	-
8. Christian Church – The Word of Hope	100	10%	90%	-	-	-
9. Free Evangelical Church – Good News	30	20%	80%	-	-	-
10. Evangelical-protestant Church - Glasnost	40	-	60%	5%	35%	-
11. Christian Church - Oasis	100	-	Orthodox and unknown	-	-	-
12. Trinity - Christian Fellowship	35	10%	80%	-	-	10%
Total	6755	100.0%				

The origin of believers in these collectivities is Protestant among the believers who are traditionally present, while conversion from existing religious collectivities is significant for the religious collectivities that are formed later.

Public role of the religion

As a summary of the analysed answers about the role of the religious collectivities in undertaking activities in the social sphere, it is important to emphasize that the respondents consider that it is about an extremely important social sphere, in which they are included and show good results. Regarding the morality issues, they point out their role, saying that they should demonstrate a "practical example" in society.

The cooperation

- The Alliance of Protestant and Evangelical Churches
 - Evangelical Protestant Initiative
- As a kind of summary on this topic, it can be indicated that the cooperation between Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities is dominant, but that there is a willingness to extend it to other religious collectivities. Significant is not only the general positive perception of the interviewees about the cooperation in the existing Evangelical-Protestant initiative, but also the need to further deepen it.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities in these regions have been present for a longer period, starting from the second half of the nineteenth century. The American missionaries are the first who began the establishment of Protestant communities and churches. Missionary activities result in the formation of numerous communities and churches, both in the past and today. The missionary activities are performed through the key patterns of church planting and connecting the Macedonian collectivities with different networks, organizations, communities for more successful mission. Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities are traditional and contemporary. Half of the registered Evangelical Protestant religious collectivities are Pentecostal.

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