

# **Christian and Non-Christian Religiosity in Estonia in the 1990s: Comparison of Estonians and Other Ethnic Groups**

Jaanus Plaat

First, this article<sup>1</sup> gives a survey of religious movements and congregations in Estonia and their membership in the 1990s, starting with the so-called Singing Revolution in 1989–1990 and finishing with the year 2000 when, after 66 years, a census was conducted in Estonia at which people were also asked questions about their religion. The survey also dwells upon the most essential changes in the development of bigger denominations during the past decade. The main emphasis is laid on the comparison between Estonians, Estonian Russians and other national groups. Therefore, the article provides a more lengthy treatment of the situation in Russian Orthodox congregations and a survey of the proportion of non-Estonians in Estonian religious associations in the 1990s. When treating religious associations, the author has made use of the data provided by the Department of Religious Affairs at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which keeps count of the denominations registered in Estonia; also the treatment is based on the archive of the Soviet-time Commissioner of Religious Affairs, the data of the census conducted in 2000, and the statistical materials of different religious denominations themselves.

The second part of the article deals with the issue of faith of Estonians, Russians and other ethnic groups on the basis of sociological surveys all over Estonia and separately in East Virumaa as the county with the greatest number of non-Estonian population. Data on Estonia have also been compared to other European countries, putting to the test the author's hypothesis claiming that in the 1990s Estonia was one

<sup>1</sup> The article was written with the support of grant No. 3706 allocated by the Estonian Science Foundation.

of the most secularized countries in Europe. The main issues dwelt upon are as follows: Is there any difference and how big is it between the Christian and non-Christian religiosity of Estonians and other ethnic groups? What are the main changes that have occurred concerning the above in the 1990s? What are the regional differences between the religiosity of Estonians and non-Estonians? What is the position of Orthodoxy and Lutheranism among Estonians and Russians? What is the relation of Christian and non-Christian beliefs in the world view of Estonians and other ethnic groups? Are non-Christian beliefs more widely spread among Christians or non-Christians?

## **1. Religious associations and their membership in Estonia in the 1990s**

According to the data found in the Archive of the Commissioner of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults<sup>2</sup>, 371 registered congregations operated in Estonia in 1989. These congregations belonged to the eight denominations which had officially operated and were registered in Soviet Estonia since the 1940s (Lutheran, Orthodox, Catholic and Methodist Churches, Jewish, Old Believers' and the Seventh-Day Adventists' congregations, and the Evangelical Christian and Baptist Union, hereinafter the ECBU<sup>3</sup>, which comprised free congregations that acted independently before the Soviet period), as well as four religious associations registered in the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the aforementioned, several unregistered congregations operated, as well as some new religious movements that had reached Estonia during the independence movement at the end of the 1980s (the so-called Singing Revolution).

<sup>2</sup> Part of the materials of the Archive of the Estonian Commissioner of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults of the Soviet Union (ACARC) is in the Estonian State Archive and part of the documents is held in the Archive of the Department of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Estonia. In this article, the author has used the following collections of the latter: "Otshety i spravki o sostojanii i dejatel'nosti tserkvei v Estonskoi SSR" (OS); "Perepiska s raznymi sovetskimi organami i obshchestvennymi organizatsiami po voprosam religii" (PSO).

<sup>3</sup> Historically the ECBU was made up of the Baptist and Free Believers' congregations initiated in West Estonia in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the congregations of Evangelical Christians and Pentecostalists, which spread in Estonia in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>4</sup> ACARC, OS, 1989, d. 3, l. 16–17; ACARC, OS, 1990, d. 3, l. 5–6, 21, 26, 60; ACARC, PSO, 1990, d. 344, l. 60; *Me õnnistame...* 1997; see also Plaata 2001: 466–468. In the 1980s the congregations of Pentecostalists, "The Word of Life", the Seventh-Day Baptists and Muslims were officially registered. According to Raigo Liiman, also six Jehovah's Witnesses' and one Reformed Baptist congregation had been registered by 1989 (2001: 32, 85–86).

Beginning from the late 1980s, the number of different religious associations started to grow rapidly. This happened, first and foremost, due to revolutionary events in Estonian society, which resulted in the re-establishment of the independent Republic of Estonia in 1991.

There exists no reliable statistics about all the denominations that operated in Estonia in the 1990s. As concerns the officially registered ones, they have been kept count of by the Department of Religious Affairs founded in 1990. This department co-ordinating relations between the state and religious organizations, was transferred under the subordination of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1993. By January 1, 2000, 518 congregations had been registered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Sixty of them were independent congregations, which did not belong to any of the fifteen Estonian churches or unions of congregations. In addition to these, the Pühtitsa Orthodox Nunnery and several orders of the Roman Catholic Church were registered.<sup>5</sup> This group does not include unregistered religious associations<sup>6</sup>, among whom the Orthodox congregations subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate had the greatest membership. All in all, more than 550 congregations were supposed to be operating in Estonia by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

So it can be said that most of the different confessions (including independent congregations) operating in the present Republic of Estonia spread here only at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s, when the borders were reopened. A number of denominations that had operated in Estonia till that time also became more active. On the crest of the national reawakening movement as well as in the 1990s a great many Estonian people (re)discovered for themselves religion, from which most of them had estranged during the Soviet period.

However, a great part of those who joined congregations in late 1980s and early 1990s, have again drifted away from their congregations in the 1990s. This also happened to the **Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC)**, which was the most numerous and most influential Estonian religious association in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among the

<sup>5</sup> The list of religious associations registered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs see: Au, Ringvee 2000: 132–138.

<sup>6</sup> Tens of religious organizations or societies, which were registered on the basis of the Law on Non-Profit Associations and their Unions in the years 1994–1996 at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and beginning from 1996 in the registrar's departments of city courts, are not included among these 518 congregations.

old denominations, the influence of the EELC increased the most at the turn of the 1980s–1990s. There occurred an explosive growth in the numbers of religious rites, which by the 1970s–1980s had diminished almost to a zero.<sup>7</sup> Yet, beginning from 1992 the corresponding numbers started to diminish rapidly again. This can be explained by the fact that the “church boom” at the turn of the 1980s–1990s passed quickly and church life set back to normal beginning from the mid-1990s. As compared to the culminating moment of the “church boom”, the number of baptisms in the EELC congregations had fallen from 18,608 in 1990 to 3,869 in 2000, that of the confirmed – from 11,691 to 2,829, and the number of weddings from 1,752 to 423.<sup>8</sup>

One of the best indicators concerning the real connection with Lutheran Church in Estonia is the donating members, whose number has been constantly decreasing since 1994. While in 1990 the 62,455 donating members of the EELC constituted 4% of the total population of Estonia, then in 2000, there were only 47,112 donating members or 3.4% of the total population of Estonia.<sup>9</sup>

The number of the 15-year-old and older inhabitants of Estonia, who admitted being Lutherans at the census of 2000 (152,237 people or 14.8% of those who answered the question about religion), exceeded 3.2 times the number of donating members of the Lutheran Church in 2000. A whole 8.1% of the population of Estonia did not answer the voluntary question about religion (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 17). It can be assumed that most of them did it to express their indifference towards religion and actually did not practise it. The number of people who claimed to be Lutherans at the census constituted 11.1% of the total population of Estonia. The EELC itself quoted 176,040 as the number of its (baptized) members in 2000 (12.8% of the total population of Estonia). Obviously most of the baptized people testified to being Lutherans at the census, although most of them did not have very close connections with the church.

<sup>7</sup> The number of baptisms in EELC, for instance, dropped from 11,437 in 1937 to 617 in 1977, that of confirmations from 10,530 to 543, that of weddings from 6,227 to 205, and that of funeral services from 11,995 to 4,085 (EELK 1938: 18; Sild, Salo 1995: 225).

<sup>8</sup> Hereinafter the EELC statistics of the 1990s is taken from the home page of Lutheran Church: [http://www.eelk.ee/tab\\_arvandmoo.html](http://www.eelk.ee/tab_arvandmoo.html).

<sup>9</sup> Percentages of the total number of population have been calculated on the basis of the census data conducted in 1989 and 2000. About the statistics of the membership and religious rites of the EELC in 1987–1999 see: Plaat 2001: 262.

By the number of its members, the second confession in Estonia is **Orthodoxy**. The Russian Orthodox Church started to spread more widely in Estonia after the Estonians' extensive change from Lutheranism to Russian Orthodoxy in South Estonia in the 1840s and a corresponding movement in North Estonia in the 1880s (Kruus 1930; Rebane 1933; Plaata 2001: 127–138). Since then the Orthodox Church together with the congregations of Russian Old Believers has also been the biggest confession in Estonia uniting non-Estonians.

The Russian Orthodox Church that operated in Soviet Estonia, had 78 congregations in 1989, with a membership of approximately 16,000–17,000 (according to the data of the Commissioner of Religious Affairs).<sup>10</sup> In 1993 the Ministry of Internal Affairs registered the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (EAOC), which had been established after the Republic of Estonia became independent in 1918, and which went under the canonical subordination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1923. During the Soviet occupation the continuity of the church went over to EAOC in exile. In 1996 the prevalingly Estonian-language congregations of the EAOC again went under the subordination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Due to that the Orthodox congregations in Estonia were divided into two in the 1990s, as most Russian-language congregations remained faithful to the Moscow Patriarchate. The latter, however, were not registered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the 1990s, except for the Alexander Nevsky congregation in Tallinn and the Pühtitsa Nunnery, which were directly under the subordination of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Both unions of Orthodox congregations named themselves EAOC and through the 1990s glaring contradictions between the two churches concerning the issues of the continuity of the EAOC and the church treasures attracted people's attention in both Estonia and Russia. By 2000 the EAOC subordinated to Constantinople and led by Metropolitan Stephanos (Stefanos Charalambidis) had about 18,000 members in 58 congregations. Only three of them were predominantly Russian-speaking congregations. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the number of congregations in Estonia subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate was 32. Most of them were registered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs only in the spring of 2002 as congregations of the

<sup>10</sup> See: Liiman 2001: 32; Plaata 2001: 466.

Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (EOCMP).<sup>11</sup> In the 1990s the membership of mainly Russian congregations obviously exceeded that of mainly Estonian congregations belonging under Constantinople.

At the census of 2000, 143,554 Estonian citizens or 13.9% of those who answered this question determined themselves as Orthodox. From among the total population of Estonia the Orthodox constituted 10.5%, which was scarcely below the proportion of the Lutherans. 72.9% of the Estonian Orthodox were Russians. The number of Estonians determining themselves as Orthodox was 18,517 (12.9%). According to the census data 351,178 Russians lived in Estonia. From among those over 15 years old, who answered the question about religion, 38.5% or 104,698 people determined themselves as Orthodox. In comparison it can be said that from among the Estonians who answered the question about religion, 145,712 people or 21.1% testified to being Lutherans (*2000. aasta... 2001: 78–79; 2000. aasta... 2002: 17–18, 328*).

Russian-language Orthodox congregations can be considered stronger than the Estonian ones not only by the number of members, but also by their substantial work and influence, considering the shrinking of small country congregations of the EAOC and the acute shortage of clergymen in comparison to the EOCMP. In 1999 the EAOC had only 19 priests and 2 deacons for 58 congregations, whereas the EOCMP had more clergymen than congregations: 34 priests and 9 deacons (Liiman 2001: 87).

So by the year 2000 the number of people in Estonia who regarded themselves as Orthodox had become almost equal to that of Lutherans. This happened, above all, due to the great number of orthodox non-Estonians, the fading influence of the EELC in society<sup>12</sup> and the increasing influence of the Orthodox Church subordinated to the

<sup>11</sup> In addition to the earlier registered Alexander Nevsky congregation in Tallinn and the Pühtitsa Nunnery congregation in East Virumaa, 30 congregations under the subordination of the Moscow Patriarchate were registered in April-May 2002. 11 of them operate in East Virumaa and 6 in Tallinn (see: <http://www.infonet.ee/~ettnat/Eestikir.html>). In April 1999 the number of EOCMP congregations including the nunnery was 30, only three of them were predominantly Estonian-language (Liiman 2001: 87).

<sup>12</sup> The number of donating members of the EELC has been diminishing also at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to the Lutheran Church sources, in 2001, the number of donating members of the EELC amounted to 45,172, which makes up 3.3% of the total population of Estonia and is only slightly more than in 1987 (3.2%) and 6 times less than in 1937 (*Eesti... 1938: 18; Me õnnistame... 1997*).

Moscow Patriarchate among the Russian-language population in the 1990s. The same tendency has also been confirmed by the sociological surveys conducted in the 1990s, part of which revealed even higher percentages of the Russian Orthodox in society than the census of the year 2000 (see tables 2–4).

The proportion of Russians is even greater among Estonian **Old Believers**<sup>13</sup>, who, since the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, have settled mainly the western shore of Lake Peipsi. In 2000 Old Believers had 11 congregations, apart from the Peipsi area also in Tartu and Tallinn. In the Soviet period the number of Old Believers decreased considerably and was not completely restored in the 1990s, either. While at the census of 1934, 5276 people in Estonia testified to being Old Believers<sup>14</sup>, then by 1985, according to the Commissioner of Religious Affairs, the membership of Old Believers' congregations had fallen to 600.<sup>15</sup> At the census of 2000, 2515 inhabitants of Estonia determined themselves as Old Believers (*2000. aasta... 2002: 328*).

The membership of Old Believers' congregations as well as that of all the other registered religious associations that operated in the 1990s, was considerably smaller than that of Lutheran and Orthodox Churches. Yet, the calculations of many smaller denominations about their membership do not correspond to the data of the census of 2000. The following table includes denominations with at least 1000 disciples by the data of the census.

**Table 1. Followers of a particular faith (persons aged 15 years and older) and their proportion among those who answered the corresponding question by the data of the census of 2000<sup>16</sup>**

Lutherans	152 237	14.8%
Orthodoxes	143 554	13.9%
Baptists	6 009	0.6%

<sup>13</sup> According to the census of 2000, the percentage of Russians among Estonian Old Believers was 95 (*2000. aasta... 2002: 328*).

<sup>14</sup> Risch 1937: 122, 133. In the 1930s the number of inhabitants in 14 Old Believers' villages amounted to 7000–8000 (Kurs, Berg 1998: 63–64). However, not all of them were Old Believers.

<sup>15</sup> ACARC, OS, 1986, d. 3, l. 77ff. See also Plaat 2001: 221.

<sup>16</sup> The table is compiled on the basis of: *2000. aasta... 2002: 292–297*. 1890 people admitted that they adhered to a certain religion, but did not specify which one. The voluntary question about religion remained unanswered by 90,297 people or 8.1% of over 15-years-old Estonian citizens. If we take into account the total population of Estonia, the percentage of those testifying to a certain religion would be 23.9.

Roman-Catholics	5 745	0.5%
Jehovah's Witnesses	3 823	0.4%
Pentecostals	2 648	0.3%
Old Believers	2 515	0.2%
Adventists	1 561	0.2%
Methodists	1 455	0.1%
Muslims	1 387	0.1%
Non-specified Christians	1 266	0.1%
Taara- or Earth Believers	1 058	0.1%
Other	2 684	0.3%
Religious affiliation unknown	1 890	0.2%
Total:	327 832	31.8%

The census data (and Table 1) obviously include under the term “Baptists” most of the members of the **ECBU**. The biggest union of free congregations in Estonia comprised 85 congregations by 1999, eight of them predominantly Russian-speaking (*Aastakonverents...* 1999; Liiman 2001: 87). According to the census of 2000, Russians constituted 13.6% of the “Baptists” and other nationalities – 7.9% (*2000. aasta...* 2002: 328). By the statistics of the ECBU they had 5970 members at the beginning of 2000 (*Teekäija*, No. 4, 2002, p. 9).

In the 1990s the congregations of the **Roman Catholic Church** have successfully operated mostly in towns. To the two congregations, which in 1989 had approximately 800 members (Plaat 2001: 466), six more were added by 2000. Also several orders of the Roman Catholic Church started or resumed their activities in Estonia in the 1990s. By the year 2000 two male orders and six sisterhoods were represented. The membership of Estonian Catholic congregations amounted to about 3000 believers in 2000.<sup>17</sup> Yet the census of the same year revealed that the number of people in Estonia regarding themselves as Catholics was almost two times bigger. However, most of them are obviously not very closely connected with the local Catholic congregations. The 5745 Catholics were grouped as follows: 30.2% – Estonians, 15.1% – Poles, 14.5% – Belorussians, 13% – Lithuanians and 12.4% – Russians.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> According to the data from Vello Salo, a Catholic priest. These data differ from those presented by Ilmo Au and Ringo Ringvee, who claim that by 2000 the church registers included seven congregations of the Roman Catholic Church with 3500 members, three orders of nuns and one order of monks (2000: 15–16).

<sup>18</sup> *2000. aasta...* 2002: 328–329. Services in Estonian Catholic congregations are held in Latin, Estonian, Polish, Lithuanian, English and Russian (Liiman 2001: 87).



In the 1990s the **Jehovah's Witnesses**, whose activity had been prohibited throughout most of the Soviet period, proved to be very successful. In 1989 the Commissioner of Religious Affairs had data about at least 150 Jehovah's Witnesses. By 2000 the membership had grown to 3846. This number also coincides with the results of the census. The number of registered congregations amounted to 11 (Au, Ringvee 2000: 73). Together with subsidiary congregations the Jehovah's Witnesses themselves quoted 46 as the number of their congregations, half of them Russian-speaking and the other half – Estonian-speaking.<sup>19</sup> The Jehovah's Witnesses have been one of the most successfully operating confessions spreading among non-Estonians (mainly Russians). According to the data of the census of 2000, the Jehovah's Witnesses comprised 47.7% of Estonians, 34.6% of Russians and 17.4% of other nationalities (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 328–329).

The rapid spread of the movement and especially their intensive missionary work have been a partial reason for the fact that, in comparison to all other confessions spread in Estonia, people's attitude towards the Jehovah's Witnesses has been the most negative throughout the 1990s. This has also been confirmed by the results of sociological surveys on religion conducted under the leadership of the author in seven Estonian counties in the years 1996–2002 (see also: Plaata 2001: 469).

The next most numerous denomination according to the data of the census of 2000 – Pentecostals – obviously includes only part of the members of the **Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church (ECPC)**. In 1999 this church founded in the early 1990s had approximately 3500 members in 39 congregations (including 5 Russian-speaking ones) (Au, Ringvee 2000: 54–55; Liiman 2001: 87). Most probably census officers included part of them under “non-specified Christians”, “other” or any other subdivision, as they marked as their faith “Christianity”, “Christian free faith”, “Evangelical Christianity”, and so on. Obviously the same happened to several other members of free congregations. For that reason, the results of the census concerning different free congregations cannot be regarded as very reliable, the more so that the answers given at the census were classified under 74 different religions (see the list in: 2000. *aasta...* 2002: 292–295).

<sup>19</sup> According to the data of the Bureau of the Union of Estonian Jehovah's Witnesses' Congregations.

According to the census data, from among the other bigger unions of Christian free congregations, Methodists and Adventists have more than 1000 disciples. The majority of the latter is constituted by the members of the congregations of the Estonian Union of the **Seventh-Day Adventists** (SDA). If compared to the census data, the SDA statistics shows a bigger membership. According to the latter, the SDA membership grew from 1041 in 1989 to 1868 in 1999. In the same period the number of congregations increased from 13 to 18; three of them are predominantly Russian-speaking. By the census data, 77.6% of the 1,561 Adventists were Estonians and 15.5% were Russians.

The membership of the **Estonian Methodist Church** (EMC) increased from 1,748 in 1989 to 1880 in 1999, and the number of congregations grew from 15 to 24.<sup>20</sup> Yet, according to the census data, there were 1455 Methodists in Estonia, of whom Estonians constituted 68.6%, Russians – 19.9% and other nationalities – 11.3% (Au, Ringvee 2000: 47–48, 133, 139; Plaat 2001: 466; 2000. *aasta...* 2002: 328–329). In many congregations of the EMC, like in several other Estonian free congregations, services are held both in Estonian and in Russian.

From among other religious associations, whose membership according to their own data presented to the Ministry of Internal Affairs exceeded 1000, but by the census data of 2000 was considerably smaller, the **New Apostolic Church** established in Estonia in 1991 is worth mentioning. According to the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1999 this church had 2,086 members in 10 congregations.<sup>21</sup> By the census of 2000, only 216 people (including 199 Estonians) testified to being the disciples of the New Apostolic Church. By the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as of January 1, 2000, the membership figures of “**The Word of Life**” (approximately 1000 members), the **Union of Estonian Full Gospel Congregations** (approximately 800) and the **Estonian Charismatic Episcopal Church** (302 members) were considerably bigger than those revealed by the census. According to the census data, in 2000 the membership of denominations was the following: “The Word of Life” – 272 members (194 of them Estonians), the Full Gospel Congregations – 192 (114 of them Estonians), and the

<sup>20</sup> According to their own statistics, the EMC had 27 congregations in 1999, 10 of which were predominantly Russian-speaking (Liiman 2001: 87).

<sup>21</sup> Au, Ringvee 2000: 66. Tallinn and Haapsalu congregations also work in Russian (Liiman 2001: 88).

Charismatic Episcopal Church – 61.<sup>22</sup>

The great difference between the data revealed by the census and those quoted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs could be caused by the fact that people determine themselves under different names (e.g., “Christian”), also because part of the congregations consider children under 15 also as members, or just that they are willing to show the membership figures bigger than they actually are.

Most of the 60 **independent congregations** that were registered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs by the beginning of 2000 and did not belong to any unions, had been founded in the 1990s. From these congregations the Estonian Congregation of the Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Gregory (57 members by the census of 2000) and the Congregation of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (12 members) with the membership of the respective national minorities could be mentioned (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 292–295).

From among the followers of non-Christian religions **Muslims** and **Judaists** have also existed for centuries in Estonia. In the Soviet period there was one Jewish congregation operating legally in Estonia; by 2000 there were already three registered congregations. The census quoted 257 as the number of Judaists in Estonia. 219 of them considered themselves as Jews by nationality, 18 – Estonians and 20 – as representatives of other nationalities. The Muslim congregation that had acted non-officially in Soviet Estonia, was registered in the 1990s under the name of Estonian Islamic Congregation. The Estonian Congregation of Muslim Sunnites which split from the latter was registered in 1995. According to the census of 2000 there were 1,387 Muslims in Estonia, whereas 94% of them were non-Estonians.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> These denominations were registered in Estonia beginning from the turn of the 1980s–1990s. In 2000 the Union of Full Gospel Congregations was called the Union of Estonian Evangelical and Free Congregations. The Charismatic Episcopal Church is also connected with part of the “New Life” congregations, the disciples of which, according to the census data of 2000, totalled 39 (Au, Ringvee 2000: 139–140; 2000. *aasta...* 2002: 328–329).

<sup>23</sup> The census quoted as Muslims 754 Tatars, 87 Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians, 83 Estonians, and 455 representatives of other nationalities. If we take into account only clearly differentiated congregations and their unions and not the ones classified under umbrella terms “non-specified Christians” and “Christian free congregations”, Islam occupies the 16<sup>th</sup> position among the religious associations spread among Estonians. It is interesting to mention that, according to this calculation, after Lutherans, Orthodoxes and Baptists, the fourth place was occupied by the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the fifth one – by the Pentecostalists, the eighth place – by Taara- or Earth Believers and the tenth one – by the Buddhists (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 328–329).

From the **religious movements of Eastern origin** that reached Estonia beginning from the end of the 1980s, first and foremost the ones inspired by Hinduism and Buddhism were registered in the 1990s.<sup>24</sup> According to the census of 2000 Buddhists were the most numerous in Estonia (622, of them 528 Estonians). Under the name “Hindu” there were 90 people (including 54 Estonians), under “Hare Krishna” 48 (22) and under “Baha’i”<sup>25</sup> 43 people (21).<sup>26</sup> So about half of the members of the last three religious movements are non-Estonians.

The activity of those of **Taara Faith**, who had already operated in Estonia in the 1920s–1930s, was restored in a modernized form in the 1980s–1990s. The association of Taara and Earth Believers was registered in 1995, and it had about 200 members in 1999 (Au, Ringvee 2000: 110, 140). At the census of 2000, on the other hand, 1,058 people considered themselves as being of Taara or Earth Believers, among them 1,041 Estonians and 6 Russians (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 328–329). The great number of those of Taara and Earth Faith could be explained by the fact that in the surveys conducted by the author in the 1990s, most Estonians considered this particular faith to be the Estonian national religion. For example, from the Estonians in Põlvamaa and East Virumaa, who answered this question in 1999–2000, Taara Faith was considered to be the national religion by 45% and Lutheranism – by 40%.<sup>27</sup> People’s identification with Estonian “national faith” might have caused the considerably larger number of those who at the census marked themselves as being of Taara or Earth Believers, in comparison to the number of members of the officially registered movement.

In addition to the aforementioned denominations, a number of smaller registered or **unregistered religious associations** and move-

<sup>24</sup> For instance, the Estonian Buddhist Congregation “Drikung Kagyu Ratna Shri Buddhist Centre”, Tibet Buddhism Nyingma Estonian Congregation, Tallinn Congregation of Hare Krishna, Sathya Sai Baba Association in Estonia, and some others. Estonian Buddhists are also known from much earlier times and they were also active in the 1980s. About congregations in Estonia connected with the world religions originating from the East see also: Au, Ringvee 2000: 100–107.

<sup>25</sup> Data about the first Estonian Baha’is date already from the Soviet period. The Baha’i Congregation in Tallinn was registered in 1995 and in 1999 it had 85 members (Au, Ringvee 2000: 99).

<sup>26</sup> 2000. *aasta...* 2002: 328–329. The data about the national belonging of the disciples of denominations with less than 100 members have hereinafter been derived from the database on the home page of the Statistical Office of Estonia (<http://www.stat.ee>).

<sup>27</sup> In 2000 East Virumaa Russians regarded as Estonian national faith mainly Lutheranism and Catholicism, and Taara Faith was not mentioned by anybody.

ments operated in Estonian throughout the 1990s.<sup>28</sup> Most of them reached Estonia only beginning from the turn of the 1980s–1990s mainly from Scandinavian countries, West Europe and the USA. At the beginning of the 1990s the transcendental meditation movement became especially popular in Estonia, and according to some estimations, more than 20,000 people participated in it (Plaat 2001: 373–374). The press has also published information about Satanist movements. At the census of 2000, 43 people (of them 38 Estonians) considered themselves as Satanists.

In addition to the denominations and religious movements observing their own doctrine and customs, beginning from the turn of 1980s–1990s tens of Christian organizations and societies have been (re)established in Estonia; their main objective is youth, social and missionary work and they are not always connected with a concrete denomination.<sup>29</sup> In 1989 the Estonian Council of Churches as the most important board for the co-operation between Christian confessions was established.

Undoubtedly the aforementioned does not include all the movements and associations somehow connected with religion that operated in Estonian in the 1990s. In spite of the great number of different congregations, during this decade people in Estonia were not actually connected with different religious associations to a great extent. This is proved by the membership statistics of both the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the denominations themselves<sup>30</sup> as well as the data of the

<sup>28</sup> From among the movements connected with Christianity and not mentioned above, e.g., Quakers, God's Assembly, Hosianna Church, the Church of Real God, Christian Communion Church, Charismatic Biblical Circles and others operated in Estonia in the 1990s. From among other religion-oriented groups we could mention theosophists, anthroposophists, christosophists, Christian Science, Scientology, Urantia Book groups, all kinds of spiritualists and the New Age movement. The latter had also supporters according to the census of 2000 (29 Estonians). From among the numerous movements inspired by Eastern religions and the way of thought, we could mention Zen Buddhism, Sry Chinmoy and "heart yoga", several other movements dealing with yoga and meditation (see: Leppik 1992). According to the census of 2000 there were still only 15 people who connected themselves with yoga as a religion, and all of them were the supporters of Sahaja Yoga (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 292–295). By the present time part of these religious movements have terminated their action or joined the aforementioned registered denominations.

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., Kurg 1995: 123–125; Ritsbek 1996: 182ff.; Au, Ringvee 2000: 113–116, 137–138. A number of organizations of this kind have been founded by single confessions. In 1999, for example, at least 44 charity organizations operated at different denominations, 20 of them under the subordination of the EELC (Liiman 2001: 38).

<sup>30</sup> In more detail see: Plaat 2001: 257–259, 262–273, 466–468.

census of 2000 about the disciples of smaller religious movements. On the other hand, however, the number of people supporting Lutheranism or Orthodoxy according to the census of 2000 and the sociological surveys of the 1990s proved that the number of people associating themselves with a certain religion or congregation is much greater than revealed by the statistics of congregations. Also the surveys of the 1990s reveal great differences between the religiosity of Estonians and other ethnic groups residing in Estonia. The corresponding research has been treated below.

## **2. The religiosity of Estonians, Russians and other non-Estonians according to the sociological surveys (1990–2000)**

Most of the sociological surveys conducted in the 1990s revealed significant differences in the religiosity of Estonians and other ethnic groups (above all, Estonian Russians). In this article the following all-Estonian surveys comprising both Estonians and Russian-speaking community have been used:<sup>31</sup>

\* **WVS 1990, 1996.** *The World Values Survey* conducted in different countries all over the world in 1990-1993 (43 countries/societies) and 1995-1998 (55 countries) was carried out in Estonia in 1990 (hereinafter WVS 1990)<sup>32</sup> and in 1996 (WVS 1996).<sup>33</sup>

\* **EMOR 1992a, 1992b, 1998, 1999.** Researches conducted by the EMOR (Estonian Marketing and Opinion Research):

– by the order of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1992 (EMOR 1992a);<sup>34</sup>

– the EMOR survey on paranormal and other non-Christian beliefs in 1992 (EMOR 1992b);<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The results of the following research are presented in: Kändler 1992; Hansen 1994, 1995, 2001; *Teekäija*, No. 10, 1994, p. 19; Ritsbek 1996: 175–178; *Kui kristlik...* 1997: 37ff.; Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998; Heino 1998c; *Postimees*, No. 284, 1999, p. 3; *Postimees*, 17.5.2000; Plaata 2000, 2001: 255–257, 356–360, 377–381; Liiman 2001; Rimmel 2001; 2000. *aasta...* 2002; <http://www.kehrakogudus.ee/vana/stat/kuikr.htm>; <http://www.kehrakogudus.ee/vana/stat/emor.htm>. As comparative material, several surveys conducted in North European countries and elsewhere have been used: Dogan 1995; Sundback 1995; Heino 1997, 1998a, 1998b; Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998, etc.

<sup>32</sup> Within the framework of the WVS 1990, 1008 people were questioned (N=1008), among them 621 Estonian-speaking and 387 Russian-speaking persons.

<sup>33</sup> N=1021, 602 Estonian and 419 Russian-speaking respondents.

<sup>34</sup> N=1013, including 627 Estonians, 307 Russians, 79 representatives of other nationalities.

<sup>35</sup> N=1000, including 630 Estonians, 280 Russians, 90 representatives of other nationalities.

- by the order of the Finnish Academy in 1998 (EMOR 1998);<sup>36</sup>
- by the order of *Gallup International* in 1999 (EMOR 1999);<sup>37</sup>

\* **ECC 1995, 2000.** Sociological surveys “About Life, Religion and Religious Life” conducted by the Estonian Council of Churches (ECC), the Estonian Evangelical Alliance and the Estonian Biblical Society in the years 1994–1995 (ECC 1995) and 2000 (ECC 2000).<sup>38</sup>

\* **PC 2000.** The results of the 2000 Population Census of Estonia (PC 2000).

Also the results of the sociological survey on religion conducted in 2000 in East Virumaa under the leadership of J. Plaat have been used in the article (**EV 2000**).<sup>39</sup> Data about the attitude towards religion and different denominations revealed by Estonian Russians in East Virumaa and other parts of Estonia in comparison to Estonians are also provided by several other sociological surveys (Kirch, Kirch, Tuisk 1997: 53–54, 65; Ruutsoo 1997: 22–23; *The Integration...* 1997: 35).

The difference between Estonians and other ethnic groups (including Russians) becomes especially obvious if a question is asked about the religiosity of the respondent.

**Table 2. The proportion of Estonians and Russians determining themselves as religious in Estonia in 1990–2000 (%)<sup>40</sup>**

Year	Estonians	Russians	Survey
1990	17	29	WVS 1990
1992	18	30	EMOR 1992a
1996	23	49	WVS 1996
2000	26	42	PC 2000

<sup>36</sup> N= 997, including 687 Estonians, 255 Russians, 55 representatives of other nationalities.

<sup>37</sup> 487 residents of Estonia at the age of 15–74 participated.

<sup>38</sup> Within the framework of ECC 1995, 2500 adult people in Estonia selected by random choice were sent a questionnaire by post. The questionnaire was returned by 1551 people, among them 914 Estonians and 637 non-Estonians. The ECC 2000 questionnaire was sent to 2200 people, of whom 1092 returned it, among them 671 Estonians and 421 representatives of other nationalities.

<sup>39</sup> N=140, incl. 27 Estonians, 95 Russians and 17 representatives of other nationalities, one respondent did not determine the nationality. At the field work of 2000 in Vaivara commune and Narva-Jõesuu town, J. Plaat’s questionnaire “Study on Religion in Contemporary Estonian Life” was used. 18-year-old and older people selected by random choice were questioned. The field work in East Virumaa constituted a part of a sociological survey on religion financed by the Estonian Science Foundation in different Estonian counties in the years 1996–2002. The material concerning East Virumaa was entered into the database and analysed in a seminar paper by Maarja Kaaristo, an ethnology student, whose work (Kaaristo 2002) partly serves as a basis for the data presented in this article concerning the East Virumaa survey.

<sup>40</sup> The table is compiled on the basis of: Liiman 2001: 51–52; 2000. *aasta...* 2002: 18.

From the results of EMOR 1992a and PC 2000 the table includes Estonian Russians, from the WVS surveys – the sample of Estonian Russian-speaking community. According to PC 2000 there were even more people adhering to a certain religion among other non-Estonians than among Russians (47%). From all the respondents 21% considered themselves as religious in 1990, 23% – in 1992 and 36% – in 1996. So it can be said that by the middle of the decade the number of religious people had increased considerably, above all due to the abrupt growth in the number of non-Estonian believers. The low indicator of religiosity in 1990 is quite surprising at first sight, as this was the heyday of the “church boom”. It was in 1990 that the number of those baptized and confirmed at the Lutheran Church was the greatest within the period after World War II (Plaat 2001: 262). Yet actually the result of WVS 1990 supports the statement that at the turn of the 1980s–1990s the reason was not the inner surge of religiosity, but the (temporary) trend prescribing church rites. The latter is also confirmed by the data of WVS 1990, according to which the number of Estonian residents who considered church rites as essential, was quite high.<sup>41</sup>

If we compare Estonia to other countries, then in 1990 the proportion of Estonian residents who determined themselves as religious (21%) among the 43 representatively selected world countries/societies ranked the last but one and in Europe – as the last one. Even the Estonian Russians separately taken lagged behind all European countries.<sup>42</sup> Owing to the great increase in the number of non-Estonian believers in 1995–1996 according to the WVS there were even fewer religious people, in comparison to Estonia, in East Germany (28%) and Sweden (33%); in all the other European countries the percentage was much higher than in Estonia. If we consider Estonians separately, then the percentage of believers was the lowest in Europe also according to

<sup>41</sup> 72%, 66% and 64% of the Estonian sample considered it as important to have a religious service on the occasion of death, birth and wedding, respectively. In Latvia, Lithuania and most other European countries, however, these figures were much higher.

<sup>42</sup> In China the percentage of believers was even lower than in Estonia (5%). The next countries with lower indicators were Japan with 26%, Sweden with 31%, Bulgaria with 36% and East Germany with 38%. The respective indicators for the neighbouring countries of Estonia were the following: Latvia – 54%, Lithuania – 55%, Russia – 56%, and Finland – 59%. From among European countries the number of believers was the highest in Catholic countries, with Poland at the top with 95% (Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998: V151).



WVS 1996.<sup>43</sup>

While examining the figures in Table 2, we have to take into consideration the fact that different questions were asked in different surveys. The WVS 1990, WVS 1996 and EMOR 1992a surveys provided multiple choice questions with four options: Do you consider yourself as 1. a religious person (their proportion in the sample is given in Table 2); 2. not a religious person; 3. a convinced atheist; 4. don't know. The PC 2000 survey asked the question "What is your religious affiliation?" and provided choices divided as follows inside the sample: 1. follower of a particular faith (given in Table 2; in addition to that they had to indicate their faith given in Table 1); 2. has no religious affiliation; 3. atheist; 4. cannot define the affiliation; 5. refuse to answer.

The percentage of religious people according to the PC 2000 survey can be compared to the results of WVS 1990, WVS 1996 and EMOR 1992a, but not to the ones of EMOR 1998 survey. According to the latter, 14% of Estonians and 49% of Russians (in all, 25% of the respondents) regarded themselves as religious, and 25% of both Estonians and Russians determined themselves as "searchers". So, among Estonians 39% considered themselves as religious or searchers for faith, and among Russians the corresponding percentage was even 74. Unfortunately, the term "searcher" provides us with the same kind of vague information as the definition "inclining towards religion", which was used in the surveys of ECC 95 and ECC 2000. Yet the surveys of the ECC also reveal that the proportion of the people who regarded themselves as believers throughout the 1990s was much higher among Estonian Russians and other ethnic groups than among Estonians (approximately three times in 1995 and 2000).

**Table 3. The proportion of religious people and those inclining towards religion in Estonia in 1995 and 2000 (%)<sup>44</sup>**

Regard themselves as...	ECC 1995			ECC 2000		
	Estonians	Non-Estonians	Total	Estonians	Non-Estonians	Total
...a religious person	9	25	16	11	35	20
...inclining towards religion	51	50	51	47	44	46

<sup>43</sup> According to the WVS survey of 1995–1996, in Finland 57% of people considered themselves as religious, in Latvia the corresponding percentage was 64, in Russia – also 64 and in Lithuania – 84 (Liiman 2001: 52).

In the case of ECC 1995 and ECC 2000 surveys, the problem was the relatively small number of respondents in the questionnaire sent out by post. As the questionnaire was returned by 62% of the sample in 1995 and by 49.6% in 2000, it can be assumed that the people who did it were interested in religious affairs to a certain extent.

The most representative comparative information about the proportion of religious people in different Estonian counties and towns was provided by the census of 2000. According to the latter, the greatest proportion of religious people among Estonian counties was in East Virumaa (40.4% of the population at the age of 15 and older). Also the percentage of the Orthodox people was the highest there – 31.8% (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 19, 316–318). It is not surprising, as the proportion of Russian-speaking community which is more religious than Estonians is the highest there, compared to all the other counties in Estonia. In 2000, 69.5% of East Virumaa population was Russian and 9.5% – other non-Estonians. All over Estonia, Russians constituted 25.6% of the population, being the largest group of non-Estonians (2000. *aasta...* 2001: 78–79).

In comparison to the census data, the proportion of people in East Virumaa, who were Orthodox or considered themselves as religious, was even greater according to the EV 2000 survey. The whole sample comprised 61.2% of religious people. From among East Virumaa Russians, 67.4% considered themselves as religious and among the representatives of other non-Estonians the percentage was 70.6. Among East Virumaa Russians the percentage of the Orthodox people was 57.9, among other non-Estonians – 47, and in the whole sample – 45 (there were no Orthodox people among Estonians). The higher percentage of believers and Orthodox people in comparison to the PC 2000 data was not due to the national composition of the sample in this region (Vaivara commune and Narva-Jõesuu town), as it almost coincided with that of the whole county.<sup>45</sup> However, it may have been due to the

<sup>44</sup> The table is compiled on the basis of: Remmel 2001: 43; Hansen 2001: 26. According to the ECC 1995 survey, 32% of Estonians regarded themselves as indifferent towards religion, 6% – as inclining towards atheism and 2% were convinced atheists. The respective percentages among non-Estonian respondents were 22, 2 and 1. According to the ECC 2000 survey, 32% of Estonians and 22% of non-Estonians regarded themselves as indifferent towards religion; 8% and 1.2%, respectively, as inclining towards atheism, and 2.2% of Estonians and 1.4% of non-Estonians – as convinced atheists.

<sup>45</sup> The sample of the EV 2000 survey region comprised 19.4% of Estonians, 68.3% of Russians and 12.2% of representatives of other nationalities, the total percentage of non-Estonians being 80.5.

different wording of the corresponding question. In the EV 2000 survey the questions asked were: “Are you a religious person?” and “What is your faith?” whereas the PC 2000 asked rather about people’s confessional belonging.

The data of PC 2000 prove that the greater is the proportion of Russians in a region, the greater is the percentage of religious people. So from among all Estonian towns, the percentage of religious people in the whole population (15-year-olds and older) was over 50 only in Kallaste (62.5%) and Mustvee (50.5%), which are predominantly Russian-populated. In addition to the Orthodox people, the proportion of believers in these towns was increased by the Old Believers (35.6% in Kallaste and 17.3% in Mustvee). The next ones on the list were – with also predominantly Russian-speaking population – Narva-Jõesuu (48.5% of the respondents were religious), Kohtla-Järve (42.9%), Maardu (42.8%), Jõhvi (42.7%), Narva (40.8%) and also Võru, which is the first town on the list with predominantly Estonian-speaking population (35.8%). Due to the great number of Russians, Tallinn with 35.5% was also above the Estonian average (34%) (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 316–322).

According to some surveys, the proportion of people who consider themselves “rather” Lutherans or Orthodox, is even higher than the percentage of people who regard themselves as religious. At EMOR 1992a and EMOR 1998 the questions asked were as follows: “Are you rather ... 1. a Lutheran, 2. an Orthodox, 3. a member of some other sect, 4. or you do not belong to any sect” (Liiman 2001: 164). This question worded by Harri Heino, a Finnish researcher, and its translation into Estonian (the usage of the word “usulahk” (sect), which has a certain derogatory tinge in Estonian) cannot be regarded as well-turned in the case you want to know about a person’s real connection with a confession. Answers to this question can reveal more the fact whether the respondents connect themselves with rather the Lutheran or Orthodox cultural space.<sup>46</sup> Yet, the percentages in Table 4 indicate the

According to the PC 2000, the percentage of Estonians in East Virumaa was 20, that of Russians – 69.5, other nationalities – 9.5 and of non-defined nationality – 1%.

<sup>46</sup> The same applies to the research project carried out in 1996 “About the Integration of Estonian Russians into Estonian Society”, which, among others, asked a question “Which of the following faiths is particularly close to your heart?” From among the choices (Catholicism, Lutheranism, Orthodoxy, Islam, other) Orthodoxy was chosen by 89% of Russians and Lutheranism by 78% of Estonians (Kirch, Kirch, Tuisk 1997: 65).

proportion between the people relating themselves to either Orthodoxy or Lutheranism. Once again it becomes obvious that Russians identify themselves more with Orthodoxy than Estonians with Lutheranism.

**Table 4.** The proportion of Estonians and Russians who consider themselves rather Lutherans, Orthodox or belonging to any other denomination (%)<sup>47</sup>

	EMOR 1992a		EMOR 1998	
	Estonians	Russians	Estonians	Russians
Lutheran	39	2	45	3
Orthodox	6	62	3	60
Other	2	1	4	15
Do not belong	53	35	48	22
Total	100	100	100	100

While viewing these surprisingly high percentages, we have to bear in mind that, according to the same EMOR 1998 survey, only 14% of Estonians and 49% of Russians regarded themselves as convinced believers. Also we can take into consideration the fact that in 1998 the Lutheran Church had 49,779 donating members, which makes 6.7% of the 15-year-old and older Estonians by the census of 2000 (in all, 745,671). According to the data presented by the EELC in 1998, the number of all (at some time) baptized people was quoted to be 174,349 or 23.4% of all adult Estonians. In the case of the latter, we should bear in mind that the EELC considers also children as members. In any case, the percentage of Estonians regarding themselves as (rather) Lutherans at sociological surveys is considerably higher than the actual membership of the Lutheran Church.

If we consider as reliable the data of the EMOR 1999 survey, which was conducted on the basis of the same methodology as EMOR 1992a and EMOR 1998, 30% of the Estonian population at the age of 15–74 regarded themselves as Lutherans, 28% – as Orthodox, 3% as Catholics, 2% as disciples of another Christian and 2% – as disciples of some non-Christian religious association. So the total percentage of people with religious affiliation was 65, not 31.8 as revealed by the census of the following year. Obviously, we cannot consider this figure as reliable (about the criticism of sociological surveys on religion in the 1990s see in more detail: *Plaat 2000*).

<sup>47</sup> The table is compiled on the basis of: *Liiman 2001: 64*.

The author maintains that, when asking about the real confessional belonging of the respondent, it is more correct to ask about their belonging to some congregation or denomination, as it was also done in the surveys of WVS 1990, ECC 1995 and ECC 2000 as well as by the author himself in EV 2000 and other surveys within the framework of the same project.<sup>48</sup> Otherwise we can only learn which denomination the respondents support or favour, not where they actually belong. Here we have to take into consideration the fact that even if people relate themselves to a certain denomination (are members, support, prefer to others), it does not mean that they consider themselves as religious.

According to the WVS 1990 survey, only 13% of the population of Estonia belonged to a religious denomination. Similarly to the proportion of religious people, this indicator also ranked Estonia as the last in Europe and the last but one in the world.<sup>49</sup> Among both the denomination members and believers in Estonia the majority was constituted by women, elderly people, people with lower educational level and lower income. Female and elderly persons were more religious also according to other surveys in the 1990s.

According to the ECC 1995 survey, 19% of the population of Estonia claimed to be members of a congregation, including 13% of non-Estonians and 24% of Estonians (from among Estonians 20% belonged to the Lutheran, 1.4% to Orthodox or Catholic Church, 0.8% to the ECU and 2.1% to other denominations), from among the rest, 5% had been members of a certain congregation and 70% had never belonged to any congregation. According to the ECC 2000 survey, 24% of the adult Estonian population belonged to a congregation, including 24% of Estonians and 25% of others. So it can be said that by the end of the 1990s other ethnic groups outnumbered Estonians in this sphere.

In the EV 2000 survey, the question “Do you belong to a church/congregation/religious movement at the moment?” was answered in the affirmative only by 13% of the respondents (7.4% of Estonians and

<sup>48</sup> In 1996–1999 the sample comprised 18% of members of a certain congregation in Hiiu county, in Läänemaa and Saaremaa the percentage was 19 and in Põlvamaa – 31. The respective percentages of those who considered themselves as religious people in these counties were 33%, 27%, 25% and 43%.

<sup>49</sup> Once again, China had even a lower percentage than Estonia (4%), Estonia was followed by Moscow with 24% (was questioned separately in addition to the sample of whole Russia), Belorussia with 30%, Bulgaria with 34%, East Germany with 35% and Latvia and Russia with 37%. The corresponding indicator for Lithuania was 63% and that of Finland – 89% (Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998: V143).

14.5% of other ethnic groups). This is also below the average percentage of congregation members in the predominantly Estonian-populated counties (Läänemaa, Hiiumaa, Saaremaa and Põlvamaa) in 1996–1999 (22%). On the other hand, the percentage of those considering themselves as religious in the East Virumaa sample (61%) considerably exceeded the average of these four counties (32%). The latter also corresponds to the Estonian average according to the census of 2000. The number of those relating themselves to a certain denomination is usually higher than the actual membership of congregations. In Estonia this tendency was especially obvious in the 1990s in the case of Lutherans and Orthodox people.

The small membership of congregations revealed by the EV 2000 survey was largely due to the fact that (Orthodox) urban congregations remained far from the rural population. While the percentage of congregation members among rural population (Vaivara commune) was only 10, the corresponding percentage among urban population (Narva-Jõesuu) was 22. It also seems that while elsewhere in Estonia (above all, in Tallinn) the growth in the numbers and activity of Russian congregations brought along the increase in their membership (cf. the results of the ECC 1995 and ECC 2000), then in rural areas of East Virumaa this indicator has remained at the level of the first half of the 1990s.

In addition to this, a great number of East Virumaa Orthodox people go to church even if they are not officially members. The tendency is the opposite in the case of Estonian Lutherans: most members of congregations are not regular churchgoers. It is also proved by the fact that, in comparison to Estonians, the Russians' participation in religious services was more active in the 1990s.

**Table 5. Participation of Estonians and Russians in religious services (%)<sup>50</sup>**

	WVS 1995		EMOR 1998	
	Estonians	Russians	Estonians	Russians
At least once a month	7	11	6	12
A few times a year	15	18	22	26

The WVS 1995–1996 survey showed that from among the countries

<sup>50</sup> The table is based on: Liiman 2001: 64. From the EMOR survey results the table includes Estonian Russians, from the WVS survey results – the sample of Estonian Russian-language population.

selected for the survey, the percentage of people who regularly attend religious services (at least once a month) was the lowest in Russia (8%), and East Germany and Estonia (9%). In comparison to the rest of the world, the indicators for Finland and Sweden (11%) as well as for Norway (12%) were extremely low.<sup>51</sup>

According to the surveys of ECC 1995 and EMOR 1998, Estonian Russians also pray much more often than Estonians (Liiman 2001: 67). The fact that Estonian Russians are more closely connected with (Christian) religion is also proved by the answers to other religion-related questions in the surveys of the 1990s, e.g., the percentages of those believing in God and Jesus Christ.

Table 6. The proportion of Estonians and Russians who believe in God and Jesus as his son (%)<sup>52</sup>

Believe...	EMOR 1992a		WVS 1995		EMOR 1998	
	Estonians	Russians	Estonians	Russians	Estonians	Russians
...in God	33	42	40	55	41	68
...in Jesus	24	37			27	55

According to the EMOR 1998 survey, the number of those who believed in God in Estonia was the highest among the East Virumaa and Tallinn Russians (Liiman 2001: 62). While the percentages given in Table 6 apply to whole Estonia, then in East Virumaa the percentage of those believing in Jesus as the God's son is even higher. According to the data of the EV 2000 survey, this was believed by 52% of the whole sample and 68% of Russians.

While believing in Jesus is a clearly Christian belief, then believing in God is not supposed to be an indication of the respondents' connection with traditional Christian beliefs. People's conceptions of God can be extremely varied and negligibly or not at all connected with

<sup>51</sup> According to the EMOR 1998 survey, 42% of the respondents in Estonia did not go to church at all. According to the RAMP survey conducted in 1998, the percentage of those who did not go to church at all was 34 in Denmark, 33 in Norway, 32 in Sweden and 19 in Finland (Heino 1998a; Liiman 2001: 64).

<sup>52</sup> The table is based on: Liiman 2001: 55, 57. The results of the EMOR surveys apply to Estonian Russians, the data of the WVS – to Estonian Russian-speaking population. In comparison it can be said that in the survey of WVS 1990–1991 the percentage of those who thought that they believed in God was the following: in East Germany 36%, in Bulgaria – 40%, in Moscow – 41%, in Belorussia – 43%, in Russia – 44%, in Sweden – 45% and in Latvia – 58%. In all other countries the percentages were higher. Unfortunately, within the framework of the WVS 1990, this question was not asked in Estonia (see: Dogan 1995: 407; Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998: V166).

Christianity. For example, although the EMOR 1992a and EMOR 1998 surveys revealed that respectively 37% and 49% of the population of Estonia believed in God, it does not tell us anything particular. The fact that, according to the same surveys, in 1992, 41% and in 1998, 45% of the population of Estonia believed in astrology, is much more eloquent.

One of the best ways to find out if people regarding themselves as believers or believing in God can also be considered as Christians, is to ask them whether they believe in personal God or not. It is the believers in personal God who can be regarded as followers of the traditional Christian doctrine.

The survey of EV 2000 asked which of the following statements was the closest to the respondents' opinion: 1. There is a personal God, 2. There is some sort of spirit or life force, 3. Cannot say, 4. There is not any sort of spirit, God or life force. It turned out that in East Virumaa 11% of the people in the sample (16% of the religious people) believed in the existence of the personal God, and 55% of the respondents believed in a spirit or life force. From among Russians, 10% believed in personal God and 53% – in a spirit or life force.

The same question was also asked in the surveys of WVS 1990 and EMOR 1999. By EMOR 1999, 22% of the population of Estonia believed in personal God and 50% – in “a certain spirit of a heavenly power”. So it can be said that from among East Virumaa Russians relatively few people believed in personal God, also if compared to the Estonian average. Yet, the results of both EMOR 1999 and EV 2000, if compared to the year 1990, reveal an increase in the percentage of those believing in personal God both among Estonians and Russians.

According to the WVS 1990 survey, only 6% of Estonians and 8% of Russians believed in personal God in Estonia, 56% of Estonians and 48% of Russians believed in a spirit or life force, and neither were believed by 12% of Estonians and 21% of Russians. From the whole Estonian sample, the percentage of those who believed in personal God was 7. From among the countries that participated in the WVS survey in 1990–1991, the percentage was lower only in China (3%), Japan (5%) and Belorussia (6%). Yet the percentage of those believing in a spirit in Estonia was much higher both for the Estonian and Russian-speaking population than the average of all the countries participating in the survey (36%).<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> The percentages of those believing in personal God in Europe were the lowest in East Europe and



This result confirms one of the peculiarities in Estonian religious life in the 1990s. Most comparative surveys showed throughout the 1990s the negligible connection of the residents of Estonia with traditional Christianity and its institutions, owing to the great proportion of Estonians in the sample. According to international surveys, Estonia can be regarded as one of the most secularized countries (according to some surveys, also the most secularized one) in Europe and also all over the world (in more detail see: Plaat 2001: 355–359).<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, most of the surveys reveal the fading of religiosity connected with institutional and traditional Christianity, not the indifference of the residents of Estonia towards different non-Christian beliefs. The beliefs slightly or not at all connected with Christianity, e.g., different folk beliefs, belief in paranormal phenomena, and some other manifestations of non-formal religion spread quite extensively in Estonia in the 1990s, especially if compared to the previous Soviet period and most European countries.

Here a question arises if, in the case of the spread of non-Christian

Scandinavian countries. From the questioned European countries those believing in personal God were in clear majority only in Catholic countries: in Ireland and Italy – 67%, and in Portugal – 62%. In Iceland the percentage was 51 and in Spain – 49, in other European countries it was below 40%. For the neighbouring countries of Estonia, the WVS 1990–1991 survey revealed that in Russia 8% of people believed in personal God, in Lithuania it was 21% and in Finland – 29%. In Latvia the percentage of those who believed in personal God was 10 and of those who believed in a spirit or life force – 56; in Sweden the respective percentages were 16 and 46. *The European Values Study* conducted in Sweden and Finland showed that the percentage of those who believed in personal God was 32 in Finland and 15 in Sweden, and the percentage of those who believed in a spirit or life force was 46 in Finland and 44 in Sweden (Dogan 1995: 410; Sundback 1995: 100; Heino 1998b; Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998: V175; Liiman 2001: 54).

<sup>54</sup> In the 1990s, besides Estonia, East Germany could also be regarded as one of the most secularized regions in Europe. For example, according to the data of the WVS 1995–1996 the number of those people who considered themselves to be believers and believed in God, heaven, afterlife, etc., was the smallest in East Germany and Estonia (Liiman 2001: 52, 56–58). According to WVS 1990, in addition to the proportion of believers and members of congregations, several other indicators were also lower in Estonia than in East Germany or any other European societies: in Estonia religion was considered as very important by 5%, 1% did some voluntary work at a religious organization; 11% agreed to the statement that “Life has a meaning only because God exists”; and 14% agreed to the statement that “Death has a meaning only if you believe in God”. Apart from the number of those who believed in personal God, Estonia was also the last but one in Europe by the proportion of those who had been brought up religiously at home (15%). This percentage was even lower in Moscow (14). In Russia the proportion of those who had been brought up religiously at home was 19, in Latvia – 29% and in Lithuania – 66%. Several other questions related to religion were not asked in Estonia in 1990 (Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998).

beliefs, a significant difference can be detected between Estonians and Estonian Russians or other non-Estonians. The survey of EMOR 1992b with its questions about people's belief in different non-Christian phenomena helps to find an answer here. The question asked was the following: "Do you believe in the existence of these phenomena?" and three choices were provided: 1. I believe in its existence; 2. I am not sure, don't know; 3. I do not believe in it. Also the respondents were asked whether they themselves had experienced the particular phenomena or not. The results were surprising to a certain extent: according to the EMOR 1992b survey approximately 30% of the residents of Estonia believed in different non-Christian and the so-called paranormal phenomena, and about 5% of them claimed that they had experienced some of them themselves. Here we must also mention that, in the case of nearly all the phenomena presented in the survey, the Estonians' readiness to believe in these phenomena exceeded that of the Russians.

For example, 62% of Estonians and 52% of Russians<sup>55</sup> believed in manual healing, in the case of astrology the respective percentages were 53 and 43, in the case of aliens' visits they were 51 and 40, in the case of clairvoyance or ability to know what happened in the past and to predict the future, the respective percentages were 43 and 31, and so on. Only in the case of sorcery there were more believers among Russians (27%) than Estonians (15%). Also Estonians tend to take these things more seriously than, for example, Finns, if we draw a comparison with the public opinion survey conducted in Finland with a slightly different methodology.<sup>56</sup> This also helps to refute the stereotype imagination of a sceptical and deliberate (in religious matters) Estonian.

One of the results of the EMOR 1992b survey that was quite to be expected was the women's considerably greater inclination towards

<sup>55</sup> 58% of all the respondents, whereas 12% of them claimed that they had experienced the particular phenomenon themselves (in more detail see Table 7).

<sup>56</sup> The public opinion survey *Gallup Ecclesiastica 1995/1996* revealed that only 10% of the population of Finland really believed or at least considered it probable that a reliable prediction of a person's future can be made with the help of astrology or horoscopes. The existence of ghosts was considered to be certain or probable by 14% and the visits of the UFOs to Finland – by 20% of the respondents. According to the survey conducted in Russia, 37% of the respondents in 1996 believed in astrology (Heino 1997: 360, 365). In the 1990s, in the former Soviet republics astrology seemed to be held in higher esteem than in western countries (see also: Kääriäinen 1993: 137). Yet, there is sufficient data available for making such a generalization; also it is methodologically extremely complicated to study the actual extent of such form of non-official religiosity.

believing these aforementioned phenomena.<sup>57</sup> For example, 13% of men and 28% of women believed in spirits, 16% of men and 31% of women – in ghosts, 31% and 45%, respectively, in clairvoyance, and 41% and 58% in astrology. It is surprising that among the respondents with a higher education there were 13% more people who believed in astrology and 10% more people who believed in ghosts than among the respondents with a secondary education. The proportion of those who believed in sorcery was almost equal among those with a higher education and those with a secondary education. From among the age groups the most susceptible towards paranormal and other non-Christian phenomena were people at the age of 25–34. 59% of this age group, for example, believed in astrology. So these beliefs were not conditioned by the lack of education or old age. These were rather the respondents with a higher education as well as young people who were inclined towards believing in different paranormal phenomena.

The high percentages of those believing in paranormal phenomena in 1992 were partly caused by the fact that in the Soviet period they were in disfavour and these topics (paranormal phenomena, astrology, occultism, etc.) became popular in the mass media just at the turn of the 1980s–1990s. On the other hand, the other surveys conducted in the 1990s do not reveal a significant decrease in the numbers of those who believed in these phenomena (e.g., ECC 1995). In the case of a few phenomena, the proportion of the believers even increased in the following years, although these changes can greatly be due to the different questions and answer options in different surveys (in more detail see: *Plaat 2000: 40–42*).

Within the framework of the EV 2000 survey it was investigated which changes believing in non-Christian phenomena had gone through by the turn of the century. On the basis of the data obtained from EMOR 1992b it was possible to assume that it was mostly women, Estonians and younger and more educated people who were inclined to take non-Christian beliefs more seriously. Apart from other things, the EV 2000 project tried to find out if and to what extent this held good about East Virumaa in the year 2000. The questions about non-Christian beliefs were the same as in 1992. The main results about the

<sup>57</sup> The same applies to Estonians and Russians as well as to the beliefs connected with Christianity and connection with religious institutions also according to the data of other sociological surveys. Regarding women's greater religiosity in Estonia see also: *Liiman 2001: 52*.

whole East Virumaa sample (both Estonians and non-Estonians) were the following.

**Table 7. Believers in non-Christian phenomena in Estonia in 1992 and in East Virumaa in 2000 (%)**

	EMOR 1992a		EV 2000	
	Believe in the existence	Have experienced themselves	Believe in the existence (% of the respondents)	Have experienced themselves (% of the sample <sup>58</sup> )
Manual healing	58	12	61	15
Astrology	50	6	52	6
Aliens, UFOs	46	2	26	3
Clairvoyance	38	5	52	12
Haunting	24	4	34	9
Telepathy	22	4	35	5
Reincarnation	22	1	21	1
Ghosts	21	2	28	2
Sorcery	20	3	45	9
Average	31		39	

If we take into account the fact that most of the respondents in the EMOR 1992a survey were Estonians and in the EV 2000 survey – Russians, we can assume that the number of the latter who believe in this kind of phenomena increased considerably during the 1990s. Belief in most of the phenomena given in the table grew, in the case of sorcery even by 25% and in the case of clairvoyance – by 14%. The only percentages that decreased were of those who believed in aliens and UFOs (by 20%) and, to a small extent, also of those who believed in reincarnation. The proportion in the sample of those who had predicably experienced these phenomena themselves was also much higher in East Virumaa than in Estonia in 1992. It is quite noteworthy that almost every tenth inhabitant of East Virumaa claimed to have experienced ghosts and sorcery.

In comparison to 1992, the number of Russians and other non-Estonians who believed in such phenomena, grew as follows. While in 1992, 52% of Estonian Russians believed in manual healing, then in

<sup>58</sup> The percentage is calculated of the whole sample, as in the case of this question the proportion of those who did not answer was very high (the number of those respondents who did not answer the question about the existence of the aforementioned phenomena was very small). It can be assumed that most of the respondents who did not answer the question about personal experience, had not experienced the phenomena themselves.

2000 their proportion in East Virumaa was already 59% (74% of Estonians and 57% of other ethnic groups believed in it), the percentage of Russians who believed in astrology was 43 in 1992 and 55 in 2000 (44% of Estonians and 54% of other ethnic groups), the percentage of those who believed in clairvoyance was 52 and 31, respectively (48% and 53%), and the respective percentages for believers in sorcery were 47 and 27 (37% and 48%). In all cases the indicator that diminished considerably was believing in aliens and UFOs: among Russians 40% in 1992 and 24% in 2000 (of Estonians – 37% and of other ethnic groups 23%). So at least in East Virumaa Russians' believing in different non-Christian phenomena increased considerably in the 1990s and in 2000 exceeded the indicators for local Estonians in several cases.<sup>59</sup> On the basis of the EV 2000 survey material we cannot say that in 1992 belief in different paranormal phenomena was caused only by their novelty.

The data of the EV 2000 survey do not confirm any more the hypothesis that Estonians, women, younger people and those with a higher education are more susceptible to different paranormal phenomena. Although as before, the proportion of women is greater among those who believe in paranormal phenomena, men have almost caught up with them. The situation on the “landscape of paranormal phenomena” is rather variegated; some phenomena are more believed by Estonians, others by Russians, the third ones by women, the fourth ones by men, etc. From among age groups (according to the EV 2000 survey) we can still distinguish the one comprising people at the age of 25–44, who constitute the majority of those who believe in such phenomena. The general situation in Estonia at the moment would require additional research, as on the basis of the East Virumaa data alone, we cannot make generalizations about the whole republic, as this particular region considerably differs from the rest of Estonia by its economy, culture and population (see: Kaaristo 2002: 8–11)

The next issue analysed in this article on the basis of the material of the EV 2000 survey is as follows: were the aforementioned non-Christian beliefs (including paranormal phenomena) taken more seriously by Christians or non-Christians? The East Virumaa sample of 140 respondents comprised 85 believers, 9 of them Estonians, 64 Russians

<sup>59</sup> According to the ECC 1995 survey, all over Estonia Russians have caught up with Estonians as regards their belief in non-Christian phenomena, and in some cases, also outgrown them (Liiman 2001: 61).

and 12 other ethnic groups (so non-Estonians constituted 90% of believers). Among the 85 believers there were 63 Orthodoxes, 9 Lutherans, 8 other Christians, from the remaining 5, two were non-Christians and in the case of 3 people religion was vaguely specified. So in the following table the majority of believers is constituted by non-Estonian Christians.

**Table 8. Believers in Christian and non-Christian phenomena in East Virumaa in 2000 (% of the respondents)**

Believe in the existence of the following phenomena	Believers (Christians)	Non-believers	Total sample
<b>Christian:</b>			
Jesus is God's son	66	29	52
Satan (devil)	51	20	39
Heavenly kingdom	48	12	35
Hell	43	10	30
Immortal soul	40	21	33
Resurrection	18	4	13
Personal God	16	4	11
<b>Non-Christian:<sup>60</sup></b>			
Manual healing	61	59	60
Sorcery	53	33	45
Astrology	51	37	52
Haunting	44	18	34
Ghosts	39	12	28
Telepathy	37	32	35
Aliens, UFOs	29	22	26
Transmigration of souls	26	24	25
Reincarnation	25	14	21
<b>Partly connected with Christianity:</b>			
Healing with a prayer	66	27	50
Spirit or life force	61	44	55
Clairvoyance	58	41	52

<sup>60</sup> The question concerning non-Christian phenomena as well as those connected with Christianity to a certain extent, which was asked in the EV 2000 survey, was the following: "Do you believe in the existence of the following phenomena and creatures?" and three options for the answer were provided: 1. Believe, 2. Not sure, cannot say, 3. Do not believe. Part of the phenomena presented in the table was explained in more detail in the questionnaire: astrology (predicting by stars), haunting (ghosts haunt in houses), reincarnation (repeated rebirth on the earth), clairvoyance (ability to know what happened in the past and also predict future), telepathy (exchanging thoughts without using the traditional five senses).

The relationship between non-Christian and Christian convictions of East Virumaa Christians is quite surprising. In 2000 only 16% of believers believed in the existence of personal God, whereas 61% of them believed in a spirit or life force. Only half of the Christians (predominantly Orthodox) believed in the existence of heavenly kingdom and Satan. On the other hand, more than half of the Christians believed in healing by hands or prayer, clairvoyance and astrology. It is especially surprising that a little more than half of the Christians believed in sorcery, and the number of those who believed in the existence of the hell was equal to that of those who believed in ghosts. At first sight it also seems surprising that apart from Christian phenomena, Christians also believe in all non-Christian phenomena more than non-Christians.

Even those Christians who believed in personal God, only partly believed in the other Christian beliefs mentioned in the questionnaire: 73% of them believed that Jesus was God's son, 64% believed in the existence of the hell and Satan, 60% – in healing with the help of a prayer and the existence of the heavenly kingdom, and 47% – in the immortal soul. But what was even more remarkable was the fact that of those who believed in personal God, 73% also believed in manual healing, 64% – in sorcery, 60% – in astrology, 50% – in clairvoyance, 43% – in telepathy, 36% – in reincarnation and ghosts, 33% – in haunting, 29% – in transmigration of souls, and 21% – in UFOs. So it can be said that these people sometimes also believe in more non-Christian than Christian phenomena. In the light of the aforementioned, it is not even surprising that those who can be regarded as traditional Christians on the basis of their belief in personal God, believe rather in reincarnation (35.7%) than resurrection (28.6%). Those who believe in personal God, believe in most non-Christian phenomena even more than the rest of the believers. While 64% of those who believe in the personified God, at the same time believe in sorcery, then among those who believe in a spirit or life force, the believers in sorcery constitute 44%.

The confusion in the Christians' world view in 2000 was inherent not only to the Russian-speaking population of East Virumaa. The same also applied to religious Estonians both in East Virumaa and all over Estonia. The ECC 2000 survey revealed that from among the Estonian believers and those inclining towards religion, 53% believed in healing with the help of a prayer, 26% – in horoscopes, 19% – in aliens and UFOs, 16% in sorcery, and 14% – in different mediums. This survey

also proved that Estonian believers and those inclining towards religion were more willing to believe in non-Christian phenomena than those indifferent towards faith or inclining towards atheism (only the number of those who believed in aliens and UFOs was roughly the same). So it was characteristic all over Estonia that those who believed, were inclined to believe in almost anything.

### **3. Conclusion**

The religious life of the 1990s in Estonia was characterized by the multitude of different congregations and movements, and, at the beginning of the decade, also by the relatively great interest society and the mass media showed towards the issues of religion. The latter could be regarded as a counter-reaction to the preceding atheism campaigns during the Soviet period. The independence movement at the turn of the 1980s–1990s brought along the so-called church boom; yet, the popularity of church rituals was mostly due to a temporary fashion, not an abrupt increase in Estonian people's inner religiosity. The WVS survey of 1990 indicated that, by the proportion of religious people, members of congregations and those considering religion as very important in their lives, Estonia was firmly the last in Europe and the last but one in the sample of world countries.

A great part of those who joined different denominations at the turn of the 1980s–1990s, drifted away from them again in the 1990s. First and foremost, it applied to the Lutheran Church and some other older denominations with mainly Estonian membership.

At the turn of the 1980s–1990s the position of the EELC strengthened the most in society. During the new national awakening movement the idea expressed by the Lutheran clergy and part of creative people that the Lutheran Church is a national church and its rebirth is the symbol of national revival, evoked a wide response. Participation in Lutheran religious services or joining its congregations became one of the possibilities for demonstrating national feelings and expressing anti-sovietism. The discovering of the so far almost forbidden or secret sphere of life brought a great number of young people to church. However, after the re-establishment of the Republic of Estonia, the Lutheran Church and its clergy, in comparison to the turn of the 1980s–1990s, have gradually been losing their importance in social-political life. It is also vividly reflected in the numerical indicators of the EELC, which, beginning from the early 1990s, showed a falling tendency in baptisms, confirmations and weddings. The number of donating mem-



bers of the EELC decreased from 76,132 in 1992 to 47,112 in 2000. The latter number constituted only 6.3% of the population aged 15 years and older in 2000.

Yet, the Lutheran Church played quite an important role in Estonians' identity also in the late 1990s. This is also confirmed by the fact that at the population census of 2000 14.8% of the adults who answered the question about religion, regarded themselves as Lutherans, and Estonians constituted 95.7% of the Lutherans. Also Estonians have developed a stronger trust towards the Lutheran Church than most other public organization, yet this proportion is much lower than in the case of Russians and the Orthodox Church. In all the surveys conducted in the 1990s, Russians picked out the Orthodox Church as the most trustworthy public institution.<sup>61</sup>

While the influence of the EELC in society has rather diminished than grown after the early 1990s, the influence of the Orthodox Church subjected to the Moscow Patriarchate among the Russian-speaking population has increased to a great extent. According to the population census of 2000, the number of the Orthodox people in Estonia is getting equal with that of the Lutherans and this is mainly due to the great number of non-Estonian members of the Orthodox Church.

Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church under the subordination of Moscow played an important role as bearers and strengtheners of the ethnic identity of Estonian Russians in the 1990s. Due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the so-called Singing Revolution and the re-establishment of the Republic of Estonia in 1991, great changes occurred in the ethnic identity of local Russians, which could be viewed as an identity crisis. The representatives of the great nation of the Soviet empire became an ethnic minority in a small country, whose rights concerning the language, citizenship and some other rights, in the opinion of a great number of Estonian Russians, were restricted by the state. During the 1990s a new ethnic identity was formed in the Russian community in Estonia, where a significant role was played by the Orthodox Church suppressed during the Soviet period, as well as Orthodoxy as the Russians' national religion.

So, by the EMOR 1998 survey, local Russians had developed a strong

<sup>61</sup> At the EMOR 1998 survey Estonians placed the Lutheran Church by its credibility third after banks and the army. After the church came, for instance, the police, political parties, the Parliament, judicial power, etc. (Liiman 2001: 85, 165).

connection between religion and ethnic identity. On the basis of this survey Raigo Liiman assumes that for Estonian Russians religion is a factor strengthening their identity, and for more than half of the Russians it is Orthodoxy that is the inseparable part of their identity. In comparison with Russians, religion was not such an essential strengthener of identity for Estonians (2001: 103, 106–108).

Yet, the Orthodox doctrine obviously exerts weaker influence on Russians if compared to the influence of the Orthodox Church as an institution. For instance, the religious world view of East Virumaa Russian Orthodox people is rather a mixture of Orthodoxy and non-Christian beliefs. Generalizing the data of the EV 2000 survey, we can claim that the average Russian Orthodox believes in sorcery, astrology, haunting and ghosts as much as they believe in Christian beliefs (the existence of Satan, heavenly kingdom and hell). Also we can say that Christians believe in all the non-Christian phenomena considerably more than non-believers. A remarkable part of the latter, in their turn, are ready to believe in several Christian beliefs (e.g., 29% of non-believers believe that Jesus is God's son).

Besides Orthodox congregations, Russians in Estonia are in great majority also among Old Believers. For centuries religion has served as the basis for the identity of one of the oldest sub-cultures in Estonia. Other ethnic groups prevailed in the 1990s among Catholics, Muslims, Judaists, and the members of Armenian and Ukrainian national congregations. Among the ethnic minorities connected with these congregations, religion plays a relatively important role as a preserver of group consciousness and ethnic identity.

The proportion of Estonians and other ethnic groups among Jehovah's Witnesses, Hindus, Hare Krishnas and Baha'is is almost equal. So several religious movements of Eastern origin, which have reached Estonia since the turn of the 1980s–1990s, have been quite popular among non-Estonians. From Christian free congregations, the number of non-Estonians is relatively high also among the members of the EMC and SDA. From greater denominations, only the EELC and the Taara Faith movement have an over 95% Estonian membership.

Almost all the sociological surveys conducted in the 1990s indicate that, in comparison to Estonians, Russians and most other ethnic groups residing in Estonia are much more religious, at least as regards the connection with traditional Christianity. For instance, the ECC surveys proved that in 1995 and 2000 among non-Estonians the proportion of people who regarded themselves as religious (not inclin-

ing towards religion) was almost three times bigger than among Estonians, and the percentage had grown from 25 to 35 in five years. The belief in God, Jesus Christ and other Christian phenomena also increased among Russians in the 1990s.

In this light it is quite expected that the higher is the proportion of non-Estonians in an area, the higher is the percentage of religious people. The population census of 2000 revealed that in almost all the Estonian towns with mainly Russian-speaking population the proportion of religious people was much higher than that of the towns with predominantly Estonian population. From among Estonian counties, East Virumaa was the one with the highest proportion of religious and orthodox people. Owing to the fast increase in the number of non-Estonian religious people, the proportion of those regarding themselves as religious grew from 21% in 1990 (WVS 1990) to 31.8% in 2000 (PC 2000).

Yet, the proportion of those regarding themselves as religious as well as those believing in some Christian phenomena, increased in the 1990s, although not to a considerable extent. Due to the high proportion of Estonians in the sample, according to international surveys, Estonia as a whole can be regarded as one of the most secularized countries in Europe and also in the world in the 1990s. At least in the early 1990s Estonia was the most secularized country in Europe by several indicators.

Most surveys still reveal the level of religiosity connected with institutional and traditional Christianity, but not the spread of non-Christian beliefs. However, surveys on the latter were also conducted in Estonia in the 1990s. The beliefs negligibly or not at all connected with (traditional) Christianity spread in Estonia relatively widely in the 1990s, both among Estonians and non-Estonians. The percentage of those who claimed that they believed in a higher spirit or life force and also in different non-Christian beliefs, was relatively high in Estonia. In comparison to the beliefs based on the Bible, people tended to believe more readily in different paranormal phenomena.

According to the EMOR 1992b survey approximately 30% of the residents of Estonia believed in different non-Christian and the so-called paranormal phenomena. According to this survey, the number of those who believed in sorcery (20% of the respondents) was the lowest in comparison to the other non-Christian folk beliefs. Yet their number exceeded at least two times that of those who attended religious services in the 1990s. The EMOR 1992 survey does not give a clear

picture of what people in Estonia believe in, but rather reveals a certain confusion in the respondents' world view and their receptiveness to the beliefs in the most different things and phenomena. Yet the data of the 1992 survey indicated that, unlike the beliefs reflecting connection with Christianity, non-Christian beliefs were more popular among Estonians than among Russians. This might have been caused by the fact that a number of those beliefs spread here on a larger extent beginning from the turn of the 1980s–1990s and, above all, through western countries. As in the years of the so-called Singing Revolution, the western society was sharply opposed to the Soviet one, people willingly accepted also the new and interesting beliefs that originated from there. The Estonian Russians could have been more conservative in this respect, as among them the wish to be similar to the west (at least at that time) was considerably less spread than among Estonians. Also Russians could have been more sceptical about non-Christian beliefs in 1992 due to the more modest role of the Russian-language mass media in disseminating the new beliefs, in comparison to the Estonian-language one at the beginning of the 1990s.

Readiness to believe in the phenomena not (directly) connected with traditional Christianity was relatively great in Estonia both in the early 1990s and throughout the whole decade. The survey of 2000 in East Virumaa indicated that at least in the main centre of Estonian Russians (besides Tallinn) the percentage of non-Estonians who took non-Christian beliefs seriously, had grown considerably, in places also exceeding the indicators of local Estonians, and, regarding nearly all the indicators, exceeded the average results in Estonia in 1992. Hereby Russian Christians (predominantly Orthodox) were inclined to take almost all the beliefs not (directly) related to Christianity more seriously than non-believers. The same also applied to Estonian believers.

The presented research data allow us to assume that there are relatively many people in Estonia who regard themselves as religious, yet, whose beliefs do not belong among the traditional Christian doctrine or are only partly connected with it. The world view of a great part of Estonians and non-Estonians throughout the 1990s was a rather vague mixture of Christian and non-Christian beliefs, which sometimes contradicted each other. However, the process of individualization and diversification in Estonians' and Russians' beliefs and the gradual retreat of traditional Christian beliefs and authorities at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is characteristic not only of Estonia and many other East European transition societies. In many so-called welfare states in

Western Europe, the important shifts in religious orientation (similar to Estonia in the 1990s) have occurred during the period after World War II. According to many social scientists, the decline of traditional religious norms together with the changing political, social, sexual and other norms is considered to be part of a Postmodern shift, which includes the developing of the so-called Postmaterialist values.<sup>62</sup> In order to decide whether we could talk about the same kind of processes in Estonian religious life in the 1990s, we would obviously need a longer time to determine the relevance and durability of the changes that have occurred in Estonian religious life beginning from the late 1980s.

## References

- Aastakonverents... 1999 = *Aastakonverents 1999. 19.–20. veebruar*. Tallinn: Eesti Evangeeliumi Kristlaste ja Baptistide Koguduste Liit.
- ACARC = Archive of the Estonian Commissioner of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults of the Soviet Union (in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Estonia).
- Au, Ilmo, Ringo Ringvee 2000. *Kirikud ja kogudused Eestis*. Tallinn: Ilo.
- Dogan, Mattei 1995. The Decline of Religious Beliefs in Western Europe. – *International Social Science Journal* 145. *Fundamental Values Across Nations*, 405–418.
- EELK 1938 = *Eesti Evangeeliumi Luteri Usu Kiriku aruanne 1937. aasta kohta*. Tallinn.
- Hansen, Hans 1994. Elust, usust ja usuelust. – *Eesti Kirik*, nr 37–47.
- Hansen, Hans 1995. Eestlaste usklikkusest. – *Eesti Kirik*, nr 24, lk 6.
- Hansen, Hans 2001. Uuringust “Elust, usust ja usuelust”. – *Rahvusvaheline konverents “Ühiskond, kirik ja religioonisotsioloogilised uuringud”*. Konverentsi materjale. Tartu: Eesti Kirikute Nõukogu, 18–29.
- Heino, Harri 1997. *Mihin Suomi tänään usko*. Porvoo, Helsinki, Juva: WSOY.
- Heino, Harri 1998a. *The Status of Traditional Religiosity in the Nordic Countries*. – <http://www.evl.fi/kkh/ktk/norden.htm>.
- Heino, Harri 1998b. *Suomalaisten Jumala*. – <http://www.evl.fi/kkh/ktk/jlatab.htm>.
- Heino, Harri 1998c. *Uusinta uutta virolaisten uskonnollisuudesta*. – <http://www.evl.fi/kkh/ktk/viro.htm>.
- Inglehart, Ronald 1997. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart, Ronald, Miguel Basañez, Alejandro Moreno 1998. *Human Values and Beliefs: A Cross-Cultural Sourcebook. Political, Religious, Sexual, and Economic Norms in 43 Societies: Findings from the 1990–1993 World Values Survey*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan.
- The Integration... 1997 = The Integration of Non-Estonians into Estonian Society: History, Problems and Trends*. Ed. by A. Kirch. Tallinn: Estonian Academy Publishers.

<sup>62</sup> See, e.g., Inglehart 1997; Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998: 7ff.

- Kaaristo, Maarja 2002. Ida-virumaalaste usulistest veendumustest. Seminaritöö. (Tartu Ülikooli ajaloo osakonna etnoloogia õppetool, juhendaja J. Laat.) Tartu (manuscript is in the possession of author).
2000. aasta... 2001 = 2000. aasta rahva ja eluruumide loendus II. Kodakondsus, rahvus, emakeel ja võõrkeelte oskus. 2000 Population and Housing Census II. Citizenship, Nationality, Mother Tongue and Command of Foreign Languages. Tallinn: Statistikaamet.
2000. aasta... 2002 = 2000. aasta rahva ja eluruumide loendus IV. Haridus. Usk. 2000 Population and Housing Census IV. Education. Religion. Tallinn: Statistikaamet.
- Kirch, Aksel, Marika Kirch, Tarmo Tuisk 1997. Vene noorte etnilise ja kultuurilise identiteedi muutused aastatel 1993–1996. – *Vene noored Eestis: sotsioloogiline mosaiik*. Koost. P. Järve. [Tallinn]: Projekt “VERA”, 47–68.
- Kruus, Hans 1930. *Talurahva käärimine Lõuna-Eestis XIX sajandi 40-ndail aastail*. Tartu: Eesti Kirjanduse Selts.
- Kui kristlik... 1997 = Kui kristlik on Eestimaa?* Koost. N. Roeder, M. Uudam, A. Parman. [Tallinn]: Eesti Evangelisatsiooni Allianss.
- Kurg, Ingmar 1995. Kristlikud uskkonnad ja organisatsioonid tänapäeva Eestis. – J. Gnadenteich: *Kodumaa kirikulugu: usuõpetuse õpperaamat*. Tallinn: Logos, 115–125.
- Kurs, Ott, Eiki Berg 1998. Eesti etniline mosaiiksus. – *Eesti rahvakultuur*. Toim. A. Viies, E. Vunder. Tallinn: Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, 63–70.
- Kändler, Tiit 1992. Eesti usub kolli. – *Rahva Hääle* lisaleht *Vaatleja* 6, 1–2.
- Kääriäinen, Kimmo 1993. *Atheism and Perestroika*. Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia. Sarja B, nide 270. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.
- Leppik, Jaan J. 1992. Ususundid Eestis. – *Vikerkaar* 6, 52–57.
- Liiman, Raigo 2001. *Usklikkus muutuvast Eesti ühiskonnas*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.
- Me õnnistame... 1997 = Me õnnistame teid Issanda kojast. Eesti Evangeelne Luterlik Kirik täna*. Koost. I.-J. Salumäe, T. Pikkur. [Tallinn.]
- Plaat, Jaanus 2000. Mida usuvad Eesti elanikud? Religioonisotsioloogilistest küsitlustest aastatel 1990–2000. – *Sator 2. Artikleid usundi- ja kombeloo*. Toim. M. Kõiva. Tartu, 28–43.
- Plaat, Jaanus 2001. *Usuliikumised, kirikud ja vabakogudused Lääne- ja Hiiu maal: usuühenduste muutumisprotsessid 18. sajandi keskpaigast kuni 20. sajandi lõpuni*. Eesti Rahva Muuseumi Sari 2. Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum.
- Rebane, Leida 1933. Usuvahetuslik liikumine Läänemaal aa. 1883–1885. – *Ajalooline Ajakiri*, 2–4.
- Rommel, Meego 2001. Inimeste eluväärtused ja usu koht nende seas. Aukartus elu ees. – *Rahvusvaheline konverents “Ühiskond, kirik ja religioonisotsioloogilised uuringud”*. Konverentsi materjale. Tartu: Eesti Kirikute Nõukogu, 41–44.
- Risch, Helmut 1937. Die estnische apostolisch-rechtgläubige Kirche. – *Kyrios*. Heft 2, 113–142.
- Ritsbek, Heigo 1996. The Mission of Methodism in Estonia. Project Thesis. Boston (manuscript is in National Library of Estonia).
- Ruutsoo, Rein 1997. Etniline tegur ja kodanikuühiskonna taastumine Eestis 1988–1995. – *Vene noored Eestis: sotsioloogiline mosaiik*. Koost. P. Järve. [Tallinn]: Projekt “VERA”, 19–26.
- Sild, Olaf & Vello Salo 1995. *Lühike Eesti kirikulugu*. Tartu.
- Sundback, Susan 1995. Tradition and Change in the Nordic Countries. – *The Post War Generation and Establishment Religion. Cross Cultural Perspectives*. Eds. W. C. Roof, J. W. Carroll and D. A. Roosen. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 87–111.

Translated by Tiina Mällo