

## CHAPTER TEN

### RELIGIOUS AND CLERICAL POLARISATION IN HUNGARY

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#### INTRODUCTION

The interaction of politics and religion took the most extreme forms in twentieth century Hungary. The country went through phases of clericalism and atheism and it also learned the similarities and differences between red and white dictatorships. The period after 1990 lacked these extreme situations, but government composition varied from monochrome 'Christian' to ex-Communist-secular liberal coalitions. The volatility of the context made religion a potentially powerful determining factor of political attitudes and behaviour.

The political 'meaning' of religiosity is special in Eastern Europe. Until 1989 it was associated with latent anti-regime, anti-Communist orientation. After 1989, as happened with other forms of opposition under Communism, religiosity became convertible into 'political capital'. As different political forces tried to obtain this capital, religion became associated with a number of different values: conservatism, nationalism, Western orientation, solidarity with the lower classes for example. There were, of course, many public actors, including a number of Churches, who appealed for a politically neutral understanding of religiosity. Ten

years after transition to democracy, there can be no doubt that these forces have been defeated. Today mainstream religiosity and active membership in the established Churches is associated with the right wing political block.

Elite political discourse does not always of course determine partisan affiliations at the mass level. There are in fact many indications that citizens do not regard elections as appropriate means of expressing their religiosity and they do not rank clerical/anti-clerical conflicts as the most relevant political issues. Until the country lags behind the pre-1989 era in terms of economic output, social equality or welfare provisions, it is likely that the social costs of the political transformation since 1989 will have priority for most Hungarian citizens. The state of mind of a citizen and of a voter however do not necessarily coincide. When citizens turn into voters, they must consider all the specific offerings of the electoral arena, including the alternatives presented by the elites. Politicians, journalists or Church leaders may use their agenda-setting power to replace certain issues with others.

Religiously coloured issues have a in-built advantage compared to many other issues. While the regulation of inflation, of agricultural subsidies or of the national health service involves a lot of technicalities that are difficult to grasp by the ordinary voter, it is rarely a problem to distinguish the atheist or anti-clerical politicians from those who are committed to religious causes. Furthermore, while the responsibility for the previous issues is divided between national and international authorities, gestures in favour or against religious symbols or church interests are within reach of all politicians. Finally, while social problems may be regarded as more important, religious questions may evoke stronger sentiments and, therefore, are likely to play a prominent role in shaping party choices.

The aim of the present chapter is to explain the patterns of religious polarisation in Hungary with the help of secondary analyses of attitude surveys. First I will present data on the stratification of the Hungarian population in terms of religiosity and I will describe the major trends. The discussion of the available data is organised around the question whether Hungarians are becoming more or less religious. The second part scrutinises the linkages between politics and religion, establishes the religious profile of the major political parties and contrasts religiosity with other explanatory variables of voting behaviour. These variables include socio-demographic characteristics and attitudes that are closely tied to, but not identical with, religiosity. The inclusion of the latter variables make it possible to analyse how much attitudes are determined by, on the one hand, religiosity, and, on the other hand, by party politics and to assess how important role they play in linking the two spheres together.

The principal source of information utilised below is provided by the International Social Survey Programme's data, especially the 1991 and the 1998 data sets. The comparison of the two data-files enables me to compare the first phase of multi-party democracy in Hungary with the most recent developments.

The operationalisation of religiosity raises a number of apparent methodological problems. The standard question about church attendance is insensitive to the different requirements of different denominations. Yet, for a number of reasons (such as greater possibilities for international comparisons and for statistical analysis) most scholars (cf. Róbert 1994) prefer it. The questions referring to self-identification raise other concerns. One must decide, for example, how to code the large number of 'don't know' answers and how many alternatives to

offer to the respondents.<sup>1</sup> A five point scale ('I am religious according to the teaching of the church', 'I am religious in my own way', 'I can't tell whether I am religious or not', 'I am not religious', 'I have other beliefs') is probably the most widely used indicator of religious identity in Hungary. The results obtained with this instrument have highlighted the fundamental differences between the political and religious orientation of the first two categories. While people belonging to both of these groups consider themselves 'religious', the ones who are religious 'in their own way' doubt many of the religious dogmas, rarely go to church and hardly differ in their political behaviour from the average Hungarian citizen, while the followers of the churches' teaching constitute a culturally and politically much more homogeneous group (Tomka 1990, 1996b).

For the present analysis religiosity was measured by ten items: church attendance (from never to several times per week, nine categories in all), frequency of praying (from never to several times per day, eleven options), belief in God (from 'do not believe' till 'believe without doubts' via four intermediary options), approach to the Bible (from 'word of God that should be taken literally' till 'is not my concern' on a four point scale, belief in life after death, heaven, hell, religious miracles (all on four point scales), and finally, agreement with the items: 'There is a God who concerns personally Himself with every human being' and 'Life is meaningful only because God exists' (on five point scales). These items refer to faith and practice, but do not tap other possible dimensions of religion like religious (spiritual) experience, religious knowledge and the levels of everyday religion (Glock and Stark 1965). Even with these restrictions, many would argue that the measured elements of integration into the church culture and degree of belief in religious dogmas, do not form a uni-dimensional phenomenon. Yet, the principal component analyses and the scale-tests indicate that the respective

dimensions are closely related, so that they can be treated without large distortions of reality as components of one single phenomenon. In 1991 the first (and only) extracted (unrotated) factor explained 61 per cent of the variance, and had an alpha scale reliability of .93; in 1998 the explained variance of the first factor was .60 and the alpha reached .85. In both cases all the items had a high loading on the respective factors, therefore they were employed as indicators of religiosity.

The ISSP data allowed me to create three attitude scales that were supposed to correlate with religiosity and form the attitudinal expression of it. The first (and only) principal component of items expressing a patriarchal view of family life (women should stay at home, husband should work) and the rejection of extra-marital and pre-marital sex and homosexual relationships was behind the 'conservative family' scale (five items), approval of the religious leaders' interference in politics and perception of churches having too much power created an anti-clericalism scale (three items), while the third scale was composed by the rejection of health-related and financial justifications of abortion (two items). Pearson correlations indicated an increasingly strong relationship between religiosity and clericalism (.14, .32) and views on abortion (.09, .35), while conservative family values were the closest correlates of religiosity in both 1991 and 1998 (.41, .37). The strength of these correlations warns, however, against regarding these attitudes as being very closely linked to religiosity.

## DIFFERENCES AND TRENDS IN RELIGIOSITY: THE STILTED REVIVAL

### RELIGIOUS STRATIFICATION

The Hungarian denominational landscape is dominated by Roman Catholics. On the territories that belonged to Hungary before 1918, Roman Catholics were only slightly above fifty percent but after the Treaty of Versailles the weight of non-Catholic denominations has radically decreased. Since then the proportions are relatively constant: Catholics around 70 percent, Calvinists around 20 percent, Lutherans around 5 percent. If there was some change in the proportions, it was the moderate shift from Protestants to Catholics, a process that had started in the nineteenth century (Tomka 1996b). The real cleavage can be drawn, however, between those who actively practice their religion and those who do not, the former group being in a minority.

The relatively high level of secularisation in present day Hungary, a country whose social and political life had one of the most religious outlooks in Europe in the first part of the century, is the result of two separate factors. The first is the social modernisation process that manifested itself in Hungary in much the same way as in the West, destroying many of the fundamental structures of traditional life. The second is specific to Eastern Europe, and it is the overt oppression of religion during the four decades of Communist rule. In the Stalinist period religiosity was regarded a sign of backward, reactionary and potentially subversive orientation and those leaders of the churches who voiced even the slightest criticism against the atheist regime were jailed or forced to emigrate. Known churchgoers were deprived of any serious

career advancement. As the regime became more liberal under the rule of János Kádár (first secretary from 1956 to 1998), religiosity gradually ceased to be a dangerous stigma even though it continued to be incompatible with membership in the political elite. The large, established denominations were not persecuted any longer and the aggressive anti-religious propaganda of the 1950s was replaced with a paternalistic discourse in which tolerance for the churches was regarded as a fundamental feature of the new model of 'goulash-communism'. Religiosity was treated as a sort of understandable and forgivable human weakness that mainly characterised the older generations. The government could afford to maintain this benevolent image only because the Machiavellian power games played against (and sometimes together with) church leaders were largely successful. The higher echelons of the churches accepted the new deal offered by the Kádár government, especially since the Communist party directly manipulated appointments within the church hierarchies. The deal involved the public support of the regime by religious authorities and the limiting of church activities to spiritual matters.

Due to the unfavourable atmosphere surrounding religion, the validity of the survey results from the years of Communism is obviously suspect. It is still significant that, either because of the ongoing liberalisation or because of a genuine religious revival, the number of those who identified themselves as religious started to grow at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. As opposed to the early 1970s, when only a numerical minority claimed (or dared to claim) to believe in God, by the time of the regime change (1989-90) the proportion of believers had reached two-thirds of the total population. Most of them (around fifty-five per cent of the total population), however, claim to be religious 'in his or her own way' and only about one sixth 'according to the teachings of the church' (Tomka 1991a, 1991b; Tamás 1997). But the change

in the latter category is also remarkable: from a mere eight per cent in 1978 it went up to roughly sixteen per cent in 1991 (Tomka 1991a). The increase was, however, halted in those years, disappointing the churches that hoped for the continuation of the religious revival. The proportion of the avowedly 'non-religious' segment of the population continues to hover around twenty-five to thirty per cent. These figures, as well as the regular church attendance, which has stabilised at around fifteen per cent, place Hungary among the more secularised European nations (Kelley and De Graaf 1997; Szántó 1992). The Christian intelligentsia initiated subcultural organisations in almost all spheres of social life after 1989 and appeared as an important political current on the Hungarian political scene (Enyedi 1996). But the significance of social or cultural church-related activities is far from that experienced in old democracies and certainly lags behind the pre-war level (Tomka 1996a).

The negative correlation between religion and social status further weakens the social strength of the religious population (Fischer 1997). The bulk of the practising Christians live in smaller settlements and women are more religious than men (Central Statistical Office 1993; Tomka 1990, 1997). Finally, while the religiosity of the oldest age cohorts is comparable to Western European standards, the middle aged and the young are less religious than in most European countries (Tomka 1996a). While the older generations are almost without exception nominal Christians (i.e. they regard themselves belonging to one of the denominations), about one quarter of those who are under the age of twenty-five are not baptised (Tomka 1997).

#### VALUE INERTIA AND VALUE CHANGE

When discussing the relevance of religion in politics one inevitably comes to the functional role of a set of attitudes typical of the religious population and institutions. Hungary's social

value system did not offer much room for the respective values. The Kádárist era was often characterised by the label of 'negative modernisation', meaning the simultaneous lack of traditional community life and of the modern forms of group co-operation. Abortion and divorce were widely available and public discourse lacked references to the 'sacredness' of life or marriage, although the conventional model of family life was officially promoted. According to the ISSP data, Hungarians maintained their libertarian attitude towards abortion throughout the 1990s: about four-fifths of them stated that it is 'never wrong' to carry out abortion for health reasons and about half of them accept poverty as a legitimate reason for an abortion.

#### **Table 10.1 Near Here**

In other areas, where Hungarians held rather conservative values (Heath *et al.* 1993), a moderate shift towards permissiveness could be witnessed between 1991 and 1998 (Table 10.1). Even more painfully for the churches, 'clericalism' has decreased during the 1990s. At the beginning of the decade the churches commanded a high level of support, even though they were not expected to play an explicit political role (Róbert 1994). This high trust has weakened during the years: in 1998, 30 per cent expressed distrust in churches, as opposed to 22 per cent in 1991. In 1991, 13 per cent regarded the churches as being too powerful, in 1998 the respective figure was 21 per cent. The number of those who accept as legitimate the churches' influence on voters decreased from 15 per cent to 8 per cent.

#### **Table 10.2 Near Here**

At the same time, seemingly contradicting the processes cited above, spiritualism (as opposed to materialism) gained in strength during the nineties. The majority of people categorically rejected the existence of life after death, heaven, hell and miracles in 1991. By 1998 all of the respective figures dipped under fifty per cent. Then almost half as many respondents doubted 'definitely' the actual presence of God in everyday life than eight years earlier (Table 10.2). From the point of view of the official teaching of the churches there are still disappointingly few who believe in religious dogmas but the sensitivity towards the existence of supernatural phenomena has considerably increased and fundamental religious concepts have gained widespread acceptance.

Trends can be analysed not only on the basis of data sets from different time-points but also, although with less certainty, on the basis of cohort differences within one single data set. Both the 1991 and the 1998 ISSP data indicate that the differences between generations in terms of religious identification, church attendance or degree of belief are considerable.

### **Table 10.3 Near Here**

The covariation of age and religiosity was analysed with the help of the above-mentioned religiosity and attitude scales. The relationship between religion and age was close to linear in 1991 (Table 10.3). But the correlation of religiosity with the modified age variable, which represents the distance of each respondent from the average age, was also significant, highlighting the fact that the decline of religiosity stops among the younger cohorts. The pattern is the same with conservative family values. The younger one is, the less attachment

one shows towards patriarchal attitudes, although the middle aged are somewhat less conservative than expected. Attitudes towards abortion and clericalism, however, hardly depend on age. That means that the political aspects of religiosity are less bound to generational differences than religiosity itself. In the case of abortion, a U-shaped curve fits the data better, indicating that the younger respondents share some of the values of the older generations.

In 1998 one could again observe an increase in religiosity by age, but at this time the relationship clearly applied only to those aged over fifty. Here one can glimpse traces of a cohort effect as well, since the least religious generation of 1991, those in their thirties, stayed the least religious cohort in 1998 as well. The previously observed pattern re-occurred: religiosity and conservatism appeared as more a function of age than abortion and clericalism. On the basis of these data one may conclude that the general decrease in clericalism during the 1990s was not so much a consequence of the entry of new generations (generational replacement) but more of the changing mood in the public at large (period effect). The religiosity and the abortion variables highlighted again the fact that the people at the two ends of the age continuum are slightly less likely to be religious or to have pro-abortion attitudes.

The above data do not refute the basic claim that secularisation is in progress, younger generations being, by and large, less religious in their life styles and in their social views than the older cohorts. But they warn that generational replacement will not lead to a monotonic decrease of religiosity in Hungarian society, and that the phenomenon of atheism has the strongest roots among those who were socialised during the Communist era.

## RELIGION ENTERS POLITICS: RELIGIOUS AND ATHEIST PARTIES

### PARTY POLITICS AND RELIGIOUS POLITICS IN THE FIRST DECADE OF DEMOCRACY

In spite of its overall relevance in party politics, the religious factor has an ambiguous position in the Hungarian electoral behaviour literature. Hungarian opinion poll companies regularly publish reports on the social composition of the party electorates. These reports, as well as the analyses that follow them, concentrate on age, education, gender, occupation and level of urbanisation, but they rarely refer to religion. One of the reasons for the reluctance of political scientists to focus on the religious factor is probably the assumption that in a largely secular society, attitudes towards religion cannot be a major guiding principle. Religiosity seems to be attributed a secondary role in spite of the fact that already in the first years of transition it was shown (Tóka 1992a, b, c) that church attendance was an important determining factor of post-socialist mass political behaviour, predicting the vote better than other social background variables such as occupation, education, urbanisation and income. Moreover, as Körösényi (1996) has observed looking not only at mass data but also at the biographies and attitudes of the political elite, religion can be regarded as a genuine cleavage that sharply differentiates between the opposing political camps.

The studies that have so far analysed the role of religion in voting behaviour (Angelusz and Tardos 1995; Gázsó and Stumpf 1995, 1996; Gázsó and Gázsó 1993; Róbert 1994; Tóka 1992a, b, c) all arrived at the conclusion that the Hungarian party system can be divided into a more religious camp where the right-wing, conservative parties belong and into a secular side,

consisting of the socialist and liberal parties. The only substantial change in this pattern is the once secular liberal Fidesz's cautious move towards the religious right.

At the level of party identities and coalition building, religion had an obvious relevance starting from the first elections. The rationale for the coalition of the FKGP (Smallholders), MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum) and KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party) that was formed after the 1990 election was not their common programme, nor the mutual sympathies of their voters, but the contention that they (and only they) formed the Christian-National camp. The opposition of the day, namely the ex-communist MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party) and its earlier arch-enemies, the liberal SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats) and Fidesz (Alliance of Young Democrats, later Fidesz-MPP) took an anti-clerical stand. The government-opposition divide was perceived as a religious-secular cleavage throughout the period, even though issues linked to the cosmopolitan-nationalist ideological opposition often overshadowed this interpretation.

The paradox that observers of Western European politics face consists in the relatively strong influence of religiosity on party choice, despite the declining relevance of church-related issues in party politics. On the contrary, in Hungary, the polarisation of parties along religious lines was fuelled by a number of issues that affected the role and power of churches directly, prompting the parties to take sides on the clerical-anti-clerical divide. One major issue was the regulation of religious education, while another concerned how and to what extent churches should be financially supported by the government. The dependence of the Hungarian churches on the state is determined to a large extent by the fact that most of their property was nationalised after the Second World War. The state was supposed to return many thousands of

buildings to the churches, but the specifics of this process depend on the party composition of the cabinet and of the local councils involved. The overall state support to church institutions is largely determined by the cabinet and by the parliamentary majority, even though some means of support independent of the government were set up recently (e.g., the taxpayers can offer one percent of their income tax to the churches.)

Church-state relations change according to changes in government composition. Under the 1990-1994 coalition of the three 'Christian' parties the government was publicly supported by the Catholic, and to a lesser degree, by the Protestant churches. After the investiture of the Socialist-SZDSZ government in 1994, this intimate relationship was instantly at an end, though the new government parties, especially the Socialists, proved to be very cautious in questioning the privileges obtained by the churches under the previous government.

Moreover, the left-wing government reached an agreement with the Vatican that ended the disputes over church property in a generous way. The Free Democrats protested against this agreement, claiming that it created a privileged position for the Catholic Church and that it discriminated against the public (non-church) schools. The Socialist Prime Minister defended the contract, hoping that the Catholic clergy would behave in a neutral if not benevolent way towards his party in the election campaign. As he himself conceded after the 1998 election defeat, these expectations were not fulfilled. The clergy made its right-wing preferences public through a number of symbolic gestures. Moreover, in a circular issued before the elections, the clergy asked its flock not to waste votes on small parties. That was widely understood as the withdrawal of support from their previous ally, the KDNP, and a gesture towards Fidesz-MPP. The head of KDNP protested immediately after the circular was issued, but this simply made the party's pariah status clear for the public.

After the Christian-National first, and after the left-wing and secular but pragmatic second government, the third cabinet (Fidesz-MPP, FKGP, and MDF) presented another new pattern of relationships between religion and politics. The paradoxical nature of the new situation was the fact that the main party of the new right-wing government was an – originally – secular liberal party. The Fidesz-MPP not only managed to woo with its newly found clericalism a large portion of the right-wing voters but it was accepted as a credible integrator of the respective political field by the right-wing political parties and by the leading conservative social circles too. The latter groups, which included the historical Christian churches, were ready to forgive the radical-secular past of the party. Fidesz-MPP won their support first with lip service paid to the positive role of churches in Hungarian society and history, and then, in power, with elevating Christian politicians to government positions, and satisfying the requests of the churches – whether material or symbolic in nature – almost without exception.

While the first two coalitions appeared as almost natural outgrowth of the parties' sociological background, the third coalition highlighted the fact that taking a stand on the clerical-anti-clerical cleavage is more a political than a sociological act. The appearance of Fidesz-MPP in the right-wing camp might have blurred the religious contrast between the major party alternatives, but it certainly did not eliminate the religious factor from Hungarian politics. Moreover, it became clear that an entry into the Hungarian right-wing camp requires the symbolic support given to and received from those who possess religious legitimisation.

## THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF THE PARTIES' ELECTORATE

Despite unusually high electoral volatility, the religious character of the parties' electorate is stable. In 1991 (Table 10.4), two groups of parties could be distinguished. The Christian Democrats, the MDF and the Smallholders composed the religious group. This camp had two layers, however, the 'ultra-black' being represented by the KDNP, whose electorate was significantly more religious than all the other constituencies. The remaining three parliamentary parties of the time, the socialists, the free and the young democrats made up the secular camp. In 1998 (Table 10.5), the pattern was largely reproduced, but the Fidesz-MPP left the secular camp while the MIÉP joined it. If the latter, rather surprising, result is not simply the artefact of the low number of MIEP supporters in our sample (N=20), one may conclude that this party, though defining itself as a Christian party, attracts voters who are not much different from the typical Western European extreme-right electorate: usually male and non-religious.

**Table 10.4 Near Here**

**Table 10.5 Near Here**

While it is possible to speak of a Christian camp in the Hungarian party system, the Christian Democratic People's Party was the only truly religious/Catholic subcultural party (Enyedi 1996). Its supporters were much more distant on the religiosity dimension from their fellow countrymen than is usually the case with the Western Christian Democratic parties (Enyedi

1995). Asking about the motives of voting for a particular party, Stumpf (1994: 42) found that 30 per cent of KDNP voters cited explicitly religious motives. This group forms 97 per cent of those who mentioned religious reasons in the whole sample. In another data set (Tamas 1997), the respondents assigned the role of 'ally' or 'opponent of the churches' to parties and other organisations. KDNP was seen by seventy per cent of the respondents as an ally, the other two Christian parties by forty to fifty per cent, while the liberals and the socialists by less than twenty per cent each.

The KDNP's electoral decline in the second half of the 1990s was associated with the party leadership's increasingly extremist rhetoric. By 1998 the party became isolated, only the two populist right wing parties, the FKGP and the MIÉP supported (temporarily) the Christian Democrats' new orientation. At the end of this road, the party was abandoned by the church, by the Western sister parties, and finally the voters, not being able to surpass the 5 per cent electoral threshold in 1998. The disappearance from the parliament of the 'natural' party of the religious made it clear that religious capital cannot be possessed by a single party. The pattern of religious party politics, as with party politics in general, moved towards a two-block competitive structure.

The parties of the 1990-94 government (KDNP, MDF, and FKGP) were ahead of the opposition parties in terms of religiosity both in 1991 and 1998, and the KDNP was continuously on the extreme fringe. Against this background of overall stability the only significant change was the transformation of the Fidesz's electorate, which was one of the least religious parties in 1991, which moved to the centre in terms of religiosity.

### **Table 10.6 Near Here**

In order to sort out the influences of religiosity and religiously-influenced political attitudes, in the next step I correlated the readiness to vote for particular parties with religiosity and with three attitude scales: the scales of anti-abortion attitudes, of clericalism and of conservative family values. According to Table 10.6, in 1991, religiosity correlated significantly with the vote for all of the parties. As above, the preference for the Christian Democrats and for the FKGP were especially strongly related to religiosity, but the government-opposition (MDF, FKGP, and KDNP versus MSZP, SZDSZ) divide was the most meaningful partisan difference in religious terms. The attitude scales were less closely linked to party preferences. Anti-abortion attitudes seemed to have no role whatsoever; clericalism mattered only in the case of FKGP, while conservative views on family affected the vote for the SZDSZ, the FKGP and the Fidesz. Both latter attitude scales significantly correlated with the preference for government versus opposition parties (Fidesz-MPP, FKGP, and MDF versus SZDSZ, MSZP<sup>2</sup>).

Since the attitude scales are possible manifestations of religiosity, I controlled their correlations with party preferences for religiosity. Those relationships that stayed significant after controlling for religiosity are marked with an asterisk in Tables 10.6 and 10.7. According to this exercise, the net effect of clericalism on party vote, as opposed to the one of conservative family orientation, is in fact not significant. In other words, in 1991 next to religiosity only the traditionalist character of the FKGP and the libertarian attitudes of Fidesz had an independent impact on the vote.

### **Table 10.7 Near Here**

In 1998 (Table 10.7) only the preferences for the Socialists, the Fidesz-MPP and the Christian Democrats could be related to religiosity. MIÉP preference was not correlated with religiosity, but as soon as one controlled for the attitude scales the relationship turned significant: among the voters with the same level of clericalism and conservatism, the less religious preferred MIÉP. Preferences for the competing blocks were less based on religiosity than in 1991. Views on abortion gained some relevance but, together with conservative family values, lagged well behind the re-politicised issue of clericalism. The newly gained importance of clericalism is due to the markedly different stands taken on this dimension by the two largest parties, the Fidesz-MPP and the MSZP.<sup>3</sup> The fact that religiosity's role declined indicates that the polarisation on the clericalism issue is a primarily political phenomenon. It also indicates that the transformation of the religious divide from a sociological (structural) into a political (institutional) cleavage happened not only at the level of the government coalitions but at the level of the voters as well.

An earlier non-significant relationship, the one between MIÉP and clericalism, became significant after controlling for religiosity. The low religiosity of MIÉP supporters suppresses the fact that the preference for this party indicates a higher level of clericalism. The Fidesz voters, on the other hand, turned out to be more liberal in family and sexual norms than the non-supporters after one corrects for their above average level of religiosity.

The observed relationships between religiosity and party preference are, of course, mediated through specific attitudes. But the 'associated' attitudes are, in fact, less 'associated' than one might expect. They seem to 'work', to a certain extent, independently of religiosity. This is indicated also by the fact that none of the significant correlations between party preferences

and religiosity lost their significance after controlling for the three attitude scales. The increased relevance of clericalism as opposed to the declining role of religiosity points also towards the autonomy of party strategies. The irony is that this new clerical-anti-clerical opposition is linked to the rise of a party that was originally neither religious nor clerical.

Finally, in order to assess the ideological profile of the religious electorate, one must contrast religiosity with the left-right 'super-issue'. The latter, as a summary measure of one's fundamental political orientations, might in long run be more important for electoral behaviour than the present party preferences. In 1998, the religiosity scale's correlation with the left-right self-identification was  $-.32$ . Taking into account the fact that the bulk of the voters placed themselves in the middle of the left-right scale, this must be considered as a relatively strong relationship. This correlation decreased to  $.16$  but stayed significant after controlling for clericalism, indicating again that religious integration has a direct, non-mediated effect on ideological identification next to the impact transmitted by clericalism. In fact, clericalism was less related to left-right position, with the Pearson coefficient only being  $-.18$ . While in 1998 party preference reflected clericalism slightly better than it did religiosity, left-right identification seems to be more a function of religiosity than of clericalism. But the general picture is clear-cut: rightist political preferences, religiosity, clericalism and, as shown elsewhere (Enyedi 1997), nationalist orientation, tend to interact and overlap.

## CAUSAL MECHANISMS LINKING RELIGION TO VOTE

According to the literature on the topic (Milbrath and Goel 1977; Oppenhuis 1995) religious people can be expected to turn out at an above average level at elections, either because they perceive the stakes to be higher or because they have a stronger sense of duty. The 1991 and 1998 ISSP data confirm this observation, since in both surveys there was a ten per cent difference in favour of frequent churchgoers as far as readiness to participate in the next election is concerned. Moreover, regressing readiness to vote at the next elections on gender, age, education, trade union membership, subjective class identification, income and religiosity, only income and religiosity proved to be significant predictors in 1991 (Table 10.8). In 1998, only the effect of class-identification reached the level of statistical significance, but religiosity was also close to it ( $\text{sig}=.04$ ). Actually, though the composite religiosity scale has always yielded results very similar to the church attendance variable, in this case church attendance would have been the more influential variable, reaching the significance of class identification.

According to the ISSP data, they are not especially likely to participate in other political actions - even though they are more involved in charity and religious activities. Therefore, the

high relevance of religiosity for turnout is probably better explained by the special weight that elections carry for religious people or by the relative ease with which associated parties take stands on religion-related issues than with the religious electors' strong sense of duty.

**Table 10.8 Near Here**

**Table 10.9 Near Here**

Regressing age, education, income, trade union membership, subjective class identification, gender, urbanisation and religiosity<sup>4</sup> on the vote for government versus opposition parties, the latter variable clearly came first in 1991, ahead of the level of urbanisation. In fact, no other included variable had a statistically significant effect (Table 10.8). Since in 1998 the right wing votes concentrated on a secular party, the expectation was that we would observe a declining role of the religious factor. The smaller correlations between religiosity and party vote reported above pointed in that direction. But the logistic regression coefficients show that the impact of religiosity again clearly surpassed the effect of all the other variables (Table 10.9).

These results indicate not only that religion is more influential than the other potential socio-cultural factors,<sup>5</sup> but also that religiosity is not simply transmitting the effect of age, urbanisation, and the other variables, as is often assumed, but it has its own effect. Had I introduced into the explanatory model explicitly political variables like left-right identification, the power of religiosity would have proved to be marginal. But in the realm of socio-structural variables it clearly has a leading role.

**Table 10.10 Near Here**

**Table 10.11 Near Here**

The relative impact of the independent variables varies, of course, as one moves from one party to another. A set of regression equations (Table 10.10) show that in 1991 religiosity was a significant predictor of the vote for four parties (MDF, FKGP, KDNP, MSZP). Subjective class identification, trade union membership and education was not relevant for any of the parties, and only age reached a relevance comparable to religiosity. Urbanisation, net income and trade union membership played no role in 1998, while religiosity effected more parties (KDNP, MSZP, Fidesz-MPP) than age, class identification, education and gender (Table 10.11). Hence, it could rightly be regarded as the most important socio-cultural predictor of the vote. Moreover, the character of Fidesz voters, contrary to what was expected on the basis of the past of the party, just reinforced that relationship. As it was shown above, the Fidesz's constituency does not exhibit the level of religiosity common on the traditional right (KDNP, MDF, FKGP), but the present data also highlight that its voters are much more religious than could be expected just by considering their socio-demographic background. In other words, the party's changed appeal was best received in the religious portions of the predominantly non-religious social circles.

## CONCLUSION

The data analysed above confirm that the Hungarian parties, and especially the party blocks, have distinct electorates in terms of religiosity. As could be expected in the case of a

religiously mixed, largely Catholic country, religion is a relatively important determinant of party choice. Although the relationship between party preference and religiosity declined somewhat since 1991, the relative weight of religiosity has in fact increased. While in 1991 religious voters recognised very well their favourite parties and voted accordingly, in 1998 disagreement over the role of religious elements in politics became the main source of party preferences. Party politics did not penetrate the realm of values closely linked to the social teaching of the Churches (family values, views on abortion) but clerical attitudes became thoroughly politicised.

While in the first years it seemed that the opposition between Christian parties, on the one hand, and the secular liberal and socialist parties, on the other, formed a natural pattern of religious politics, the developments of the second part of the 1990s have brought about a re-drawing of the map. The Fidesz leadership has opted for a 'Christian' strategy, and the result was, on the one hand, the acceptance of the party into the conservative camp and, on the other, the transformation of its electorate. On the other pole of the right wing field, MIÉP appeared as a party which is strongly committed to radically clerical policies, in spite of its relatively secular electorate. These examples highlight the highly symbolic role churches and religion play in Hungarian politics and the complex relationship between religiosity and religious politics.

At a higher level of abstraction one may conclude that a crude dichotomy of secularisation versus Christianisation does not suffice. Different dimensions of the role of religiosity in society point in different directions. At some points the classical features of secularisation seem to surface: younger cohorts are much less integrated into the churches' institutional

culture than the oldest ones. At other points, the stability of an already secularised situation prevails: religion is not used as a universal mechanism for explaining the world in everyday life, religious dogmas are doubted by the majority, social subsystems follow their own, autonomous logic. The withdrawal of the secularised forces can be witnessed at a third level, however. Religious concepts, metaphors and teachings became an integral part of the private and public discourse in Hungary during the last decade. More importantly for us, in the world of politics religious symbols and attitudes towards Churches developed into major organising principles of alliances and conflicts. Clearly, the development of the institutional and personal dimensions of religiosity follow different paths.

The picture provided by the empirical data indicates that secularisation should not be perceived as a social phenomenon constraining politicians in their behaviour, but more as a process that is, at least partly, endogenous to politics, especially party politics. The role of religion in social, private and political life had to be re-defined after the collapse of Communism and the main definers are party politicians. The rival projects of re-Christianising and re-secularising (in a Western way) Hungarian society are running parallel with each other, affecting both the relevance of religious values for party choice and the actual combination of religious beliefs, religiously motivated social attitudes and political affiliations.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> In the early 1990s from half to three-quarters of the Hungarian population identified themselves as being religious, depending on the number of alternatives (two or five) offered to them (Tomka 1991a).

<sup>2</sup> MIÉP has a half-governmental, half-opposition status, therefore it was omitted. But when included in the opposition camp, the results were the same.

<sup>3</sup> This polarisation left the Christian Democrats' supporters unaffected, probably because of the ambiguous relationships between the party and the churches in this particular time period. Any conclusion on this party is tentative, since only twenty-two respondents preferred it in the 1998 data-set. The only reason for the party's inclusion in the analysis is that it played such a central role in religious politics for most of the decade.

<sup>4</sup> In order to discover non-linear effects, I have also experimented with adding next to the original independent variables their distances from the sample means. None of these measures had a significant effect, except in 1991 the modified urbanisation variable (sig. 05), and in 1998 the modified age variable (sig. 0.000). That is, in 1991, the inhabitants of very small and very large settlements were more likely to vote for the Right, while in 1998 the middle-aged were more likely to vote for the Left, and the young and the old for the Right.

<sup>5</sup> According to the data of Angelusz and Tardos (1995), between 1994 and 1998, previous membership in the Communist party had a more decisive impact on the vote.