

RELIGION AND PARTY ALIGNMENTS

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Religion is a cleavage from the past. Yet it is still closely intertwined with contemporary party alignments and voting behavior in most Western democracies, much more than often recognized. The divisions between religious denominations and between secular and religious groups continue to define the social bases of support for many modern political parties.

This essay tracks the historical evolution of the religious cleavage within Western political systems, and then turns to evaluating the present strength of religious influences on citizen voting preferences. Although much has been written on the class cleavage, relatively little cross-national research exists on the extent and variations in religious voting. While few contemporary elections are fought on the basis of religious issues, we find a surprising persistence of the religious cleavage in the face of modernization, secularization, and the other changes transforming advanced industrial societies. To an extent, the values tapped by the religious cleavage still represent a silent aspect of the political agenda for many voters.

The Evolution of the Religious Cleavage

In their seminal study of partisan alignments, Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967) described how the historical conflicts over religious and other cleavages influenced the structure of contemporary party systems. The persisting influence of this historical legacy is perhaps no where more evident than in the case of religion.

The religious cleavage was first shaped by the Protestant Reformation which created divisions between Catholics and Protestants -- divisions that had political consequences because control of the nation-building process often became intermixed with the religious cleavage. Protestants frequently allied themselves with nationalist forces in the struggle for national autonomy. In Anglican England and the Calvinist Netherlands the Protestant church supported national independence and became a central element of the emerging national political identity. Calvinist Protestantism became identified with the dominant Swiss national culture. In other nations, religious tensions ran just as deep, but these differences sidetracked the nation-building process. The strains between Lutheran and Catholic forces in Germany was a continuing source of conflict and even open warfare between contending principalities. These religious differences delayed national unification until late in the nineteenth century. The Catholic church also resisted the forces of national unification in Italy, even after national unity was achieved in 1870.

Gradually the political systems of Europe accommodated themselves to the changes wrought by the Reformation. But then, a second historical event, the French Revolution, renewed religious conflicts in the nineteenth century (Martin, 1978). Religious forces -- both Catholic and Protestant -- mobilized to defend church interests against the Liberal, secular movement spawned by the events in France. Conflicts over church/state control, the legislation of mandatory state education, and disestablishment of state religions occurred across the face of Europe. These conflicts often were intense, as in the *Kulturkämpfe* in Germany and Switzerland. In reaction to these Liberal attacks, new religious political parties formed in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, and Belgium. These parties ranged from the Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary party in the Netherlands (named in reaction to the French Revolution) to a Vaican-allied Catholic party in Italy.

As suffrage was extended and mass democracy developed at the turn of this century, new political parties formed to institutionalize these pre-existing elite conflicts. Specific interests -- Catholic or Protestant, religious or secular, Erastian or nonconformist -- attempted to ally themselves with a political party. Lipset and Rokkan impressively detail how the pattern of party alliances varied cross-nationally as a result of the sequencing of the nation-building process, the consequences of the Reformation and French Revolution, and the relationship between religious and other cleavages. The important point, however, is that the party alignments developed at the start of the twentieth century institutionalized the religious cleavage in politics -- and many basic features of these party systems have endured to the present.

Empirical research on mass voting behavior underscores the continuing importance of the religious cleavage. Richard Rose and Derek Urwin (1969) examined the social bases of party support in 16 Western democracies. Their oft-cited conclusion maintains that "religious divisions, not class, are the main social bases of parties in the Western world today" (p. 12). Additional evidence comes from Arend Lijphart's (1979) comparison of the religious, class, and linguistic cleavages in four democracies where all three cleavages exist. He found that religion exerts the strongest independent influence on voting choice. The persisting importance of the religious cleavage is documented by numerous other cross-national and longitudinal studies (Rose, 1974; Inglehart, 1977, chap. 9; Baker et al., chap. 7; Miller, 1977; Dalton, 1988; Lijphart, 1975).

Despite this evidence of a strong relationship between religious values and partisan preferences, there are indications that the religious cleavage may be following the same pattern of decline that Henry Kerr (this volume) described for the class cleavage. The modernization process in advanced industrial societies may disrupt religious alignments in the same manner that social class lines have blurred. An increase in social and geographic mobility has weakened traditional group and community ties, including integration into religious networks. The churches, too, have reached a rapprochement with secular and socialist parties. The virulent conflicts between

Christian good and socialist evil which once dominated elections in many European nations have moderated. In Italy one can now be a good Catholic and a good communist (Wertman, 1982); the German Social Democrats are no longer an anathema to Christians; and the religious "pillarization" of Dutch society has crumbled (Andeweg, 1982).

This chapter addresses these topics by examining the status of the religious cleavage in eight Western democracies. The irony of the religious cleavage is that although religious voting is often stronger than class voting, the literature on the class cleavage is extensive and the literature on the religious cleavage is quite limited. We therefore begin by describing the history of religious alignments in these nations, and then turn our attention to the patterns in religious voting. What is the future of the religious cleavage in societies increasingly concerned with postindustrial politics?

Religious Cleavages in Eight Nations

The Political Action study (Barnes, Kaase et al., 1979) provides a useful base for exploring the religious cleavage in detail because it includes nations with diverse confessional patterns. Following the typology defined by Stein Rokkan (1970, chap. 3), Western Europe can be divided into three broad religious regions (table 1). First, a Catholic grouping includes the Latin nations of Southern Europe and several small states, such as Belgium and Austria. Second, a mixed region in central Europe is composed of nations with sizable Catholic and Protestant communities. Third, the northern tier of European nations is predominantly Protestant. In addition, we add the classification of the United States as a fourth region of denominational pluralism.

Our surveys from Italy and Austria provide examples of predominantly Catholic nations, with over 90 percent of the survey respondents expressing a Catholic affiliation. The religious cleavage in both nations primarily reflects conflict between religious (Catholic) forces and secularists. The two nations differ, however, in the path this religious cleavage has followed. Prewar Austria was known for its intense conflict between Catholics and Socialists (Powell, 1970). Each group, or Lager, was represented by its own political party and attendant associations. The trauma of World War II produced a realignment of Austrian politics in repudiation of past political polarization. A new postwar conservative party, the Austrian People's party (ÖVP), avoided formal ties with the Catholic hierarchy and projected the image of a conservative Volkspartei. The Catholic church also lessened its direct involvement in politics. The ÖVP and Socialist party formed a Grand Coalition in 1945 and shared control of the national government until 1970. These developments lessened the intensity of the religious cleavage in Austrian politics.

The polarization between Catholics and secular forces has also been the major religious cleavage of postwar Italian politics (Wertman, 1982). In Italy, however, the Catholic church has retained a relatively more formal and activist role in politics. The resources of the Catholic network, such as the Catholic Action organization, are still an important base of support for the Christian Democratic party. In addition, the clergy are willing to directly involve themselves in political matters when church interests are at stake, as during the divorce and abortion referendums. Thus, the active involvement of the Catholic hierarchy makes the religious cleavage more visible in Italy, while the presence of the religious cleavage in Austria is less apparent.

The Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland are nations from the Political Action study that exemplify mixed denominational systems. The religious cleavage in these nations historically pitted Catholics against Protestants. In Germany, the population is divided between Lutherans and Catholics; in the Netherlands and Switzerland the division is between Calvinists and Catholics.

Table 1. Depillarization of Dutch Society, 1971-1982

	1971	1972	1981	1982
Political parties should be:				
Secular	38.4	42.8	53.0	61.7
Confessional	11.1	10.2	5.2	5.1
Labor unions should be:				
Secular	43.5	48.8	58.1	64.4
Confessional	11.2	11.7	3.7	4.0
Schools should be:				
Secular	37.5	39.1	36.8	40.6
Confessional	20.3	21.8	20.8	21.4

Source: Dutch National Election Studies (Amsterdam: Steinmetz Archive).

During the last century, the Catholic minorities in all three nations formed Catholic parties in defense of their interests. Protestant parties also were created in Switzerland and the Netherlands. After World War II, however, the nature of the religious cleavage changed. Confronted by a growing secular trend, denominational differences between Catholics and Protestants were replaced by a joint defense of religious values. In Germany, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) bridged the historic denominational divide by uniting both Catholics and Protestants in a single religious party. Faced with a rapid decline in the confessional vote, the separate religious parties in the Netherlands (KVP, ARP, and CHU) merged in 1977 to present a single Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) for religious voters. In Switzerland the Catholic People's party (KVP) changed its name to the Christian Democratic People's party

(KDVP) in a search for inter-denominational votes. The formation of these Christian Democratic parties realigned the primary lines of the religious cleavage to follow a secular/religious axis instead of a Catholic/Protestant one.

The predominantly Protestant nations of Northern Europe are represented by Finland and Britain (Madeley, 1977, 1982). Like other Scandinavian nations, the Finnish public is almost entirely Lutheran. The church's support for national independence in the early twentieth century developed a close bond between nation and the church. The utilitarian pragmatism of the Lutheran church precludes the emergence of a secular/religious conflict. Finland is thus known for its lack of a religious cleavage.¹

Britain's religious composition is more varied: the English and Welsh are mostly Anglican, while the Scots are largely Calvinists. In addition, about a tenth of the respondents in the British survey were Catholics. Religion was the primary cleavage of British politics until early in this century (Wald, 1983). Religious issues gradually were removed from the political agenda through Welsh disestablishment, educational reforms, and independence for the Catholic Republic of Ireland. The religious tolerance of the dominant Anglican church obviated a Catholic/Protestant cleavage, and the Erastian principles of the national church prevented the development of a significant secular/religious cleavage. Thus only a residue of past religious cleavages apparently remains (Butler and Stokes, 1974, chap. 7).²

The United States represents a distinct pattern of its own. Religious and moral conflicts have been a central element in American history (Lipset, 1968, 1981). Nevertheless, the formal separation of church and state limited the impact of religion on politics. Explicitly religious parties have not existed in modern times, and formal institutional ties between the churches and the present day parties do not exist. In addition, the United States lacks a dominant national religion, with the public divided between Catholics, Reformation-era Protestants (Anglican, Calvinist, Lutheran, etc.), neo-fundamentalist Protestants (Southern Baptist, Pentacostals, etc.), and other Protestants and Christians (Methodists, Mormons, Christian Scientists, etc.), and non-Christians (primarily Jewish). These religious groups display different voting patterns (Ladd with Hadley, 1975; Lopatto, 1985), but often these differences can be traced back to class or regional cleavages.

Besides the denominational differences between publics, the nature of the religious cleavage in a nation is also affected by the strength of religious networks and the intensity of religious beliefs (table 2). The number of citizens who are integrated into religious networks through regular church attendance is fairly modest and varies widely across these eight nations. Weekly church attendance is generally higher in largely Catholic nations such as Italy and Austria, which means more voters are regularly exposed to the political cues of their religious milieu. Conversely,

participation in religious services is less extensive in predominantly Protestant nations. Church attendance is, however, only one measure of religious commitment.

Table 2. The Patterns of Religious Cleavage in Eight Nations

	Major Denomination	Religious/Conservative Parties
Catholic Dominant		
Italy	% Catholic (85)	% Christian Democrats, DC (38.7)
Austria	Catholic (89)	Austrian People's Party, ÖVP (43.0)
Mixed Denomination		
West Germany	Lutheran (50) Catholic (43)	Christian Democratic Union/ Christian Social Union, CDU/CSU (48.6)
The Netherlands	Catholic (35) Calvinist	Catholic People's Party, KVP
	Dutch Reformed (22) Orthodox Reformed (9)	Anti-Revolutionary Party, ARP Christian Historical Union, CHU
Switzerland	Calvinist (52) Catholic (44)	Christian Democratic Appeal, CDA (31.9)
		Christian Democratic People's Party, KDVP (20.6)
		Swiss People's Party, SPP 810.1)
		Evangelical People's Party, EVP (2.0)
Protestant Dominant		
Britain	Anglican (62)	
Finland	Lutheran (90)	Christian League (3.3)
Pluralist		
United States	Catholic (22) Protestant Reformation (17) non-traditional (31) neo-fundamentalist (20)	

a. The size of each denomination is based on the samples from the Political Action study.

b. The figures in parentheses are the party votes shares in the election closest to the time of the survey.

The second column in table 2 presents a subjective measure of religious beliefs: the proportion of the public who consider themselves to be religious.³ Subjective religious feelings are much more extensive than frequent church attendance. Furthermore, these feelings do not simply reflect the religious composition of a nation. The number of people who feel religious is higher than in Britain and Finland than in Catholic Austria. Additional data on religious orthodoxy are available from the 1981 European Values Survey (Harding, 1986). Belief in the basic tenets of Christianity -- God's existence, life after death, heaven and hell -- is fairly modest, with only slight variation across nations. The national pattern of religious beliefs is somewhat distinct from participation in church activities.

One anomaly stands out in these cross-national comparisons. Despite the affluence, high mobility rates, and social diversity of Americans, the United States is probably the most

religious of the advanced industrial societies (Dalton, 1988, chap. 6). Church attendance among Americans is highest among the eight nations surveyed, religious feelings are widely held, and orthodox religious beliefs are extensive. Religion appears to be an integral part of American culture (Lipset, 1968, 1981).

The level of church attendance is often used as an cross-national indicator of the intensity of religious commitments and the strength of the religious cleavage. The pattern in table 2, however, suggests that national levels of church attendance are heavily influenced by the denominational composition of the nation, and that feelings of religious commitment are somewhat independent of formal participation in church services. Thus the religious commitment of the mass public might be better measured by the religious beliefs which citizens actually express. Catholics and Protestants may be equally intense in their religious beliefs, even though they attend church with differing frequency because of the norms of their denominations. The cross-national pattern of religious beliefs reflects the culture of the nation rather than simply the distribution of denominations. Furthermore, internalized religious beliefs may be better predictors of citizen attitudes and behavior better than external contact with church institutions.

Secularization and the Religious Cleavage

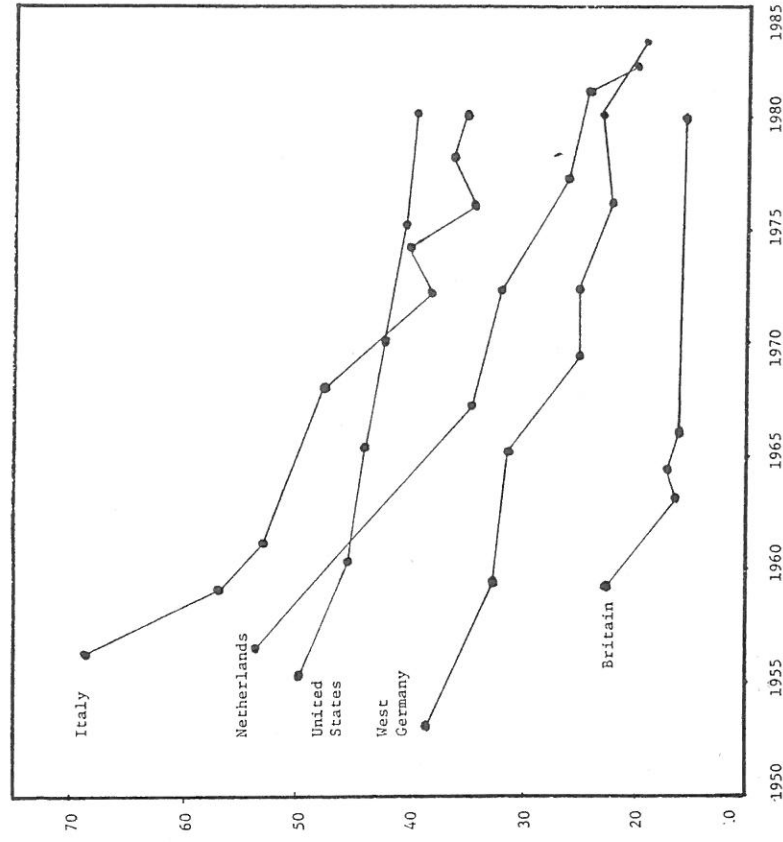
The secularization process has been an on-going aspect of modernization in Western democracies. Attention to this question first developed in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, as industrialization sharply reduced the social importance of religion when migrants to the cities left behind a rural life style centered around the community and local church. The traditional moral framework of agrarian society was replaced by the diversity and economic orientations of an urban, industrial society. Some of the major figures in sociology focused on the decline of religious values that accompanied industrialization, and explored the social consequences of these trends. Max Weber, for example, described the process of disenchantment, *Entzauberung*, that resulted from the decline of religious values. Emile Durkheim was concerned with the normlessness that accompanied the erosion of religious networks.

The secularization of industrial societies was an incomplete process, however. The churches adapted to the new social order, with the formation of religious labor unions, schools, and civic groups. The pillarization of Dutch society, for instance, dates from this period. The churches accommodated themselves to a new role, and insulated the religious community from external influences.

In the last several decades, the social forces of advanced industrialism have renewed the secularization process; thereby further altering and eroding the role of religion in society. A

change is leisure patterns weakened religious networks; church life is no longer the focus of social activities. More generally, the increased social and geographic mobility of urbanizing, industrial societies undermined community integration; social bonds of all sorts -- class, religious, and linguistic -- generally moderated (Dalton et al., 1984). The mass public is also becoming more sophisticated about politics and more individually aware of political issues, further undermining the importance of social cues such as religion or class (Dalton, 1988). As a result of these factors, contemporary mass publics are less exposed to religious influences and religious values are not as widespread as they once were (Harding, 1986).

Figure 1. Weekly church attendance



Source: Italy (Wertman, 1982); United States (Gallup, 1980, 1981); Netherlands, Dutch National Election Studies (Amsterdam: Steinmetz archive); West Germany, West German Election Studies, Civic Culture Study (Ann Arbor: ICPSR); Britain, Butler and Stokes' Election Studies, Civic Culture Study, Eurobarometer 13 (Ann Arbor: Eurobarometer 13).

One component of this modern secularization process consists of the public's integration into religious networks. Involvement in church activities exposes the individual to the clergy's views on political issues and to the social cues of the religious milieu (Sani, 1975); much as union involvement indoctrinates the working class. Figure 1 displays the longitudinal trends in church attendance for several of the nations we are studying. The downward trend is unmistakable. In Italy, for example, weekly church attendance drops from 69 percent (1956) to 35 percent of the public (1980). Even when church attendance is initially quite low, as in Britain, a further decline occurs during the 1970s and 1980s. This trend exists across virtually all Western nations and for both Catholics and Protestants.

The social distribution of religious involvement provides some basis for judging the patterns behind this secularization process. Table 1 presents Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) results using several common predictors of religious commitment.⁴ Church attendance is consistently higher among women, though the gradual moderation of sex roles may have contributed to the secularization process. In addition, social status and postmaterial value priorities are moderately related to church attendance.

Table 3. The relationship between religious feelings and Left/Right party preferences by age group.

Age Group	Italy	Austria	Germany	Netherlands	Swiss	Britain	Finland	USA
Under 30	-.26	-.37	-.29	-.29	.01	-.10	-.26	-.11
30-50	-.24	-.29	-.29	-.38	-.16	-.03	-.16	-.01
50-70	-.36	-.37	-.27	-.30	-.15	-.07	-.16	-.04

Table entries are tau-c correlations.

The strong relationship between age and church attendance may provide a valuable clue in explaining the secularization process. Age group is consistently one of the best predictors in of church attendance. These age differences may partially represent life cycle effects; that is, a tendency for church attendance to be weaker among the young and strengthen with age. If this is the primary basis of this relationship, then age differences have no long term significance for the secularization process. Today's youth would become like their elders as they age and are replaced by a new youth cohort. We believe, however, that age differences also represent significant generational effects. The characteristics of advanced industrial societies -- weakening social bonds, increased mobility, a stress on individualism, etcetera -- are limiting the relevance of religion for succeeding generations. If age differences are due to such distinct cohort experiences, then we should expect these generational differences to persist over time. The generational hypothesis thus predicts a continuing trend of secularization as older, more religious cohorts are replaced by younger, more secular individuals.

Neither explanation of age group differences can be disproven with surveys from a single timepoint. However, a longitudinal comparison of age groups can provide useful "side information" for judging the validity of either theory. The life cycle theory would predict fairly constant age differences across time, since aging is a fairly constant process. Conversely, the generational theory predicts increasing age differences over time, as new generations reflect the changing conditions of contemporary society.

Table 4. Italy Austria Germany Netherlands Swiss Britain Finland USA

Denomina- tion	Italy	Austria	Germany	Netherlands	Swiss	Britain	Finland	USA
Religious feelings	.10	.10	.21	.35	.13	.11	.10	.20
Occupation of household head	.28	.32	.29	.23	.18	.12	.17	.06
Education	.17	.31	.17	.15	.23	.27	.28	.09
R	.04	.09	.07	.07	.14	.15	.20	.13
(N)	.38 (1297)	.54 (1235)	.46 (1437)	.55 (964)	.34 (741)	.38 (1200)	.45 (999)	.28 (1371)

Table entries are MCA beta coefficients.

Table 4 compares age differences in the frequency of church attendance between 1959-60 and 1974-75 for four nations from the Political Action study. In each nation, the age differences in religious involvement are greater in the later survey. Furthermore, the drop off in church attendance is especially noticeable for the youngest age cohorts (also see Gallup, 1981, p. 31-35). Thus generational effects are at least partially responsible for the observed age differences.

The data in table 3 also advise caution in making too close a link between secular and social change. In most nations there is a tendency for church attendance to be higher among the middle class and the better educated; and yet religious values have not strengthened with the spread of affluence and education. These patterns are due to a persisting imbalance in the religious attachments of social classes; the working class experiences the secularizing effects of Socialist groups and the upper class is more closely identified with the religious establishment. Even these patterns are changing, however; this relationship is weaker among younger cohorts (data not shown). This is another indication of the changing norms of advanced industrial societies.

The general decline in church attendance can be replicated with numerous other measures of religious involvement. Data from Germany and Italy document a postwar decrease in the proportion of the public who have church weddings; the percentage of interdenominational weddings is also increasing. Participation in religiously-based associations and social clubs is decreasing (Wertman, 1982; Balvik, 1981). And nearly everywhere, the number of young men entering a religious vocation is declining.

Another aspect of secularization involves an erosion in religious beliefs and values. Max Weber's earlier comments on the Industrial Revolution may be even more appropriate today: with the progress of science and technology, man has stopped believing in magical powers; in spirits and demons; he has lost his sense of prophecy and, above all, his sense of the sacred.

In an age of computers, high tech, genetic engineering and space flight, the church is no longer a widely accepted source of knowledge and authority. A new rationalist era may be upon us.

The evidence from opinion surveys yields mixed results on the decline of religious beliefs. Surveys from Britain, the United States, and Germany indicate that support for the basic tenets of Christian religions -- belief in God, life after death, heaven, hell and Jesus's divinity -- has remained fairly stable for the past several decades (Gallup, 1979, 1980; Noelle-Neumann, 1981). In other areas, however, the evidence of declining religiosity is more obvious.

A number of recent political issues -- birth control, abortion, divorce, pornography -- emanate from conservative religious moral beliefs. There has been a liberalizing trend in support of these issues in virtually all contemporary societies. Often these views are held in direct contradiction to official church policies, especially as the Catholic church has taken a more conservative course under Pope John Paul. Even in overwhelmingly Catholic Italy, the church suffered defeats on national referendums dealing with divorce (1974) and abortion (1981). Secularization has developed a more "permissive" view of moral choices. In addition, changing mores and disregard for official church policies may have eroded the importance of religious values for other political beliefs.⁵

The public's declining involvement in the established churches is paralleled by the churches' declining involvement in politics. Conflict between secular and religious forces has moderated since World War II. On the one hand, Leftist parties in many European nations sought a rapprochement with religious groups, especially with the Catholic church in countries with a large Catholic population. On the other hand, the churches themselves have strived to normalize political relations, if church interests could be guaranteed as part of the process.

The depoliticization of religion is most visible in the predominantly Catholic nations. In Italy, the partisan advocacy of the papacy changed under Pope John XXIII. His ecumenical spirit was applied to political rivals of the church and he de-emphasized the church's electoral involvement. Beginning in the 1960s, the Italian bishops abstained from their traditional appeals for Christian Democratic votes. While the level of the church's involvement in Italian politics has fluctuated during the 1970s and 1980s, it has never regained the pre-Vatican II level, and with a Polish pope it is unlikely to do so in the future. A normalization of Socialist/church relations also occurred in Germany during the 1960s, as the SPD consciously modified its antireligious image and the Catholic church responded (Spotts, 1973). A series of political

agreements were negotiated between church representatives and the Social Democrats. Beginning with the 1969 election, most Catholic bishops now refrain from their traditional election-day sermons in support of the CDU/CSU.

The process of secularization is probably best exemplified by the Netherlands (Andeweg, 1982). Dutch society was noted for its rigid system of social "pillars" (*zuilen*), which segmented virtually all aspects of social relations into three separate pillars: Catholic, Calvinist, and secular (Lijphart, 1975; Bakvis, 1981). There were separate trade unions, employers associations, agricultural organizations, schools, media, and social clubs. Even the Catholic goatherders had a professional association separate from the Calvinist goatherders. Interaction between members of the different religious subcultures was kept to a minimum.

In the mid 1960s, the cohesion of these pillars began to weaken, leading to a process of depillarization. The percentage of the public regularly attending church fell by a full 20 percent in a single decade (see figure 1). A similar decrease occurred in the membership of confessional business associations and social clubs. The secular labor union increased in size as the Catholic union stagnated. And while separate confessional media continued to exist, citizens increasingly shifted their attention to the secular media. The clearest evidence of depillarization came from electoral results. The total vote for all three confessional parties declined precipitously from 53 percent in 1948 to 31 percent in the 1972 parliamentary elections.

The Catholic hierarchy in Holland responded to, and contributed to, these trends. Facing pressure from younger clergy and the public, the Dutch Catholic church became less orthodox in religious and political matters. Sanctions against Catholic membership in the socialist labor union were dropped in 1965; other interbloc contacts were tolerated, if not encouraged. Moreover, most of the Dutch bishops ceased their electoral appeals in behalf of the Catholic People's party (KVP), and explicitly told their congregations that voting was a matter of personal conscience.

Table 5. Predictors of religious feelings.

	Italy	Austria	Germany	Netherlands	Swiss	Britain	Finland	USA
Age	.18	.04	.25	.23	.21	.21	.25	.18
Gender	.17	.10	.15	.07	.10	.15	.25	.15
Occupations	.05	.16	.10	.10	.13	.08	.13	.03
Education	.09	.14	.09	.06	.11	.06	.08	.06
Value priorities	.16	.10	.10	.09	.06	.07	.07	.02
R	.39	.30	.35	.27	.33	.29	.44	.24
(N)	(1742)	(1570)	(2144)	(1172)	(1234)	(1454)	(1202)	(1689)

Table entries are MCA beta coefficients.

Indications of this depillarization trend can be seen in table 5. By 1971 the Dutch public's support for confessional parties and labor unions already was quite limited.⁶ A clear preference for secular institutions developed over the next decade. Only the educational system appears immune from this trend; but even in this area a plurality of the citizenry favor secular schools. Rudy Andeweg (1982) has documented a general decline in the public's confessional orientations and religious orthodoxy which parallel this depillarization trend.

This remainder of this chapter examines the possible consequences of this secularization process in Western democracies. But even initially, several broad trends are apparent. Secularization has generally decreased the size of the religious sector in most societies. Fewer citizens are now involved in church activities, or feel bound by church policies. Concomitantly, in most nations the churches have also lessened their direct involvement in politics. The inevitable result of these changes should be a decline in the impact of church affiliation on mass political behavior.

Religion and Voting Behavior

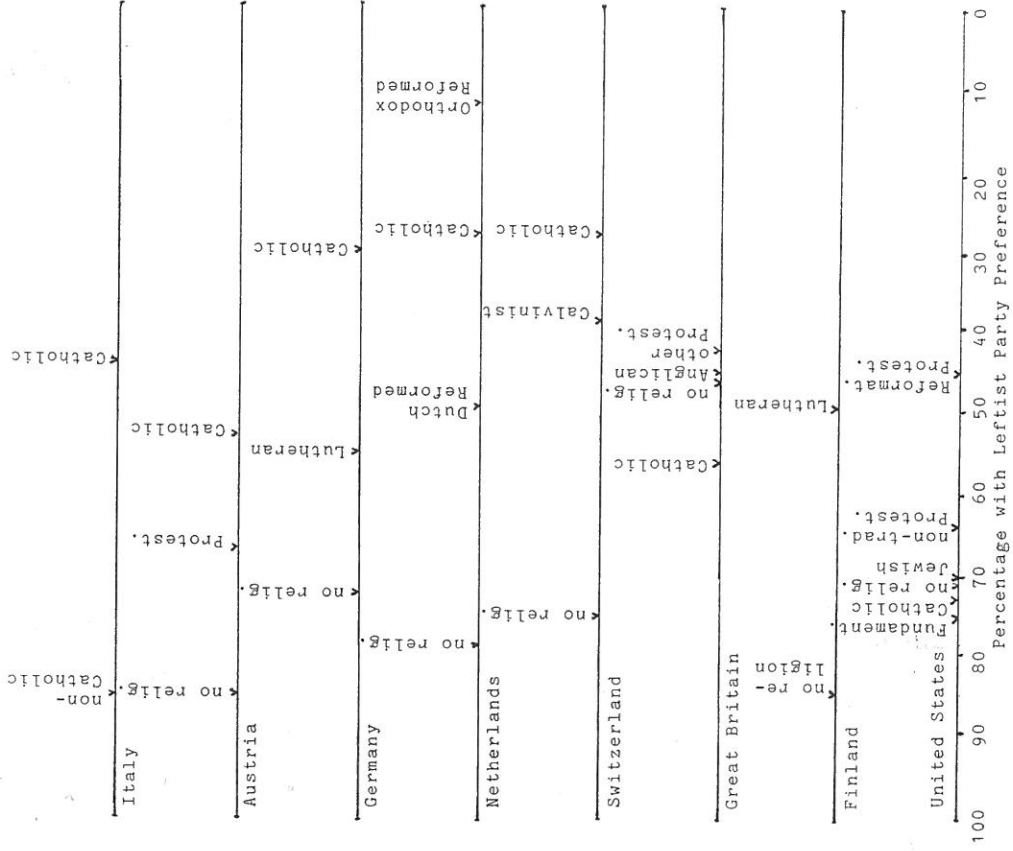
One of the main dimensions of religious cleavage in many Western party systems is based upon denominational differences. Denominational patterns in voting behavior are most obvious when they are linked specifically Catholic or Protestant party, but the impact of religion also extends to the overall Left/Right framework of these party systems. Therefore, we began our examination of religious voting by examining the relationship between denomination and Left/Right party preferences. Figure 2 presents the percentage of each religious denomination that favors a Leftist party; the complete distribution of party preferences for each denomination is included in the appendix.⁷

In Catholic dominant and mixed denominational systems, the historical conflict between the Catholic church and Liberal/Socialist parties still appears in voting alignments. Catholics are less likely to support the Left; their votes go to the conservative parties which have defended traditional values and the church's prerogatives. The Leftist parties in these nations receive greater support from Protestants and non-religious voters. There is, however, a deviation even in this religious alignment.

The Reformed church (Gereformeerd) in the Netherlands was created in the 1800s in reaction to the "liberal" tendencies of the established Calvinist Dutch Reformed church (Nederlands Hervormd). The Gereformeerd church is characterized by strict adherence to orthodox Calvinist doctrine and a closed religious community. It is an intensely religious denomination (see figure 3 below). Members of this church are the most conservative in all eight nations; only 12 percent express a Leftist party preference. In addition, the specific party preferences of Dutch religious denominations provides evidence of the continued pillarization of voters in this 1974 survey (see

appendix). A major bloc of Catholics (39 percent) endorse the KVP, members of the Dutch Reformed church give substantial support (19 percent) to the CHU, and a plurality of the Orthodox Reformed (45 percent) prefer the ARP; the crossover vote between religious blocs is minimal.

Figure 2. Leftist party preference of religious groups



The religious cleavage follows a different pattern in the two Anglo-American democracies. In Britain, the Anglican church is historically identified with the political establishment; thus Anglicans give disproportionate support to the Conservative party. Conversely, British Catholics are aligned with the Labour party as a consequence of their minority status and the lingering residue of party conflicts over Irish independence. The non-conformist Protestant denominations have long sought representation through the Liberal party (Wald, 1983; Madeley, 1982). In the Political Action survey, 20 percent of non-conformists favor the Liberals (see appendix). Thus, figure 2 is somewhat deceptive because it only measures support for the Labour party in Britain; in overall Left/Right terms the category of other Protestants should be located between the Anglicans and Catholics.

In the United States, Protestant denominations from the Reformation era support the Republic party, while the other major religious blocs support the Democrats. These voting patterns may, however, be due less to religion than to other factors (Ladd with Hadley, 1975). Neo-fundamentalist Protestants are a heavily Democratic group, but this is a reflection of regional cleavages in American politics, and the concentration of this denomination in the conservative, but Democratic, South. Catholic ties to the Democratic party are primarily due to ethnic and class influences, rather than religion per se.

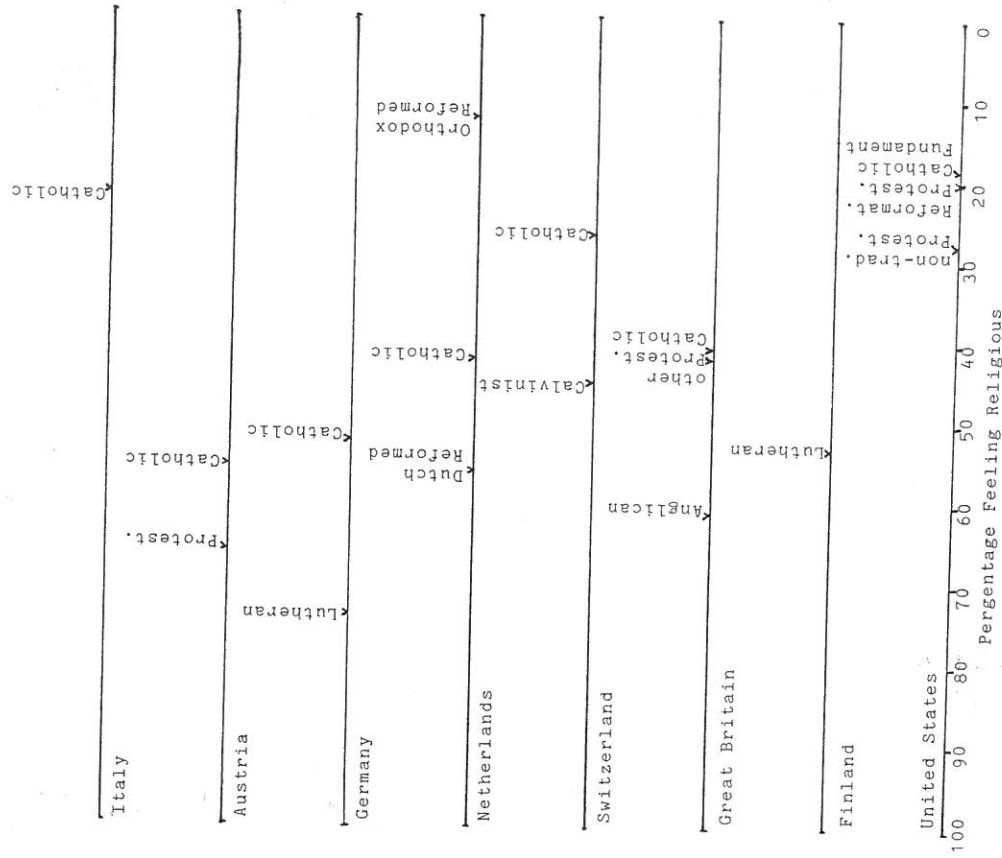
Despite some commonalities, these data lack a consistent patterning in the Left/Right orientations of denominations. This is because the partisan loyalties of religious groups are determined by several factors (Lipset, 1968, p. 170-171). The values of different denominations predispose them to either liberal or conservative parties. Protestantism stresses individualism, self-reliance, and a personal determination of what is moral behavior; Protestants are therefore less hostile to the liberal orientations of Leftist parties. Catholic theology emphasizes a more rigorous set of moral codes and communal responsibility over individualism; this encourages support for Conservative parties. The intensity of these religious commitments is displayed in figure 3, which charts the percentage of each denomination that feels "very" or "somewhat" religious. One can see a general correspondence between the intensity of religious feelings and party support (figure 2). Protestant voters tend to be less religious and more Leftist than Catholics.

In addition to the differing values of religious denominations, historical events have often structured the relationship between a religious denomination and a political party or tendency. In Britain, for example, the disestablishment issue during the nineteenth century forged a persisting bond between non-conformists and the Liberal party. The partisan consequences of the struggle for Irish independence are still visible in the Labour orientations of British Catholics.

Finally, the partisan loyalties of religious groups vary because of the social characteristics of their members. The Democratic party preferences of American Catholics cannot be explained by

their religious values, but by their class and ethnic origins, and the history of how these ethnic groups were integrated into American society and politics.

Figure 3. Religious feeling of religious groups



These are only cross-sectional data, but the clear Left/Right positions of religious groups are evidence of the persistence of the religious cleavage down to the present. Indeed, the longitudinal data which are available display little evidence of a decay in religious alignments during the postwar period. Based on a quarter-century of German election studies, Kendall Baker and his colleagues (1981, chap. 7) find no indication of a convergence in religious voting patterns through the early 1970s. Trend data for the United States display a similar constancy (Lipset, 1968, chap. 8; Lopatto, 1985). A cross-national analysis of religious voting in four Western democracies finds relatively little change in denominational patterns over the past quarter century (Dalton, 1988).

Further evidence on the stability of denominational voting differences is available by comparing religious voting across generations in the Political Action surveys. These analyses are possible only in the mixed denomination systems -- Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland -- where sufficiently large groups of Catholics and Protestants are available. In these three nations, the difference between Catholics and Protestants in the percentage supporting a Leftist party shows scant evidence of decline across age groups:

	Ages		
	-30	30-49	50-69
Germany	6	22	19
The Netherlands	17	22	25
Switzerland	7	14	3

Younger Catholics and Protestants are both more likely than their elders to support Leftist parties, but the relative gap between the two denominations does not narrow systematically by generation -- a sharp contrast to the pattern of generational convergence normally found for class voting.

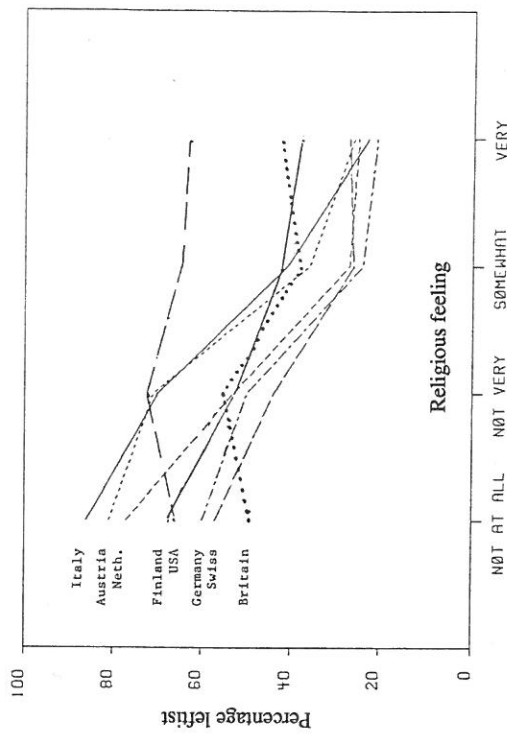
Religiosity and Voting

Another dimension of the religious cleavage involves the conflict between secular and religious voters. The relationship between this religious dimension and Leftist party preference is presented in figure 4. The figure presents Leftist preferences according to the strength of the respondent's religious feelings, from "not at all religious" to "very religious."

In Catholic and mixed denominational systems, the voting gap between polar groups is often extreme: 63 points in Italy, over 50 points in Austria and the Netherlands, and over 30 points in Germany and Switzerland. Analyses based on the frequency of church attendance show similar, and sometimes stronger, relationships (data not shown). Moreover, the same negative relationship between religious feelings and Leftist voting occurs within every major

denomination in these five nations. The secular/religious cleavage is still a potent predictor of partisanship in contemporary party systems.

Figure 4. Leftist preferences by religious feeling



The partisan differences between religious and non-religious citizens are more modest in Protestant nations. The lack of religious conflict is not simply a function of weak religious networks and religious feelings in Protestant nations; the overall strength of religious feelings in Britain and Finland is comparable to Catholics in Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. Instead, the weakness of the religious/secular cleavage can be attributed to the Erastian nature of the Anglican church in Britain and the Lutheran church in Finland.

The United States presents another exception. We have seen that religious beliefs are intensely held in the United States, and religious conflict is a recurring element of American society. And yet, because of the formal separation of church and state, these religious conflicts have not been institutionalized in the party system. The partisan preferences of most religious denominations display only modest differences, and there is virtually no overall relationship between the intensity of religious feelings and partisanship.

Much as we have found for denominational voting patterns, longitudinal studies in several nations find a fairly constant relationship between religiosity (as measured by church attendance) and voting preferences (Dalton, 1988). The enduring importance of the religious/secular cleavage is further documented by generational analyses from the Political Action study. Table 6 presents age group differences in the relationship between religious feelings and Left/Right party preferences for all eight nations in our study. The overall pattern suggests a basic

constancy in this religious cleavage across age groups, in some nations there is even greater polarization along this dimension among the young.

Table 6. Church attendance by age group, 1959-1974.

Age Group	Italy		Germany		Britain		USA	
	1959	1974	1959	1974	1959	1974	1959	1974
18-30	64	22	25	10	22	11	46	29
31-40	45	28	29	19	16	13	50	44
41-50	59	44	25	23	28	13	47	41
51-60	60	42	24	23	14	43	44	
60 plus	60	46	42	31	26	21	46	53
Youngest-oldest difference	4	-24	-17	-21	-4	-10	0	-24

Source: 1959 from Civic Culture Study, 1974-75 from Political Action Study. Table entries are percentage attending church on a weekly basis.

The Cumulative Impact of Religious Influences

The religious cleavage thus consists of two separate components: religious denomination and religious/secular differences. Either or both of these traits is often strongly related to partisan preferences in the eight nations of our study. But before concluding on the importance of the religious cleavage, it is necessary to judge these effects relative to the other major social basis of party support -- the class cleavage -- and to make sure that religious differences are not due to the varying class composition of religious groups. For example, Butler and Stokes (1974, p. 157-159) maintained that the relationship between church attendance and Conservative vote for members of the Anglican church is largely a spurious class effect; middle class citizens are more likely to attend church and vote Conservative.

The two measures of religious cleavage were combined with two measures of social status, occupation of the head of the household and respondent's education, in a Multiple Classification Analysis predicting partisan preference. In Catholic nations the simple correlation indicates that the religious/secular division is the strongest basis of partisan cleavage (Italy, $\eta^2=.34$; Austria=.42). These relationships are even larger if measured with the frequency of church attendance (data not shown). The impact of this religious cleavage moderates slightly in the multivariate analyses (Italy, $\beta=.28$; Austria=.32), but still exceeds the influence of occupation and education.

In mixed denominational systems, both religious denomination and religious feelings emerge as strong predictors of partisanship, even independent of social class influences. Indeed, if both items are combined into a single religiosity measure, their combined impact provides persuasive

evidence of the continuing importance of the religious cleavage in these nations (Germany, $\eta^2=.44$; Switzerland=.36).⁹

In the Protestant nations of Britain and Finland, the influence of the class cleavage overshadows religious differences in partisanship. Even the modest simple relationship between religious feelings and partisanship in Britain is substantially reduced by controlling for class effects. Finally, in the United States all four predictors have only a weak influence on party preferences. Nevertheless, from among this list of social influences on American voting behavior, religious denomination emerges as the strongest predictor of partisanship.

The Basis of the Religious Cleavage

Against the backdrop of contemporary politics in these eight nations, the persistence of the religious cleavage is a cause for some surprise. Most elections are still phrased as contests over economic stability and growth, the welfare state, taxes and other economic issues; yet class voting is steadily declining (Kerr, this volume). In contrast, despite the paucity of explicitly religious issues and the lack of religious themes in most campaigns, religious beliefs are a strong predictor of party choice in many Western democracies. Moreover, in contrast to Kerr's findings on the decline of the class cleavage, the predictive power of the religious cleavage remains strong. A present day replication of Rose and Urwin's (1969) comparison of class and religious cleavages would probably place even greater stress on the relative importance of religion as a basis of party choice -- if only because the influence of class has eroded so dramatically. This pattern is all the more striking because advanced industrial societies have become more secularized during the past few decades.

There are several reasons why religion continues to play an influential role for voter choice. Perhaps the most important factor is that religious conflicts helped determine the structure of modern party systems and therefore still affect the electoral choices open to the voters (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). In the first half of this century this often meant a competition between Catholic- and Protestant-oriented parties. Because of the secularization process, the more common pattern of religious cleavage now follows a religious/secular axis: the competition is between Christian Democratic parties and the parties of the Left. For example, Ronald Inglehart's analyses of group cleavages (this volume) finds that the clergy are associated with the major conservative party in all Catholic and mixed denominational nations. Since many parties are at least partially structured around the religious cleavage, it is easy for religious concerns to be represented in partisan politics. And, with "Christian" appearing in a party's name, this alone provides clear cues on the party's orientation.

In the United States and Protestant dominant nations, the relationship between church and state has attenuated the religious cleavage, and specifically religious parties are lacking. Yet, the

historical significance of the religious cleavage can be documented even in these nations. Religion was the primary basis of partisan division in Britain until Irish independence. The close ties between the Finnish state and the Lutheran church are also of recent vintage. The American case is one of intense religious differences which are not, however, institutionalized into the party system. Religion is politically significant in the United States, even if its partisan consequences are modest.

The religious cleavage is also important because it reflects deeply held human values, which have a great potential for influencing behavior. Explicitly religious issues constitute small part of the political agenda: state support for religious schools, abortion, divorce, and a few other issues. However, religious values have been linked to a wide range of social and political beliefs: the work ethic, achievement aspirations, life style norms, parent-child relations, morals, social relations, attitudes toward authority, and acceptance of the state (Weber, 1958; Lenski, 1961; Harding, 1986; Lipset, 1968). Religious values also encourage a preference for traditional social conditions and a conservative attitude toward social change; these attitudes have broad relevance for political beliefs and behaviors (Lipset, 1981). In the nations of the Political Action study, there is a clear and consistent relationship between religious feelings and self-placement on a Left/Right scale. Religious citizens are more likely to score high on the political Repression Scale and low on the Protest Potential Scale; they are also less supportive of postmaterial values.

Religion thus signifies a *Weltanschauung* that extends into political areas. Indeed, many of the social issues facing contemporary societies can be linked to religious values: birth control, abortion, gender roles, moral codes, social order, acceptance of alternative life styles, etcetera. Such issues contribute to the continuing importance of the secular/religious cleavage. Religious groups often provide institutional support for individuals opposed to liberalizing social norms, and recast these issues in moral terms. Indeed, there is often a substantial overlap between voter positions on the religious cleavage and the value cleavages of advanced industrial societies (Inglehart, 1977, 1989; Baker et al., 1981).¹⁰ Thus religion has been described as the hidden agenda of politics -- influential but not always obvious.

At the same time we note this persistence of the religious cleavage, we should also cite the less obvious evidence of its erosion. The persisting relationship between the religious cleavage and party preferences does not mean that the secularization of advanced industrial societies has not had an impact. Comparisons of voting patterns across denominations ignore the growing non-religious segment of society who are excluded from these analyses. Furthermore, even though voting differences between religious and secular voters have held fairly constant for the past generation, secularization is steadily increasing the absolute number of non-religious citizens. Individuals who attend church regularly are still well-integrated into a religious network and maintain distinct voting patterns; but there are fewer of these individuals today. By definition,

the growing number of secular voters are not basing party preferences on religious cues. Thus, the changing composition of the electorate is lessening the partisan significance of religious cues by decreasing the number of individuals to whom these cues are relevant.

If secularization means that religious groups are losing their effectiveness, a historic watershed may be passed in the balance of religious and secular forces, and therefore the development of Western democracies. The religious sector of society has traditionally been a source of societal stability, balancing the forces of social change. Seymour Lipset (1981) maintained that the religious/secular dimension has historically structured political conflict over the modernization of Western societies. Because of support from religious groups, conservatives normally were able to retard, or halt, liberalizing social change. Freed from the traditional values and orientations of religious beliefs, the majority of Western public are now more receptive to modernization, liberalization, and social change. There are many indications that the pace of social change has quickened in recent decades. Values and social behavior that were considered radical a few short years ago are considered commonplace today.

Religious groups have responded to these trends in different ways. These developments have sometimes mobilized a conservative, religious opposition to liberal social issues. The rise of Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and other religious fundamentalists to positions of prominence in the American Republican party exemplify the religious revival seen in other nations (Madeley, 1977; Berger, 1982). As Lipset notes, however: what is striking about the right-wing backlash movements in Europe and the United States is not the fact that they exist, but their weakness, particularly when compared to the electoral and membership strength of comparable tendencies in the interwar years generally of the immediate postwar era. (1981, p. 491) These groups have lost their majority status because of secularization, and now function as vocal minorities.

Other religious groups have reacted to societal trends by promoting a progressive role for their churches. Catholic bishops in the United States, Lutheran church groups in Germany, Anglicans in Britain, and the Catholic clergy in the Netherlands have publicly supported the peace movement and endorsed nuclear disarmament (Rochon, 1988). German Lutheran groups advocate liberal policies toward guestworker rights and relations with the Third World. Latin Europe has experienced a revival of Christian socialism in various forms. In many nations the younger clergy have become vocal proponents of social reform (Berger, 1982). Rather than fighting against the tide, these religious groups have sought new strength by becoming active on issues which underscore the liberal aspects of Christian values.

Our findings thus present a mixed picture of the status of the religious cleavage. The secularization process is having far-reaching effects on Western democracies by decreasing the number of religiously active citizens. In the short run this trend might actually stimulate an intensification of the religious cleavage, as religious groups wage a vigorous defense of their

fading influence. This course signals an apparently inevitable decline of religious influence in the political process. However, the churches may also adapt to changing social realities. The churches' past ability to accommodate social change explains their longevity as the oldest institutions in Western societies. In either case, the consequences of the secularization process may be just beginning.

Footnotes

- 1) Although Finland has a religious party, the Christian League, it routinely receives less than 5 percent of the vote. The support of this party is based on sects more than membership in National (lutheran) Church.
- 2) The conflict in Northern Ireland may be reviving religious conflicts in the United Kingdom, but Northern Ireland was not included in the British sample of the Political Action survey.
- 3) The question wording was as follows: Generally speaking, would you consider yourself to be very religious, somewhat religious, a little religious, or not very religious. Table 5 includes the percentage saying "very" or "somewhat" religious.
- 4) Another important predictor of church attendance is rural/urban residence. This was not included in the MCA analyses because a comparable variable was not available for all eight nations.
- 5) For example, data from Eurobarometer 19 (1983) indicate that only a minority of Europeans state that their religious convictions affect their political preferences:

Neth	Irel	Gr	Belg	Ital	Fran	Germ	Brit	Den
27.1	23.0	22.5	20.5	19.2	17.6	16.2	13.2	5.7
- 6) Thung et al. (1982, p. 137) show that support for confessional parties and unions declined sharply between 1966 and 1970.
- 7) The Left/Right coding of parties follows the codebook for the Political Action study (Zentralarchiv, p. 458-459). There is some disagreement on whether specific religious parties should be coded as Right or Center. The figure presents the percentage with a Leftist party preference to avoid this problem and produce results comparable to the class analyses in Henry Kerr's chapter.
- 8) Essentially similar results are obtained using subjective religious feelings or another question on the frequency of church attendance. Since some nations differed in the coding of church attendance, the analyses here are based on the religious feeling item. In addition, because of differing norms for regular church attendance, a subjective measure of religious feelings may be more appropriate when comparing nations with different religious compositions.
- 9) These relationships are based on a seven point religiosity scale, include three categories of religious feeling for both Catholics and Protestants and a separate category for the non-religious.
- 10) In contrast, these social issues tend to cut across traditional class lines, moving portions of the working class toward conservative parties and a part of the middle class toward liberal parties, and thus weaken the overall predictive power of class position. The analyses in table 1 indicate a moderate positive relationship between postmaterial values and secularism; that is, these two cleavages are not contradictory and are somewhat reinforcing.

GROUP SYMPATHIES, PARTY TIES AND SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AMONG WESTERN PUBLICS

Ronald Inglehart

Political conflict is multidimensional. Theoretically, the number of dimensions required to describe it fully could be as large as the number of identifiable social groups taking part in the political process, involving scores or even thousands of factors. To make such complexity manageable, both politicians and social analysts necessarily simplify the problem, dealing with one or two dimensions of polarization in order to bring order out of chaotic complexity.

Among Western journalists and politicians, the Left-Right concept has been the most widely-used organizing principle. It provides a cue that quickly distinguishes between the good guys and the bad guys: between the groups (and issue positions) on "our" side and those on the other side. Just which groups and policies are on the Left or Right can vary a great deal across time and cultures, but at a high level of abstraction one can say that the groups and policies of the "Left" favour social change in an egalitarian direction, while those of the "Right" resist it.

How neatly the political system actually does polarize into two opposing camps at a given time and place is, of course, an empirical question. As a conceptual scheme for mobilizing political action, the Left-Right concept has much to recommend it; it presents political behaviour as a clear, dramatic choice between good and evil, rather than one of selecting between scores of alternatives in subtly different shades of grey. There is even a certain measure of truth in it: needing to reach a 51 percent threshold in order to govern, the bulk of a nation's political forces frequently do divide up into a governing coalition versus an opposition coalition, with each side having a more or less consistent political program. Insofar as one coalition is relatively favourable to changing the established socio-political order, and tester opposes it, the two groups fit the traditional image of Left and Right. Thus the Left-Right dimension may provide a useful first approximation of the alignment of political forces in a society.

But reality, in today's highly differentiated societies, is far more complex than this. In their influential analysis of social cleavages and party systems, Lipset and Rokkan emphasize the importance of (1) religious, ethnic and regional cleavages emerging from the national revolution; and (2) economic cleavages emerging from the Industrial Revolution, based on different industrial sectors (e.g., primary versus secondary), and social classes (e.g., bourgeoisie and proletariat).¹ Though it might seem almost self-evident that the former, older set of cleavages had by now lost most of its political relevance, empirically they remain important bases of electoral behaviour.²