



Political Science of Religion

Theorising the Political
Role of Religion

Maciej Potz

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Maciej Potz
Faculty of International and Political Studies
University of Łódź
Łódź, Poland

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For Sylwia and the girls, with love

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maciej Potz is a Full Professor of Political Science at the Department of Political Systems, Faculty of International and Political Studies, University of Łódź, Poland. He obtained his Ph.D. in 2006 from the Silesian University in Katowice and his post-doctoral degree from the University of Łódź in 2017, both in political science. His research focuses on political theory (especially theory of power and democratic theory) and political science of religion. Within the latter, he is specifically interested in theocracies (as a Foundation for Polish Science scholar he did research on Shaker and Mormon theocracies in the United States) and political strategies of religious actors in contemporary democracies, especially Poland and the United States.

His publications include monographs on religious freedom and the relations between religion and the state in the United States (*Granice wolności religijnej* [*The Limits of Religious Liberty*], 2008; 2nd ed. 2015) and American theocracies (*Amerykańskie teokracje. Źródła i mechanizmy władzy usankcjonowanej religijnie* [*American theocracies. The Sources and Mechanisms of Religiously Sanctioned Power*], 2016), as well as several articles, including in *Religion, State and Society*, *Journal of Political Power*, *Politics and Religion Journal*, *Studia Religiologica*.

Maciej Potz has taught political science–related courses in the University of Łódź and has given guest lectures at several European universities, including the University of the West of Scotland, Buskerund College and NTNU (Norway), University of Joensuu (Finland), University of La

Laguna (Spain), University of Olomouc (Czech Republic). He has participated in a number of international conferences, including IPSA World Congresses of Political Science in Santiago (2009), Madrid (2012) and Poznań (2016).

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PART I

Reclaiming Religion for Political
Science



Introduction: Why We Need Political Science of Religion

It is no longer fair to bemoan the inattentiveness of scholars to the importance of religion for the sphere of politics. After a long period of actual and institutional neglect (Jevtić 2007), the literature on various aspects of the relation has been growing exponentially since the 1990s, due to both real-life processes (e.g. the surge of Islamic extremism) and intellectual developments, such as the renunciation of the secularization thesis (Gill 2001). This enhanced awareness of political significance of religion attracted the attention of scholars from various disciplines within social sciences and humanities, including political science. But while political scientists have been at the forefront of this movement to bring religion back into the study of politics, they have largely failed to develop and articulate a comprehensive, uniquely political-scientific perspective on the relationship between politics and religion, even if many of them adopt such a perspective implicitly in their work.

This book is designed as a partial remedy for this deficit. It originates from the conviction that a consistently political-scientific approach to the study of the relationship between politics and religion, distinct from legal, sociological, theological or religious studies perspectives, is badly needed. The development of such a perspective has been impaired by the influence of paradigms which constrain us within an overly narrow legalistic view, or else dilute the study of the political role of religion into a methodologically incoherent collection of phenomena and cases. I refer to these existing frameworks as Church and State (or CS) and Religion and Politics (RP)

paradigms. They are not flawed in themselves: they simply cannot stand on their own as independent explanations of the political role of religion. Instead, they need to be situated within a theoretical framework which incorporates religion into the existing modes of political analysis, rather than singling it out for a special treatment. This new framework—political science of religion—would treat religious organizations just as other political actors pursuing their goals within a political system, and religious doctrines similarly to other political ideologies, while retaining the ability to account for the important differences between religious and secular actors and ideas. Whether or not political science of religion will be somehow formalized into a subdiscipline of political science (which, admittedly, runs some danger of overspecialization and insularity; see Kettell 2016), it needs to be recognized as a proper field of study within this discipline. In this methodological sense, it is not interdisciplinary, even though it uses insights from sociology and psychology of religion, theology, comparative religion or legal studies.

The book consists of three parts. In Part I, I offer a critique of the existing approaches (Chap. 1) and introduce the theoretical framework of political science of religion (Chap. 2). The critique dwells primarily on the three issues spelled out above: the excessive importance attached to the legal-institutional dimension of the religion-politics relationship, the lack of political science identity amidst the potpourri of religion and politics studies, and their normative overload—approaching the subject of study with strong normative assumptions, something that plagues a lot of research in social science, but seems to be especially difficult to avoid when it comes to religion. The longer, constructive Chap. 2 starts with general principles (the “nine theses”) of political science of religion, then proceeds to the conceptualization of the main items of analysis within the discipline (religion, political system, political actor etc.) and concludes with a theoretical framework integrating macro, mezo and micro levels of the study of the political role of religion, with the discussion of approaches most appropriate to each level.

Parts II and III employ this framework to explore some of the main subjects of study within political science of religion. The structure reflects the fundamental shift in the relationship between religion and political power in the Western world which occurred in early modernity. Gradually, religion lost its function of ideologically upholding and justifying political authority and gave way to other legitimation formulas, notably the contractual formula of contemporary democracies. It did not, however,

disappear entirely from the public sphere. Rather, religious actors took on other institutional forms and adopted different strategies, transforming from official churches at the centre of power structures to religion-motivated participants of a pluralistic political arena. In recognition of this, the book covers both theocratic political systems, where religion provides the central component of the system's legitimation formula (Part II)¹ and non-theocratic systems, where it coexists with other ideologies within a pluralistic public sphere, while religious organizations engage in power relations with other political actors (Part III). Specifically, Chap. 3 discusses religious legitimation of power, develops a conception of theocracy derived from it, situates it within the existing typologies of political regimes and considers the role religious doctrines and practices play in sacralisation of political power. Chapter 4 focuses on the mechanisms of succession of power, its institutionalization and what I refer to as political control in theocracies. Importantly, the analysis is not restricted to theocratic states, but also covers non-state theocratic political systems, such as churches or religious communes. In defining theocracy as political power sanctioned by religion, but not necessarily held by religious functionaries, and thus applicable not only to ancient or medieval, but also to contemporary (mostly Muslim) political systems, I aim to re-establish the analytical significance of this relatively rarely used category.

Part III considers the political role of religion in non-theocratic political systems. In Chap. 5, I attempt to explain the survival of religion and religious actors in the face of secularization and the loss of formal positions of authority, as well as political strategies they use to navigate the field of secular democratic politics. Some of these strategies are uniquely religious, but others, perhaps most, emulate the behaviour of other political actors—one more reason to integrate religion and religious actors into general explanatory frameworks of political science. In the last section, I look briefly at the relationship between religion and political conflict. Finally, Chap. 6 combines various concepts discussed throughout the book into a model of religion-inspired political activity in democracies, which is then applied to the cases of post-1989 Poland and the United States. The difference between strong, effective political presence of the Polish Catholic Church and equally active but less effective political involvement of a multitude of American religious organizations is conceptualized by a veto player–stakeholder dichotomy, and explained by a number of factors pertaining to both the religious actors themselves and the political opportunity structure within which they operate.

I should, perhaps, begin with a disclaimer: clearly, this book does not offer a single, coherent theory for studying all instances of the religion's influence on the sphere of politics. Political science of religion is too vast an area to be approached with a single method or model. I therefore merely demarcate the field, provide guidelines on how to approach it, identify the basic problems within it and propose some solutions, along with empirical illustrations to test their viability. I dwell on some issues extensively (religious legitimation of power, theocracy, religious actors in democratic politics), while only signalling others (religious extremism, civil religion etc.), largely because they are very well researched already and I would have little to add. So this certainly is not *the* political science of religion—the ultimate theory of political significance of religion—but a structured selection of conceptions, models and other theoretical tools potentially useful for the analysis of religion-related political phenomena, to be further developed and restructured. This selection, however, is by no means haphazard. It is integrated by a consistently political-scientific perspective: it approaches religion as a power resource and religious organizations as political actors pursuing their agendas within a political system.

1.1 THE DOMINANT APPROACHES

“Church-state relations” has been, arguably, the most popular way of referring to the relationship between religion and the sphere of politics, both in common usage and in scholarly work. As a research field, it has been fairly well-defined in terms of its research questions, approaches and methods, thus justifying the label “paradigm”. Ostensibly, it lies at the crossroads of constitutional law and political science, but in fact, conceptually and methodologically, it has been chiefly the domain of legal scholars.

The Church and State paradigm focuses on the institutional relationship between the organs of the state and religious organizations, usually referred to collectively as churches. It asks, among other things, the following types of questions. Is there an official or established state church? Are churches formally linked to state institutions? Do religious functionaries hold positions in organs of government? Does the state support churches financially, organizationally, or in some other way? If so, is this support equally distributed among all religious organizations? Does the state protect religious freedom of the citizens? What are the legal sources of such arrangements? What are their normative underpinnings?

On the basis of the above criteria, numerous categorizations of church-state relations are proposed. They vary in complexity, but the types are usually situated on a scale from close connection to strict separation between religious organizations and state institutions. To take just a few examples, the simplest typologies include the models of establishment (state church), cooperation and separation (Eberle 2011; Zrinščak 2011). Neuberger (1999–2000) distinguishes two “dictatorial” models—theocracy and secular absolutism—and four democratic ones: established church, endorsed church, separation of church and state, and recognized communities. Burgoński (2014) talks about monism (no distinction between the religious and the political, characteristic mainly for early ancient states) and various kinds of dualism of religion and politics: confessional state, pure separation, coordinated separation and hostile separation, in a totalitarian or non-totalitarian setting. Other terms used to describe arrangements which do not fall neatly within the basic types include benevolent separation, recognition or accommodation. Notwithstanding the differences, all these models treat “churches” as legal entities whose public presence needs to be managed by constitutional and other legal provisions, while their members as bearers of rights, primarily, in this context, freedom of religion. However, neither religious organizations nor their members are, in the Church and State paradigm, political actors.

Religion and Politics is a broad, catch-all category, which seems to encompass all research reporting any relationship between the two spheres. To see what it contains, let us look at two recent handbooks on the subject. *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Politics* covers topics as diverse as “Religion and the American Founding”, “Religion and American Political Thought” and “Religion, Parties and Voting Behavior” (*Oxford Handbook* 2009). *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics* starts with an essentially comparative religion section on various world religions’ attitude to politics (“Buddhism and politics”, “Shiism and politics” etc.) and continues with three sections devoted to various connections of religion to domestic and international politics, where political science chapters on parties or democratization are interspersed with sociological reflections on fundamentalism or philosophical analyses of concepts such as civil society and postsecularism, with occasional excursions to the church and state framework (*Routledge Handbook* 2016). While all these themes are no doubt important for understanding the political role of religion, they are approached from a variety of per-

spectives, ranging from comparative religion, to sociology of religion, international relations theory, legal studies, to political philosophy. Indeed, because of such methodological eclecticism, it is even questionable to call R&P a paradigm—it rather resembles a loose collection of texts reporting any kind of coexistence of religion and politics. Meanwhile, in the Routledge handbook there is no effort whatsoever to formulate theoretical assumptions that would serve to systematize such study from a political science perspective (or from any other perspective, for that matter). In a similar fashion, *The Politics of Religion* (2006), edited by Jeffrey Haynes, is another collection of “Buddhism/Christianity/Islam... and Politics” chapters followed by some chapters on fundamentalism, religious terrorism and so on, but, again, without any systematic theoretical introduction (save, perhaps, for the glossary, which, admittedly, provides some conceptual clarity). The Oxford handbook is somewhat of an exception, since it opens with an excellent theoretical political science chapter by Smidt, Kellstedt and Guth, and most chapters (except, perhaps, for a historical one on America’s founding and a philosophical one on American political thought) are broadly situated within this framework; nonetheless, true to the book’s title, it is for the most part applicable only to the United States.

Such an interdisciplinary approach may even appear within a single article. For instance, Zrinščak (2011), in a chapter devoted to church, state and society in post-Communist Europe, concedes that “church-state relations are principally a domain for lawyers rather than sociologists” (158) and quotes approvingly Koenig’s statement that “Church-state relations [is] a topic that had for a very long time been left to historians and legal scholars” (159), and he goes on to consider “social position of minority religions, the concrete exercise of religious rights and religious freedom, norms guaranteed by constitutions or international agreements”, establishment or disestablishment of religion, levels of religiosity and so on. These, however, are still mostly legal and sociological, rather than political science research problems. The result is not necessarily irrelevant or invaluable—and certainly it is not so in this case. Rather, approaching the study of religion’s impact on the sphere of politics from the perspective of a sociologist, legal scholar or historian does not yield the answers that political science seeks with regard to the significance of religion, in various senses of the term, for the distribution of political power.

1.2 WHY ARE THESE APPROACHES DYSFUNCTIONAL FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE?

The question makes sense, to be sure, only from the perspective of a particular discipline. There is nothing inappropriate for legal scholars, philosophers, theologians or students of religion to view the relationship of religion and politics through their own lenses. The subject itself is, of course, a public good—only the methods, theories and approaches are distinct. The following discussion offers arguments why political science should avoid copying these other perspectives, instead of applying its own tools to the study of the political significance of religion.

a. *“Legal blindness”* In the Church and State paradigm, the relationship between religion and politics is viewed primarily from the legal perspective, as set out in constitutions, codes, concordats, judicial rulings and other legal documents. This potentially blinds scholars to the actual influence of religion in a political system, often exerted through informal, non-institutional channels. For instance, if one viewed the political system of seventeenth-century Massachusetts from a legal-procedural perspective, one would see a limited democracy, where assembly members and a governor are elected by all freemen of the colony. What would be missing from the picture, however, is that the authority of these organs was legitimized in strictly religious and not democratic ways—their power came from God, not from the people who elected them—and that Congregationalist clergy exerted strong political influence without holding any official government positions. Massachusetts and other Puritan colonies of New England were thus theocracies, although not hierocracies (see 3.1; Potz 2016, chapter 7). To take another example, the application of the Church-State paradigm to contemporary Poland would leave us with some version of “benevolent separation” model with constitutional, statutory and concordat regulations of the legal status and the financing of churches, but would not account for the powerful influence the Catholic Church exercised through lobbying, grassroots mobilization, moral suasion and other strategies which this powerful political actor uses to further its goals (see 6.2).

In general, “concepts like neutrality, establishment, or erastianism are more at home in historical studies, legal theory or political philosophy than in empirically oriented comparative politics” (Enyedi 2003, 224). They provide convenient templates which may stall further inquiry into

the power relations in which the actors figuring statically in these models actually engage.

b. *Normative overload* Most of the studies within the “church and state” perspective are burdened with more or less explicit assumptions about the proper place of religion in the public sphere. These assumptions stem, broadly speaking, from either conservative or liberal worldviews. The conservatives, who perceive religion as a source of political norms and values, a necessary component of power legitimation formulas and/or the pillar of public morality (see e.g. Neuhaus 1986), bemoan the “empty place of power” which results from the dissolution of the organic conception of body politic, with a religiously mandated sovereign at its head (Miller 2016). Meanwhile, the liberals insist on relegating religion to the private sphere, refusing religious arguments’ self-standing validity in the public space—that is, when they are not supported by “proper political reasons” (Rawls 1999, 152)—and arguing for the neutrality of the secular state in matters of religion. In this respect, they find allies in proponents of deliberative democracy, most of whom insist on excluding religious arguments from the public forum as failing to meet the test of intersubjective validity: they may not be accepted by others as reasons, especially when they are not formulated in terms of the common good (Potz 2010, 112–113)².

While these conceptions *per se* pertain to political philosophy, they undergird much of political science research on the political role of religion. This is not to say that political scientists should find some middle ground between these conflicting conceptions of the proper place of religion in public life. No—it’s none of their business at all. Political analysis which explains political processes in terms of goal-oriented behaviour of political actors does not need to make such judgements at all.

Meanwhile, many students of the relationship between religion and politics bring these normative orientations to bear on their work. This is especially true for the church–state tradition, perhaps because it deals with legal norms as expressions of axiological assumptions. Thus, for example, the author of a book on *Church and State in Western Society* asserts that

the need for demarcation between religion and the state is important [...]. If the line between religion and the state is drawn more clearly, there is often a greater likelihood that the integrity of both religion and the state will be better preserved. It is important to focus on the value of religion to a person, the society, and the state. (Eberle 2011, 2)

Needless to say, such concerns are out of place in social science. What is more, they are presumably peculiar to religion only. Would the author be equally concerned about the integrity of, say, liberal or social-democratic ideology vis-à-vis the state, or, if religion is meant here institutionally, the integrity of political parties or pressure groups, or their “value to a person”? Probably not, just because religion is not treated as any other ideology, nor religious groups as other political actors—as they should be in a political science-informed approach to the subject³.

The normative overload is partly attributable to general misconceptions regarding the relationship between the normative and the empirical in the study of politics. In considering how various “dimensions and sub-fields of political science” might contribute to the study of religion and politics, Steven Kettell proposes that “‘political theory’ might consider the normative merits of religion in public life, questions of morality and the nature and effects of religious ideas and values” (Kettell 2016, 9). In this, he follows the entire Anglo-Saxon tradition of calling “political theory” what should be properly termed “political philosophy”, and in making it a part of political science to boot. Note that this odd usage is peculiar to the study of politics. Sociological or social theory, for instance, is a set of conceptual tools and interpretative frameworks for understanding social phenomena, not normative assumptions about the proper functioning of the society. The same applies to economic, anthropological, psychological and so on but not to political theory. In view of such terminology, there seems to be no theory of political science beyond such “political theory”-cum-philosophy (which, of course, is not the case). To be sure, understanding religious ideas and their political impact is necessary, but “considering their normative merits” is totally at odds with what social science, including political science, should concern itself with. In a similar vein, Joshua Mitchell states that “[t]he resurgence of religion around the globe poses a challenge for both empirical and normative social scientists”, and the task for the latter should be to find adequate terms so that “religion may be brought into public dialogue without violating the tenets of pluralism or toleration” (Mitchell 2007, 351). Well, “normative social scientists” should strike any social scientist as *contradictio in adiecto*: it’s either normative, or it’s social science! And it always seemed to me that bringing religion “into public dialogue” is the job for clergy and politicians, if they so wish, not for scientists.

c. *Singling out religion for special treatment* The researchers working within the CS paradigm usually formulate the subject matter of their study

as “church-state relations”. No such distinct perspective, however, is applied to other political actors in their relationship with the government: it is not customary to talk about “political party-state relations”, “interest group-state relations” or “social movement-state relations” as separate fields of study. This may be partly due to a deep-seated, often unconscious conviction of the unique significance of religion, its respectability, its exceptional place in a nation’s history and so on. Thus, for instance, in America religious liberty is often referred to as “first freedom”—as a statement of priority, not just chronological precedence (see e.g. Gaddy and Lynn 2008). Whatever the reason, singling out religion for a different treatment within the discipline, more than just a matter of terminology, is an obstacle to a coherent theory of politics devoted to the study of power relations within a political system.

An extreme case of attributing unique importance to religion in the sphere of politics is Claus-E. Bärtsch’s project of political science of religion as a universal discipline encompassing nearly all aspects of human existence. Bärtsch starts with the assertion that “[t]he general subject of [...] political science of religion is the relationship between politics and religion as it is and as it should be” (2009, 167), thus situating himself firmly within the normative perspective. The methodology of this discipline is rather mysteriously defined as a “topical-hermeneutic dialectics of viewpoints” (loc. cit.). But it is when Bärtsch outlines the “object of political science of religion” that the eyes of political scientists begin to widen. It includes “the spheres of existence”, “the categories of cognition”, “the order of man, society and history” and “the meaning of existence and the quest for a good and happy life” (177). “The psychic-existential sphere” consists of, among other things, “the phenomenology of the ‘*metaxy*’ with regard to the experience of the tension between being and the ground of being”, while “the spiritual-cognitive sphere” is composed of “intellect, reason, spirit, illumination” as well as “Voegelin’s principle of ‘*metaxy-reality*’” (178). Bärtsch is concerned only with individual human experience and disregards completely collective or institutional elements of politics, dismissing the statement “that the state is an actor and in which this assumption performs the task of an axiom” as bearing “good amount of superstition” (173). In sum, Bärtsch’s “political science of religion” is an ambitious intellectual project deeply immersed in the German philosophical tradition, but with little relation to political science as a discipline of social science. It starts with an overly broad understanding of politics,

which does provide a wider perspective, but, at the same time, makes his approach completely non-operational as a theoretical framework for the scientific study of the political significance of religion.

* * *

There is no denying that religious groups are certainly specific in many respects, as compared with other actors: their norms, values and goals are anchored in the supernatural sphere; they provide their members with supernatural rewards (compensators) and sanctions potentially stronger than those of their secular counterparts; they usually condition the administration of these rewards on the commitment of their members, which allows them to overcome the free-rider problem characteristic of at least some secular organizations, especially economic interest groups; and some of the strategies they use are religion-specific (see Chap. 5). But other actors have their own peculiar features, too. The recognition of the unique characteristics of religious actors should not prevent researchers from incorporating them into unified theoretical frameworks valid for all kinds of political actors, since they share a lot in common. According to Simon Fink, “a foundation that treats churches as somewhat unique actors impedes attempts to embed churches as actors in overarching theoretical frameworks” (Fink 2009, 80). In fact, religious organizations often emulate the strategies of other actors, behaving as social movements or interest groups. As Carolyn Warner observes with regard to the Catholic Church, “While some of the differences between the Catholic Church and other interest groups affect the Church’s assessment of strategy, they do not preclude us from analysing it as an interest group when it is engaged in politics” (2001, 13).

Finally, the postulate of situating political science of religion within political science rather than religious studies (or comparative religion) is quite natural (though not uncontested—see literature review in Marczevska-Rytko 2018), considering that the latter lacks methodological identity beyond, perhaps, *Religionwissenschaft*—the phenomenological, “morphological” study of religious beliefs, rituals and symbols. Methodologically, political science of religion belongs to political science, just as sociology, psychology or anthropology of religion belong to, respectively, sociology, psychology and cultural anthropology, with these discipline’s research methods and explanatory potential.

1.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have targeted three main deficiencies in the scholarly literature dealing with the relationship between politics and religion: its narrowly legalistic-institutional approach, its normative overload and its methodological eclecticism, resulting in the failure to provide a coherent account of religion as power resource and religious organizations as political actors, grounded in theoretical frameworks of political science. Many of the above and other problems are clearly recognized by some scholars within the discipline. Allen Hertzke (2009, 322–323) observes “a broader deficiency in political science. As Wald and Wilcox suggest (2006), the inattentiveness toward religion by mainstream political science is attributable to both sides: secular political scientists find the complexity of religion a stumbling block, whereas scholars of religion and politics fail to tie their efforts to the theoretical work of leading scholars”. This, if accurate, would provide an argument for the development of political science of religion: a subdiscipline whose adepts would be well-versed in religion and would thus not fear this complexity, but who would approach it with the theoretical background in political science. It would also hint towards openness of political science to other relevant fields (such as religious studies or theology), while retaining its theoretical sovereignty. Likewise, Enyedi (2003, 230) points to

the importance of the political context for the understanding of church–state relationships. The lesson is that specifically political science frameworks are needed for interpreting the dynamics of this field. The relevance of approaches using juridical, historical, economic, or philosophical perspectives is in no way denied. But by drawing analogies between churches and the other subjects of standard political science, like parties or corporations, or by contrasting types of church–state regimes and types of democracy, we may gain insights that the above-mentioned approaches cannot deliver. Both churches and the state are part of the political institutional setting that surrounds us, and therefore they should not be studied in isolation

Lest the case be overstated, it must be admitted that not all works within this literature are equally marked by the above difficulties, and many do provide a decidedly political science-oriented account of the relationship between politics and religion. There are a number of excellent empirical political science studies and some, albeit less frequent, attempts at theorizing this relationship from the perspective of political science; I refer to and extensively use some of them in this book, particularly in

Chaps. 2 and 6. However, most studies rarely do it in a consistent and systematic fashion. In consequence, the dominant approaches fail to provide a coherent theoretical framework for studying the role religion plays in politics. This is not to say that some of their elements (e.g. the account of the institutional model of church-state relations in the case of the Church and State paradigm) should not be incorporated into the political-scientific approach. In fact, the combination of the three theoretical perspectives I discuss in Chap. 2 provides avenues to integrate these insights into the discipline. For instance, institutional models of church-state relations will be explicitly used in my discussion of theocratic political regimes (4.2) and they form an important part of “political opportunity structure”, the configuration of conditions external to religious actors which they must take into account in the course of their political activity. However, the legal regulations are just one of many determinants of the effectiveness of a religious organization in politics; other factors include its social legitimation (Kowalczyk 2012, 22) and the resulting political leverage it can exert through electoral politics and mass mobilization (in contractual democracies), its power relations with secular authorities (in all types of regimes) and the configuration of other political actors in the system, among other things.

NOTES

1. Chapters 3 and 4 of Part II are based on my previous Polish-language book (Potz 2016) devoted entirely to theocratic political systems.
2. There are, admittedly, less teleological versions of deliberative democracy, i.e. not explicitly invoking reaching consensus on common good as the ultimate goal of deliberation.
3. To take another example, authors of a selection of sources on the attitude of various religious groups to the Polish constitution finish their perceptive and highly informative introduction with an odd conclusion that the “influence of religious communities, and particularly the Catholic church” on the Constitution “may not be assessed positively” (Borecki and Janik 2012, 42). Such an evaluation adds nothing to the content of the study, poses the question of the normative standpoint from which it is made and, ultimately, works to undermine the credibility of the authors.

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CHAPTER 2

Political Science of Religion: Demarcating the Field

There has been some effort over the last ten years or so, especially in European literature, towards the development of a theoretical framework of what was explicitly referred to as political science of religion (Bärsch 2009; Góra-Szopiński 2015; Jevtić 2007; Michalak 2016; Zuba 2010; see also Kettell 2016 for a critical view), while many other authors worked in the same area without invoking the label (e.g. Fink 2009; Gill 2001; *The Politics of Religion* 2006; Warner 2001). In fact, although Europeans were more eager to claim the fatherhood (with Miroljub Jevtić being probably the most assertive), most empirical work on political relevance of religion has likely been done in American political science. However, the principles of the discipline have yet to be adequately elucidated and systematized. In what follows, I will attempt a step in this direction.

The chapter starts with articulating the main assumptions of political science of religion. I then suggest conceptualizations of religion as a subject of study for social sciences and religious groups as political actors within a functionally defined political system. I conclude with the outline of three main research perspectives within the discipline: economic, social movements theory (SMT) and “cultural”. These are not, to be sure, the only possible approaches, but, combined, they are, I believe, a step towards building a more systematic framework for studying the relationship between politics and religion from the vantage point of political science.

2.1 THE PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL SCIENCE OF RELIGION

To begin with, let us articulate right away the basic principles of political science of religion, to be further developed in the subsequent sections of this and later chapters. The study of the relationship between politics and religion from the perspective of political science should be informed by the following assumptions:

1. Religion is a system of beliefs and practices related to the supernatural which motivate people to various kinds of social, including political, behaviour (Chap. 2).
2. Religious doctrines serve important political functions. In theocratic political systems, they legitimate political power on normative, structural/institutional and personal levels (Chap. 3); in non-theocratic systems, they guide segments of the public in their political views and attitudes, are posited as a source of public morality and may drive political activity, including protest and conflict (Chap. 5). In general, from the perspective of political science, religious doctrines should be treated similarly to secular political ideologies.
3. Religious organizations (churches, sects, cults etc.) are social entities which, insofar as they enter a political system to engage in power relations, become political actors. In their relation to other political actors, religious actors can be treated as units (ROI—religious organizations as institutions) or as communities of believers (ROC—religious organizations as communities), and the analysis of the interaction between religious and secular actors may focus either on the outcomes (the “black box” approach) or on the internal structure of these actors and the mechanism of their interactions (the “white box” approach; see Sect. 2.3. below).
4. These religious political actors should be analysed, in principle, in the same way as secular political actors such as political parties, social movements, interest groups and so on—in terms of their internally defined goals and interests, and the strategies they adopt in pursuing them. There is no such thing as “church-state relations” as fundamentally different from other political interactions.
5. A similar analysis may apply to religious organizations themselves as political systems—the arenas of power relations. Their governing institutions, succession procedures and mechanisms of political

control, all fall within the scope of interest of political science (Chap. 4).

6. Religious doctrines certainly differ in many respects from secular ideologies (in supernatural realm they refer to, in absolute yet non-arbitrary character of their claims), and religious organizations differ from their secular counterparts in terms of, among other things, their long-term goals, rewards they offer to their members, values they invoke, their mobilization potential. These differences, however, should not preclude political science analysis of their political engagement, especially since they share a lot with other political actors in terms of their short-term objectives and strategies of political action (Chap. 5).
7. All the above is not to imply that politics is the ultimate concern or even the primary activity of religious groups—from their perspective, it is certainly secondary to their supernatural goals. These assumptions simply serve to narrow down the focus on what is relevant for the discipline, thus avoiding the mishmash of the Religion and Politics approach.
8. It is not necessary to assess the validity or truth status of religious beliefs; they are “real” and “objective” as a subject of study insofar as they stimulate actors, individual and collective, to adopt certain political views and attitudes and to express them in political behaviour.
9. Evaluating the existing relations between state institutions and religious organizations from the perspective of normative assumptions about the proper model of “church-state relations” is the job of a political philosopher, not a political scientist.

The initial seven principles constitute an attempt to set a proper perspective for religion and religious actors in political science, while the last two are methodological precautions against the normatively loaded approach to religion as such and, in particular, in its relation to the sphere of politics.

2.2 RELIGION AS A SUBJECT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Religion comes within the focus of political science insofar as it causes people to behave in a certain way and to adopt certain attitudes in the sphere of politics. Religion as such may have evolved as a functional

adaptation, with beliefs, ideas, ceremonies, rituals and organizations which enhanced social integration and cooperation (Wilson and Green 2007, 15–17) and provides legitimation for social structures and power hierarchies. While its relation to the political sphere has changed in contemporary democracies—it no longer constitutes the source of legitimacy of political authority—it is still among significant factors explaining political behaviour and retains its influence on political systems through religious political actors. Thus political science views religion as a social phenomenon, without assessing the validity of its claims.

Social Scientific Understanding of Religion

Some authors question the necessity, feasibility or appropriateness of defining religion in social science, sometimes regarding it a mission impossible to adequately conceive of the concept on non-theological grounds (Griffiths 2000, 33). Max Weber, for his part, proposes that we arrive at the definition at the conclusion of our study, not in the beginning (Weber 1978, 399). These suggestions are, for the most part, a reaction to the overwhelming complexity and polymorphism of the phenomenon, resulting in a kind of “Bongo-Bongoism”¹: after all, isn’t it the case that, however inclusive the understanding of religion we come up with, there is always this well-meaning colleague who will hasten to inform us that beliefs and rituals of such and such group do not fit our definition? Well, perhaps. But this is precisely the reason why social scientists are obligated to pin down this fuzzy term by devising a workable definition of religion with which to start the investigation. Defining is not the essence of scientific activity, to be sure, but it serves (apart from enabling communication) to demarcate the observation field within a discipline, and as such, has significant consequences for the outcomes of the study (Kehrer 1988).

“Religion” has always been a somewhat artificial concept, never adequately corresponding to the wealth of individual experience. The phenomenon itself significantly predates the term we use to describe it. The understanding of religion as a general category of which many types exist—as essentially distinct from European Christianity—is a modern, perhaps seventeenth-century development (Griffiths 2000, 31–32). In fact, in the words of J. Z. Smith, “Religion is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define. It is a second-order generic concept that plays the same role in establishing a disciplinary horizon that a concept such as ‘language’ plays

in linguistics or ‘culture’ plays in anthropology” (Smith 1998, 281–282). While this would be an overstatement if taken to imply that we are allowed to disregard completely the meaning that people attach to “religion”—after all, social scientists study and explain real-life phenomena—we should be free to put on conceptual lenses which facilitate our explanatory purposes.

What are the options, then, available to political scientists when they try to conceive of the meaning of this elusive concept? Instead of reviewing the plethora of existing definitions of religion, let us categorize them using three main binary distinctions: theological vs. non-theological, substantive vs. functional and sociological vs. psychological. Theological definitions, even though they may recognize similar morphological components of religion (doctrine, cult, community etc.) as their non-theological counterparts, assume the real existence of the supernatural designata of these components. Non-theological approaches, on the other hand, do not regard the question of the reality of these supernatural designata as a valid one. Substantive definitions use the presence of a set of items conventionally associated with religion, such as God or gods, spirits or other superhuman beings, or more vaguely, the Absolute or the Real (depending on how inclusive the definition is intended to be) as a criterion of demarcation of religious from non-religious. In functional definitions, the same purpose is achieved by focusing on the role the beliefs and rituals play—the function they perform—for a community or for an individual, rather than on the content of these beliefs. Finally, sociological and psychological approaches are distinguished, predictably, by looking at religion as a collective or individual phenomenon, respectively.

Since theological definitions, while essential for theologians and interesting for philosophers, are of no use for social scientists, I chose to ignore them here. Of the non-theological ones, one can theoretically distinguish four types, based on the other two alternatives. For instance, in Melford Spiro’s substantial and sociological definition, religion is “an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated human beings” (Spiro 1994, 197), while for Emile Durkheim “religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim 1995, 44). It is worth noting that Durkheim’s sociological formulation, although it is regarded as a classic functional definition,

actually does have a substantial element: beliefs and practices relative to sacred things.

Alternatively, by combining the “bricks” that correspond to both ends of the two alternatives, we can artificially create four types of definitions of religion. So, assuming that the essence of sociological and psychological definitions is, respectively, *collective* and *individual* character of the experience, and that substantive definitions focus on the supernatural *content* of beliefs and rituals, while functional—on their *function*, we arrive at the following general formulas:

Substantive-sociological: “system of beliefs and practices related to the sacred, held and practised by a community of believers”

Functional-sociological: “system of beliefs and practices which perform the function of the sacred for the community of believers”

Substantive-psychological: “system of beliefs and practices related to the sacred, held and practised by an individual”

Functional-psychological: “system of beliefs and practices which perform the function of the sacred for an individual”

In the above formulations, “sacred” relates to everything which a believer or community of believers attribute to the supernatural order of things, that is, to “forces beyond or outside nature which can suspend, alter, or ignore physical forces” (Stark and Bainbridge 1987, 39). The functions of the sacred—something that distinguishes functional from substantive approaches and thus requires expounding with reference to the former—have been variously described as integrating the community (Durkheim 1995), helping negotiate key moments of life (rites of passage) and protect everyday pursuits of the community from the uncertainty inherent in primitive existence (Malinowski 1948), providing a solution to free-rider problem by eliciting costly-to-fake signals of commitment from group members (Sosis and Bressler 2003), bestowing meaning and sense upon human existence (Stark and Finke 2000, 91), providing source of moral principles (Carter 1993, 18), and classifying, demarcating and ordering space and time (Ivakhiv 2006, 171). Politically, the key function of religion has been the creation and perpetuation of collective ideas and images which serve as legitimization formulas and factors of political mobilization (Skarzyński 2011, 171–179; Potz 2016b).

Substantive definitions allow for a clearer distinction between, on the one hand, the beliefs and behaviours regarded by the actors as related to

the supernatural, and, on the other hand, other integrating, sense-bestowing, demarcating practices. On the downside, they run the risk of being too exclusive, leaving some potentially religious phenomena out of bounds. Conversely, functional approaches are, perhaps, too inclusive: they may treat as religious, to use a classic example, totalitarian ideologies with their accompanying quasi-religious attributes (“sacred” texts, cult of leaders, elaborate ceremonies), thereby denying the researchers an opportunity to draw meaningful distinctions—both conceptual and empirical—between various sources of political ideas and actions.

The problem may present itself not only to scholars, but also to public policymakers who need to define religion (as much as they would prefer to avoid it) insofar as religion becomes a legal category of discrimination, the source of rights and privileges. Faced with such a dilemma, the US Supreme Court, in a famous 1965 decision (*US v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163), took inspiration from Paul Tillich in treating as religious everything that is of “ultimate concern” in the person’s life. With this functional approach, we escape the problematic task of assessing the content of one’s beliefs. But do we escape the problem altogether? The judge (just as the social scientist) still needs a criterion of demarcation of religious from non-religious. With the functional-psychological definition the court adopted, the focus is simply transferred from the content of beliefs to the importance a person attaches to these beliefs. The former may be, in a sense, susceptible to a more objective evaluation: one may compare a particular set of beliefs with what is normally, in a particular cultural context, regarded as pertaining to the supernatural sphere. With the latter, it is never entirely clear what constitutes an “ultimate concern”. Something a person would die for? Would sacrifice other values (what values?) for? Something he or she regards as binding on all aspects of their lives?

Fortunately, it is not necessary to make this conceptual choice once and for all, provided one avoids theological definitions. Both functional and substantive approaches can be utilized in political science, their usefulness depending on our purpose. If the goal is to explain general mechanisms by which various beliefs and ideas translate into political action, the functional approach will enable generalizations, highlighting the similarities between “religious” (traditionally conceived) and “secular” ideas in this respect. If, on the other hand, the aim is to demonstrate the difference that religion makes in politics—and this is what political science of religion as an empirical discipline is, ultimately, interested in—substantive definitions will better serve this purpose. They afford an opportunity to focus

on the political impact of specific types of ideas, beliefs and practices, namely those which refer to the supernatural, and not just any ideas, beliefs and practices that perform similar social functions. Regarding the other distinction, sociological definitions of religion would seem better suited for political analysis, since they facilitate quantitative, statistical explanations of religiously motivated political behaviour. However, a substantive-psychological approach may help account for personal motives that drive individuals to political engagement in religious movements, thereby becoming an important component of social movements theory, or illuminate motives of their voting behaviour, thereby contributing to electoral studies. Note that, in this context, the psychological approach may, but need not, refer to an individual's unique religious experience—a private religion. It may also view the shared, communal experience from an individual perspective. Indeed, in order for such explanations to be generalizable, providing more than anecdotal evidence, we must assume these motives of political involvement are derived from shared, communally created and sustained understandings of a particular religious tradition.

For these reasons I opt, throughout this book, for a substantive, albeit non-theistic and relatively broad understanding of religion combining sociological and psychological approaches, according to which *religion is a system of beliefs and practices related to the supernatural, held and practised individually or collectively*². Notably, the above formulation does not predetermine social and political functions of religion, something that constitutes one of the principal objects of our investigation.

Conceptualizing Religion in Political Science

As noted, religion refers to a set of beliefs, ideas, practices and, often, though not necessarily, moral principles which are in some way connected to the supernatural sphere. This sphere itself may be variously described in different religious traditions as the domain of spirits, ancestors, gods, a God, Absolute, some unspecified power or simply as set apart from the world of human experience. For believers—and theologians who articulate and elucidate these understandings—the connection is real: the supernatural exists and constitutes the source of meaning, sense and, often, moral obligations.

For social, including political, scientists, religious beliefs are real, too, but in a very different sense. They are real, because they are psychological phenomena existing in people's minds and stimulating their social and

political actions. They translate into positions on public issues, political engagement, electoral behaviour, elaborate symbolic practices, collective action. To observe and explain these political acts, we do not have to assess the validity of religion's claims. The truthfulness of religious beliefs—something theologians assume and philosophers of religion debate—is simply beyond the cognition of social sciences. Such a *désintéressement* does not necessarily imply taking the extreme positivist position according to which only empirical statements make sense, and thus religious beliefs, which lack empirical designata, do not (Konrad 2002, 53–55). A distinction between sense and verifiability may actually be a sounder position: one can still attach meaning to a statement that one cannot, in principle or at present, verify or falsify. But, again, social scientists do not have to pass judgement on this issue. What is empirically verifiable for them are, on the psychological level, the believers' convictions that their beliefs are both sensible and true and, on the sociological level, the collective attitudes and actions these beliefs stimulate. These are the facts political scientists deal with. Such methodological stance is consistent with any of the philosophical positions in the truth/sense of religion debate: even if we assume religious people are deluded and act on the basis of senseless statements, it does not render their actions any less real. So, as long as religious beliefs make sense to those who hold them and motivate their political behaviour, they constitute a legitimate object of study.

While the above methodological prescriptions might seem quite innocuous, many scholars are still uneasy about such a bird's eye, outsider's view on religion. Even if they do not opt for an overtly theological understanding of the term, they insist on adopting a believer's perspective in talking about religion's public presence. For the sake of illustration, Joshua Mitchell, in a *Journal of Politics* article, argues against the use of terms such as "preference", "choice", "value" or "identity" in relation to religion, since they do not reflect adequately a believer's experience. Confronted with the power of the Creator, man experiences exaltation and humiliation, passively accepting God as he reveals himself, rather than picking and choosing according to his preferences (Mitchell 2007, 353–354). Similarly, "value" is a man's own creation and possession, while in religious experience "man is *moved*, toward and by God" (ibid., 358). In conclusion, Mitchell urges social scientists who aspire to understanding human motivation and conduct to comprehend "religious experience in its self-stated idioms, which are logically and chronologically prior to the

act of translation that rendering it as «preference», «choice», «value» and «identity» entails” (ibid., 352).

Mitchell is certainly right as to the necessity of understanding the content of religious beliefs and their impact on the way of thinking and conduct of the believers to adequately explain the political role of religion. However, his argumentation is flawed on other counts. To begin with, why should we adopt believers’ self-identifications and “self-stated idioms” in explaining their social behaviour? The use of artificial categories, imposed on the experience of social agents by scholars studying them is the strength, not the weakness of science. By highlighting the crucial aspects of a phenomenon (from the point of view of a particular discipline), it allows for generalizations and synthesis. In this case, the reduction of religious experience to its sociopolitical expressions—in the form of preferences, choices, values, and identities—is both inevitable and desirable. It is like using a spotlight to discern the most relevant, from the perspective of political science, elements of this experience. More generally, if social sciences were to restrict themselves to self-descriptions and self-understandings of the subjects of their study, they could never construct categories which serve to generalize their findings and illuminate relevant aspects of their observation field. For instance, we could never legitimately use terms such as “authoritarianism”, “social control”, “identity”, “relative deprivation” and the like, because people whom these categories are designed to describe never actually thought of their social experience in this way, especially when the terms were first introduced. There is nothing anachronistic or methodologically unsound in attempting to explain people’s social and political attitudes and behaviours in terms foreign to their self-perception.

Is this approach reductionist? By all means. But without such reductionism, science would not be possible. A general, all-encompassing science of religion is no more realistic than “Anthropology” as a study of a human being in all its aspects. In exchange for jettisoning this chimera, we may advance in medicine, psychology, cultural anthropology, sociology or political science. In fact, an appropriate test for the analytical usefulness of particular concepts is the empirical adequacy of measures derived from them—their validity and reliability (Wilcox et al. 2008, 876). It is the power of these concepts to explain and predict religiously motivated behaviour, not their formulation in a religion’s “self-stated idioms”, that ultimately vindicates their application. Without a doubt, empirical political

scientists have used the preferences-values language with considerable success.³

The above methodological issues aside, Mitchell's substantive claims about the nature of religious experience are questionable. For starters, there is no fundamental opposition between religiosity and exercising choice, both in religious and public matters. After all, the believers, instead of (or in spite of) being overwhelmed by the power beyond their comprehension, do make choices: which church and how often to attend, whether to vote or not to vote out of religious motives, or which political causes to support (see Wilcox et al. 2008, 877). Moreover, the same fundamental religious convictions assume multiple interpretations and translate into various political positions and courses of action. Since there is nothing deterministic about the relationship between religion and politics, it is entirely appropriate to conceptualize it in the form of choices and preferences.

Perhaps even more importantly, Mitchell's account of religious experience does not reflect adequately the actual experience of ordinary believers. Most people do not tremble in fear and exaltation, are not humbled in the dust from whence they are "lifted up to the heights by God", are not subjected to rapture, suffering and awe as the biblical heroes of Judeo-Christian religions were (Mitchell 2007, 352). In fact, the forceful, prevailing experience of a supreme power upon which our lives entirely depend may be the privilege of culturally isolated religious communities and relatively few religious virtuosos within the larger traditions. Since these individuals—monks, mystics, ascetics, prophets, gurus or philosophers like Mitchell—are those who often write about their experience and are set as role models, their cultural influence is disproportionately large and their mode of religiosity appears to be standard. Such an individualistic, virtuoso religion is potentially apolitical: it is non-collective (a solo seeker does not need a community to mediate between him and God), anarchistic (a virtuoso does not submit to human authority, although he or she may impose their authority on others) and amoral (in pursuing the absolute one goes beyond good and evil)⁴.

Meanwhile, for the majority of believers, religion is (a) a communal experience of belonging, (b) an intellectual experience of submitting to an authority, and (c) a source of moral imperatives. These elements, while their intensity varies among religious traditions (some religions or confessions within them are more collectivist or more individualistic, inclusive or exclusive, ritually or ethically oriented), are common to the experience of

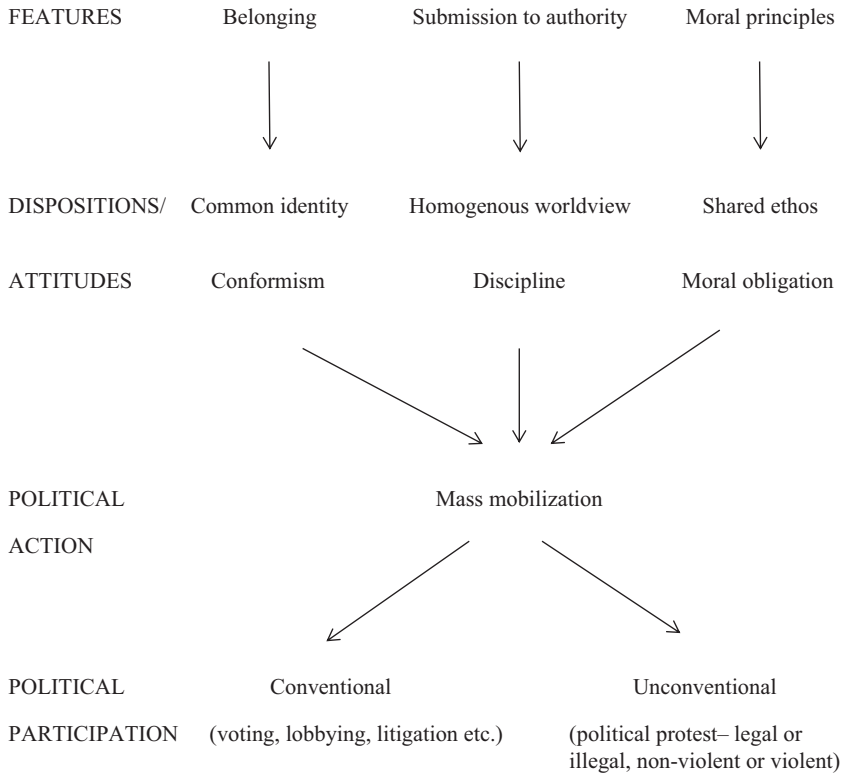


Fig. 2.1 Conversion of religious affiliation to political action

most rank-and-file believers in most religious traditions. And they are precisely the factors that make religiosity amenable to translating into politics. The mechanism by which religious affiliation finds its political expression has been presented schematically in Fig. 2.1.

These fundamental features of religion as a social phenomenon translate into certain dispositions and attitudes which, while not per se political, may, in favourable conditions, lead to collective mobilization into various types of political participation. The feeling of belonging to a congregation bound by communal worship and complex social ties is the source of common identity and a disposition to conform to the group's norms and values. Reliance on the authority of religious elites who expound and

interpret the doctrines of the group gives rise to a homogenous worldview and creates power relations which, in turn, enhance the discipline and organizational efficiency of the group. Finally, adherence to a set of moral principles perceived as originating from a supernatural, and thus non-arbitrary source, provides an incentive to an ethos shared by believers in their lives and influencing their position on public issues perceived as moral issues. All these attitudes, in turn, may, in the presence of appropriate mediating conditions, translate into political mobilization and lead to conventional and unconventional political participation. We will look into the modes of religiously motivated political activity in the concluding chapters of the book.

2.3 RELIGIOUS GROUPS AS POLITICAL ACTORS

Religion performs a crucial political function as a reservoir of ideas used to sanction or subvert political power and shape people's attitudes towards it. The legitimating function of religious beliefs will be discussed in Chap. 3. But there is another, no less important aspect of the relationship between religion and politics, namely the activity of religious groups in the public sphere. For a political scientist, it is only natural to perceive these groups as political actors entering the political system to pursue their goals in interaction with other actors.

Political System

“Political system” refers to a sphere delimited and regulated by institutions, norms, rules and procedures, in which social actors enter into power relations in the pursuit of their goals. In other words, political system is a sphere where social subjects, in their capacity as political actors, strive to improve their position in power relations, by either gaining or retaining power, freeing themselves from the power of others or influencing the decision-making processes in order to further their goals. Alternatively, political system can be treated as a cybernetic regulatory mechanism, processing external and internal environmental inputs to produce binding decisions and rules (Easton 1965; Corning 2017). In this approach, power and authority are not goals in themselves or instruments of pursuing narrow self-interest of particular actors, but emergent qualities of a social system, contributing—due to their potential for mobilizing collective resources and organizing collective efforts—to public interest. These two

approaches are largely inspired by two general visions of politics present in the Western political philosophy. According to one tradition, epitomized by Machiavelli and developed by Hobbes, Weber, Schmitt, Dahl and others, politics is a sphere of perpetual conflict, in which actors try to prevail to gain power for its own sake or to realize their selfish interest. In the other tradition, empirically functionalist (Parsons 1963) and normatively “republican” (Arendt 1970; Habermas 2006, deliberative democracy theorists etc.) power is just a means to organize and direct collective efforts to realize a common good.

The cybernetic approach is, nonetheless, to a certain extent complementary with the initial formulation in terms of power relations (see Corning 2017). Both of these approaches—the former, conflictual (“power over”) and the latter, constructive or consensual (“power to”)—can be interpreted functionally: they do not presume any fixed catalogue of political actors, for example, identical with formal organs of government. Any social subject, religious or secular, which enters into power relations, becomes a political actor. Therefore, to treat a church as a political actor is not to imply that political activity constitutes its *raison d’être*. On the contrary, from the believers’ perspective, a church is primarily a religious organization whose activity is grounded in and mandated by the supernatural. Insofar as it engages in power relations, however, we are justified in perceiving it as a political actor. Nor is it necessary to view it, because of its peculiarity, as influencing the political system from the outside (Kowalczyk 2014)⁵. In the functional approach adopted here, the political system is composed of actors for whom political activity may be the fundamental (state institutions, political parties) or merely an auxiliary aspect of their existence. They are within the political system to the extent that they engage in power brokering⁶.

The above interpretation of religious organizations as political actors within a functionally defined political system has a lot to offer for political science. Moving beyond the static picture of the institutional model of church-state relations, it shows the dynamics of religious actors’ political involvement. At the same time, it takes away a lot of the “normative overload” of the Church-State paradigm: instead of considering how a particular model of church-state relations conforms to some set of philosophical principles (e.g. axiological neutrality of the state, equal treatment of all religions, civil rights), we become interested in the objectives that the religious actors set themselves in the public sphere and the political strategies they use to pursue them. Finally, it proposes to treat religious

organizations as any other political actors (such as parties, interest groups, non-governmental organizations)—skipping over, for the purpose of analysis, the obvious differences between secular and religious actors—and to use the same tools to study their political behaviour.

Let us explore the above approach to public activity of religious groups by further conceptualizing both sides of the equation: a church as a political actor and the cybernetic model of political system. For our purposes, a religious organization can be perceived as (a) a more or less unified institution governed by leaders who represent a consistent position in dealing with external actors; or (b) an internally structured community of believers who try to live in accordance with the norms and principles of their religion (Böckenförde 1989). In the former scenario—let us call it ROI (*religious organization as institution*)—the relevant items of political analysis will be the decisions, statements, and other actions of the organization’s leadership. In the latter—ROC (*religious organization as community*)—we are interested in religion-motivated political behaviour of the members, as well as power relations within the group.

Concerning the cybernetic model of a political system, two distinct approaches are possible. In the traditional “black box” (BB) approach, political system is viewed as an indivisible unit (the “black box”) which processes energy and information inputs from the environment (supports and demands) to produce outputs (regulations and other political decisions). The alternative, “white box” approach (WB, although “transparent box” would probably be more precise), looks at the internal structure of the system and the processes going on inside of it. While the black box model focuses primarily on the function of the system in its interaction with the environment, the white box model is defined mainly by the structure of the system and the interaction between its elements (Kasianiuk 2018, 1263–1264). This conception can be applied not only to conventional types of political systems (e.g. the state), but also to particular organizations interpreted as political systems in themselves, interacting with the larger system of which they are a part. For instance, a parliament could be analysed, on the most general level, (a) as part of the political system of the state, indistinguishable from other components of the state’s black box; or, also in the BB convention, (b) as a unit transforming inputs from other components of the state-level political system (the cabinet, interest groups etc.) and from the environment to produce legislation; or, in the WB convention, (c) as an arena of contention between political parties and

individual MPs, structured into party fractions, parliamentary commissions, and presiding organs, and governed by internal regulations.

By using the above approaches in conjunction with the earlier distinction between religious organizations as institutions (ROI) and religious organizations as communities (ROC), one may suggest the following types of relations between religious political actors and a political system (the arrow means “influences”).

1. *ROI as BB* → *state political system as BB*. At this most general level of analysis, we are interested in the outputs: the decisions of certain components of the larger political system (organs of government etc.) made under the institutional influence of a religious organization.
2. *ROI as BB* → *state political system as WB*. Here, the analysis focuses on the actual mechanisms by which such influence takes place (for instance, how religious functionaries representing religious political actors lobby government officials).
3. *ROC as WB* → *state political system as BB*. In this case, we look at a religious organization as a community which socializes and mobilizes its members into politics. The members, in turn, act as providers of demands and support (or lack thereof) for the larger political system (e.g. by voting, demonstrating).
4. *ROC as WB* → *state political system as WB*. Similarly, we are interested in political socialization and mobilization processes going on inside the religious group, but in this variation the focus is on the way in which political activity of the group’s members is brought to bear on the behaviour of other political actors (for instance, how they shape their agenda to meet or circumvent the demands of religiously motivated voters).
5. *ROC as WB as a political (micro)system in itself*. Here, the analysis focuses primarily on the power relations within the religious group, with only occasional reference to the larger political system(s) in which the group functions.

We have thus identified two aspects in which religious organizations come within the focus of political science: as actors interacting in a larger political system (1–4) and as political systems in themselves (5). The latter aspect will be explored in Chap. 4, which deals with internal power

mechanisms of theocracies, and the former in Chaps. 5 and 6, devoted to the role of religion in non-theocratic political systems.

Political Actors

Consistently with the understanding of political system proposed above, we can define “political actor” as a social subject, individual or collective, which engages in power relations with other such subjects in an attempt to realize its goals. Within this broad definition (into which politically active religious organizations quite obviously fall), political actors vary enormously as to their goals, strategies they use to pursue them, their organizational form, scope of activity, level of institutionalization, ideas, norms and values guiding their behaviour, patterns of leadership and so on. From the perspective of political science, one obviously crucial dimension of this variety is the unequal ability of actors to influence the political process. This dimension is well captured by two metaphors of political actors: veto players and stakeholders. Although taken from different research traditions—“veto player” being a rational choice theory concept, while “stakeholder” is borrowed from management theory (Hayes 2007, 53) and came to be applicable to politics through political marketing—they could be, I argue, combined into a useful model of a political actor.

Veto players are “individual or collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a change of the status quo” (Tsebelis 2011, 19). Veto players are thus defined by their ability to block the decision-making process if the outcome could threaten their interests. Stakeholders are members of an organization (here: the political system) or its environment who, by definition, have an interest in the efficient running of the entity in which they hold stakes, since their profit depends on the success of the entire undertaking. In the political context, stakeholders are all those social agents, ranging from voters, through interest groups, political movements, to mass media, which can impact on the ability of key institutional and partisan actors “to compete successfully in political marketplaces” (Ormrod 2017, 1). In other words, stakeholders can directly or indirectly influence the veto players, but, in contrast to them, cannot by themselves block political outcomes. Since they are more effective as part of a coalition, they may be more inclined to cooperate with other actors, even if driven by self-interest.

The difference could be formalized in the language of causality. A veto player’s (in)action is the necessary condition of a given outcome. It is thus

Table 2.1 Two metaphors of a political actor

<i>The political actor</i>	<i>Type of causality</i>	<i>Typical behaviour</i>
Veto player	Necessary	Blocking; competition
Stakeholder	INUS	Bargaining; cooperation

possible to assign agency to this actor by counterfactual inference: if the outcome B would not have occurred in the absence of actor A's consent (if not A, then not B—i.e. A is the necessary condition of B), then A was the veto player in the situation under analysis. Stakeholders, by contrast, can only be assigned INUS-type agency: they are an insufficient but necessary part of a group of factors which itself constitutes an unnecessary but sufficient condition of the outcome in question (Mahoney 2008, 419). In other words, a coalition of stakeholders may be sufficient to bring about or block the change of the status quo, but none of them is necessary for this outcome.

I prefer to call these descriptions “metaphors” rather than types or classes, since they do not constitute a proper classification. It is not the case that each political actor falls exclusively into one of the two categories. Indeed, the concepts are relative and highly context- and issue-specific. An actor may, in a given situation, behave as, or perform the function of, a veto player, but become a stakeholder (or even completely disappear from the political process) in other configurations or over a different issue. For instance, groups of voters (treated as collective actors) are veto players during election or referendum, but merely stakeholders in between elections. This context- and issue-dependent character of the veto player-stakeholder distinction is especially important for our purposes, since it will be used in Chap. 6 to explain the differential political role of religious actors in two political systems. I will then spell out the various factors that influence the ability of religious actors to perform these roles⁷.

It is beyond doubt that religious political actors can be described by both of these terms. While Tsebelis seems to focus on institutional actors in formal positions of power (institutional veto players) and actors generated by the political game, such as political parties (partisan veto players; Tsebelis 2011, 19⁸), the category of veto players can be extended to include all social subjects who become political actors by virtue of their agency in a particular situation, rather than of their formal authority. Such agents have recently been referred to as *societal veto players* (e.g. Fink

2009), and I will continue along these lines in Chap. 6 with regard to religious actors. As for stakeholders, it has even been postulated to count God among stakeholders of some (business) organizations (Schwartz 2006). For a church, God is certainly its main founder, owner, CEO or however they imagine his role in the organization. For a political scientist, it is enough to treat the church itself as a political stakeholder, while remaining conscious of the role God is assigned in the particular religious tradition.

What Kind of Actors Are Religious Organizations?

We have already categorized political actors, including religious ones, by their agency in the political system, that is, their ability to impact the decision-making processes. But they also differ along other dimensions, such as a type of organization, the resources available to them or their *modus operandi*. So what kind of actors are religious organizations by these criteria?

If the question is poised in an essentialist sense, to reveal, as it were, the “true nature” of religious actors, then it is probably badly poised. If, however, it can be reformulated in a functionalist manner—do religious organizations act as or perform the role of interest groups or social movements within a political system?—then the question boils down to the usefulness of such a perspective. Is it theoretically expedient to employ such a conceptualization in political analysis of the churches’ public activity? By the same token, calling religious organizations “political actors” is meant neither to capture their essential feature nor to unmask their true purpose, but simply to illuminate one of the many facets of their social existence.

For political science of religion, the relevance of describing religious actors as interest groups depends, predictably, on our understanding of the notions of “interests” and “interest group”. If the former is taken to mean mainly economic or material considerations (as in “special”, or “private” interest or in the Marxist tradition), then it has only limited applicability to religious groups, namely when their activity is geared towards securing the material basis of their existence (accumulating wealth, obtaining state subsidies, tax exemptions etc.). If, on the other hand, the notion of interests is extended to all kinds of conscious motives of individual and collective behaviour, including non-material goals and aspirations dictated by the actors’ ideological and axiological positions, it becomes applicable to political activity of religious groups driven by non-material considerations. To illustrate this point, the labelling of religious actors as interest

groups when they champion, say, anti-abortion laws is often rebuffed with a rhetorical question: “Well, what possible interest can the Catholic bishops have in stopping abortion?”. In the narrow, material meaning of interest—probably none⁹. But obviously, a self-defined goal of the church is the attainment of salvation by its members. It is thus in the interest of the church to prevent them from committing what it perceives as a grave sin and, on a more general level, to make legal norms—and public morality which these norms both represent and shape—conform to the divine law. On this view, interests are derived from goals defined independently by the religious organization by reference to the supernatural. They are informed by beliefs enshrined in the group’s doctrine and reflected in its ethics.

One should be cautious, however, not to extend the meaning of “interests” to the point when they explain each and every human action (Olson 1965, 160), thereby rendering the notion tautological (for every x, “A did x because it was in his/her interest to do so”). To navigate between the Scylla of the narrowly economic meaning of “interest” and the Charybdis of overstressing the concept, let us assume that social actors, both individual and collective, act out of interest when they seek optimal means to attain their goals, whatever they are (thus acting rationally in *zweckrationalität*, or instrumental way), but they act out of internalized norms or values when they feel morally compelled to do something. Thus, moral satisfaction resulting from acting according to the dictates of one’s conscience or ideals will not be treated as realizing one’s interest. Religious organizations, just as other social actors, engage in both interested and disinterested behaviour in the above sense. They do the former when they vie for their institutional position, material well-being or legal status, but also when they seek salvation for their members, quite a real objective from their perspective. They do the latter, when they organize poor relief or fight for human rights, for example, both nationally and internationally (Hertzke 2009, 316).

However, unlike their secular counterparts, religious organizations anchor their activity in the supernatural. This makes their claims appear non-arbitrary, non-negotiable and, *ceteris paribus*, tends to elicit more commitment from their members compared to secular organizations. When they pursue their interests, these interests are either directly situated in the supernatural sphere (seeking god’s favour, securing one’s salvation) or more or less directly related to it. When they act out of moral considerations or value commitments, the general ethical principles are often supplemented by the sense of religious obligation (a “Christian duty” to help

the disadvantaged, to spread the Word etc.). This, in turn, helps them overcome the free-rider problem. This is so because, first, individual's behaviour cannot be based on rational calculation assumed by rational choice theories, since the character of the rewards—or, as Stark and Bainbridge (1987) call them—compensators is, by definition, elusive and unverifiable, which infinitely increases the uncertainty involved in individual choices. Second, most religious groups offer these rewards as selective incentives rather than public goods; that is, they require at least some commitment from their members to be eligible for them. Usually, it is not enough to just belong to be saved. While the obligation to participate may only refer to religious practices, it often extends to some of the group's public activities. Indeed, the effectiveness of religious actors in political mobilization depends on their internal (i.e. in relation to their own members) ability to represent political issues as moral issues rooted in their beliefs, and political activities as religious duties. The case in point would be the post-WWII Protestant fundamentalists' postmillenarian sense of urgency to convert the corrupt world (Wilcox and Robinson 2010, 44–45) or the Mormons' religiously motivated political struggles in defence of “family values” (Potz 2016a).

How should we, then, conceive of religious organizations as interest groups? For Carolyn Warner, “interest groups” is a broad category comprising institutions which, in their dealings with political parties, seek preferential treatment, or more than their “fair share” of whatever assets they deem valuable. Thus, “the Church is a subset of the universe of interest groups” (Warner 2001, 4, 6). She then employs an economic model, with churches operating as firms on a competitive market, to perform a fascinating analysis of the politics of Catholic churches in selected European countries. Warner's position is, in fact, methodologically essentialist: churches simply are, from the perspective of political science, interest groups, to be distinguished from political parties and, presumably, other non-state political actors¹⁰.

However, referring to all social actors pursuing their interests in the above broad sense as interest groups may obscure important differences in their structure, principal assets and strategies they employ in the process. It is, I believe, more useful to adopt a relativist/functionalist, or “as if”, approach, in which churches are treated as interest groups only when they act like them, that is, when and where they display characteristic behaviour of this type of actor. Drawing on Rucht's description of political actors based on their structure, resources and methods (1996), one can distin-

guish the three main types of non-state political actors: (a) *political parties*, which rely on formal organization, voters as their principal resource and parliamentary politics, including competing for public office, as their strategy; (b) *interest groups*, also formally organized, with professional employees, money and expertise as the main assets used in lobbying the policymakers; and (c) *social movements*, characterized by a network type of organization, large number of committed supporters as their resources and mass mobilization and protest as their *modus operandi*.

On this view, churches are interest groups insofar as they rely on money and professional employees to lobby the decision-makers, and they are social/political movements when they mobilize broad base of their supporters to political action.¹¹ Religion may inspire political protest and social or political movements may emerge within religious organizations (e.g. Radio Maryja movement in the Polish Catholic Church) or bring a number of such organizations together (e.g. anti-ERA movement in the USA). Churches are never political parties, but they influence the parties—reservoirs of present and future decision-makers—in their capacity as both interest groups and political movements. They do so through two general strategies. As *political principals*, churches try to influence the existing parties as actual or potential (opposition parties) power holders, offering votes and support in exchange, or, in some circumstances, creating or sponsoring the creation of their own parties (Kalyvas 1996; Zuba 2010). As *value-based actors*, in turn, churches do not engage in direct transactions with political parties. Instead, they exert moral pressure on both power holders and voters, attempting to set up a situation where violating or failing to implement the principles they stand for would become, given their socially recognized moral authority, a politically losing option for the decision-makers. High moral authority of a religious actor may provide it with institutional access, formal or informal, to policymaking—through participation in crafting legislation, consulting politicians, controlling the sphere of education or social services and so on—a potentially less costly and more effective channel of influence than direct transactions with political parties (Grzymała-Busse 2015).

Admittedly, it may be practically difficult to clearly distinguish between these various roles and strategies of religious organizations, since they often intersect and overlap in the group's political behaviour. Nonetheless, there is value in analytical distinctions of this kind, as long as the results can be later reintegrated into a broader picture of religious actors' political activity. For, as Allen Hertzke observes, "Lobby activity is thus melded

into the multifarious social movement activities of institutional development, electoral mobilization, litigation, media campaigns, and demonstrations” (2009, 308).

In conclusion, there is no definite answer as to the type of political actors religious organizations represent. When they engage in direct lobbying, they effectively become interest groups and when they draw on mass mobilization they become political movements for the purpose of political analysis. In other words, this is an empirical question to be decided on a case-by-case basis. The typology presented above, applied in Chap. 5 to the analysis of political strategies of Catholic Church in Poland, is general enough to be applicable to secular political actors, too.

2.4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The initial “9 theses” of political science of religion and the subsequent theoretical formulations do not determine the exact way of studying the impact of religion on politics. They are merely general directives that should inform political science-oriented research into this relationship. As such, they are compatible with multiple approaches already present in the existing scholarship. Most of these approaches fall within three broad categories: economic (or market or transactional), social movements theory (SMT), and cultural (or “understanding”) perspectives. Let us briefly delineate their main assumptions.

The Economic Perspective

To begin with, economic models of relations between politics and religion should be distinguished from (a) the study of the relations between religion and economy (economic functions of religious institutions, such as ancient temples or medieval monasteries, the role of religious ideas in economic development etc.) and (b) economic interpretation (with its radical form—economic determinism) of political processes, such as Marxist materialism or Charles Beard’s economic interpretation of the origins of the United States constitution. The economic/market models of politics and religion do not assume predominance of economic factors, they simply use economic theories and the terminology borrowed from them to explain political processes. Thus, for the sake of clarity, it may be better to call them “transactional” models.

The transactional approach to politics and religion is rooted in economic theory and inspired by, on the one hand, market interpretations of politics (Schumpeter 1943; Downs 1957) grounded in the rational choice theory, and, on the other, the “religious economy” school (Stark and Bainbridge 1987; Iannaccone 1990), applying economic and rational choice concepts to religion and religious behaviour in general. There are two spheres to which these kinds of explanation may be relevant: (a) the individuals as consumers in their relations with religious organizations as producers or suppliers of religious goods (“whiteboxed” religious organizations as communities, or ROC as WB, in our terminology) and (b) religious organizations as entrepreneurs competing with other actors on a political market (“blackboxed” religious organizations as institutions, or ROI as BB¹²). The distinction is important, since the transactional approach, I would argue, is better poised to deal with the latter, while the former cannot be adequately explained without the SMT and cultural approaches.

Basic assumptions of the economic approach can be summarized as follows. Religious organizations are economic entities (firms) operating within a market (society at large in “religious economy” or political system in political science of religion). The goods they produce or sell to their members are the promise of salvation and other religious rewards, such as blessing, healing, gifts of the Holy Spirit, or even “religious satisfaction” (Iannaccone 1990). The goods they sell to or exchange with other political actors (such as political parties or governments) are their members’ votes and mass actions religious organizations are able to organize for or against these actors. While political science is quite accustomed to treating votes, support and protest as commodities administered by political actors, the purely religious goods are of peculiar character. Eternal salvation is a compensator (Stark and Bainbridge 1987) or a credence good (Ekelund et al. 1996). Both of these labels highlight the nature of this product: its quality cannot be adequately assessed either before or immediately after purchase (unless one converts on the deathbed). Hence, in the absence of one’s own experience or other customers’ reviews, the decision to buy is based on the reputation of the seller.

The basic type of action in economic models is transaction: an exchange relation entered into on the basis of a rational calculus of costs and benefits. This applies, again, both to religious organizations in their dealings with other social actors and (although somewhat less convincingly) to individuals in their relations with religious organizations-cum-entrepre-

neurs. Religious organizations as economic actors engage in various profit-maximizing behaviours, including subcontracting (Kalyvas 1996), vertical integration (Warner 2001; Ekelund et al. 1996), monopolistic practices and fierce market competition. These categories are used by the proponents of economic models to explain a range of actual behaviour of religious organizations, such as maintaining doctrinal purity, persecuting heretics and fighting other religions (maintaining monopoly and protecting the organization's market share), adapting the organizational structure of the group to prevailing social-economic conditions (authoritative and centralized or decentralized, franchise-type structures), entering into alliances with the state or political parties (subcontracting, effective utilization of the group's assets). In Chap. 3, I will use a variation of this approach to explain the origins and conditions of stability of theocratic political systems.

The transactional approach has significant explanatory power derived from economic theory. By standardizing elements of religion into goods, producers and customers with their preferences, it offers an outside perspective on the topic still surrounded by an aura of uniqueness, and thereby subjects it to social-scientific modes of analysis. Despite this explanatory potential, the economic approach has certain limitations which, I believe, make it ill-suited for a general theory of political role of religion. For starters, it works best if treated as *explanatory metaphor*, not a substantive statement that religious organizations are, in fact, firms consciously following the economic logic. Failure to make this distinction may lead to crude anticlericalism, ascribing to religious actors' cynical pecuniary motives. While such ascription may be accurate in particular cases, it certainly cannot serve as a general theory of religion and the behaviour of religious political actors. Even in the work of such methodologically conscious authors as Ekelund and his collaborators, it is not always clear whether religious institutions are treated, metaphorically, *as* economic entities, or are regarded as actual firms consciously engaging in profit-maximizing behaviour (especially in their discussion of monasteries).

Certainly, the economic metaphor cannot be pushed too far. There is a substantial difference between a firm and a church. The ultimate goal of a firm is the maximization of profit, expressed in monetary units. But what does the church maximize? Surely not the money, even though it can in fact get rich in the process. Utility? This is an empty word, an artefact of speech which needs filling in with substance. Religious organizations set themselves goals related to the supernatural. What are these goals? Why

these? What motivates the leaders of these organizations, for surely not all of them are sybarite shams, or even conscientious managers concerned with their companies' net profits? Is the rational, profit-maximizing behaviour of religious organizations the effect of their competent strategic management (their agency), or just an emergent, structural effect of their functioning within a market/political system? And what is the role of religious doctrine? It is no doubt more than just a series of promotional articles for the firm's products, as the economic models would have it: it influences the organization of the religious institution, structures power relations within it and with outside actors, and affects its goals and activities.

Equally problematic is the application of economic analysis to the relations between the religious organization and its individual members. For example, Ekelund et al. (1996) speak of the (Catholic) church as producer of the main religious good (eternal salvation), which it sells to the faithful (consumers). But the church presents itself as merely the distributor, not the producer of the good. The difference is significant, even from the economic perspective, for the consumers' perception that the church merely sells God's product enhances this product's credibility and the consumers' willingness to buy it. More generally, while the transactional approach can adequately model the religion-related behaviour of individuals, it stops short of explaining their motives. Why is religion a source of satisfaction people seek to maximize? Why is the product of religious organizations constantly found attractive despite its intangible, unverifiable, "compensatory" character? And I am not even mentioning the usual objections to the individual rationality assumption of rational choice theories.

All of these questions are directly relevant to sociology of religion and, indirectly, to political science of religion, since they are related to the religion's mobilizing potential. They are not meant to expose flaws of the transactional approach, but rather its limitations—which, in all fairness, the proponents of these models are usually aware of. Thus Gill admits that "the economic school ignores the importance of how culture can affect the preferences of actors" (2001, 135). And, according to Iannaccone, the fact that his household production and human capital model "sidesteps questions about what religion «really» is" can be actually "beneficial in economic discourse, since it facilitates the construction and application of abstract theories" (1990, 312). The nature of religion, the psychology or religious attachment, the way the religious preferences are formed—these

sorts of issues are simply off the bounds for economic models, which, as any theoretical model, need to be selective in their scope. This indicates that the transactional approach, with its valuable analyses especially when it comes to the behaviour of “blackboxed” religious institutions in interaction with other political actors, must be supplemented with the other two perspectives. The SMT approach offers an insight into the “box” of a religious organization, discerning its internal dynamics, and, crucially for political science, its ability to mobilize members for political action. The cultural approach tries to explain why religion is capable of such mobilization.

The Social Movements Theory Perspective

Social movements theory (SMT) is a theoretical framework combining insights, such as political opportunity, collective identity and framing theories, which supplanted earlier, functionalist approaches to collective political action which interpreted social movements mostly as a sort of a dysfunction of social system (Peoples 2019). Since it applies primarily, as the name suggests, to social movements, it can be useful for the analysis of religious actors insofar as they rely to some extent on collective mobilization. SMT bridges the gap between culturally shaped individual dispositions and institutionalized political action. This is a crucial step, since religion-induced or augmented individual existential states (suffering, deprivation, anger, awe etc.), preferences and attitudes do not automatically translate into collective action. This requires organization. Michael Mann is worth quoting at length in this regard:

Neither suffering nor happiness, nor economic nor political nor spiritual crisis, nor even repression, has any necessary causal effect on the emergence of new social movements. Sometimes economic crisis and political repression may produce a united movement or reaction among the people, sometimes they divide them. Sometimes they generate political revolution, reaction or reform [...] Mostly they have no result other than an upsurge in despair at the general harshness of life. The outcome is dependent not on the depth of the crisis but on the *organizational forms* of the people being affected. Who precisely is affected by the crisis? With whom they are in communication? With whom do they share normative commitment and a stock of knowledge about the world? What contacts and social knowledge are likely to lead them to blame their rulers for the crisis and to conceive of practical alternatives? What power resources can they mobilize, against

whom? These are the decisive questions about responses to crises and to other dramatic social changes, whether they are political, spiritual, or whatever. The organization of power resources [...] is the crucial determinant of the rise of a religious movement, as it is of any movement. (Mann 2012, 309–310)

These are precisely the sort of questions around which the social movements theory's research agenda is built. Applied to religious political actors, it studies the mechanisms by which available resources (communication networks, internal power structures, culture) and emergent collective qualities (common identity, shared normative commitments) are harnessed to convert critical dispositions to political action.

According to Wald et al. (2005), the analysis of a social movement should explain the *motives* that drive participants to action, *means* they have at their disposal and *opportunities*, that is, structural constraints on their action within a political system. As a point of departure, they show how elements of cultural repertoire of a society are used to create the movement's unique identity and how grievances, formulated within this identity, are transformed into collective action. This involves framing mechanisms whose function is to reach out to like-minded individuals sharing the movement's motives, or to transform, extend or amplify its original message to recruit more members (ibid., 126–128). Religion is, of course, a powerful cultural resource useful for creating the group's identity, legitimating its norms and upholding its worldview. The second aspect are the means—resources of the movement. They are as diverse as ideas, symbols, money, leadership, communication and political space (particularly important in the case of religious actors, often able to label their space as sacred and thereby keep it relatively autonomous from the state), but all are necessary to translate grievances into political action (ibid., 131). Finally, such action, the end product of the movement's activity, is facilitated or obstructed by a set of outside circumstances referred to as political opportunity structure. They include legal environment for non-state actors' activity; the openness of the political system, including the access to decision-making positions (Sarfaty 2014, 4); the type of a democratic regime “employing a participatory or a delegative principle”, since “varying amounts of assistance given to civic society organizations empower churches to different degrees” (Enyedi 2003, 229); but also the dynamic within a country's party system. For instance, social movements are more likely to achieve their goals among a realignment of

the party scene or an elite conflict, for, in these circumstances, parties seek allies and are more likely to address the movement's demands (Wald et al. 2005, 137–138).

Yusuf Sarfati (2014) uses a similar approach grounded in social movements theory to study Turkey's and Israel's religious parties. The three components of his model are political opportunity structure, social networks from which members are mobilized and framing processes which "mediate between political opportunity structures and collective behavior". Sarfati demonstrates "how religious entrepreneurs construct injustice frames, prognostic frames and empowerment frames to mobilize the masses" (ibid., 4). These three types of framing processes, a variation on the classic triad of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames (Benford and Snow 2000), refer to, respectively, narratives which victimize potential movement's supporters and put the blame on the group's political opponents (*injustice frames*); cognitive tools to overcome this victimization and create collective identity and pride, thereby empowering the movement's supporters (*empowerment frames*); and ways out of the situation, methods of action (*prognostic frames*) (ibid., 21).

In summary, social movements theory is a "middle way" approach, bridging the institutional behaviour of religious organizations as institutions (ROI) in a political system with the socio-psychological coordinates within religious organizations as communities (ROC). Importantly, both culture and the political opportunity structure should be treated as external elements, from which a social movement draws, and which constrain, its activity, but which are, in a sense, given and beyond its full control¹³. A social movement creates a common identity which binds together members of potentially diverse social, economic or even ideological backgrounds (Della Porta and Diani 2006, chap. 4¹⁴). The identity combines various cultural components (ideas, values, norms, symbols etc.), but these components are not usually the product of the movement. In the case of religious organizations as social movements, the ideological cohesion of members is obviously higher than in many secular movements, especially "new" (such as environmental or alterglobalist) and churches do create ideas. But to stimulate political action, these religious ideas need to be moulded into an identity containing also other, secular concerns. And some determinants, such as evolved cognitive mechanisms of human beings, are entirely beyond the control of any social organization and have to be, simply, taken for granted.

One great advantage of SMT is that it helps integrate the church-state paradigm into political science of religion. It does so through the notion of political opportunity structure which contains much of what the church-state studies are concerned with, including constitutional provisions of relations between the state and religious organizations, legal regulations concerning their financing and other aspects of their public presence. These are all very important aspects of the legal-political setting of their activity, but only aspects—external, as we observed, and not fully determinative of the mechanisms of political mobilization taking place within religious actors.

The Cultural Approach

The third and final perspective, which I tentatively call cultural or “understanding” (in tribute to Max Weber, one of its most distinguished representatives) is the broadest, least differentiated and most difficult to demarcate. It is often adopted by default by students of the relationship between religion and politics. Most generally, it focuses on man in the three fundamental aspects of their existence: biological, as a creature shaped by evolution; psychological, as an individual whose behaviour is influenced by his or her personality traits and the stimuli, both rational and emotional, coming from his mind; and social, in interaction with other human beings.

Consequently, the general purpose of the cultural perspective is to discern individual motivations and social mechanisms behind the religiously inspired political behaviour of individuals and religious organizations. The units of analysis are individual believers and “whiteboxed” religious organizations as communities (ROC as WB). The cultural approach takes over where the other two leave off: it seeks to explain things that in the SMT and especially the economic models are treated as given. How are “preferences”, a starting point for rational behaviour analysed by the transactional approach, formed? Are religious preferences stronger stimuli for political action than secular ones? If so, why? How are various cultural components used by religious actors in the process of political mobilization, such as ideas, norms and values, socially created and transmitted? More specifically, what are the mechanisms of religious legitimation of power? How do religious doctrines make people obedient, inspire their behaviour and influence social, economic and political processes (Weber)? To what extent are these processes controlled by social actors, as opposed

to being emergent, spontaneous developments? What is the political role, and psychological motivation, of religious leaders? This is just a sample of research problems within the scope of the cultural perspective. They emerge on three general levels: biological, psychological and sociological.

1. *Biological foundations of religion and politics.* Given the deep-seated distrust of social scientists towards social Darwinism, sociobiology and other natural explanations of human action (with the potential implications of racism, eugenics and biological determinism), it is easy to underestimate the immense importance of the biological foundations of human behaviour, including political behaviour, and to overlook recent developments in *evolutionary political science*. This body of literature operates on two levels. On the level of species, it shows how evolved features of humans, such as cognitive mechanisms, emotional responses, patterns of intra- and intergroup relations and so on, which developed as adaptations to evolutionary pressures, constrain and shape (but not determine) political attitudes and behaviours of human beings (Alford and Hibbing 2004; *Handbook of Biology...* 2017; Herr and Young 2003; Lopez and McDermott 2012). On the individual level, it demonstrates how these predispositions vary within a population and what proportion of this variance is attributable to heredity as opposed to socialization (the age-old nature vs. nurture controversy). Using twin research techniques, it is possible to show, for instance, the extent to which the inclination to conservatism is genetically transmitted (Alford and Hibbing 2004, 714). As a whole, evolutionary political science greatly illuminates topics such as aggression (with its political extension—war) and its containment, formation of power hierarchies, group identification, cooperation and collective behaviour in general.

Analogous strand of research within religious studies—*evolutionary religious studies*—considers elements of religion as adaptations benefitting an individual or a group, or, conversely, as evolutionary by-products, neutral or even parasitical to their bearers. Significantly, this applies to traits inherited both genetically and culturally (Wilson and Green 2007, 6). This is an important reminder for those who would regard the “cultural” perspective an unfitting category for a biologically oriented research. Cultural traits are not totally independent of biology: they emerge within the biologically shaped cognitive constraints of human beings in response to evolutionary

pressures. Even though these constraints are not too tight, allowing for a great variety of human cultural patterns, most of these patterns play, or had played in the past, a concrete social function (i.e. were a solution to a problem groups of humans faced at some point in their history). To give just one example, an evolutionary theory of costly signalling has been used to interpret elements of religious behaviour and, in particular, to explain greater longevity of religious communes compared to analogous secular groups, a fact well known to the students of nineteenth-century American religion (Sosis and Bressler 2003). It would be a great accomplishment to combine these two biologically informed perspectives into *evolutionary political science of religion*: a study of the role religion, an evolutionary product itself, has played in the political development of man. Relevant research questions for this field of study include: Did religion emerge in response to the need for ordering power relations within a group? What mental dispositions towards power does religion breed? In what circumstances is religion functional/dysfunctional for political organization?

2. *Psychological dispositions*. On the second level, informed by political psychology and psychology of religion, the cultural perspective is concerned with psychological features which predispose individuals to political responses to religious stimuli. While these features may themselves be evolved, we are now interested more in their expression in human behaviour than in their origins. Why, how and in which individuals do religious ideas evoke emotional responses which can be utilized by political entrepreneurs? Why are the religious goods administered by religious organizations in such high demand? What personality traits correlate with both religiosity and the readiness to submit to political authority? High score on authoritarianism? External localization of control (Powalka 1996)? What unique combination of psychological features makes somebody a potential “devoted actor” (Atran 2016), ready to die for their religion? Some of the findings of political psychology are also directly relevant to social movements theory, for instance when it explains the mechanism of grievance formation (Klandermans and van Stekelenburg 2013).

The flip side of psychology of religiously inspired masses is political psychology of religious leaders. What are their personality traits? Certainly not identical with those of their followers, since they need

to be less submissive and more assertive and creative to be effective. What about their motivations? Are they driven by the desire for the same “religious goods” sought by rank-and-file believers, or by more mundane motifs, such as power and wealth? Is it true that many of them have or had suffered from some mental disorders, such as depression, psychosis or bipolar disorder (Storr 1997)? Are gurus who lead their flock to mass suicide or other sufferings deluded but sincere or sober but cynical? Or perhaps it is more complicated: they may deceive their followers for the sake of a higher good, if they believe the suffering or death the faithful would not have voluntarily accepted is necessary for their salvation. There are no universally applicable answers—after all, political and religious psychology rely mostly on statistical generalization—but the questions are highly relevant to political science of religion.

3. *Social mechanisms.* Thirdly and finally, the cultural perspective looks at how religion impacts power relations at the sociological level. How are religious ideas turned into legitimation formulas for political power and by what mechanisms are these formulas transmitted to the ruled? How have religions influenced social, economic and political developments in human societies (Weber, Mann)? In what way did they contribute to (dis)integration of societies (Durkheim and beyond)? And, going from macro- to microsociological level, how are power relations shaped, through mechanisms of political control, within religious organizations? For all these problems (some of which I will address in the following chapters), political science will have to enlist the help of sociology of religion, comparative religion and theology, but it will do it on its own terms, that is, seeking to illuminate how religion influences, through these social processes, the organization of political power.

There is no doubt that culture—in a broad sense discussed here—matters. It provides a repertoire of ideas, norms, values and patterns of conduct from which individuals draw, but which is, for any given society, finite and relatively fixed, and thus constrain their behaviour (see Wildavsky 1987). Religion may play a vital role in shaping various elements of this cultural repertoire. At the same time, as we are reminded on numerous occasions, the relationship between culture and political behaviour is not deterministic. Gill warns against overestimating “ideational variables”, because “institutional concerns often trump theological prescripts in many political situations”

(2001, 135). And Sarfati criticizes “cultural essentialism” *à la* Huntington, which assumes a natural tendency for politicization of some religions, most notably Islam, due to their alleged fundamental inability to distinguish between the religious and the political (2014, 14–15). Sociocultural cleavages are, certainly, the sources of politics, but in a non-deterministic way. It takes political initiative and considerable resources to turn these cleavages into condensation nuclei of political action.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In the course of this chapter, I have suggested ways to study the mechanisms by which religion, defined substantively by its reference to the supernatural, influences a political system understood functionally as a sphere where social actors engage in power relations. This is no accident: substantively defined religion acting within a functionally defined political system is the optimal combination from the perspective of political science. It facilitates a discriminating observation of the role of this particular form of collective consciousness and social organization in multiple ways in which it influences politics. To study these processes, political scientists need to peruse the theories, concepts and methods elaborated within their discipline, adapting them, if necessary, to the study of religion’s political role, and only reach to other disciplines for information, inspiration and widened perspective, not for their essential theoretical toolkit.

I have proposed two conceptualizations of types of religious political actors: in terms of their ability to change the status quo in the political system (veto players and stakeholders) and their structure, resources and modus operandi (social movements and interest groups), as well as the methodological principles of political science of religion. These theoretical and methodological categories are applicable to various perspectives that could be employed to the study of political role of religion. I have outlined three such perspectives. Each of them is best suited for the analysis of a different aspect, or level of the relationship between politics and religion. At the evolutionary level, both religion and political behaviour can be shown to originate from cognitive mechanisms, personality traits and patterns of social interaction evolved as adaptations to natural selection pressures. At the individual level, we are interested in the psychology of religious political mobilization: in what way religion predisposes individu-

als to political action, makes them ripe for mobilization. At the social level, we want to know how religion shapes power relations within both religious groups and the larger political community. These sorts of questions are best answered by what I refer to as the cultural perspective. Social movement theory shows how religion is brought to bear on political process, when religio-political entrepreneurs use religion-supported identities, norms and symbols to mobilize believers into political action. Finally, economic models are most useful in explaining the interactions of thus organized religious political actors (ROI as BB) as profit-maximizing transactions with other actors within a political system.

None of these perspectives, as outlined in Table 2.2, is predisposed to become *the* theory of politics and religion. They have their own territories and the aspects of the relationship they are best at explaining. Admittedly, the division is not clear-cut and the territories often overlap. Social movements theory sometimes aims at discerning both individual motivations of the movement's members and the larger context of their operation ("political opportunity structure"), but it does so arguably more superfi-

Table 2.2 Three theoretical perspectives in political science of religion

<i>Approach</i>	<i>Main focus</i>	<i>Unit of analysis</i>	<i>Corresponding fields of knowledge / bodies of literature</i>
Transactional	Profit-maximizing behaviour of religious entrepreneurs.	ROI as BB; religious organizations as firms in a competitive market	Economic theory; rational choice theory; systems theory.
SMT	Religion-inspired political mass mobilization within a political system.	ROC as WB and BB; religious organization as a social/political movement.	Political sociology; political psychology; theories of collective behaviour; comparative politics.
Cultural	Biological, psychological and social determinants of religiously motivated political attitudes and behaviour.	Individual, ROC as WB; <i>homo religiosus</i> as a subject of politics.	Evolutionary political science, evolutionary religious studies, comparative psychology of religion, sociology of religion, political psychology, political anthropology, theology.

cially than, respectively, the cultural and the economic approaches, or simply borrows their explanations. The economic approach, in turn, may also apply to relations within a religious political actor (e.g. between the faithful and religious personnel, or between the secular rulers, the priests and the subjects in a theocracy—see Chap. 3); however, most of its recent applications concern the external power relations of religious actors. I believe that the integration of these three perspectives into a relatively coherent chain of causal explanations from religion-driven individual motives and attitudes to organized political behaviour of religious political actors has the potential of providing a comprehensive account of political significance of religion.

NOTES

1. The term is borrowed from T. C. Lewellen who used it to describe similar difficulties in classifying social systems in cultural anthropology (Lewellen 2003, 15).
2. Compare Robert Bellah, who, following in the footsteps of Durkheim, defines religion as a “system of beliefs and practices relative to the sacred that unite those who adhere to them in a moral community” (Bellah 2011, 1). I find this formula too exclusive: it leaves out private, individual beliefs which do not find communal expression; and it implies that religion is necessarily a source of moral obligation, when some religions, such as Vedism (early Hinduism) or animistic or shamanistic religions may lack strongly articulated moral principles. “Supernatural” is preferable to “sacred”, since it leaves out quasi-religious, functional equivalents.
3. Interestingly, Michael Sandel advanced a similar, on the face of it, case against treating religion as a matter of choice. He demonstrated how liberalism subsumed freedom of religion under individual liberty or freedom of expression, which resulted in US Supreme Court decisions restricting public expression of religious convictions in some contexts, notably in the military (e.g. *Goldman v. Weinberger*, U.S. 503, 1986). Instead, Sandel argues for interpreting religious liberty, consistently with the understanding of the Founding Fathers, as a freedom to express beliefs that are “the dictates of conscience” and were not chosen in the same way as one chooses a lifestyle or a hobby (Sandel 1993, 492–495). Sandel’s critique, however, bears only superficial resemblance to Mitchell’s. The former argues from a consistently philosophical position, addressing his claims to decision-makers who *shape* public policy, while the latter targets social scientists who *study* the impact of religion on politics. Thus, from the point of view of political science of religion, Sandel’s argument is inconsequential, but Mitchell’s is wrong.

4. The mistake of ascribing the religiosity of educated elites to ordinary believers is typically made in relation to Buddhism. Buddhism is often described as a religion without gods, atheistic religion or simply a philosophical system. However, for the rank-and-file Buddhists the universe is filled with superhuman, semi-divine figures, adopted from Buddhism itself (bodhisattvas) and local religions preceding it, such as Tibetan bon (demons etc.), while Buddha is often accorded a divine status. The lively rituals, cult practices and festivities are also very different from long, silent meditations of the virtuosos.
5. Such an approach assumes a narrower understanding of political system as consisting of specialized institutions of power (government organs, political parties), with all other actors influencing their activity placed outside (in the environment) of the system.
6. This and the following paragraph are adapted from Potz 2019a.
7. The categories from Table 2.1 are useful for political analysis not only because they help conceptualize political behavior of social actors by reference to a certain general framework for studying politics. No less importantly, they allow a researcher to ascribe power and agency to actors by introducing a distinction between potential and actual players. If the outcome B would not have occurred in the absence of actor's A consent, then A was *actual* veto player in the situation under analysis. If, on the other hand, A's consent is merely perceived or expected to be necessary for the occurrence of B, but this assertion has not been put to the test, this actor is a *potential* veto player. Referring to the theory of power, the distinction between *potential* and *actual* veto players accurately captures the difference between political power as a general capacity and political agency as the ability to make things happen or prevent them from happening (Barnes 1988, 57–59). A potential veto player—a power holder—may, and often is, but needs not be the actual veto player—a political agent—with regard to a particular event. This kind of analysis can be fruitfully applied to both political activity of religious actors within larger political systems and for internal political dynamic inside religious groups (for the elaboration of this line of analysis and an example including power relations within the Mormon Church, see Potz 2019b; for the discussion of three distinct levels at which agency may be exercised and its application to the Catholic Church in Poland, see 6.2).
8. In fact, he mentions a religious organization—the Catholic Church—only once (p. 133).
9. Even this, however, is not so clear from an economic perspective, since fewer abortions equal, on average, more new members for the church (Ekelund et al. 1996, 111) with the accompanying economic benefits.
10. She states so at least implicitly when claiming that interest groups are institutions, “not just diffuse social movements” (Warner 2001, 6).

11. Thus “interest group” is effectively equivalent to “pressure group”, although one can argue for a broader understanding of interest groups, where pressurizing (or lobbying) the decision-makers is only one among the actor’s possible tactics (Ćwiklińska 2007, 139).
12. Some authors make the unitary character of religious actors very explicit. Thus, for Kalyvas writing about the Catholic Church, “first, the leadership of the church can be treated as *the* church; second, the church can be treated as a unitary actor; and third, the church can be equated with the Vatican (or Roman Curia)” (31).
13. Wald et al. (2005) accept this fully with regard to the latter (“Political opportunities are exogenous resources”, 138), but are less unequivocal as to the former. They quote approvingly Wildavsky on the restraining function of culture (126), but, at the same time, treat it as one of the “means”—endogenous resources of a movement (132).
14. In fact, della Porta and Diani regard shared identity, and not ideology or some common social characteristics of the members, a defining feature of a social movement.

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PART II

Theocracies



Religious Legitimation of Power and the Concept of Theocracy

In this chapter, I conceptualize religion—with its doctrine, symbols and rituals—as a political resource used for the legitimation of power. Religion plays a significant political role in non-theocratic political systems, too (to be discussed in subsequent chapters), where religious actors use it as an asset, not for the legitimation of state authority, but for political mobilization, lobbying, protest and other forms of political participation, pursuing their interests within a pluralistic political system. But it is in theocracies where religion is indispensable for creating and upholding the relations of political power. In fact, religious legitimation of power is, in my framework, a defining feature of theocracy.

3.1 THE LEGITIMATION OF POWER

The notions of legitimacy and legitimation of power are important for all three methodological approaches to the study of political role of religion outlined in Chap. 2. In the economic model, legitimacy is an asset which religious functionaries offer in transactions with secular rulers. In social movements theory, it is the basis of efficient leadership—one of the key types of resources—enabling effective mobilization. The cultural perspective, applied to theocracies, illuminates cognitive and social mechanisms by which subjects recognize the ruler's claim to power, and, applied to religious political actors in non-theocratic environment, explains the motivation behind their members' engagement in the group's political activity.

Legitimation of power is a process, at least partly controlled by the rulers, which, if successful, leads to *legitimacy*: a state of a political system in which the rulers' claim to obedience is recognized by the ruled as valid. Such validity may stem from various sources, religion being just one of them. The essence of legitimacy is that the ruled feel morally compelled, but not coerced, to obey the orders of the rulers or abide by laws they establish. The rulers' claim to obedience is communicated to the ruled through what I call legitimation transmitters, in the form of (a) legitimation formulas—systems of ideas explaining and justifying the unequal distribution of power; (b) political rituals, symbolically playing out the ideas contained in the legitimation formula and integrating the political community around shared values and goals; (c) succession procedures, validating the change of power by reference to legitimation formulas; and (d) actual actions pragmatically sustaining the legitimacy of the rulers by demonstrating their effectiveness in meeting the needs of their subjects. If these legitimating efforts are successful, the ruled respond by recognizing legitimacy of the rulers and the system as a whole. Such recognition can be expressed either passively, by submission to the rulers' laws and orders, or actively, by political participation or even direct support for the system (two-way legitimation transmitters; see Potz 2016, 54–57).

Legitimacy is, needless to say, an immensely valuable asset for any ruler. Every act of power consists of two components: the threat of using force (coercion) and the recognition of the validity of the rulers' justification for the demand to comply (legitimacy). They are intermixed in various proportions, ranging from sheer tyranny, that is, non-legitimate rule based solely on violence, to compliance based on respect and moral authority, without any sanctions attached. Thus, the more legitimacy, the less need to use violence, and the lower the accompanying costs of enforcing each and every decision. This, in turn, facilitates increased extensiveness and comprehensiveness of power: a rational ruler will extend his power up to the point where the marginal costs (social unrest, opposition, protest) exceed the profits, broadly conceived. High level of legitimacy reduces these costs (Dahl and Stinebrickner 2003, chapter 5). While, in a short perspective, a non-legitimate regime can sustain itself through pragmatically satisfying the basic needs of the subjects, its long-term stability requires a certain degree of legitimacy (Lipset 1960, 82). Moreover, there is a positive feedback loop between legitimacy and goal attainment: the level of legitimacy of a political system seems to be positively correlated with its ability to achieve its goals, which, in turn, reinforces its legitimacy.

In the words of Chris Thornhill, “legitimacy results from the ability of a political system to adapt to its functional objectives, to provide political performances that are accurately adjusted to the specific structure of a given society, and generally to use power in a manner that effectively stabilizes the social environments in which it is located” (Thornhill 2011, 139). In sum, legitimacy translates to cost-effective, efficient rule and a stable political system.

There has been some debate over objective vs. subjective character of legitimacy. David Beetham attacked Weberian notion of “belief in legitimacy”, proposing instead three objective criteria. In his view, power is legitimate to the extent that (a) it is legal, that is, acquired and performed according the existing rules and procedures; (b) these rules are compatible with norms prevailing in the society; (c) the subjects express their support for the system through political participation and symbolic acts (Beetham 1991, 15–20). Despite the force and sophistication of Beetham’s entire argument, I tend to side with Weber. While the ruled certainly take into account the first two criteria, that is, whether the rulers abide by the rules and whether these rules are congruent with a broader axiological/moral/ideological consensus, it is their subjective disposition, not the objective facts, which, in the last analysis, influences their political attitudes and behaviour. If an election was fraudulent or a secret *coup d’état* occurred, but public opinion knew nothing about it, the legitimacy of the system would not diminish, even though the objective criteria of legitimation are no longer met.

Let us, finally, complement this fairly standard mezzo-level account with a deeper, cultural explanation (as postulated in Sect. 2.4) of the effectiveness of legitimation. Why is it the case that the rulers make the effort to come up with justifications, and the ruled tend to believe them? Social psychologists have shown that people crave for justification: providing reasons for a request dramatically increases the chances that the request will be granted, even if the reasons are themselves spurious. It is the formulation of the request itself, for example, containing the word “because”, which triggers the habitual positive reaction (Langer et al. 1978). Now how about the rulers? Do they simply, in their infinite wisdom, recognize and satisfy this need of their subjects? Contrary to over-realistic theories of politics, the act of legitimating—providing reasons—is never entirely cynical. While the reasons rulers offer might not be the original motives of their actions, these *ex post* justifications do leave a mark: the rulers’ actual behaviour tends to converge with their professed principles (Skinner 2002,

155). This is because of a desire for consistency, a very powerful, evolved psychological trait of humans which manifests itself even more strongly in certain circumstances. In particular, we feel especially bound by our declarations if they were made actively, publicly (especially in writing) and freely (Cialdini 2014, chap. 3)—and all these conditions usually apply to the process of legitimation. In the minds of the rulers, the external process of legitimation performs the internal function of rationalization. In sum, regardless of the intentions behind it, an effort to justify one’s positions or actions affects the actor, thus influencing tangibly social and political reality. Legitimation *makes* politics, not simply reflects it.

3.2 A LEGITIMATION-BASED CONCEPT OF THEOCRACY

The importance of legitimacy makes it not only a major analytical category in political science, but also a potential criterion of classification of political systems. This is the route I take: I define *theocracy* as a political system which derives its legitimacy from a supernatural source. I thus depart from the standard understanding of the term as the rule of religious functionaries, properly called “hierocracy”. The procedural criterion—who rules?—has, especially in the case of power based on religion, much less explanatory potential than the location of the source of legitimacy. The similarities between secular and clerical regimes legitimized by religion are, I believe, much more significant than the differences between them; these similarities are obscured by limiting the applicability of theocracy to hierocracy.

But how does this conceptualization of theocracy conform to the standard classification of political systems into democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian? The simple answer is that it does not. This is because the above classification itself is fundamentally wrong. In fact, it is hardly a proper classification at all, since it uses two different criteria: procedure of power succession (how are the rulers selected?) and the level of political control or comprehensiveness of power (how large is the subject’s sphere of autonomy against the state?/what is “the variety of actions to which A can move B”?; de Jouvenel, quoted in Wrong 1980, 14). The first criterion distinguishes democracies from the other two types, while the second criterion is, in fact, a continuum extending between the extremes of absolute freedom (politically: anarchy) and total enslavement, with the real-life political systems located somewhere in between. As a result, the classes are not disjunctive, and some cases, such as non-liberal democracies, do not easily fit. This is especially problematic for theocracies, which have to be

packed into authoritarian or totalitarian types, depending on their oppressiveness (with subtleties such as democratic succession procedures in religiously legitimized systems completely disappearing from view) or fitted into awkward typologies.¹

It would add a lot of clarity and precision to political analysis to treat these important dimensions of political power—its comprehensiveness, the source of its legitimacy and the mode of leaders' selection—as the criteria of separate classifications of political systems. Thus, depending on whether the leaders are selected by (or from among) the majority of the subjects or within a narrow elite, a political system is democratic or autocratic (Fig. 3.1).

The comprehensiveness/political control dimension, or the level of individual's autonomy vis-à-vis the state, can be conceptualized as a continuum, with a number of discrete types: let us call them, in a traditional fashion, liberal, authoritarian and totalitarian (Fig. 3.2).

Finally, based on various sources of legitimacy invoked by the rulers, such as religion, secular tradition, supreme knowledge, and popular will/popular sovereignty, the following types of political systems can be distinguished: theocratic, patrimonial (e.g. secular hereditary monarchies), meritocratic (e.g. Plato's republic, Chinese mandarins' administration), contractual (e.g. contemporary Western democracies) and, where the rulers' efforts at gaining legitimacy fail, tyrannical or despotic. Note that these *sources* of legitimacy are different from Weber's types of legitimate authority (charismatic, traditional and rational-legal), which are, in fact,

Fig. 3.1 Political systems according to succession procedure

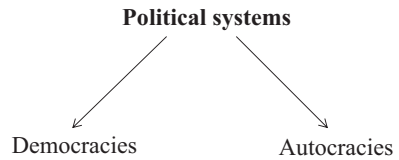
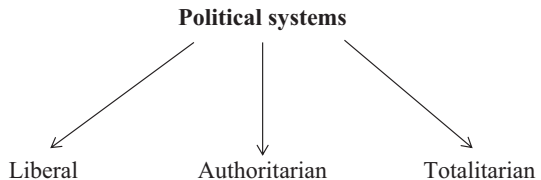


Fig. 3.2 Political systems according to comprehensiveness of power/level of political control



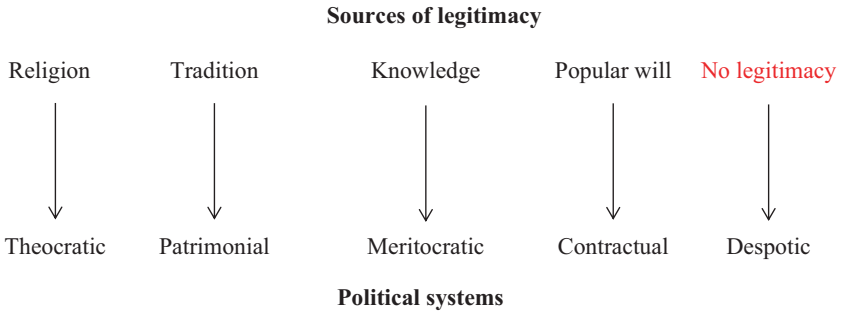


Fig. 3.3 Political systems according to the source of legitimacy

modes of legitimation, quite independent of the content of the legitimation formula. In fact, both charismatic and traditional, and perhaps even rational-legal authority is compatible with all sources of legitimacy, both religious and secular (traditional, meritocratic and contractual). Various modes of legitimation may even coexist within one political system. For instance, the Roman-Catholic Church, an undeniably theocratic organization, is, at the same time, traditional (when it invokes the time-honoured authority of its leaders invested with apostolic succession) and rational-legal (when it relies on codified legal rules and spheres of competence attached to ecclesiastical offices, not personally to their holders), although no longer charismatic (Fig. 3.3).

Combining the three criteria proposed above—the leaders' selection procedure, the comprehensiveness of their power and the source of legitimacy of their authority—would yield as many as 30 theoretical types of political systems ($2 \times 3 \times 5$). Certainly not all of them have an empirical content, but the approach itself allows for more analytical precision, especially when it comes to less obvious combinations. For instance, while most Western political systems are contractual liberal democracies, some non-Western democracies are non-liberal, non-contractual, or both. Ancient Athenian democracy was contractual and authoritarian (see classic arguments by Constant 1988 and Sartori 1987), while the political system of the European Union is, in principle, democratic, but, arguably, more meritocratic than contractual, since its justification is, more often, its technocratic effectiveness rather than the fulfilling of the will of the people.

From the perspective of political science of religion, an approach based on the source of legitimacy of power, not on the religious or secular status

of rulers, makes the concept of theocracy much more useful for political analysis. It may be applied to both historical and contemporary political systems (e.g. Muslim states or quasi-states which are not hierocracies). It also draws attention to the variety of institutional arrangements used by religion-sanctioned political systems, something that a narrower and more formal conception of theocracy would not be able to account for. One intriguing example is the seventeenth-century Puritan colonies of New England. As far as the succession procedure is concerned, they were decidedly democratic: the governor was elected by all free men of the colony². Yet, the democratic procedure in no way implied the contractual character of these political systems: it would occur to nobody that the governor's power comes from the people in the sense of being the expression of popular sovereignty. No—his power came from God, who merely used the electorate as the instruments for revealing his choice. In this way, the concept of theocracy, a somewhat antiquarian term used mainly for the ancient empires of the Near East, can be reintegrated into the framework of comparative politics with considerable explanatory potential.³

3.3 ORIGINS AND STABILITY OF THEOCRATIC REGIMES

The origin of particular theocracies is, of course, an empirical question of historical enquiry which cannot be definitely resolved with a single model, just as the theories of state formation (hydraulic, conquest, patriarchal etc.) do not explain the history of each and every state. The purpose of this exercise is, rather, to conceptualize, in the language of the economic approach set out above (Sect. 2.4), typical power relations which tend to emerge between the rulers, the religious functionaries and the society in theocracies.

The following transactional model of the origins and conditions of stability of theocratic political systems is derived from sociological theories of social exchange. The social exchange theories, as developed by, among others, Blau and Emerson, conceive of all social relations as a series of transactions in the course of which various goods, material and non-material, economic and symbolic, ranging from physical objects, money and labour, to information, ideas, beliefs, to social status, prestige and power, are exchanged between individual and collective social actors. Power is conceptualized as arising from unequal exchange relation, where one party to this relation, B, is unable to return goods of equal value to goods provided by the other party, A. If B wants to maintain the relation, that is,

continue receiving the goods they consider valuable, they have to offer submission in return (Blau 1986)⁴. Note that this is consistent with the understanding of power as a social relation which, although asymmetrical, requires a minimum of consent from both parties (in contrast to violence).

How does theocracy map onto this general framework? In theocracies, there are three groups of actors entering into exchange relations: religious functionaries⁵, secular rulers (unless, in hierocracy, they are indistinguishable) and the faithful/subjects. The relation between religious functionaries and secular rulers is often roughly equal: the former supply the latter with legitimation of their position and the ritual setting of the spectacle of power, in exchange for material subsistence, social status and prestige. The relation between religious functionaries (and secular rulers allied with them) and the faithful/subjects is, of essence, an unequal exchange, or power, relation. Religious goods, and especially eternal salvation, are of ultimate value to the believers (priceless) and thus cannot be matched by anything they could give in return. To secure their supply, they have to pay with submission. Consequently, *theocracy originates from unequal exchange relation between religious functionaries (and, usually, secular rulers cooperating with them) and the believers.*

To accomplish this, religious functionaries must create demand for the goods they offer. Even if we accept that humans are naturally predisposed for religion⁶, it is still necessary to secure the adherence to a specific set of beliefs and rituals administered by this, and not any other, group of clergy. “The monopolistic suppliers of unworldly hope, as it were, *create* (do not just *meet*) the demand for their commodity by fostering fear and trembling” (Poggi 2001, 67). The strategies they may use include sharply contrasting this and the other world, presenting the former as a source of misery and suffering (recall the Christian motives of *vanitas* and *danse macabre*), and the latter as eternally blissful. The role of religious functionaries is indispensable, both to placate, as far as possible, the sufferings of this world and to facilitate the entry to the other. They may also have other goods to offer, such as bestowing sense on existence, formulating and enforcing moral rules, presiding over rituals, and creating communities and identities associated with them⁷. Once the demand for their services is established, power relations emerge. But it also follows from this that *the propensity of various religions to create theocracies differs with the political potential of their doctrines, where political potential of a religious doctrine is its ability to generate justifications for political power (to legitimize it).* Thus salvation religions (such as Christianity or Islam) are

natural candidates, especially since they are normally also ethical religions, with a prominent role of religious functionaries in enforcing divinely established ethical codes. Non-ethical but highly ritualistic religions, such as ancient Middle Eastern and Mesoamerican religions, as well as early Vedism, may also qualify, insofar as priests are regarded indispensable for elaborate world-upholding rituals. Conversely, religions in which the road to salvation leads through individual effort, asceticism or meditation, largely unmediated by clergy (such as philosophical Buddhism or, to a lesser extent, Hinduism) should be theoretically less prone to create theocracies.⁸

Social exchange theories predict certain balancing operations by the subjects aimed at reducing, or eliminating entirely, the inequality of a power relation. To do so, B may (1) offer goods sufficiently attractive to A that the latter wants to continue the exchange even in the absence of B's submission (thereby turning the power relation into equal exchange relation); (2) find alternative suppliers who offer the goods hitherto provided by A at a lower price (less submission), or are interested in goods B has to offer in exchange; (3) take over the desired goods by force; (4) renounce the goods, rendering the exchange obsolete, and thus making the power relation disappear (Blau 1986, chap. 5; Emerson 1972).

From these, one can derive counterstrategies used by power holders to preserve the power relation in the face of these challenges by their subjects. I conceptualize them as *conditions of stability* of a political regime⁹. They include, respectively, (1) avoiding dependency on goods offered by the subjects; (2) preventing them from finding competitive suppliers, thus maintaining the monopoly; (3) retaining full control over instruments of force (note that, in the case of states, the exclusive right to resort to violence is seen as one of prerequisites of their sovereignty); (4) maintaining in the subjects (through socialization, propaganda and other marketing techniques) the conviction of the absolute necessity of the goods the power holders offer (Potz 2013).

When applied to theocracies, the above general strategies of both sides of power relations translate into the following types of action (Table 3.1).

As stated above, by the very nature of religious goods they cannot be equalled by anything the believers have to offer, making the first balancing operation unavailable, and the respective counterstrategy obsolete. The second option, searching for alternative suppliers, corresponds in theocracies to all sorts of heresies (questioning the authenticity of the religious goods themselves), schisms (questioning the competence of religious functionaries in administering the goods), dissident movements, revivals

Table 3.1 Conditions of stability of theocratic political systems

<i>Alternatives to submission in general</i>	<i>Alternatives to submission in theocracies</i>	<i>Responses by theocratic rulers (conditions of stability)</i>
Providing counter-rewards.	–	–
Finding alternative suppliers.	Religious dissent, new revelation, heresy, schism.	Maintaining monopoly by persecution of heretics, guarding the purity of the doctrine, preventing entrance by religious competitors.
Taking over the goods by force.	Taking control over religious functionaries or cult sites; popular rebellion against infidel elites.	Firm control over the instruments of force.
Renouncing the goods.	Decreasing importance of religion in a person's life; secularization.	Maintaining coherent religious world view; isolation; propaganda; traditionalism; fundamentalism.

Source: adapted from Potz 2013, 419.

and so on. The power holders respond with the persecution of heretics, stressing the orthodoxy and unity of belief, setting up entrance barriers for other religions and otherwise protecting their monopoly. The third balancing operation may take the form of a struggle for the access to and control over the personnel of cult centres, temples or oracles, but also a religiously motivated popular rebellion against conquerors trying to impose their religion. Finally, renouncing the goods translates into the decreasing importance of religion in the lives of the subjects, or secularization. To counter this, the rulers must attempt to maintain the coherent religious worldview of their subjects, to prevent disenchantment of the world by means of, among other things, intense propaganda, isolating the ruled from outside influences, and emphasizing the time-honoured value of their beliefs and accompanying moral norms against the corruption of the world (traditionalism, fundamentalism)¹⁰.

3.4 SACRALISATION OF POWER

Let us now turn to the mechanisms of religious legitimation of power—the deeply rooted connection between political power and religion which enables the latter to justify the claims of the former. In this, I will largely

switch to the cultural/“understanding” perspective, trying to explain the impact of religious ideas on the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of actors, individual and institutional, involved in theocratic power relations.

Sacralisation of power—ascribing supernatural properties to political authority—had been a nearly universal feature of human societies. It may have originated from the need to anchor human experience, including the social world, in a reality of which it partakes (immanent) or which is external to it (transcendent). Thereby, social order, in fact a human creation, gains a non-arbitrary status as a part of divinely established natural order of things. As Mark Haugaard put it:

What made that order normatively compelling was that it was the work of God. [...] God is the creator of nature, or maybe even stronger, he is infinite and immutable. Thus, to the extent to which the meanings and norms of society reflect the will of God, they are neither socially constructed, nor the will of mankind. Thus, in a theocracy, God serves the function of reifying society, making it appear other than culture, thus not constructed and arbitrary. Anyone who attempts a counter-hegemonic strategy is not going against other members of society, but is violating the laws that govern the firmament of the heavens, the earth and the humblest ant. (Haugaard 2012, 83)

In this process of making sense of human experience by linking it to the ultimate, sacred reality—legitimation in a broad sense (Berger 1990)—political authority is accorded an important if complex role. In stratified societies, the rulers constitute the top layer of the divinely established social order, embodying the power of god(s) who created it. Social inequalities and distributional disadvantages inevitably arising with the emergence of power hierarchies are thus legitimized by reference to the otherworldly realm which they are supposed to reflect. In non-stratified societies, with more egalitarian, looser political organization where such ideas were not developed, rulers were the bearers of mysterious, both fascinating and terrifying (Otto 1959, chap. 4–6) cosmic force, which they can tame and channel for the benefit of the community (van der Leeuw 1997, 110–111).

What are the consequences of positioning rulers in such a way? First and foremost, they are burdened with the fundamental task of upholding the universe itself, of constantly guarding the cosmic order from slipping back into the primordial chaos. Hence the horror with which the subjects watched the agony of the Inca emperor (and the desperate efforts to pro-

long his life), since his decease might stop the sun from shining (Karsten, quoted in Widengren 2008, 397). Similarly, one of the main duties of the Aztec kings was to provide prisoners (by waging politically unnecessary wars) for sacrifice in order to feed their celestial gods with blood. If this interpretation is accurate, then religion would virtually dictate the state's *raison d'être* (Banek 1985, 5).

By being regarded a bearer and wielder of cosmic/divine force, the ruler was also made responsible for anything that happened to the community in his charge. He was thus credited with military victories, but also fertility of women, good harvest, healing abilities, and so on. The belief in the ruler's magical powers goes beyond "primitive" societies. European kings, especially of France and England, were ascribed the power to heal a form of tuberculosis ("scrofula") well into the Middle Ages, and much longer in folk culture (hence peasants were desperately trying to touch their robes whenever they were passing by; Bloch 1990). The flip side of such beliefs is the rulers' potential culpability for any disasters, natural or not (war, disease, infertility, draught) that befell the community. The ruler who lost the power could be deposited and even executed, either actually or ritually, in which case a double was killed in his stead. After such a force-restituting ritual, a new or old-new ruler could start afresh with his powers replenished (see Tymowski 1999, 68, for evidence from pre-colonial African states; Urbańczyk 2008, 154, for early Medieval Europe; Frazer 1998, chap. 6). Even the Chinese emperor would have to undergo a public penance in cases of extreme disasters, such as prolonged drought, to prove his status of the Son of Heaven (Weber 1968).

The belief that political power is of divine origin thus lies at the heart of its religious legitimation. However, "divine origin" is a vague notion which may translate into various religious statuses of rulers, with different political consequences. These include (a) direct rule of God, (b) deification of rulers (or entire dynasties), (c) treating them as God-anointed or (d) as priests. Let us consider them in turn.

Political ideology of ancient Israel, particularly in the pre-monarchic period, was a model case of theocracy *par excellence*—direct rule of God, as stipulated by the etymology of "theocracy" (the term was probably first used by the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius). The patriarchs or clan heads (such as Abraham), and later the "national" leaders (such as Moses) were regarded as more or less passive recipients of the commands of God, who constantly guided the community with revelations, and gradually supplied an ethical code—commandments and other rules. The community

was bound by a covenant (a prototype of its later, Protestant versions), whereby each member was responsible directly before the sovereign God as well as other members of the community for abiding by Jahveh's laws. Thus when the Israelites, following the example of their neighbours, appointed a king, this was seen in the Bible as a grave error, the severing of the unique bond between Jahveh and Israel (1 Sm, 12:17). Jahveh continued to actively participate in the life of Israel, now communicating with the monarchs and patriarchs rather than appearing before the people. However, his growing transcendence and exclusiveness—his ascension from a tribal idol to monotheistic, “national” God—precluded the deification of kings. After the downfall of the monarchy and the Babylonian exile, Israel became a hierocracy: a theocracy based on the rule of clergy.

Elsewhere in the ancient world, the rulers claimed the divine status of gods or, somewhat more modestly, sons of gods. Thus in Egypt, in the Old State period the pharaoh was regarded the incarnation of god Horus; later, with the ascension of Re and then, in the New State period, of Amon, to the top of the Egyptian pantheon, the pharaoh was still worshipped as the son of these mighty gods. Deification was also characteristic for some Mesopotamian dynasties (from Sumer-Akkad onwards). The apotheosis of Alexander the Great and the Roman rulers since Caesar (without, however, claiming exclusiveness for their cult) served an important political purpose of ideological integration of their universalist empires. Had Alexander claimed, in the Greek part of his empire, supreme power as a mere mortal, he would have been treated as a tyrant (Piotrowicz 2006, 48): the claim to divinity made it easier to overcome the particularity of the Greek *poleis*. In the Asian and especially Egyptian parts, with a long tradition of some form of sacralisation of power, Alexander's divinity claim found even more fertile ground. Examples can be found in other parts of the world, too. In the Far East, the Japanese emperors have been regarded as the divine descendants of the sun goddess Amaterasu, while their Chinese counterparts were Sons of Heaven, even though “Heaven” gradually came to symbolize the universal cosmic order rather than a personal deity. Across the ocean, the Inca dynasty traced its origins to divine twins, the offspring of the Sun god.

As noted by Poggi, “Essentially, in despotism the phenomenon of rule was itself the key source and the key referent of a distinctive set of cosmological beliefs and cultic practices; rulers did not simply make use for their own purposes of a self-standing religious system, but stood at the very centre of one specifically concerned with rule” (Poggi 2001, 77).

Deification was thus possible when the religious system the rulers used to justify their claims was centred upon political power and instrumental to it. If, on the other hand, the religion is “self-standing”, that is, political authority is just one of many spheres it encompasses, deification of a ruler becomes incompatible with the sovereignty of the supernatural. This is probably the reason why no genuine cult of a ruler ever developed in Christianity.

Instead, the dominant tendency in Christendom was to treat rulers as anointed by God. This is a broad category, including, at one extreme, the Byzantine conception of an emperor as a sacred figure, standing close to God in the ontological order, although short of a genuinely divine status, and, at the other pole, a late medieval Western Church theology subordinating the divinely mandated monarch to the pope. Byzantine imperial ideology was influenced by Christian political thought of late antiquity. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, Constantine the Great’s aide, the king, while not *logos* himself, is the Viceroy and a friend of God, the recipient of God’s messages and the interpreter of his Word (Runciman 2003, 22). He is a reflection (*mimesis*) of God in his monarchical function (Scattola 2011, 50). As such, the emperor is charged with managing all worldly affairs, and even supervising the church, including calling councils and synods, approving ecclesiastical nominations, guarding the orthodoxy and arbitrating in doctrinal disputes. Symbolically, this high, semi-divine status of the Byzantine emperor was expressed in iconography (e.g. coronation of emperor by the hand of God, double throne with a place left for Christ) and ritual (e.g. emperor playing Christ’s part in certain ceremonies; Baszkiewicz 1998, 85–87). This tradition of the ruler’s near-deification was carried over to Russia, where the tsar was likened to an “earthly god” and Christ in panegyrist literature, and particularly in the folk culture, was worshipped with ritual acts pertaining to the icons cult (Uspienski and Żywow 1992).

In the West, such an elevated status of a ruler, with the accompanying caesaropapist institutional arrangements, never fully developed, even though in the Merovingian and Charlemagne’s kingdoms rulers retained some of the magical charisma of their predecessors and the bishops were effectively their (non-hereditary) vassals. But the church managed to emancipate itself through, among other things, the investiture controversy, as a result of which the nominations of bishops were no longer subject to rulers’ approval. In early second millennium, the popes consolidated their power within the church, gradually asserting their superiority

over secular rulers. In the process, they were trying to downgrade the status of the monarchs from *christomimêtês* (king as the impersonator of Christ; see Kantorowicz 2016, chap. 3) to a mere *bracchium seculare*, the secular arm of the church, responsible for worldly affairs under the supervision of the church. This tension over the interpretation of the broad notion of divine origin of king's power was well reflected in the symbolic sphere. The ritual of *sacra*—the anointing of the ascending monarch with sacred oils during enthronement ceremony, performed by a bishop or the pope himself—was a double-edged sword. It expressed the idea that the ruler's authority is conferred on him by God, that he reigns *Dei gratia*—a part the royal ideologues stuck to; but, at the same time, it emphasized that this grant of authority is mediated through church, with the implication, developed by the papacy, that the church is competent to control whether such power is used in accordance with God's law.

Sacralisation of power has often been associated with the priestly status of rulers. This could take the form of either the performance of priestly functions by secular rulers (whether deified or merely god-anointed), their coexistence with dominant clergy (papocaesarism) or direct rule of religious functionaries (hierocracy). In the first scenario, it would seem quite natural for divine or divinely instituted rulers to perform world-sustaining rituals or pledge with gods on behalf of the community. Thus, to take just two examples, a Roman emperor was *pontifex maximus*, the archpriest presiding over the official state cult; and in imperial China, the cult of gods (or the impersonal Heaven) and ancestors was the domain of the state, with emperor, together with state officials, rather than specialized religious personnel, officiating at religious state ceremonies. In the second, papocaesarist variation, the empowerment of professional religious functionaries might lead to the limited and subordinate position of secular rulers, with the accompanying deflation of their sacral status: they can no longer be legitimized as bearers of divine mandate, but, more pragmatically, as useful components of the god-established, priest-controlled social order. The examples include India, with the gradual elevation of ritual and social status of the Brahmins, as well as their actual power vis-à-vis the secular rulers of the lower Kshatriya *varna*; and contemporary Iran, whose post-revolution political system, consisting of the parallel hierarchies of secular and religious authority, is, in a few key aspects, controlled by the latter. In hierocracies *par excellence*, such as Tibet under the Dalai Lamas or the Vatican, no separate secular authorities exist and the administrative functions are executed directly by the clergy¹¹.

3.5 THE FUNCTION OF RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES

The preceding discussion of sacralisation revealed the primary political function of religious doctrines—*providing legitimacy* for political power. They do so on three distinct levels: (a) normative, creating and sustaining the general normative and moral consensus within the political community by anchoring it in supreme, supernatural order of things; (b) institutional, justifying the particular institutions, procedures and hierarchies related to the organization of power in this community as entrenched in this higher order, and thus divinely mandated; and (c) personal, upholding the legitimacy of particular power holders by ascribing to them one of the various religious statuses discussed above. Note that these three levels of legitimacy of a political system, though certainly strongly related, are also independent to a degree. Thus, personal delegitimation—for example, when a ruler is regarded a usurper or as fallen from god’s grace—may leave institutional and normative legitimacy of a system intact. On the other hand, a charismatic leader may question the legitimacy of the existing power institutions by invoking common normative consensus (this is, essentially, the definition of populism). In this case, institutional delegitimation is combined with high levels of normative and personal legitimacy of the system.

The second important function of religious doctrines is that they serve as *adaptive and stabilizing mechanisms* for a political system. Effective legitimation formula is not given once and for all: it must be flexible enough to react to various internal and external stresses that knock the system out of an equilibrium. For instance, without assuming the predominance of the religious over other factors (and thus entering the “ideal vs. material” quagmire), one can still speculate about the fate of the Aztecs, had they been able to see beyond the confines of their beliefs that made them welcome their conquerors as the white gods of their legends. And one can wonder to what extent the large expenditure of scarce resources on gigantic religious statues contributed, along with other factors, to the decline of the Easter Island civilization (Diamond 2011, chap. 2). In these cases, the religious doctrines were unable to adapt to changing circumstances and thus save the political systems for which they provided legitimacy.

Conversely, a good example of an adaptive potential of a religious doctrine is the Mormon belief in continuous revelation—that is, that revelation was not completed in biblical times, but that God permanently

guides his people through history by speaking directly to the Mormon president-prophet. In reaction to the mounting pressure from the United States federal government on Mormon theocracy in Utah—related to polygamy and threatening the dissolution of the church and imprisonment of its leaders—Wilford Woodruff, the President of the church, received a revelation in 1890 announcing that the practice of “plural marriage” must stop. While some fundamentalists contested the authenticity of this revelation (a handful still does), the majority of Mormons obeyed, thus ensuring the survival of Mormonism—albeit in a less autonomous form—and paving the way for its later journey from the fringes to the mainstream of American culture. In this way, the doctrine of continuous revelation supplied strong justification for a decision that would have otherwise been likely disobeyed as a betrayal of the original Joseph Smith’s revelation on polygamy, and thus stabilized the system in response to serious external stress (Potz 2016, 5.2.2). Similarly, the decision of the Latter-Day Saints Church to admit non-white males to priesthood in 1978, against a long-standing practice of exclusion, was justified by a revelation to the First President Spencer W. Kimball (*Official Declaration 2* 1978). Once again, the doctrine of continuous revelation helped overcome the common dilemma faced by religious groups, whereby “Intransigence puts a church increasingly at odds with the prevailing culture and risks alienating both current members and potential converts; accommodation undermines its claim to transcendent truth and divine authority”, because “it is difficult for churches to change what they have declared to be eternal truth” (Iannaccone 1990, 1231, 1245). Not so for the Mormons, contra Iannaccone, because doctrinal change has been part and parcel of their religious experience, and modification of previous teachings by God himself speaking through the leaders of the church—a real possibility.¹²

The two above functions of religious doctrines—providing legitimacy for a political system and stabilizing it—pertain to theocracies. The third and most general function, namely inspiring certain political attitudes and actions (compliance, cooperation, protest etc.) is what makes religion relevant to politics in all, including non-theocratic, political systems. I will return to it in the last two chapters. Let me now conclude with a few important qualifications.

First, religion is not just a doctrine. The chapter devoted to religious legitimation of power naturally focuses on doctrines as ideologies, but other elements of religion play important political roles, too. Ritual serves as a legitimation transmitter, recreating or reliving the content of the doc-

trine, but also contributes to creation of the religious community which performs it. The community itself is a social base of political mobilization.

Second, religious organizations allied with secular rulers did more than just ideologically reinforce their power. They were also used for administrative purposes, from temples serving as redistribution centres in ancient Mesopotamia (Mann 2012, 85–87) to parish priests performing quasi-state functions in early modern Protestant countries (Marshall 2009, 63–64). What made the Christian church so attractive as a political ally was that it controlled extensive social networks of communication and attachment, outside of official state channels, ever since the Roman empire and on through the Middle Ages, when, especially in the first millennium, it was one of the few social institutions that survived the fall of the western empire and the period of “barbarian” kingdoms. Nor is the ideological function of religion restricted to providing legitimacy. Religious organizations produced and reinforced a certain normative consensus, in the form of divinely mandated moral principles, rules of conduct and attached sanctions, which facilitated social, economic and political interactions, both within and between political entities. And it often provided infrastructure for those interactions—temples, personnel, script.

Third, although the distant past seems immensely religious to us, we must accept the scepticism of some scholars pointing to surprisingly low levels of church attendance in the Middle Ages (Stark and Finke 2000, 63–70). While this is not the only measure of religiosity, and, when considering religious legitimation of power, this one is probably not the most relevant, one may not forget that religion had always coexisted with other sources of legitimacy, even if the vast majority of states up until the seventeenth century were theocratic in the sense described above.

Finally, the legitimating role of religion has varied considerably. As we have seen, rulers were assigned various, more or less prominent, religious statuses. Furthermore, Michael Mann made a distinction between transcendent and immanent role of ideology, including religious ideology. It is *transcendent* when it operates autonomously from other types of power (military, economic and political, in his terminology), shaping power relations and creating new tracks of social development. It is *immanent*, when it merely reflects and passively upholds the existing power relations, being, in a way, instrumentally used by the ruling elite. At the same time, Mann treats legitimation essentially as manipulation. Discussing the changes in Mesopotamian religion (from agrarian, to military-royal, to patriarchal to “national” gods), he asserts, echoing Jacobsen’s observation, that “[t]hese changes

reflect and grapple intellectually with political and military power development, not as crude political legitimation, but as genuine intellectual effort to grasp the nature of life” (Mann 2012, 156). The opposition between true intellectual effort and superficial legitimation implied here is, I think, mistaken. Some rulers believe what the priests preach about them and some don’t, but the fact that religious legitimation is politically useful does not necessarily imply that that it is somehow disingenuous or fake. The process of legitimating power is actually more efficient if the legitimation formula is the product of actual “genuine intellectual effort” credible for both the rulers and the ruled, rather than the pure fabrication of the former.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The chapter focused on legitimacy as a major power resource, and the function of religion as the source of legitimacy for political authority at normative, institutional and personal levels. This is where the relationship between political power and religion reveals itself perhaps most forcefully. This intimate relation may have originated from the role rulers had to play in upholding the cosmos (by feeding, pleasing and sacrificing to gods) and preventing it from slipping back into primordial chaos, in managing supernatural powers, as well as from the translation the divine order with god at its head into the earthly social and political order. In the process rulers were accorded various statuses of gods, gods’ children, or just god-anointed mortals. The extent of sacralisation of their power ranged from deification to delegation of divine authority to a ruler, a process over which religious functionaries claimed exclusive control by presiding over monarchical investiture ceremonies and interpreting the divine law. As a result, political systems were anchored in the non-arbitrary, other-worldly realm.

I proposed to treat the legitimating function of religion as the defining criterion of theocracy, making the source of legitimacy an independent dimension of political systems’ classification. Within such framework, the concept of theocracy gains in usefulness and applicability: it is no longer restricted to a narrow class of priestly regimes (hierocracies), but illuminates ideological underpinnings of political systems with various institutional arrangements and levels of comprehensiveness of power (political control). The subsequent discussion of the origins of theocracies, adopting the transactional perspective, highlights another, related political function

of religion: providing adaptive and stabilizing mechanisms for a political system. In the case we looked at, the Mormon doctrine of continuous revelation served as a theological facilitator for drastic changes the Mormon theocracy had to go through to survive. This, along with other similar examples, demonstrates that theocracy, in its various forms, may be a rational and even optimal choice for a political system.

NOTES

1. For a particularly striking example of such a conceptual confusion, see Perl 2008, who classifies theocracy alongside communism, socialism, democracy, dictatorship and monarchy (134–135).
2. Censuses applied, to be sure: only male members of Congregational churches were eligible to vote.
3. For a more thorough discussion of the concept of theocracy and the typology of political systems, see Potz 2016 (Chap. 2).
4. Similarly, Stark and Bainbridge (1980, 119), in developing their transactional theory of religion, define power as “the degree of control over one’s exchange ratio”.
5. A religious functionary can be defined as priest, sorcerer, shaman, prophet or any other person possessing, in a particular community, a privileged relation to the sacred, and administering religious goods. This last clause is crucial: the fact that the religious goods, which are believed to be of divine origin, are administered (distributed) by religious functionaries makes it possible to talk of theocracy in sociological or political, and not theological terms.
6. Which is by no means certain—the debate about the precedence of religion vs. non-religious traits of human culture is ongoing (see, e.g. de Waal 2013).
7. It is thus too simplistic to treat salvation as virtually the only valuable product religious organizations sell (as, for instance, Ekelund et al. 1996, 21, imply in relation to the Catholic Church).
8. The existence of some Buddhist theocracies (including Tibetan, discussed in more detail in Chap. 4) makes this assertion questionable. Part of the answer lies in the false impression of Buddhism as a highly individualistic, virtuoso religion which does not hold for ordinary believers (see note 4, Chap. 2). Moreover, the Buddhist rulers might actually be forced to violate the religion’s ethical principles, something Karen Armstrong refers to as the Aśoka’s dilemma (Armstrong 2015, 68–71).
9. This is not to imply that the stability of a political system depends solely on the power relations within it. There may also be other, external factors which I do not consider here.

10. A host of historical instances of the strategies postulated by the above model could be adduced. For one such empirical application, see Potz 2013.
11. The discussion here is restricted to hierocratic states. But of course political systems of religious organizations, such as churches, sects, religious orders etc. are essentially hierocratic; on their power mechanisms, see Chap. 4.
12. A different, but no less intriguing example of an adaptive function of supernatural beliefs (in this case magical rather than religious) comes from the Innu of Canada. Each year, before setting off for the caribou hunt, a divination ritual including the burning of an animal scapula is performed by a shaman to determine the direction in which the hunters should depart. This serves, functionally, as a randomizing procedure, ensuring that the hunters will not yield to the natural inclination of looking for game where they found it the previous year, since caribou do not usually return to the place where they were ambushed before (Henrich 2016, chap. 7).

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CHAPTER 4

Theocracies as Political Systems

Political science is equipped with tools enabling it to see not only the influence of religion within larger, non-theocratic states (something I will look at in the following two chapters) or transnational political systems, but also to analyse political structures and processes within various forms of theocratic systems, ranging from states to religious organizations—to view them, according to the terminology adopted in Sect. 2.2 of Chap. 2. above, as “white boxes”. The functional conception of a political system as a sphere where power relations unfold can be fruitfully applied to all social, including religious, organizations. The chapter will look into three aspects of theocratic power relations: how rulers are selected (Sect. 4.1), how their power is institutionalized within the system (Sect. 4.2) and how they make the ruled conform to the norms they establish (Sect. 4.3).

4.1 SUCCESSION PROCEDURES

The change of power is a critical moment for any political system, jeopardizing the integrity and stability of the political universe. To avoid crisis, the ascending leader(s) must effectively assert their legitimacy, which, in the case of theocracy, is rooted in the supernatural sphere. Among a number of succession mechanisms used in theocracies, few are unique to this kind of political systems. What makes them theocratic (in the sense defined in the previous chapter) is that they serve as transmitters of these systems’ legitimization formulas, bestowing divine mandate on the new ruler, thereby

gaining a different significance than identical procedures used in non-theocratic systems. For instance, the meaning of elections in theocratic context—be it the election of governor in seventeenth-century Massachusetts or the papal conclave—is completely distinct from, in fact opposite to, elections in contractual democracies. In a theocracy, voters, rather than being regarded as a collective sovereign delegating its power to a representative, are *denunciatores divinae providentiae*—instruments God uses to reveal his will.

Let us review some of the most important succession procedures identifiable in theocratic political systems (see Potz 2016a, 201–206).

1. *Designation* Designation by the previous leader (not to be confused with nomination), often in the premonition of death, is a mode of succession characteristic for early, charismatic phases of development of religious organizations, before their institutionalization. It is quite consistent with the theocratic logic: god’s chosen representative, the founder of the group, usually combining the authorities of a political leader and a prophet, is naturally in the best position to reveal the divine will to his or her successor. The failure to publicly anoint a successor by the previous leader may give rise, in the absence of well-established alternative procedures, to conflicting claims and, in consequence, to a serious crisis, leading, in the worst-case scenario, to disintegration of the system.
2. *Nomination* Nomination, or granting of a position of authority according to legal regulations to a qualified candidate, is a procedure typical for more mature, better-institutionalized political systems. In a theocracy, the qualifications required for the office are usually, not surprisingly, confessional: the nominee has to be a faithful of the official religion and abide by the religious law. Examples include the nominations of public officials in Iran and other Muslim theocracies or in the Vatican state.
3. *Co-optation* Co-optation—appointing a new member to a vacant position in a collegial governing body by the remaining members of that body—is, in fact, a special case of nomination. Among American Shakers, to take one example, it was instituted in the second generation of the sect’s membership after a series of three successions by designation, at least one of which (of Joseph Meacham) was bitterly contested (Potz 2016a, 211–216). Co-optation has a visible stabilizing effect on a political system, religious or secular: it ensures con-

tinuity, eliminates an interregnum period and thus cushions the system from the turmoil of non-collegial succession mechanisms.

4. *Precedence*, including heredity. In this procedure, authority is passed to the person standing first in a succession order determined according to a certain criterion, such as family relation to the previous leader (hereditary succession), age or seniority in some function. From the perspective of its political consequences, precedence has a double effect. On the one hand, it helps avoid the power struggle, since the successor is preselected by virtue of traditionally established rules. On the other, it renders the system less flexible, since the candidate cannot be selected according to abilities or personal features. This is especially true for hereditary succession. When other criteria of precedence are applied, such as seniority—for instance, when the senior member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles becomes the next president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)—the effect is mitigated by the fact that future leaders had already been selected on the basis of their fitness for positions they hold at present.
5. *Acclamation*. By acclamation, the entire community demonstrates its unequivocal support for the new leader. As in other theocratic succession mechanisms, the function of acclamation is to reveal god’s choice, not to express the “will of the people”. The choice may be signalled by special signs, as when Fabian was acclaimed the bishop of Rome by clergy and lay members of the community in the middle of the third century after a dove landed on his head, an obvious intervention of the Holy Spirit (Chadwick 1993, chap. 2). In reality, the support is never literally unanimous, but, if the dissent is not too striking, it is played down (otherwise the divine inspiration of the decision would be put into question) and does not necessarily compromise the legitimating potential of the procedure.
6. *Election*. Election refers to a procedure in which leaders are chosen by the members of the community—either most of them (universal election) or, more often in the case of religious political systems, only the elite—by means of voting. Many religious organizations have used this procedure: the Catholic Church as a whole (conclave), monastic orders within it, knights orders, various protestant churches, as well as theocratic states, such as Iran (election of the Supreme Leader by the Assembly of Experts). Election in this sense is not necessarily a democratic procedure (it remains autocratic if the

electorate is significantly limited, thus becoming a “selectorate”), but it allows for a flexibility in choosing the best-qualified candidate. The significance of this procedure in religious political systems is also far removed from its meaning in modern democracies. The cardinals electing the pope are merely *denuntiatores divinae providentiae*, to use Dante’s expression,¹ not a demos choosing its representative (Giuriato 2009, 156). They are not sovereign—God is. Similarly, to reiterate the example from the previous chapter, in seventeenth-century theocratic Puritan colonies of New England the governor was elected by the freemen of the colonies in a procedure which was as democratic as any in these times, despite religious and gender censuses. Yet the governor’s authority was not regarded as originating from the will of the people who elect him: it came from God through the electors serving as mere instruments (Potz 2013). Once again, the political sense of a procedure depends on the legitimation formula which stands behind it.

7. *Lottery*. The final two succession procedures are, in contrast to those mentioned earlier, genuinely religious. As regards determining succession to power by lot, why would a theocratic community decide such a crucial matter through a procedure whose results are supposed to be completely random?² From a religious perspective, of course, they are not random at all; a holy lottery is just a way to leave the decision to God. The religious universe is deterministic. God doesn’t play dice, but he makes people do so in order to find out his will. Examples of religious organizations which use lottery as part of their succession mechanism include the Coptic Church (Egyptian Christians), the Old Order Amish and, in the past, the Russian Orthodox Church (the appointment of the Patriarch in 1917) (Rzażewski et al. 2014, 42–44). In all these cases, the leader’s name is drawn from among a few candidates preselected by a “selectorate” group (e.g. the bishops’ synod). The fact that the drawing takes place at the altar of the cathedral (Russian Orthodox and Coptic Churches) or is performed with the use of biblical verses (the Amish) is a strong evidence of the theocratic interpretation of the act. In analogy to the medieval judicial procedure of ordeal or God’s judgement, the decision is placed in the hands of God.

An intriguing variation on the same theme was found in the now-extinct culture of the Easter Island. Once a year, in a place called Orongo by the sea, all islanders gathered for a religious festival. One

of the purposes of the meeting was to choose the following year's birdman (*tangata-manu*), a religious political leader of the community (his precise functions remains obscure) from among the clan chiefs. The clans would choose young men to participate in a contest: they were to swim to the rocky islet nearby—not an easy task in the often stormy, shark-rich waters of the Pacific—and bring back the first egg of a certain species of bird nesting there. The birdman title went to the head of the winner's clan (Métraux 1971, 331–341). Thus, the religious and possibly political leader of the community was determined by a sporting contest of sorts, whose result was, as in the previous examples, probably attributed to divine intervention.

8. *Inspired search*. “Search” refers to a peculiar Tibetan practice of finding the next ruler of this erstwhile sovereign Buddhist theocracy. It is closely tied to the belief that the Dalai Lamas—the most respected of the several lines of *trülku*, enlightened Buddhist monks and spiritual leaders—are incarnations of bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, a divine figure who deliberately refused to enter nirvana to be able to continue serving human beings. Given such a legitimation formula, when a Dalai Lama dies, the task of other high-ranking Buddhist leaders is to find his next incarnation: a young boy who would succeed after a period of education and spiritual training. Candidates, selected on the basis of certain signs accompanying their birth or childhood, are tested, among other things, for their ability to recognize personal items belonging to their predecessor—or, rather, to themselves in their previous incarnation.

As a succession mechanism, inspired search carries interesting political consequences. On the one hand, it has an innate weakness: the inescapable periods of interregnum between the death of one Dalai Lama and the coming of age of the next one. The regents (*desi*), whose legitimacy was, by definition, weaker than that of the *trülku* himself, could potentially be more susceptible to internal conflicts and external (Mongolian, Chinese) pressure (Norman 2008, 293–294). On the other hand, the search was an effective device for reconciling the growing power of the Buddhist monks with political claims of local aristocracy. It is certainly no accident that some of the *trülkus* were found among the heirs of the local clans (while the Fourth Dalai Lama was probably a descendant of Altan Khan of Mongolia). There is even evidence that Ngawang Gyatso was declared the Fifth Dalai Lama despite the fact that the

boy failed the test (Schwieger 2015, 39).³ Overall, “reincarnation apparently became more and more attractive as an effective strategy for the succession of spiritual and clerical power” (ibid., 23), since it offered the clergy a degree of independence from the aristocracy with its hereditary principles. Functionally, “search” is thus equivalent to election as opposed to succession based on precedence, including heredity: it facilitates selection made by clerical hierarchy in accordance with its current interests.

Succession procedures can also be viewed through the Weberian types of legitimate authority. Thus, charismatic succession invokes signs, miraculous events or, more generally, any way of ascending to power that has not been sanctioned by previous traditions or legal rules. Traditional succession relies on the existing practices of claiming power, informal but deeply entrenched in the community’s culture, time-honoured (whether, Hobsbawm would add, they are indeed ancient or, in fact, relatively new inventions) and thus perceived as natural. Finally, rational succession abides by, usually codified, legal rules and procedures, and the legitimacy of rulers thus selected depends heavily on whether these rules and procedures are respected (and whether, Beetham would add, they are themselves considered compatible with the community’s norms and values).

These, however, are modes of legitimating the succession of power, and should not be confused with the procedures themselves or the sources from which the rulers draw their legitimacy. Indeed, there is no mutually equivalent relation between the three elements: the source of legitimacy (legitimation formula), the succession procedure and the mode of its legitimation. For instance, elections, while usually associated with contractual legitimation formulas, may also be used, as we have seen, in theocracies (Puritan colonies of New England). Acclamation, a charismatic procedure in most contexts, may become routinized and serve as a supplement to traditional mechanisms such as co-optation (as among the Shakers) or hereditary succession (as in enthronization rites of medieval rulers).

To complicate matters further, various succession procedures may change, alternate or coexist in a single political system. The selection procedure of Roman Catholic bishops changed from acclamation by the entire congregation to election by *maioritas et sanioritas*—the major and/or “healthier” or wiser part of the congregation, which, when in doubt, had to appeal to a superior in ecclesiastical hierarchy (Giuriato 2009, 152)—to nomination by the pope, while the pope himself came to be elected by cardinals. Not only the procedures, but also the mode of suc-

cession changed in the process, from charismatic to traditional (something Weber calls routinization of charisma: the church leaders making their decisions on the basis of their authority, with a faint trace of inspiration remaining, at least in theory) to, as a matter of fact, legal-rational (bureaucratic nomination procedures in the Holy See, formalized rules of conclave etc.). The Shakers moved from the designation of a successor by the predecessor, with occasional “battles of gifts” over the grave of the deceased leader waged by challengers to his or her mantle (Potz 2012, 392–394)—charismatic succession par excellence—to co-optation to a collegial organ called Central Ministry, a traditional procedure. Acclamation accompanied both stages, initially with a real power-bestowing function, especially in cases of contested designation, and later merely as a routine confirmation of the decision made by the remaining members of the Central Ministry. In Tibet, the search of the next Dalai Lama consisted initially of a holy lottery and consultation of an oracle (Schwieger 2015, 29, 39), in addition to looking for signs and testing prospective candidates.

To finish, let us take a closer look at the power struggle that followed the death of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, for it illustrates well the dynamics of succession in theocratic political systems and the interplay of various elements referred to earlier.

On 27 June 1844, Joseph Smith, the founder, President and prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, was lynched in Carthage jail together with his brother Hyrum. Smith failed to designate his successor, which, in the absence of any traditions or institutions regulating alternation of power, led to a serious crisis. A number of pretenders stepped up, claiming their right to the prophet’s mantle. Most of them invoked some principle of precedence, supposedly established by the deceased leader: Sidney Rigdon as the remaining counsellor to the First Presidency; William Marks as the President of the Nauvoo (Mormon capital at that time) Stake of Zion (administrative unit of the church); Brigham Young as the head of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; William Smith as the presiding Patriarch and Joseph’s brother; and members of the Council of Fifty as officials of a theocratic government of the Kingdom of God (Quinn 1976). They all claimed the organ they were representing was elevated by Joseph Smith himself to the supreme position of authority. A strong bid was also made by James Jesse Strang, a charismatic recent convert, who produced a “letter of nomination” from Smith (almost certainly fake; see Smith 2002). He also invoked a revelation he had received, in a striking similarity to Smith’s revelation of the *Book of Mormon*, in the form

of golden plates unearthed on the instructions from an angel and translated by Strang. While Strang failed to win the presidency of the church, he did attract a considerable number of followers (about 2000) whom he ruled as king on Beaver Island on Lake Michigan (van Noord 1988).

The decisive contest was waged between Sydney Rigdon and Brigham Young on 8 August 1844. They both spoke in front of the entire Nauvoo community, the former invoking his position as the Prophet's counsellor in the First Presidency and a revelation he received, the latter claiming that the Presidency ceased to exist and the Quorum of the Twelve stood next in hierarchy. More important, perhaps, than the arguments they advanced was a kind of a collective illusion under which Young appeared to many believers as closely resembling the murdered Prophet. Young was promptly acclaimed, and the Twelve Apostles took over the charge of the church. This result was not, however, inevitable. All of the aforementioned claims were, to a certain degree, serious succession options, protestations of the official Mormon historiography notwithstanding. The fact that nearly half of the believers did not follow Brigham Young to Utah, either leaving the faith or joining one of the many schismatic Mormon organizations, shows that his succession was not universally accepted and unopposed. To avoid similar crises in future, Utah Mormonism (LDS Church) established succession of the senior member (of longest tenure) of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles as the selection method of Church Presidents. Other procedures were used by minority Mormon churches, with the largest of them, Reorganized Church of Latter-Day Saints (RLDS), headquartered in Independence, Missouri (renamed Church of Christ in 2001), appointing its leaders by hereditary succession from among Joseph Smith's descendants until 1996 (Potz 2016b).

In conclusion, the Mormon succession crisis of 1844 illustrates the characteristic instability of weakly institutionalized political systems. While most of the claimants relied on the precedence principle, attempting to establish the church organ they headed as next in hierarchy to the disorganized First Presidency, they all invoked the will of Joseph Smith, allegedly expressed at some point in his life. This shows that designation by the Prophet was still the preferred option at the time and had the strongest legitimation potential, even though it was not in fact made explicitly by Smith. Moreover, the traditional mode of succession ("tradition" being, admittedly, *in statu nascendi*) competed with the charismatic one: at least two challengers, Jesse Strang and Sidney Rigdon, claimed divine revelations pointing to them as future leaders. Finally, the matter was decided to

a large extent by acclamation, a genuine decision-making mechanism at the time, as opposed to its ritualized and formalized version in later Mormonism.

4.2 INSTITUTIONAL REGIME

As with succession procedures, there are few institutional arrangements specific to theocratic political systems. Possible exceptions are various prophetic institutions, such as oracles, professional diviners or “court” prophets, linked with religious organizations but exerting considerable political influence. For instance, oracles were widely consulted by all ancient Greek cities on crucial issues ranging from war, peace and alliances to political regimes of newly founded colonies; and Roman leaders rarely made an important decision without having a haruspex inspect the bowels of a sacrificial animal or trying to foretell the future by other means, with analogous practices everywhere in the ancient world (Banek 2005). This, obviously, gave remarkable power to priests controlling the oracles, diviners or other expert revelators. It would be tempting to dismiss them as religious equivalents of secular consultants or policy experts, but there is a substantial qualitative difference: the former’s authority stemmed from a supernatural source and was so much more difficult to dismiss. On the other hand, the prestige of various prophetic establishments varied (with Delphi’s Pythia consistently high in the ranking of Greek oracles) and false prophets often found themselves in serious trouble, which only attests to the limits of their influence.

Aspects of Theocratic Regimes

In most cases, however, theocratic institutional arrangements vary with the type of political entity in question, from charismatic, personal authority in a theocratic sect to full-blown government apparatus in a theocratic state. What makes a regime theocratic is thus not so much the form of its institutions of power, but the role religion plays in their shaping, upholding and functioning. There are several dimensions in which religion influences political regimes. One such dimension is religion’s function as the foundation of the regime’s legitimacy and the source of norms, values and laws it relies on—something we have discussed extensively in the previous chapter. The other two related aspects are the differential political status religion confers on members of a political community and the amount of

power religious organizations and their functionaries have vis-à-vis secular rulers.

When it comes to status, in theocracies, typically only the members of the politically dominant religion enjoy full political inclusion, whether it is citizenship with the attached political rights (voting, holding office etc.) or, more generally in non-state political systems, access to positions of authority. To give a few examples, religious census was in force in most North American colonies in the seventeenth century, before it was displaced by the census of wealth. In most contemporary Muslim states the position of the head of state (a monarch or a president) is reserved for Muslims.⁴ In theocratic Iran, the passive suffrage for parliament and president is subject to a religious test: the orthodoxy of candidates is vetted by the Guardian Council composed of Shia jurists.⁵ Even in some non-theocratic European monarchies, such as Great Britain or Sweden, the candidate has to be a member of the established church, Anglican and Lutheran, respectively, to be fit for the throne.

For determining the amount of power religious organizations or their functionaries have versus secular rulers, the Church and State paradigm re-enters the scene: we may use its models of church-state relations to illuminate this particular aspect of the connection between politics and religion, provided we look beyond formal ramifications of these relations. From the wealth of such models, only those that assume close institutional connection between religion and politics, including the existence of established religion, apply to theocracies. Indeed, it is safe to assume that all theocratic political systems are confessional (i.e. have an official/established/state religion), although the reverse is not true. Let us, therefore, distinguish three models of theocratic church-state relations: hierocracy, papocaesarism and caesaropapism. In hierocracy, there is no distinction between religious functionaries and secular rulers: the priests govern directly. In the other two models, the institutional distinction between the religious and the secular spheres is maintained. In papocaesarism, religious functionaries dominate the secular rulers: they are fully independent in the religious sphere and they have considerable control over the secular one (Geneva under Calvin is a classic example). In caesaropapism, conversely, the secular rulers have an upper hand: they are independent in their own domain and they often interfere in the sphere of religion (e.g. in the ancient Roman and medieval Byzantine empires). Using the terminology introduced earlier, religious organizations and their functionaries are veto

players in both religious and secular domains in papocaesarism but only in religious domain in caesaropapism.

These general categories are, however, too crude to reflect the actual institutional and political diversity of theocracies. Hierocracy may occur when the clergy assume secular functions (as in Buddhist Tibet or monastic states of medieval Europe) or when such a distinction is lacking altogether. The latter is the case in non-state religious communities, particularly in early periods of their development. Further, actual papocaesarism may be masked by formal separation of church and state: in seventeenth-century New England colonies, religious functionaries wielded considerable power despite holding no office. By the same token, in the Mormon theocracy in Utah, state and church offices, while officially separate, were held by the same persons (in 1851, Brigham Young was the governor of the Utah Territory, the President of the Mormon Church, its Trustee-in-Trust and member of the Council of Fifty; see Potz 2016a, 345). Thus, in spite of the formal distinction between the state and the church, Mormon Utah was a *de facto* hierocracy, without any power dynamics between secular rulers and religious functionaries characteristic for papocaesarist and caesaropapist regimes. The picture is further complicated by the fact that the religious and secular spheres are never neatly and unanimously distinguished and their demarcation is often a politically contested issue in itself. Political scientists are still entitled, as I argued in Chap. 2, to impose their understanding of what is secular and what religious, thereby partially disregarding self-definitions of the political actors they study—otherwise no cross-temporal and cross-cultural generalizations would be possible—but at the cost of losing some of the nuances in each particular case.

Approaches to the Study of Theocratic Regimes

Various approaches may be necessary to capture this institutional diversity of religiously sanctioned political systems. For non-state systems—religious sects and other communities—Weberian sociology of religion and political sociology, with its types of legitimate authority, remains useful. Political institutionalization of such entities can be presented as a transformation from charismatic to traditional and/or legal-rational authority, provided we treat Weberian ideal types not as sources of legitimacy of power (for these, see Fig. 3.3 in Chap. 3), but as modalities in which power manifests itself.

To revert to a now familiar case of American Shakers, such institution-ization, or routinization of charisma, as Weber would have it, is clearly demonstrable in all aspects of the sect's life. In the political sphere, the leadership of Ann Lee, the founder of the group, was purely charismatic: it was not based on any formal position of authority, but solely on the recognition of her supernatural features by other members of the group. In this way, her power was entirely relational and subjective. Her charisma was reinforced by her prophetic and revelatory abilities and a series of miraculous events attributed to her, such as calming of the storm during the ocean trip to America, speaking in dozens of tongues during her interrogation, faith healing, sustaining heavy beating with no injuries, fasting for incredibly long periods when in jail and so forth (*Testimonies* 1868 [1816], 40–42; Francis 2001). By contrast, Joseph Meacham and Lucy Wright, the third and fourth Shaker leaders, initiated the process of institutionalization, which, among other developments in the everyday life of Shaker settlements, led to the establishment of permanent leadership institutions: gender-balanced, four-member Central Ministry with similar bodies at the regional level. The authority of the Shaker leaders, although never completely devoid of charismatic appeal (see next section for evidence), was now attached to these institutions (Paterwic 2009, 36, 167; Potz 2014).

A similar, if much quicker, transition occurred among the Mormons. The early church, understood in evangelical terms as a gathering of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ and in Joseph Smith's revelation of the *Book of Mormon*, within less than two decades had been transformed into a hierarchical power structure managing both religious and secular affairs of its members and headed by apostles, once a purely religious function of those who spread the Word. The early egalitarianism very soon gave way to centralization: Joseph Smith led the way already in 1830 when he received a revelation declaring all other prophets false and deceived by Satan (*Doctrine* 28: 2, 11) and thereby eliminating competing suppliers of religious goods. And while charisma did retain its importance during the succession crisis of 1848 and the leaders of the church were still regarded, in accordance with the doctrine of continuous revelation, as “prophets, seers and revelators”, these attributes are strongly linked to the offices of Church President and apostles. In Weber's terminology, it is now “charisma of office”. Such transformation within the church had been accompanied by the process of (quasi-)state formation in Utah since the 1850s,

which resulted in parallel secular-religious power structures with priests doubling as territorial or local officials (Bowman 2012).

Other, non-Weberian perspectives may be more appropriate for studying political regimes of theocratic states. One such approach is through legal-institutional analysis of their systems of connection between church and state. Thus, for instance, Ryszard Małajny lists four typical features of the early American model of a confessional state called religious establishment: (1) official state recognition and support of a particular church; (2) granting full political rights exclusively to the members of that church; (3) financing the state church from taxes; (4) state protection of official religion and its imposition on followers of other religions and non-believers (Małajny 2011). To this, we should add actual political influence of religious leaders, regardless of their formal position within the system. For instance, political power of Puritan ministers in New England colonies, such as John Davenport in New Haven or the Mathers “dynasty” in Massachusetts is beyond dispute, even though they rarely held political office in their colonies.

Another approach—“political economy of theocracy”—is grounded in rational choice theory and represents the economic perspective outlined in Chap. 2. Here we look at particular church-state arrangements in a theocracy as attempts at optimization. What is it, then, that theocracies seek to optimize? According to Pierre Salmon, it is the “implementation of divine prescriptions or satisfaction of God’s wishes” (Salmon 2009, 60). Given different assets the church and secular rulers wield and their uneven “production possibilities” (producing God-serving goods and services) in particular circumstances, various arrangements of cooperation, support or rivalry between religious and secular authorities lead to different values of “God’s preferences or utility function”. On this basis, Salmon arrives at five models of theocratic church-state relation—variations, broadly speaking, of our caesaropapist and papocaesarist models (ibid., 66–68).

In a similar vein, Brandon O’Leary ponders the relative rarity of hierocracies (theocracies ruled exclusively by priests). He argues that such a regime, especially if it is based on interpretation of sacred texts, would often be unstable due to the “combination of monotheistic relativism, hermeneutical difficulties with textual sacred law, and the routinization of charisma after the exit of a religion’s founder” (O’Leary 2009, 24). This may force the hierocrats to contract out some of their non-religious tasks to secular rulers. In this way, the potential instability of hierocracy as unitary power leads to a theocratic regime based on a division of power.

For Mario Ferrero, such contracting out to secular authorities may be rational for the church—even if it means trading “full-information arrangement” (hierocracy) for “hidden-information arrangement” (caesaropapism or papocaesarism)—either due to administrative or political incompetence of religious functionaries, or because of the risk of excessive corruption in the ranks of the church associated with holding political power (Ferrero 2009, 33). Further, he addresses a more fundamental question of when it is rational for a religion to seek to establish a theocracy in the first place, and finds that such tendency is characteristic of what he calls “behavior-based religions” as opposed to “doctrine-based religions”. Behaviour-based religions, such as Judaism, Islam and Protestantism, which rely on display of external signs of belonging (public rituals, wearing religious symbols in public etc.) posed as religious duty, are much easier to destroy by a hostile ruler than doctrine-based faiths (Catholicism, Orthodoxy), which emphasize internal and communal, but not necessarily public, aspects of worship and have an option of going underground in the face of persecution. Religions from the first group have thus more incentive to pre-emptively create a theocracy rather than risk disintegration when threatened by persecution (*ibid.*, 44–47). Even if some of Ferrero’s attributions are doubtful (for instance, some strands of Protestantism, such as Quakerism, seem to fit the doctrine-based category better), his theses are an interesting attempt to provide theoretical explanations for the emergence of theocracies and the institutional shape they assume.

4.3 MECHANISMS OF POLITICAL CONTROL

Mechanisms of political control refer to those mechanisms of social control which are consciously used by rulers (compare Ross 1901, 411). The notion of social control encompasses all the mechanisms which ensure the conformity of individual behaviour to the norms of the group. They include instruments such as persuasive communication, peer control, socialization, special codes and rules of conduct (e.g. monastic rules), moral suasion, economic sanctions, disciplinary measures, visual identification of within-group status, control over sexuality, and even gossip or mockery. None of them are political *per se*, but most can be put to political use. They become instruments of political control, to repeat, when they are consciously initiated, inspired or used by the rulers to reinforce and stabilize their power.

Thus defined, political control is close in meaning to political power itself. The latter, however, is a broader concept: it refers to asymmetric social relations where one actor intentionally modifies the behaviour of other actor(s). Political control, by contrast, is about enforcing conformity with the group's norms. It thus assumes a more regular, institutionalized relationship, whereas some acts of power are incidental and not related to the enforcement of norms. As with succession procedures, most of the mechanisms described in this section are not peculiar to religious organizations; instead, they acquire their theocratic significance by being anchored in divinely revealed or inspired laws and doctrines. I will illustrate them with examples from my research on American theocracies.

The system of political control consists of two major components: the normative subsystem and the regulatory subsystem. The normative subsystem comprises all kinds of rules guiding the behaviour of individuals and organizing social interactions within a community. In the context of political control, I refer to these rules as legal norms, taking "law" to include—in an anthropological (rather than a legal or state-centric) sense—all rules, the breaking of which is socially sanctioned, when the sanction is executed by the rulers. Legal norms, whether codified or not, are publicly binding and are enforced by the rulers, whereas other social norms can be enforced in the absence of any organized political authority. The difference between legal and non-legal social norms is thus analogous to the difference between political and social control. Such a notion of law facilitates comparison and generalization between different types of political systems: states, quasi-states and non-state organizations.

Normative systems of theocracies assume various forms. They can be more or less formalized and detailed, written or oral, containing both generally binding codes and personally binding "contracts". Thus new members of Shaker communes entered into a "covenant", a document setting out the doctrines they declared their faith in, specifying their obligations towards the leaders and other members, consecrating their property to the group and forfeiting any claims to it (*Constitution of the United Societies* (1978) [1833]). All Shakers were also bound by the so-called *Millennial Laws*, a lengthy code of conduct developed in the phase of routinization of early charismatic authority, which comprised extremely detailed and stringent regulations of virtually all spheres of life in the community, down to which foot one is supposed to start ascending stairs with or which knee should touch the floor first while kneeling (right in both cases, if you are curious) or what distance to keep when looking out the

window (*Millennial Laws* 1963 [1845]). From the point of view of power relations, these legal norms performed a number of functions: they affirmed the divine sanction of the leaders (the covenants emphasized their “apostolic succession” from the Shakerism’s prophetic founder Ann Lee), made it a religious duty to obey them and created a kind of highly regulated, patterned, monastery-like environment with little room for individual deviation which is easy to control, particularly when compared to early Shaker communities characterized by ecstatic cult forms and spontaneous outbreaks of uncontrolled behaviour. These legal norms thus paved the way to a high level of political control, a defining feature of totalitarian political systems.

Among the New England Puritans, the notion of covenant took on a broader meaning. It became an organizing religio-political ideal with biblical origins in the form of an unwritten contract binding individual believers with obligations towards the Creator (“covenant of grace”), fellow members of their congregation (“church covenant”) and the political community (“national/civil covenant”) (Miller 1953).⁶ The terms of this contract were, in a sense, spelled out in legal codes enacted in the seventeenth century by the colonies’ legislative bodies. The striking feature of these regulations is their strong dependence on biblical norms. Most contain general clauses establishing the authority of the word of God in the absence of a statutory provision, and some of the rules, especially referring to capital offences, are virtually copied from the Old Testament (*Body of Liberties* 1890 [1641]). These regulations, again, served to reaffirm the power of the rulers as guardians of divinely sanctioned order who enforce the norms not of their own making, and thus non-arbitrarily.

The regulatory subsystem of political control consists of various types of positive and negative sanctions administered by the rulers. In the broad sociological usage I adopt here, sanctions are not just outright rewards or punishments, but, rather, all forms of ensuring that the ruled abide by the norms. Sanctions may, therefore, precede or accompany the behaviour in question, in addition to just being its consequence. Positive sanctions, in theocracies, are mostly related to supernatural goods distributed by the rulers, including salvation or any other ultimate “compensator” the group believes in, but also high religious status within the community (Puritan “saints” or “elect”, Gnostic “pneumatics”, Cathar “perfecti” etc.). Negative sanctions may be physical or socio-psychological.

The existence or absence of physical sanctions—the actual or potential use of physical force by the rulers—does not seem to be strongly related

to the theocratic character of a political regime. In theory, one would expect theocracies to be less dependent on force, since religion provides a strong source of legitimacy and there should be less violence needed to ensure the obedience of the subjects. The study of various religious communities seems to corroborate this hypothesis. The Shaker leaders never resorted to physical force—a fact confirmed even by some apostates, which makes it all the more credible (Elkins 1853, 30)—despite the virtually total power they were able to exercise over the members' lives. The divinely anchored authority of the leaders, coupled with socio-psychological sanctions and the ultimate threat of expulsion from the millennial community of the saved, was sufficient to accomplish such total political control. The Mormon political system enjoyed, likewise, strong legitimacy, despite episodes of violence both towards strangers and in their own ranks⁷. In the judgement of Thomas O'Dea, while “[t]he exact proportion of consent to coercion in the operation of any government is difficult to gauge and does not permit of quantitative measurement [...] the Mormon leadership would seem to have rested, first of all, on consent and to have made use of coercion as a supplement” (O'Dea 1964, 244). The same is true for many other religious organizations (for instance, see Nonneman 2009 on Jesuit theocracy in Paraguay), some extreme cases of violent enforcement of compliance notwithstanding (such as the People's Temple, Aum Supreme Truth etc.).

However, the hypothesis of the prevalence of legitimacy over violence, and thus limited use of physical sanctions in theocracies, does not hold so well for theocratic states and quasi-states. The level of violence administered by the theocratic rulers ranges from moderate (the Vatican, Buddhist Tibet) to extreme (Münster under Anabaptists in 1534–1535, Afghanistan under the Taliban, the Islamic State), but is, in general, comparable to their non-theocratic counterparts. This would suggest that the significance of physical sanctions within the system of political control is related less to the source of the system's legitimacy than to the type of its institutional regime. Non-sovereign theocratic organizations, such as religious communes, do not rely on physical sanctions as much as theocratic states do, because (a) in a small community with intensive, face-to-face social interactions, other types of sanctions are highly effective; and (b) since these organizations are not legally sovereign over the territory they occupy, their physically oppressed members might seek protection from the authorities of the state on whose territory they live. By contrast, theocratic states which are non-communitarian, more extensive and less homoge-

neous political organizations cannot rely on primary-group social sanctions. At the same time, physical sanctions are potentially more effective, since their subjects cannot easily opt out of the state's sphere of sovereignty (in the way they can leave a non-state religious organization).

Even in the absence of physical coercion, the rulers still have a wide array of other sanctions at their disposal. Since they are numerous and, for the most part, employed in all kinds of political systems, I will only briefly look at theocratic incarnations of some of them, namely, those related to communication, that is, those used to exert political control through the means of language. The relationship between language and power has been well established in philosophy and social science. As Quentin Skinner recognizes, "we employ our language not merely to communicate information but at the same time to claim authority for our utterances, to arouse the emotions of our interlocutors, to create boundaries of inclusion and exclusion and to engage in many other exercises of social control" (Skinner 2002, 5). These language-related power practices are, of course, universal to all types of political systems, but they acquire a specific character in theocracies.

When it comes to creating "boundaries of inclusion and exclusion", in theocracies the boundary is usually between believers and non-believers, the perfect and the imperfect, the saved and the condemned. These demarcation lines are sustained with the use of strong, emotionally charged expressions condemning transgression (sin, filth etc.), thereby making the expulsion from this imagined community an ultimate and highly effective sanction. The crossing of the boundary, even temporarily, requires decontamination rituals on coming back: both Hindu Brahmins getting in contact with the pariahs and Shaker trustees returning from a business trip had to purify themselves before regaining their full standing in the group.

When language is used in its authority-bestowing function, the power holders refer to god to legitimize their power, as we have seen in Chap. 3. Moreover, the communication itself may be interpreted to be coming from a supernatural source. This serves as a standard explanation of the origins of the group's doctrine: the evangelists, the prophet Muhammad, Joseph Smith and innumerable other founders of religions presented themselves as mere transmitters of divine words, not their actual authors. But such claim may also be used to reinforce socio-psychological (non-physical) measures of political control, such as persuasive communication. Thus, when a Shaker leader issued an order, he or she used a peculiar expression: "I have a gift that you do this or that".⁸ The concept of a

“gift” invoked divine inspiration, suggesting the supernatural origin of the communication. And even though the leaders were not expressly claiming they had received a revelation at that very moment (in fact the “gift” language became a routine convention of speech among the nineteenth-century Shakers), they had retained enough of the original charismatic authority of their early predecessors—the Weberian “charisma of office” of sorts—to successfully back their claim to obedience of their subjects with such language. Other mechanisms of political control using religious parlance to mask power relations inherent in them include self-control (vows and other obligations required of the members) and peer control (reporting misbehaviour of fellow members) with the accompanying executive measures such as confession and “extended confession” (confessing not only one’s own, but also other people’s sins) presented as religious duties. In fact, many religious communes practised a combination of self-control and peer control in the form of public meetings during which the members were encouraged to both confess their own transgressions of the group’s norms and to expose the failures of others (on Oneida’s sessions of “mutual criticism”, see Klaw 1993, 119–121). In addition, control of information is justified by the need to separate the community of saints from the destructive influence of the “world”. From the perspective of our conditions of the stability of theocratic systems (see Sect. 3.3 of Chap. 3), it is crucial for maintaining the consistency of the members’ worldview by avoiding the destabilizing effects of their exposure to competing providers of religious rewards or to secular ideas which might lead to renouncing these rewards completely.

While these mechanisms permeate everyday life of a theocratic community, there are times when they gain added dynamism: the periods of religious reinvigoration, variously referred to as revivals, awakenings or reformations. These phenomena, studied intensely in their theological and cultural dimensions, do not usually receive comparable attention from political science. And they certainly deserve it, given that revivals are periods of massive social and political change, complete with revision of social norms, challenging of political hierarchies and reconfigurations of power relations. Here theocratic power manifests itself not only as political control (i.e., in its norm-enforcing function), but in all its cosmos-upholding and order-creating functions.

Let us look briefly at one such period among the Shakers, known as the “Era of Manifestations”. In the early 1840s in a number of villages, several members of the sect, initially mainly young females, began receiving rev-

elations coming from a large crowd of supernatural beings. They included the bi-gendered God of the group (Almighty Father–Holy Mother Wisdom), Jesus Christ, the deceased founders of Shakerism (Ann Lee, James Whittaker and others) and the assortment of other respectable figures who converted to Shakerism posthumously, such as George Washington, Alexander the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte (Andrews 1963, 155). The messages from these figures called for profound changes in various aspects of the group’s life, from dietary customs to cult practices. They inspired flows of artistic imagination (drawings, songs, poems), introduced new rituals and reorganized daily routines.⁹ Most importantly, from our perspective, they also affected power relations within the group.

From the very beginning, an interesting dynamics developed between the local leaders of villages (the ministry members and deacons) and the “instruments”—recipients of the revelations. Shakers were a charismatic group, and, from its early days, the members were accustomed to the gifts of the spirit, fits of inspiration and other close encounters with the supernatural. Despite the routinization of this early charisma in the first decades of the nineteenth century, after the first generation had passed away, this tradition was still alive. “Manifestations” were regarded as part of the millennial order of things they lived in, and thus highly credible. This gave the media enormous power. On certain occasions, they could successfully confront distinguished and highly respected members of the communities, forcing them to suffer public humiliation for their insufficiently enthusiastic attitude to the “manifestations”.¹⁰

The leaders’ strategy in relation to the “instruments” was twofold. On the one hand, they encouraged the “manifestations” as a way to enliven the religious life of the community, increase the members’ commitment and strengthen the discipline. At the same time, they sought to control the media, channelling their freshly acquired authority for their own purposes. Thus they insisted on reviewing the content of inspired communication, censored the media’s writings and reserved the right to interpret them. This led occasionally to power contests between the leaders and the media. Characteristically, these contests were not played out as conflicts of official (legal-rational or traditional) vs. charismatic authority, but rather within the charismatic paradigm. The group’s leaders retained enough of their post-charismatic power (charisma of office) to be able to challenge the authenticity of a particular communication without questioning the entire conception of continuous revelation, thereby potentially cutting the branch they were themselves sitting on. A classic example features Elisha

Pote, an esteemed elder of a Maine Shaker village, who challenged a medium claiming to have received a revelation from Mother Ann to expel some members from the group. ‘It is Mother’s voice’, the medium protested, to which Pote exclaimed: ‘It is the voice of the mother of harlots!’ (MacLean 1905, 60). As this exchange illustrates, the elder confronted the “instrument” on the same spiritual plane: he did not deny the very logic of a dead founder of the sect guiding its members from above, but, instead, questioned the revelation itself as false, since it came from “the mother of harlots”—a figure from the *Book of Revelation* (17:5) and, in Shaker elaborate theology of that time, the Satan’s female companion (Bates 1993 [1849], 261).

In this, as in many similar conflicts, the established authority ultimately prevailed. The media who became too influential or sought independent position were soon discredited or exiled, but Era of Manifestations left a permanent mark on many spheres of Shaker existence. Several sociopolitical interpretations of the period are possible. The media could be viewed as individuals vying for positions of authority, expressing their individuality in a highly collectivist culture, but also as more or less conscious representatives of underprivileged groups within the community, such as women or young members, seeking empowerment through the supernatural sphere—the group’s locus of authority (Humez 1993, 218–219). Whichever of these interpretations is closest to the mark, they all converge on viewing religious revival as a political phenomenon, a period of power reconfigurations which, ultimately, provided leaders with the opportunity to enhance political control and/or attempt profound changes in various dimensions of the group’s political system, from its normative foundations to the institutional architecture.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter addressed three crucial aspects of theocratic political systems: the ways in which political power is passed, institutionalized and enforced. Some of the *succession procedures* discussed are peculiar to religion-sanctioned regimes, but most are found in other types of political systems, too. What makes them theocratic is the supernatural legitimacy of the ascending leaders that these procedures, ritually and symbolically reinforced, are supposed to transmit.

Similarly, specifically theocratic *institutional regimes* are relatively rare. Even in hierocracies, the priestly rulers tend to reproduce institutional

arrangements typical in their times and cultures. The theocratic character of these arrangements is determined, again, by the role of the religious factor in their creating and upholding, as well as by the form in which it manifests itself. For this reason, it may be more revealing to analyse these regimes through the relations between secular rulers and religious functionaries (hierocratic, caesaropapist or papocaesarist), either within the sociology of religion framework when applied to non-state systems (such as communitarian religious groups) or from a rational choice/economic perspective (possibly supplemented by legal-institutional analysis) in the case of theocratic states.

Finally, various mechanisms of *political control*—social control consciously used by the rulers—were discussed. The system of political control consists of publicly binding laws enforced by the rulers (normative subsystem) and sanctions, both physical and socio-psychological (such as self-control, peer control, control of information), the function of which is to make the subjects comply with the laws (regulatory subsystem). In theocracies, the norms are drawn from religion, but the sanctions vary with the type of institutional regime. Theocratic states resort to violence just as their secular counterparts do, while in non-state theocracies, territorially unsovereign and based on face-to-face social relations, physical sanctions are less effective and more difficult to apply. One interesting, religion-specific form of political control is religious revival.

Importantly, various intensities and degrees of effectiveness of these regulatory mechanisms lead to different levels of political control exercised by the rulers. This, in turn, can be used as a neutral, non-evaluative criterion for classifying political systems into totalitarian, authoritarian and liberal (see Fig. 3.2 in Chap. 3). For instance, the Shaker political system, used as a case study in this chapter, is arguably totalitarian, even though the leaders were able to control each and every little aspect of their subjects' life without ever using physical coercion.

NOTES

1. In Dante's *Monarchy* (1996, book III, chapter XV), the formula refers to the princes-electors of the German Empire, but it leads to the same theocratic conclusion.
2. In a democracy, such a rationale obviously exists: lottery gives everyone an equal chance of holding office, regardless of their wealth, rhetorical skills, personal charm etc. Even in its secular versions, though, such as in ancient

- Athenian democracy or Renaissance Italian city states, lottocracy may have had religious origins (Hansen 1999, 50–51).
3. This was, however, done after his name was drawn by lot in front of a holy statue (Schwieger 2015, 39). It is thus conceivable that the lottery was accorded more authority than the subsequent test. More likely, however, the decision was dictated by immediate political considerations.
 4. For example, in Algeria, “[t]o be eligible to the Presidency of the Republic, the candidate should [...] be of Muslim faith” (*Constitution de la République Algérienne*, art. 87); in Oman, “whomever is to be chosen from amongst them as successor shall be a Muslim” (*Oman’s Constitution of 1996*, art. 5).
 5. See Article 99 of the *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*.
 6. As an aside, the notion of “covenant of grace” is somewhat inconsistent with the Calvinist idea of predestination: God’s gift of grace is free, not conditioned on any obligations that a believer is due to the sovereign God. However, this theological tension was probably, in practice, relieved by the emphasis on communal aspects of covenant.
 7. In his excellent analyses of Mormon power relations, D. Michael Quinn refers in this connection to the Mormon “culture of violence” (1997, chap. 7). However, he subsumes under this label some instances of physical sanctions which might not be, in fact, related to religion (e.g. punishments for criminal offences).
 8. Everett (1823, 100) quotes a characteristic exchange which might occur between a Shaker elder and a boy he was trying to discipline, where both invoke a “gift” to back their arguments.
 9. These aspects of Era of Manifestations attracted most scholarly attention. See, for instance, Andrews and Andrews (1969) on Shaker art of the period and Horgan (1987) on its ritual aspects.
 10. See the cases of Calvin Green and Richard McNemar, discussed in Potz (2012, 396–398).

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PART III

Religion in Democracies



Here to Stay: The Role of Religion in Contemporary Politics

5.1 THE CHANGING POSITION OF RELIGION

Secularization theory has travelled a long and bumpy road. Once enthusiastically embraced by sociologists of religion in middle twentieth century (with earlier proto-scientific predecessors), it was later rejected with equal vigour. Indeed, many texts on religion and politics or sociology of religion begin with a strong and dismissive denouncement of the notion of secularization.

It is beyond doubt that the secularization thesis is wrong if it is taken to mean gradual decline of religiosity in modern Western societies. Although fluctuations occur, no steady downward trend can be demonstrated in personal faith, measured by the belief in basic religious dogmas. The belief in God or some universal spirit has hovered around 90% in America for the last 40 years (*Gallup 2016*). In Europe, three out of four respondents say they are religious persons, while a small minority of people declare themselves as atheists, with the largest percentage, in France, at just 15% (*European Values Survey*). Perhaps even more significantly for religious mobilization potential, the importance of religion in people's life has also been fairly stable, with a modest decline from 58% in 1992 to 51% in 2017 (*Gallup 2017*). There is, to be sure, a significant decrease in the level of church attendance (an even stronger predictor of political behaviour, by some accounts; see Sect. 6.2 of Chap. 6), a trend that is likely to be compounded by the falling religious observance among the young generation

(Sherwood 2018), although in Europe church attendance had probably always been lower than we assume (Stark and Finke 2000, 63–70).

At the same time, secularization, understood as decreasing influence of religion and religious institutions on various spheres of life in modernizing societies, and the accompanying process of taking over by the state many functions hitherto performed by churches (functional differentiation), is a fact of life. Failure to distinguish between these two meanings of secularization may lead to ignoring the extent to which politics has become independent from religion in the course of the last two or three centuries, in both institutional and ideological aspects. A characteristic case in point is Anthony Gill, who, before presenting an economic approach to the study of political role of religion, joins in the ritual bashing of the secularization theory. That his aim is the “institutional” version of secularization is made clear by a passage he quotes critically as a model formulation of the concept, in which Lechner points to processes such as “social differentiation, and organizational specialization”, a shift from religious to rational-legal legitimation of authority and the emergence of secular conception of citizenship (Gill 2001, 121). Gill then proceeds to present oft-quoted “political events in the late 1970s and 1980s” which, according to him, “brought the paradigm crushing down” (*ibid.*, 122). These events include the Iranian revolution of 1979, the overthrow of a Nicaraguan dictator by Catholics inspired by liberation theology, the role conservative evangelicals and the Religious Right played in the election of Ronald Reagan and clashes between Hindus and Muslims in India.

For starters, let us look at these events from a proper perspective. Iran is hardly a model case for the secularization theory, since modernization, initiated by the Pahlavi dynasty, was short, superficial and largely perceived as imposed from outside, unlike the long-term endemic process in the West. Neither did the Iranian example trigger a religious revolutionary wave in the Muslim world, although it did inspire some Islamist organizations (Haynes 2006, 112). As for the mobilization of Latin American Catholics, the “liberation theology” is only partly a religious ideology. In fact, its secular, socialist components—fighting poverty and inequality, class struggle—were probably crucial for its mobilization potential. For the effectiveness of the movement, even more important than the ideas themselves was arguably the organizational capacity of the Catholic Church (Burns and Kniss 2013, 1076–1077). As regards Religious Right, it no doubt left a mark on American politics and it did strongly support Reagan’s candidacy (Wills 1990, 120–121). Nonetheless, it would be hard

to prove that Moral Majority or other Religious Right organizations actually did play a pivotal role in the election of Reagan or other Republican presidents—and by proving this I mean demonstrating the counterfactual: if it wasn't for the Religious Right support, such and such would not have been elected. This is because, first, evangelicals and fundamentalists were always a part of a larger conservative coalition, and, second, their religious views coincided with a range of conservative stances which might be the actual reasons for supporting a Republican candidate. A Religious Right candidate, the Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson, didn't even manage to secure the GOP presidential nomination in 1988. Finally, India—just as Iran, culturally and socially incomparable to European states—remains a secular democracy despite the Hindu-Muslim conflicts.

These examples are thus, in themselves, not entirely convincing. More importantly, Gill and others who use them tend to forget the boring evidence that supports the “institutional” version of the secularization thesis. Year in and year out in the West, election after election has been silently—perhaps too silently to draw the attention of politics and religion scholars—won by secular parties; relatively limited number of cases of religious political mobilization occurred; few political leaders invoke God as the source of their power or the laws they legislate; equally few citizens actually believe this to be a case; and the entire social and political life has pretty much conformed to the secularization/modernization logic. If the secularization theory were to fall on a handful of endlessly reiterated and dubious counterexamples, then no theorizing in social sciences would be possible. Secularization theory serves to illuminate and explain general trends, not to predict each and every political outcome. In its institutional sense, it remains valid: Western political systems continue to be firmly secular, both in terms of political institutions and their underlying legitimation formulas. But these systems are also characterized by a pluralistic public space open to all kinds of social actors and multiple access points to the decision-making processes, including by political actors other than organs of government and political parties. Religious organizations use these favourable conditions of pluralistic democracy to influence the sphere of politics. In this sense, institutional secularization coexists with public presence and political significance of religion.

All in all, secularization thesis, understood as (a) the decline of religiosity in the world, is wrong; (b) the gradual elimination of religion's social and political functions in a modern state, especially its institutional and normative links with state's power apparatus, and the resulting limitation

of its central political role in the West—is certainly right; and (c) the withdrawal of organized religion from the public sphere—is mostly wrong. While religion ceased to be the source of legitimacy of political power and the state took over many social functions of religious organizations, religious actors continue to make their presence felt within democratic political systems. They bargain with political parties, lobby decision-makers and mobilize their members into political action, while religious ideas motivate political attitudes and behaviours of individuals. The political import of religion is even more evident in non-democratic context, where it continues, and sometimes returns, as a major source of contention. Indeed, within the last decades a number of national/ethnic conflicts, for example, in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Kashmir or Palestine, have transformed into religious ones or have taken on a strong religious dimension (Dolnik and Gunaratna 2006, 85). The explanation of this persistence of political significance of religion, even if limited and non-monopolistic, is one of the central tasks of the political science of religion. The next section looks at the strategies of political survival in contemporary democracies.

5.2 AGAINST THE ODDS: THE SURVIVAL OF RELIGION IN DEMOCRATIC POLITICS¹

To pose the problem of religion's survival as a political force in contemporary Western democracies as something in need of explanation is to assume that it is somehow against the odds. But why, precisely? After all, especially with the rejection of the secularization-as-atheization thesis, religion has been generally recognized as a more or less permanent feature of the cultural landscape of human societies. So what are these inhibiting factors that would make it *a priori* unlikely for religion to play a major role in democratic political systems? There are at least three mutually connected groups of such factors.

- a. *Ideological*. Ever since early modernity, religion had been gradually losing its status of a *default legitimation formula* it enjoyed in ancient and medieval times. Religion served to legitimize political power—to justify the rulers' demand of submission by the ruled—on various levels. As indicated in Chap. 3, religion explained the existence of political power itself as the extension of the original act of the emergence of cosmos out of chaos; it justified the unequal

distribution of important social assets and the resulting stratification inherent in all power relations; it defined the status of rulers as divine, priestly or, in any event, god-sanctioned; and it provided symbolic and ceremonial framework to succession procedures—acts constitutive of political power (Poggi 2001, 77–79; Giuriato 2009). In the European context, Christianity had successfully performed these and analogous functions from Constantine to the Middle Ages,² until it was replaced by other legitimating ideas. It was a long and gradual process in which the growing “disenchantment of the world” (to borrow Weber’s term), a sociological fact which consisted in de-sacralization of various spheres of existence (but not necessarily in declining levels of individual religiosity, as we have seen),³ coincided with developments in Western political thought. As a result, the theocratic legitimation formula gave way to other justifications, such as traditional, meritocratic and, most relevantly to contemporary democracies, the contractual legitimation formula, according to which political power originates from a social contract and is based on the ideas of the will of the people and popular sovereignty. So, however it may be in other civilization circles (Muslim or tribal societies, for instance), political leaders of Western democracies are no longer obeyed because of any sort of divine mandate.

- b. *Normative.* Along with this process of stripping religion of its legitimating status, liberalism has been established as an axiological foundation of Western political systems—they have become liberal democracies. Liberalism, true to its individualistic spirit, is hostile to religion as a public ideology that puts forward claims to absolute truth and requires of the believers loyalty that supersedes their civic duties and attachments (Carter 1993, 55). In its essential distinction between public and private spheres, modern liberalism relegates religion to the latter, where it can enjoy the protection analogous to any other intellectual or spiritual pursuits of a person, but should not drive the political behaviour of collective social actors. The “naked public square” (Neuhaus 1986), stripped of grand, all-encompassing ideologies, is, in the liberal vision, the domain of a neutral state and citizens acting from rational, non-absolutist motives.

A similar view of the public sphere is postulated by many proponents of deliberative democracy, an alternative model of liberal democracy which advocates increased participation of citizens in

arriving at political decisions. According to this conception, the public forum should only be accessible to arguments formulated in the pursuit of common good and based on rational premises and thus comprehensible, if not necessarily convincing, to all sides of the debate (Cohen 2007, 220). Religiously motivated views do not qualify, because, ultimately, they are rooted in the belief of a god as the source of moral principles. As such, they are not rational—not subject to modification as a result of deliberation and unlikely to yield to some secular conception of a common good prevalent in the community (Pötz 2010, 113).

Other political philosophies, such as conservatism or communitarianism, offer a different approach to the public role of religion. For the former, religion is one of the principal sources of public values and the mainstay of public morality, while for the latter, religion constitutes one of the legitimate condensation nuclei of group identity, and thereby the basis for rights claims. The liberal view, however, has dominated the public discourse on religion in most Western countries in the post-WWII period, with the potentially unfavourable consequences for religion's public presence.

- c. *Institutional*. The objective process of “disenchantment” and the normative liberal injunctions against the presence of religion in the public sphere were accompanied by institutional developments which also worked against religion's political influence. The intensified processes of functional differentiation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw churches withdrawing from social spheres of their traditional activity (health service, education, social care, etc.), which became colonized by specialized agencies of the state. Politically, any institutional links between religious organizations and government organs were severed and the state became fully secular. Even in countries which retained a formally established state religion—such as Anglicanism in England—the actual influence of the church on the state was insignificant. As a consequence, the separation of church and state came to be seen as a cornerstone of liberal democracy, even if, in practice, it appears in many different variations across the Western world. In the United States, “[n]otwithstanding that some Americans had doubts concerning separation, growing numbers celebrated it as a constitutional right. [...] [S]eparation became established in popular opinion and eventually even in

judicial opinions as a fundamental First Amendment freedom” (Hamburger 2002, 391)—even though it can be plausibly argued that the constitution did not require separation, and in any case not in the strict version that emerged from the Supreme Court decisions since the 1940s. The principle of the separation of church and state, even if it does not preclude political activity of religious organizations, deprives them of the privileged status of official religions institutionally linked with the state, thereby demoting them to the rank of one among many political actors populating the public sphere.

So how does religion manage to survive as a significant political force despite these adverse social, philosophical and institutional developments that would seem to render it obsolete as political ideology and unwelcome in the public sphere? Two such broad strategies of survival can be identified which, combined, contribute to the sustained presence of religion in the public arena of contemporary Western world. First, religion claims special status among other systems of beliefs, ideas and values on philosophical, legal and institutional levels. Second, religious organizations behave as political actors within a political system. In this capacity, they both emulate the behaviour of other, secular actors (the “mimicry” strategy), thereby gaining fresh, non-religious legitimacy in democratic politics, and use unique, religion-specific methods, unavailable to their secular counterparts. Let us look at these strategies in turn.

5.3 THE SPECIAL STATUS OF RELIGION

Religion has been accorded special status among other ideologies. In science, it results in a sort of methodological agnosticism, which treats religious and scientific statements as belonging to two incommensurable spheres. In politics, religious organizations are often granted special legal status among other political actors and religious freedom has been constitutionalized as a special case of general freedom of expression. As judicial and legislative practices show, religious arguments can often trump non-religious claims when fundamental value conflicts arise. In their political activity, discussed in the next section, religious organizations have used strategies characteristic of other political actors (lobbying, mass mobilization etc.), thereby gaining democratic legitimacy, as well as unique, religion-specific strategies. Armed with these and other empowering tools,

religion can continue to influence democratic political systems in significant ways.

On the most fundamental level, religion—and especially Judeo-Christian religions—claims unique status as a system of beliefs about the world and the human being, their nature, origins and future, which must not be examined by the methods of science. Religious statements should not undergo scientific scrutiny, it is argued, not because science is in itself essentially wrong (a fundamentalist view that most mainstream Christian denominations would readily reject), but because science and religion deal with two different and ultimately incommensurable spheres—they belong to “non-overlapping magisteria” (Dawkins 2008, 77–83).⁴ Religion’s statements about God, the afterlife and even the origin of the universe are beyond the scope of scientific research, cannot be falsified and therefore should not be questioned, even when these statements do in fact overlap with reality (Christianity, after all, is not a sort of a *deus otiosus* deism, but a religion with God actively involved in everyday running of the world. Scientific and theological claims are thus alternative and often mutually exclusive explanations of the same phenomena). The measure of success in imposing such a view is that it is articulated not only by theologians, but by scientists themselves, including natural scientists. It is quite common for cosmologists, for example, to suspend their scientific judgement when it comes to the origins of the universe beyond the Big Bang or the explanation of its internal order, leaving it to religion to answer these questions (*Le savant* 1993). It became politically incorrect, it seems, to publicly question the statements of religion from the scientific perspective. The practical political consequence of such an attitude is that religion receives preferential treatment vis-à-vis other belief systems. Religious instruction in schools, for instance, is often directly or indirectly financed with public funds. Why not the instruction in astrology, alchemy or geomancy? Supposedly because they are considered false, and such assessment is made from the point of view of science. No similar scientific assessment of religion is performed as a matter of public policy.

This general atmosphere of uniqueness surrounding religion in the public sphere—a sort of a secular halo—facilitates the creation of a legal and institutional setting in which it is easier for religious organizations to survive as political actors. This setting consists of legal regulations and political practices, but also less formal arrangements contingent on the political culture of a society, which define the position of religion in general and religious groups in particular in the public sphere. Some of these

regulations are common to various third-sector, that is, non-governmental, non-business, public actors (NGOs or other types of associations), such as registration procedures or some tax exemptions. Others, however, may single out religion for special treatment against secular ideologies and organizations, as well as favour some religions to others. Examples include the existence of official state church (e.g. Great Britain, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Greece, Malta, Liechtenstein⁵); religious invocation in the preambles of constitutions (e.g. Poland, Ireland, Greece⁶); unique legal basis for the status of a church (concordat in Catholic countries); unequal levels of legal recognition of various religious organizations (e.g. Poland, Germany, Belgium); privileges for religious functionaries in comparison with the personnel of secular organizations (tax exemptions for priests, their release from military service when it was compulsory); government-supported religious instruction in public schools, either in the form of (compulsory or optional) lessons paid by the state, as in Scandinavian countries, Malta, Poland, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Alsace in France (Llorent-Bedmar and Cobano-Delgado 2014; Furniere 2015; Stewart 2015), or some version of released-time programme (USA); financial support for religious organizations from public coffers in the form of grants to religious schools of various levels, tax exemptions, maintenance of church property and so on; and religious setting of public ceremonies. In addition, religious organizations are allowed to discriminate in employment not only on the basis of the candidate's religious convictions, but also by gender (by refusing to ordain women), sexual orientation or marital status, if hiring certain categories of persons violates their religion-based convictions. The Church of England, with its exemption from some anti-discriminatory provisions of *The Equality Act*, is a case in point (Ronek 2018, 232–235). Most secular organizations do not have these privileges. Particular arrangements and the extent of such preferential treatment vary, of course, across the Western world (with France being on the opposite pole to Greece, Poland or Ireland), but the very notion of “church-state” relations suggests, as I pointed out earlier, a special position of religious organizations among other public actors. This perspective is, to a certain extent, supported by the political scientists' and particularly legal scholars' use of “Church and State” as a paradigm for the study of the relationship between religion and politics, in preference to a more explanatorily powerful and less normatively burdened framework of political science of religion.

The preferential attitude to religion is sometimes so deeply embedded in the normative foundations of Western political systems that it often goes almost unnoticed. It rarely strikes anyone as controversial that religious liberty should be among the “first freedoms”, one of the most fundamental human rights. Yet it does attest to religion’s uniqueness. In fact, even though religious freedom is merely a special case of the general freedom of expression (the difference lying only in the content of the expression), its scope has been routinely extended beyond it. In the United States, the Supreme Court had interpreted the “free exercise” clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution to grant religious believers exemptions from generally applicable laws if these laws burdened their exercise of religion. In the landmark case, a Seventh-Day Adventist was allowed to retain her unemployment benefit despite refusing to work on Saturday (which the law required), because executing the regulation would force her into the dilemma of violating the principles of her religion (Saturday is the holy day for Sabbatarian Christians, including Seventh-Day Adventist) or forfeiting her benefit (*Sherbert* 1963).⁷ Similar exemptions are not granted to sincere followers of secular ideologies or non-mainstream or quasi-religions (for instance, Scandinavian mythology aficionados who would demand having Thursday—the day of Thor—as a day off work). It had always been much easier to obtain exemption from military service, where and when it was compulsory, by invoking religious rather than secular justification for one’s unwillingness to serve. Members of traditional pacifist churches, such as the Quakers, the Mennonites or the Amish, were routinely released, while non-religious pacifists found it much more difficult to successfully establish the sincerity of their intentions (Noonan 1987, 255). In Poland, it is illegal to intentionally insult another person’s “religious feelings”,⁸ while similar regulations do not, needless to say, protect a person’s atheistic, communist, liberal or other non-religious views and feelings.

The standard justification of such asymmetry, often invoked, for instance, in communitarian critiques of liberalism, is that religious convictions are not freely chosen in the way philosophical views or political opinions can be, but are instead acquired during socialization, emotionally amplified and felt as moral imperatives. As such, they should be treated in a different way, almost as a given, natural feature of individuals which imposes “objective” restrictions on their behaviour and must be taken into account (Sandel 1993, 487; see also note 3 in Chap. 2). Whatever the merits of this argument, it only confirms that special status is postulated

for religion, which, in turn, translates into institutional arrangements referred to earlier.

Historically, the political function of claims emanating from the principle of religious liberty had been to protect members of religious communities from state persecution. Today, in non-oppressive liberal regimes, they serve more to prevent strict separation of the state from religion, potentially threatening religion's public presence. Thus, for example, in the United States the "conflict between the clauses" (i.e. the *nonestablishment* and *free exercise* clauses of the First Amendment to the Constitution, see Greenawalt 2017) has been routinely recognized as an obstacle to making the state religion-blind, that is, refusing to recognize the religious character of social actors in legislation and governance. Similarly, in France and elsewhere in Europe, religious freedom has been invoked against the state's attempt to introduce uniform, religion-blind regulations of public spaces (e.g. the ban on wearing religious symbols in public schools in France).

Together, these phenomena of granting religious statements immunity from scientific scrutiny, recognizing religious persons' unique claims to rights and the existence of an institutional, including legal, environment altogether beneficial for religious organizations combine into favourable conditions for religion's political prominence. They do not translate directly or with necessity into political action. Nevertheless, the stage is set.

5.4 POLITICAL STRATEGIES OF RELIGIOUS ACTORS

Notwithstanding these favourable conditions, religion can no longer spur political activity in liberal democracies the way it did in premodern times or it still does in contemporary, for example, Muslim, theocracies. The old-fashioned alliance between the altar and the throne is no longer an option: even if institutionally feasible, it would have generated nearly universal social opposition.⁹ Having lost its legitimating power, religion needs to re-legitimize its presence in the democratic public sphere by adopting tactics similar to those of other political actors and deemed acceptable within a given political culture. In addition, religious organizations may complement this mimicry strategy with the use of religion-specific strategies, grounded in their unique capacity of defining their principles and ultimate goals by reference to the sacrum. Let us review this repertoire, using the example of the Roman Catholic Church in contemporary

Poland, with occasional references to the Religious Right movement in the United States.

Mimicry Strategies

As any other political actor, religious organizations attempt to realize certain goals in the course of their public activity. For the Polish Catholic Church in the post-communist era, these goals included the institutionalization of church-state relations in the way that would not hinder the church's public presence; retaining its position of moral authority in the society; and securing the material basis of its existence. Some of the methods it used resembled the methods of other types of democratic actors. In particular, it acted as

- a political principal, sponsoring conservative political parties;
- a social movement, mobilizing, often through the Radio Maryja Family movement, Catholic masses behind issues such as anti-abortion or *in vitro* fertilization legislation;
- an interest group, lobbying the government for favourable constitutional provisions and financial arrangements.

Therefore, the church, in fact, emulated the strategies of all three types of actors distinguished by Rucht (see Table 2.2. in Chap. 2), with the important qualification that, while its social movement and interest group-type of activity has continued throughout the entire post-1989 period, its involvement in party politics was never consistent and has been abandoned since the late 1990s for a variety of reasons (see Chap. 6). Organizationally, these strategies should be thought of as various aspects of the church's political activity, rather than actions performed by separate divisions within it, since the Polish Church does not have clearly identifiable structures responsible for particular strategies: it may act in all these capacities simultaneously, as the situation dictates. For the American Religious Right, a different perspective might work better: it could be conceived of as a broad social movement with specialized units—NGOs, lobbies, think tanks and so on—focused on certain methods of political action.

To illustrate these strategies, as a political principal, the church had been inspiring, since 1989, the creation of Catholic political parties which would reflect its position on public issues and thus let it bear on parliamentary politics, as well as openly supporting the existing right-wing

parties (Zuba 2010, 119–120). Examples of the former tactics include Wyborcza Akcja Katolicka (Catholic Electoral Action), a church-sponsored party created for the 1991 parliamentary election, and of the latter, the infamous “electoral instruction” of 1991, a list of parties which the faithful should vote, secretly sent out to parishes by the episcopate before the election day (Sowiński 2014, 661). In this capacity, the church had also been trying to act as an arbiter and facilitator of party politics, with events such as “the tea at the Primate’s”, a meeting of the country’s political leaders with primate Glemp at the Primate Palace to prevent a political crisis in 1990 (Dudek 2016, 3.3); and “St Catherine’s convent”, a forum of right-wing parties hosted by Rev. Józef Maj of St. Catherine’s Church in Warsaw in 1994–1995. The political principal approach, however, proved ineffective: church-sponsored parties did poorly in elections and the public opinion was not prepared to accept such a direct political influence of the church. When the failure became clear, the strategy was abandoned by the late 1990s.

As a social movement, the church displayed significant potential of mass mobilization. This was achieved mainly through Radio Maryja—a Catholic radio station which grew into a community of people sharing conservative world views and values (so-called Radio Maryja family) and a media concern with its own newspaper, television, mobile network and college, managed by its charismatic founder and leader Fr Tadeusz Rydzyk. Many mass events organized by Radio Maryja, in the past reportedly gathering up to 500,000 people (*Jasna*, 2010), are of predominantly religious character (e.g. the pilgrimages to the Jasna Góra sanctuary). Others were, however, political demonstrations, letter-writing campaigns and events mobilizing support for causes important for both the church as a whole and Radio Maryja itself. The former included the abortion law and the position on the new constitution and the EU accession, and the latter involved defending Father Rydzyk from prosecution for insulting speech or securing a place on a nationwide broadcasting platform for the movement’s TV station (Głuchowski and Hołub 2013, 110, 253 ff.).

The US Religious Right movement is a significantly different example. Rather than a social movement within a religious group, it is a loose coalition of religious organizations, NGOs, think tanks, lobbies and other types of political actors, representing various Christian denominations, but united in the goal of stopping what they consider a liberal assault on traditional American values. They stress, among other issues, public significance of religion, the traditional model of family, individualism,

self-sufficiency and America's special mission. Their political repertoire ranges from direct lobbying of the decision-makers, through litigation, to grass-roots lobbying based on mass mobilization of the movement's supporters to take part in a demonstration, vote in a state referendum or school board election or flood the congressman's office with letters or e-mails. One example of effective political action by a coalition of social actors including the Mormon Church and other conservative religious organizations was the nationwide campaign to block the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (Mansbridge 1986; Potz 2015).

In their capacity as interest groups, religious organizations influence other political actors, specifically those in positions of authority—organs of government, political parties—to secure their own institutional and material interests. This comes as a natural consequence of their being social entities whose survival as organizations is the prerequisite to the successful fulfilment of their otherworldly mission. In other words, churches lobby the government as interest groups, to be able to execute their God-given mission in their capacity as value-based public actors. In the case of the Polish Catholic Church, the lobbying concerned the model of church–state relations and the financial conditions of the church's existence. As regards the former, the bishops tried to prevent a doctrine of strict separation to be entered into the new constitution (see Sect. 6.2 of Chap. 6), lobbied for the ratification of the concordat with the Vatican and for religious education in public schools. With respect to the latter, the church had been able to secure various forms of financial support from the state (despite the ban on direct funding of religious groups by the government), such as salaries for clerical personnel teaching religion in public schools, funding of church schools of all levels, including universities, preferential, out-of-court track for church's reprivatisation claims, various tax exemptions and so on (Potz 2019). While some of these arrangements are technically available for other religious groups, too (though not necessarily for non-religious organizations, as we have seen earlier), the Catholic Church has been by far their biggest beneficent. The methods of this type of activity range, typically for interest groups, from direct, behind-the-scene contacts between the church hierarchs and decision-making politicians, letters announcing the position of the episcopate and critical opinions on a range of public issues important from the perspective of the church's teachings (Sowiński 2014, 666) to moral suasion on politicians. While not all postulates of the church were realized, the institution has been generally successful in promoting its ideological and material

interests. For a case study of effective political action of the Polish Catholic Church, see Sect. 6.2 of Chap. 6.

Religion-Specific Strategies

In addition to these “mimicry strategies”, religious organizations use a range of religion-specific strategies, absent from the repertoire of other political actors. These include

- presenting political causes they champion *as moral issues*, thereby lifting them from the sphere of political expediency and compromise to the realm of God-given moral principles of which a church is the legitimate guardian;
- exerting religiously grounded pressure on the group’s members occupying important positions of power to secure their compliance with the group’s agenda (e.g. the threat of excommunication);
- using *par excellence* religious weapons in political struggle (such as imprecatory prayer).

While any political actor attempts to impose its interpretation of reality—its *truth*—on other actors, including the decision-makers, and on the public opinion, religious organizations feel specifically authorized to do so. Their values are presented as being of outside, supernatural origin, and the positions they take on public issues are firmly grounded in these timeless values, detached from the world of political opportunism and expediency. So, while from the point of view of a political system religious subjects act as creators of public values, they see themselves merely as their transmitters. Religious organizations are thus uniquely *value-based political actors*. This self-perception generally agrees with the public opinion, at least in Poland: while most people reject the Catholic Church’s direct intervention in party politics (only 15% is not offended by the priests telling people whom to vote), 40% approve of its taking position on parliament’s legislative acts, and more than 60% feel comfortable with the church speaking out on moral issues (*Religia i Kościół* 2013, 2). This survey, in fact, verifies the church’s choice of strategies and their potential effectiveness. Whereas the church holds firm control over the faithful in the matters of faith and, albeit to a lesser extent, morality—Caroline Warner is certainly right in saying that “Catholics are not the principals of the Church”, that there is no relation of delegating authority from the

rank and file members to the hierarchs, and that the church as an institution “long ago appropriated the religion and reversed the principal-agent roles” (Warner 2001, 37)—the church, at the same time, has to defer to their judgement in political matters, since, in the realm of politics, the same people act in their autonomous capacity as citizens and voters.

Thus it is of paramount importance for the church, and a precondition of its sustained public influence, to be able to present all issues it speaks out on or otherwise deals with in a public sphere *as moral issues*. This way, a religious organization may both assert its legitimacy as a value-based political actor and, ultimately, attain some of its objectives. Thus, for instance, when taking a position on the legislation regulating *in vitro* fertilization, the Conference of the Episcopate of Poland stated this distinction unequivocally: “While there can be no compromise on moral issues, in politics compromise is the essence of law-making in a democratic state”. The bishops further insisted that this case clearly falls into the moral sphere and therefore the church is authorized to set “boundaries for the involvement in adopting an immoral law” (Apel, 2015), at least for the Catholic lawmakers.

Such an appeal to legislators *as Catholics* to follow the teachings of the church shows another weapon that the church, as opposed to other political actors, may wage in pursuing its goals in the public sphere. In the aforementioned document on the proposed *in vitro* law, the bishops express their concern that the members of parliament (MPs) who declare themselves as practising Catholics could “remain in full bond with the community of the Catholic Church and in the disposition to receive Holy Communion”. They thus offer guidelines for how these MPs should proceed with the bill, since the support for an “immoral law” may “amount to excluding oneself from the community of the Church” (Apel, 2015). In this way, the church uses what effectively amounts to the threat of excommunication—withholding of ultimate rewards which the religious organization administers—to put pressure on decision-makers to make them conform to the church’s agenda. According to Dominik Hierlemann, such influence (though not necessarily backed by the threat of excommunication) can be effective to the extent that the MPs exposed to it are members of the church (a relational belonging), are bound to it through socialization, tradition, local community and so on (affective belonging) and, regarding its teachings essential to the public life (thematic belonging), try to protect its interest (Hierlemann 2005, quoted in Kowalczyk

2012, 29–30). He even speaks of the “church lobby” in the Polish parliament composed of the Catholic MPs fitting this description.

This is, to be sure, a time-honoured tactic. To invoke just a couple of post-WWII examples, Hungarian cardinal Mindszenty excommunicated teachers and MPs who accepted the nationalization of Catholic schools by the communist government in 1948 (Burleigh 2006, 331); the Italian Church, with the Pope’s approval, denied sacraments to members of Marxist parties (communist and socialist) to coerce Catholics into supporting Christian Democrats (Warner 2001, 143); a French bishop withheld communion from a family which sent children to a public instead of a Catholic school (*ibid.*, 90); and some US Catholic priests refused to administer communion to pro-choice Catholic politicians (Olson 2009, 382). Nor is this kind of religious pressure to elicit political response exclusively a Christian phenomenon. Despite the absence of centralized, hierarchical institutions similar to the Catholic Church, many Muslim religious leaders are potentially politically powerful due to their high prestige, and their *fatwas* (legal opinions) may be quite influential, especially in Shiism. To take a less familiar example, the *marabouts*, spiritual leaders of Sufi brotherhoods in Senegal, can issue a *ndigel*—an injunction binding on all their disciples (*talibes*) and dictating a certain course of action. In a few instances, when powerful *marabouts* sided with political leaders, *ndigels* were of openly political character (Gifford 2016, 696–697).

In the United States, a striking recent example of an attempt to bring a uniquely religious ritual to bear on the political process is the use of imprecatory prayer. Some pastors, including Southern Baptist Wiley Drake of California, one of the first to use the practice, have succeeded in mobilizing thousands of people to curse (usually liberal) politicians with passages from the Old Testament (mainly the book of Psalms) or self-composed prayers. The imprecations are directed against godless laws (e.g. pro-choice legislation or Obamacare) or sinful public officials, with Barack Obama, until recently, firmly at the top of the list, and the prayers call on God to punish the transgressors, often with severe suffering or death (Pomarański 2013, 144–147). At times the faithful actually pray for the evil politicians rather than against them—as in the Adopt a Liberal initiative (*Adopt*)—but the actions are always connected with the positions on public issues that the decision-makers in need of prayer took.

A better-known instance of a religious practice turned political weapon is the phenomenon of televangelism. Here preaching—an essentially religious form of communication, deeply rooted in the Christian and

particularly the Protestant tradition—is used to promote religious standpoints on a host of public issues, ranging from sexual ethics to national security and climate change. The specifically political edge of the activity of TV and radio preachers is evident in their targeting particular politicians and addressing specific policy decisions or legislative proposals. Not only are these items evaluated from the perspective of religion-based axiology, but the faithful are prompted to take action on them by expressing discontent and lending electoral, financial or organizational support. The impact of these messages is enhanced by their transmission through media of mass communication (TV and radio broadcast) and social media, thus potentially reaching, through cable and Internet networks, millions of viewers and listeners. Connected mainly with fundamentalist and evangelical Protestantism, televangelism has been instrumental in the emergence and success of the Religious Right movement (*Media, Culture* 1998). In Poland, political communication through the Catholic media assumes a less passionate, more toned-down form, mainly due to the lack of tradition of emotional and overtly political preaching in Polish Catholicism.

5.5 RELIGION AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

Religion is both integrative and therapeutic, as well as a divisive social force. The integrative function dates back to early history of man, when religion might have been the prerequisite for more complex forms of social and political organization, going beyond small bands of relatives (Fukuyama 2011, 60–63). This cohesive potential of religion manifests itself within primary social groups and primitive societies, where cult is mostly collective, public and requires cooperation (Durkheim 1995; Malinowski 1948), in theocratic states, where it provides legitimation for political authority (Chap. 3), in modern nations and ethnic groups, ethnically and culturally diverse political societies, and even transnational communities of the faithful (the Islamic *umma*). In fact, the recognition of the crucial importance of this integrative role led many authors to emphasize quasi-religious functions of secular ideologies wherever traditional religion lost their legitimating potential. These ideologies are referred to as “political religions” in case of totalitarian regimes (Aron, Voegelin) or, in modern democracies, as “civil religion” (Bellah 2006), both representing instances of “religion of politics” resulting from the sacralization of the political sphere (Gentile 2000, 21–23). The therapeutic function of religion, in turn, consists in soothing the suffering of the afflicted, oppressed or socially and materially disadvantaged—which, we may add, is regretta-

ble to many thinkers: religion may mask social, economic and political problems, assist in exploitation and domination (Marxism), and sacrifice individualism for allegiance to the communal self.

But religion is also divisive: it may breed inter-group conflicts on various levels. Religious conflicts in a political community may lead not only to violence, but also to realignments in social structure and transformation of power institutions. Bruce Lincoln (1998) shows how contemporary nation states are affected by conflicts driven by religiously motivated political identities. Based on how religion is used for political mobilization and identity construction, he distinguishes the following four scenarios¹⁰:

1. *Religious reconstruction of the state.* A part of the religious population in a confessionally homogeneous secular state challenges the government, invoking traditional religious values allegedly suppressed or ignored by it (ibid., 57–59). In effect, a religious state is created (Iran, Egypt under Muslim Brotherhood, Afghanistan under the Taliban) or attempted (Orthodox Jews' movements in Israel, some fractions of Religious Right in America, particularly Christian Reconstructionists).
2. *Construction of religious hegemony.* Imposed (often from outside) neutrality/secularity of the state is contested by the dominant religious group in a confessionally diverse nation. Its objective is to replace the secular state with a religious one, within the same heterogeneous social structure (ibid., 59–61). For example, Hindu religious nationalism in India (as opposed to the Congress Party's secular nationalism), with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as its political arm, has been anti-Muslim and has challenged the secularism of the Congress' governments.
3. *Schism along religious lines.* In this variation, the state—whether officially confessional or secular—favours one religious group. The disadvantage group(s) rebels in the name of religion, seeking to secede and create an independent state or join a state ruled by their coreligionists. Examples include Catholics in Northern Ireland, Palestinians in Israel, Tamils in Sri Lanka and Tibetans in China (ibid., 61–62).
4. *Devolution.* A weakening state, secular or openly atheistic (USRR, Yugoslavia), decomposes, and the groups inhabiting it start building their identity along religious lines, in opposition to other such groups. In effect, new nation states may be created (not necessarily confessional) dominated by the most militant fraction (ibid., 63–65).

Table 5.1 Types of religion-induced transformation of contemporary states

	<i>Society (with respect to religion)</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Attempted outcome</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Religious reconstruction	Homogeneous (with fundamentalist fraction)	Secular	Religious society vs. secular state	Confessional state	Iran; Afghanistan (Taliban);
Construction of hegemony	Heterogeneous	Secular	Dominant religious group vs. state and minority groups	Confessional state controlled by the dominant group	Hindu nationalism
Schism	Heterogeneous	<i>De facto</i> confessional	Disfavoured groups vs. state and the favoured group	Secession	Tamils in Sri Lanka; Palestinians; Catholics in NI
Devolution	Heterogeneous	Secular/anti-religious	Between religious groups	Independent states	Yugoslavia; USSR (Caucasus)

Source: own work, based on Lincoln 1998.

The typology is summarized in Table 5.1.

It is worth keeping in mind, however (something that Lincoln does not sufficiently account for), that religion, important as it is, is just one of the determinants of these conflicts (especially of the third type), along with other ethnic or cultural factors. It is disputable, for instance, to what extent the conflict in Northern Ireland was actually religious. That is, while religion no doubt has been the key identity marker for both sides, neither the Irish Republic Army (IRA) nor the Protestant terrorists killed for or in the name of God, as many Islamist extremists do. Religion constituted an important, perhaps even the main, but not the only ingredient in the mixture, which also contained nationalism, mythologized history, resentment passed from generation to generation and endogamy, in which the role of religion has been to integrate, provide quick in-group–out-group markers and “render everything in absolute and apocalyptic terms” (Burleigh 2006, 380). Indeed, precisely because religion becomes the crucial component of wider national or ethnic identities, it is so difficult to

isolate it as an independent cause and assess its impact relative to other factors. Similarly, religion might not necessarily be the primary source of conflicts on the ruins of multination secular states (Lincoln's type 4). For instance, the majority of Bosnian Muslims were religiously indifferent when the war started, and embraced religious observance only as a reaction to persecution from their Croatian-Catholic and Serb-Orthodox neighbours (Ognjenović and Jozelić 2016, 2).

Symbolic Conflict

A crucial dimension of all the above types of conflicts is the symbolic sphere. Simon Harrison (1995) distinguished four types of symbolic conflict—defined as the conflict over symbolic capital—in which actors attempt to (1) enhance the value of their set of symbols (symbolic inventory) in relation to the competitor's symbols (valuation contests); (2) appropriate or claim ownership of a contested symbol(s) (proprietary contests); (3) create and promote new symbols (innovation contests) or (4) displace symbols of the rival actor with their own symbolic inventory (expansionary contests). While the typology originates from anthropology, it could also be fruitfully applied to symbolic conflicts involving religious actors in contemporary states. These contests need not have the far-reaching, state-creating consequences envisaged by Lincoln. Religious actors may also engage in lower-stake, less disruptive challenges over the value of their symbols vis-à-vis the state and other secular actors.

For instance, it could be argued that the Catholic Church in Poland engaged in a valuation contest against the state in which it tried to impose its own religious interpretation of several key elements of the Polish statehood and national identity with the use of items from its own symbolic arsenal. The context was the period of post-communist transformation and the accompanying process of searching for new self-definitions and symbols to replace those of the communist past. The church, enjoying wide social respect and having been traditionally associated with Polishness, was potentially in a position to supplement secular legitimating ideas and symbols with its own symbolic inventory. The key politically relevant items from this inventory included the following:

1. The notion of Pole-Catholic
2. The emphasis on Christian origins of Poland
3. The cult of political incarnations of religious figures
4. Sacralization of the public sphere

“Pole-Catholic” was a traditional identity formula dating back to the nineteenth-century period of partitions, when confessional affiliation served as shorthand for national identity, especially in Russia- and Germany-occupied territories. On the basis of this, bishops insisted, particularly in the 1990s, on championing Catholicism as the main ingredient of the nations’ identity, warning that its rejection would weaken national feelings, question the nation’s identity and even jeopardize its sovereignty (Gowin 1995, 156). According to primate Glemp, secular values are no alternative, since they are not rich enough to provide a firm foundation for social and political life (Kowalczyk 2012, 102). Consequently, Christian origins of Poland have been emphasized, with the baptism of prince Mieszko I in 966 as the beginning of the Polish statehood. In 2016, the 1050th anniversary was inaugurated by a mass in the Gniezno Cathedral, with the entire episcopate, the President and the cabinet in attendance. While there is no denying that Christianization of the political elite was a decisive moment in the rise of early Poland, there was no attempt by the government to mark the anniversary with any separate secular state ceremonies (perhaps to avoid any association with the communist regime’s fierce competition with the church over the 1000th anniversary in 1966).

As regards the third point, Virgin Mary has traditionally (perhaps since the sixteenth century) been worshipped as the “Queen of Poland”. More recently, the political metaphors connected with Jesus Christ have taken on a more tangible expression, when, in November 2016, Jesus was enthroned as the King of Poland and the nation submitted to his rule (Ogórek 2016). Importantly, the ceremony was attended by the President of Poland and several members of parliament. Although the act could easily be dismissed as devoid of any real life consequences, it does symbolically downgrade secular power holders by contrasting them with the external, absolute source of law and authority in the form of this peculiar royal couple of Mary and Christ. Finally, the valuation contest manifests itself in the sacralization of the public sphere—less spectacular, day-to-day attempts at infusing public life with religious meanings and symbols. The instances include religious rituals accompanying official state ceremonies; display of religious symbols in public places, including public schools and the main hall of the Sejm (lower chamber of parliament); priestly blessing of everything from new buildings and cars to military equipment; peculiar Epiphany processions featuring local notables dressed as religious figures;

and a mass in the intention of bringing down rain during a long draught in the summer of 2006, held in the Sejm chapel on the behest of the Law and Justice MPs (“Modlitwa” 2006).

In sum, while these challenges to the symbolic inventory of the secular state have not led to its total replacement by a competing set of religious symbols, it was never the real purpose of the contest in the first place. For this, the church lacked both the consistency and unanimity within the episcopate over whether and how far to push this challenge, and the support of public opinion. Instead, this low-intensity conflict contributed to maintaining the public presence of religious ideas and symbols and their positive valuation among large segments of the public, thereby ultimately increasing the church’s political efficiency.

Religious Extremism

Another obvious illustration of the conflictual, divisive potential of religion is religious fundamentalism and religiously motivated political extremism. These phenomena, ever since they became serious domestic and international political and security issues some three decades ago, have drawn enormous attention of scholars from various fields. It is probably one of the best-researched themes within the scope of political science of religion and I would have little to add to this rich body of literature. Let me just observe that the topic lends itself perfectly to the kind of three-level analysis I advocated in Sect. 2.4 of Chap. 2. First off, on the individual (cultural) level we need to discern psychological processes which facilitate acts of violence (i.e. terrorist attacks, suicidal or otherwise) perpetrated in the name of religion. Scott Attran with collaborators has been pursuing a research programme in which the problem is conceptualized in terms of a “Devoted Actor” acting in defence of “Sacred Values”. The devoted actor’s behaviour is deontic (duty-based) but instrumentally irrational, that is, non-optimal from the perspective of the actor’s own goals (Atran 2016, 192–196). It can, however, be explained by long-term evolutionary profits arising from the readiness of some members of the group to make costly sacrifices outside of one’s kin (i.e. overcoming the “selfish gene” logic), thereby increasing the groups’ chances vis-à-vis other groups or changing environments. This is also consistent with the costly signalling theory, which postulates that costly (i.e. dangerous, time-consuming, etc.) behaviour of individuals signal their genuine commitment to the group,

which helps solve the free-rider problem and thus enhances intragroup cooperation and cohesion. Importantly, costly signalling seems to produce these effects only in religious, as opposed to secular, groups (Sosis and Bressler 2003).

Still on the psychological level, but moving from the evolutionary perspective, individuals engaged in terrorism display certain characteristic features such as self-victimization; identity fusion (merging personal identity into a collective one) and the resulting proneness to extreme, pro-group behaviour (Swann et al. 2012), including self-destruction (“sacrifice” in religious parlance); dehumanization of enemies; and perceiving their own actions as the struggle against the forces of evil. These features, however, are not necessarily specific to religious terrorism. As argued by Dolnik and Guneratna, religion enters not at the level of motifs or personal characteristics of particular extremists—these are to a large extent shared by their secular counterparts—but at the level of legitimation, as ideology providing justification for their actions (2006, 88–90). The distinction is certainly valid, although, as I argued earlier (Sect. 3.1 of Chap. 3), legitimations become ultimately internalized by actors as rationalizations of their behaviour, whatever their original motives. Moreover, at least some of the potential members of religious extremist groups are no doubt attracted by their religious message, even if their propensity to join depends on certain personal predispositions in the first place.

Then, on the mezzo level, there are religious fundamentalist/extremist organizations, which may be analysed through the social movements theory (SMT) toolkit, that is, in terms of ideas and values they invoke (something of a transitory phase between the SMT and cultural approaches), resources they can muster and the political environment they operate within (analogously, a transitory phase between the SMT and transactional perspectives). Here we look, among other things, at the group’s declared values and goals (e.g. reinstating the caliphate, cleansing the world of moral corruption), its material resources, internal organization, leadership, recruitment strategies and *modus operandi*. Finally, at the macro level, extremist organizations are analysed in terms of their impact on other actors within the political system and the society at large, that is, to what extent various strategies, including violence in the case of terrorist groups, have been effective in dealing with institutional or partisan actors, and whether they mobilize or alienate the group’s potential constituencies.

5.6 CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that secularization—understood ideologically, as religions’ growing obsolescence as a basis of political legitimacy in democracies, and institutionally, as gradual replacement of religious organizations by the state in many social functions—has changed the social and political landscape in ways potentially unfavourable to the churches. Yet, despite these adverse circumstances, religion—both as a system of ideas, values and norms and in its institutional expression—has adopted effective survival strategies guarding it from social and political marginalization. By immunizing itself from scientific scrutiny and claiming unique character of religion-related rights, religion, or, as the case may be, particular churches, attained a sort of a special status, expressed institutionally in a range of favourable legal arrangements. By emulating the behaviour of other political actors, religious organizations have been able to situate themselves firmly within the democratic public sphere, successfully countering ideological, normative and institutional developments potentially challenging their position. While these “mimicry” strategies are easier to justify in the context of democratic politics than the religion-specific strategies (such as asserting the superiority of religion’s supernaturally mandated ethics, threatening members with penalties jeopardizing their prospects of salvation and so on), even the latter cannot be rejected offhand by the critics of religion’s public role without undermining the entire liberal conception of a pluralistic public sphere, where subjects use whatever (legal) means are available to them to further their interests.

Another aspect of religion’s political significance, for both democratic and autocratic political systems, is its integrative and disruptive potential. Focusing on the latter, we have seen how conflicts based on religious identities might lead to reconstruction of the state in multiple directions, depending on a number of religious, societal and political variables. However, religion-induced conflicts may not lead to such extreme results. As we have seen in the Polish example, religious actors often engage in symbolic contests of various types with other actors, including the state, to boost their public legitimacy and win themselves more leverage in the political process. Finally, in discussing religious extremism, I referred to explanations from various levels of political analysis, ranging from human’s evolved propensity to making costly, individually irrational sacrifices for “sacred values” which benefit the group, through psychological traits predisposing to violence, to organization, resources and macropolitical impact of extremist groups.

NOTES

1. This and the two subsequent subchapters are adapted from Potz 2016.
2. “Successfully” does not necessarily mean without conflicts between confessions and sects within Christianity or between the church and secular rulers (over investiture, for instance). Nonetheless, nobody had seriously challenged the basic belief in the divine origin of power, even if the particulars of the relation between God and the ruler, whether it should be mediated by the church and so on, were hotly disputed.
3. Stark and Finke list “disenchantment” among the unfulfilled secularization prophecies (2000, 58), but Weber seemed to have in mind the process whereby various spheres of life, including the political sphere, cease to be perceived from a religious perspective, as intimately linked with religion, sacralization—and not the disappearance of religiosity as such.
4. The term “non-overlapping magisteria” (NOMA) originally comes from Stephen J. Gould’s *Rocks of Ages*.
5. See *Constitution of the Republic of Iceland*, art. 62; *The Constitutional Act of Denmark*, art. 4; *Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway*, art. 16; *Constitution of Greece*, art. 3; *Constitution of Malta*, art. 2; *Constitution of the Principality of Liechtenstein*, art. 37.
6. *Constitution of the Republic of Poland*, *Constitution of Ireland*, *Constitution of Greece*. See Szymanek 2011 for a general discussion of the constitutional expression of the idea of a confessional state.
7. This extensive interpretation of religious freedom was reversed in the 1990s by the divided Supreme Court among hot political controversy (Potz 2015, chaps. 2 and 5).
8. Art. 196 of the Polish penal code.
9. For instance, according to the findings of Wave 6 (2010–2014) of World Values Survey, fewer than 10%, and in most cases only 2–4% of Europeans think it is essential that religious authorities interpret the laws in democracy (*World Values Survey*).
10. Some of the examples in the following discussion are mine.

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Veto Players and Stakeholders: Religion in Polish and American Politics

In this chapter, I compare the role of religious political actors in two political systems where religion has markedly influenced the political processes in the last decades: Poland and the United States. Before moving on to the empirical analysis, I draw on the insights of social movements theory (SMT), veto player theory, as well as my previous account of political strategies of religious actors (Sect. 5.4 of Chap. 5), to construct a model of religious actors' political engagement, combining elements such as the internal potential of the organization, the opportunity structure it encounters, strategies it chooses and the extent to which it can control the decision-making process. I conclude that, due to a variety of factors, American religious organizations have for the most part played the role of stakeholders, as defined in Chap. 2, whilst the Polish Catholic Church approached that of a veto player.

6.1 A MODEL OF RELIGION-INSPIRED POLITICAL ACTION: THE CONCEPTUALIZATION

The conceptualization of religious actors as veto players and stakeholders seeks to address a fundamental research question: to what extent is a church able to affect policymaking on issues that fall within its sphere of interest? Even though, in Tsebelis' original formulation, veto players are, basically, two types of actors—government institutions and political parties (institutional and partisan veto players, see Tsebelis 2011)—there is

no reason why the notion should not be expanded to other types of actors, such as social movements and interest groups, including religious organizations, even if they are not a part of constitutional regimes and their engagement may be less regular and more issue-specific than in the case of political parties. These actors—societal veto players—in alliance with their institutional or partisan counterparts, may play similar roles of promoting, blocking and constraining political change. I will use two successful recent conceptualizations of churches as societal veto players to build a model which will then be applied to the study of political activity of religious political actors in Poland and in the United States.

For Simon Fink, churches as societal veto players are characterized by three main variables which, ultimately, are the key determinants of their political influence:

1. *Mobilization potential*, which depends on the number of adherents and their religiosity; the latter can be measured in various ways, but rough generalizations (e.g. Catholics are usually more religious than Protestants), the author claims, are acceptable. In this way, religiosity becomes a *power resource*, and not merely a background factor (Fink 2009, 81–82). Mobilization potential is also issue-dependent: presumably, moral issues are more salient and, consequently, have greater mobilization potential than issues perceived as purely “political”.
2. *Preferences*. Since the preferences of religious organizations often “lie outside the usual spectrum of policy preferences” of secular actors, they are not absorbed by these actors and can play independent roles as veto players in shaping policies. This uniqueness or extremism, relationally speaking, of some religious organizations’ preferences in relation to those of other actors can be attributed to “strong fixation of churches on absolute moral values” with the resulting inflexibility, and centralized, top-down organization of some churches, especially the Catholic Church. By contrast, “Protestant churches are more bottom-up in their preference formation and therefore susceptible to societal preferences apart from moral reasoning” (ibid., 82–83).
3. *Cohesion*, understood as “coherence of the policy preferences of the members”, and *discipline*, defined as “the willingness of the members to act upon the directive of their leaders” (ibid., 83), are significant for both the perception of the organization as a powerful player by other actors and its actual performance in the political game.

The second set of variables of the political influence of religious groups is the “institutional landscape” in which they operate (*ibid.*, 83–85). It consists of (a) *veto points*—access points to political system, where the mobilization potential can be translated into political influence; one example is referendum which can be used as a threat in negotiations with other actors; (b) *state–church relations*—while it is disputed whether separation of church and state enhances or impedes the political influence of churches, the confessional legal regime no doubt has a bearing of the religious actors’ opportunities to effectively use their mobilization potential; this is, precisely, the role institutional models of church-state relations play from the perspective of political science; and (c) *power of religious parties*—typically, religious parties, a distinct type of a veto player with different functions within the system, are not absorbed by the churches, but provide them with access to the political system. These three factors could be, for clarity, subsumed under *access opportunities* (a category similar to political opportunity structure of the SMT), since they all provide religious actors with channels of influence, thereby externally both constraining and enabling their political participation.

Finally, Fink performs three case studies (on Italy, Austria and the United Kingdom) to determine the applicability of the characteristics he developed for the actual policy analysis. The concepts do seem to be useful and viable. However, Fink’s conclusion that “the British case shows that the cohesiveness of the churches’ position does indeed make a difference” (*ibid.*, 90) is not supported by his findings. Indeed, as is clear from his Table 1, the only two factors that consistently accompanied successful attempts of church’s influence on political process (in Italy and Austria) but were absent in the case of failed attempts (United Kingdom) were high mobilization power and the presence of religious parties. In the absence of these factors, neither a cohesive (Catholic Church) nor a divided (Anglican Church) actor was able to make a difference. So, on the basis of Fink’s evidence, one cannot conclude about the positive role of cohesiveness of the religious actor’s preferences on its political impact, although it is, intuitively, certainly a sensible assumption.

Sophie Schmitt, Eva-Maria Euchner and Caroline Preidel use the veto player theory to investigate the role of the Catholic Church in shaping regulations of morally sensitive issues (prostitution and same-sex marriage) in two European Catholic countries. The basic units of analysis are coalitions of actors (institutional, partisan and societal), either promoting or blocking change in the status quo (Schmitt et al. 2013, 428). The starting

point for policy change analysis is the institutional setting which includes type of regime, the party scene, access points to decision-making and so on. For instance, due to fragmentation of parliament, unstable coalitions, unregulated interest groups activity and similar factors, “institutional veto players can be considered less pivotal than partisan or societal veto players when it comes to morality policy making” in Italy. In Spain, a dominant, sometimes majoritarian ruling party and strong party discipline make it more profitable for interest groups to lobby party leaders than individual members of parliament (MPs) (*ibid.*, 434–435).

In the course of their study, Schmitt et al. identify two key variables of policy change: (a) the balance of power between the change and blocking coalitions; and (b) the congruence among actors within the change coalition. Incongruence, that is large distance between the partners’ positions in relation to the issue in question, results in limited change potential (small winset of the status quo, in Tsebelis’ language)—only incremental, non-radical change is possible. Different combinations of these two variables may result in failure of the proposal, when blocking coalition is stronger and congruence within the change coalition is high (and thus flexibility low); radical change when change coalition is stronger and highly congruent; and incremental change in the other two, low-congruence scenarios (*ibid.*, 438).

All these, together with our earlier findings on political strategies of religious actors (Chap. 5), can be used to derive a model of religious organizations’ political influence. It consists of (I) internal, “white-box” characteristics of religious actors, with a bearing on their political effectiveness; (II) external constraints on their political activity—the access opportunities; (III) strategies religious actors use to transform their mobilization potential to political impact; and (IV) the analysis of political games involving “black-boxed” religious actors to determine the effectiveness of their influence on the policymaking process, thereby determining the role they performed (societal veto players or stakeholders). Here is a brief outline of the model.

1. Religious organizations are political actors characterized by the following variables:
 - a. Mobilization potential, which depends on (a) number of adherents; (b) their religiosity and thus commitment; and (c) the salience of particular policy issues.

- b. Goals and preferences; the latter, usually centred around moral issues, are (a) relatively inflexible and (b) tend to lie outside the spectrum of preferences of other actors.
 - c. Cohesion and discipline, bearing on the ability of the organization to perform effectively in the political system, and related to its organizational and leadership structure.
2. The ability of religious actors to effectively pursue their agenda is constrained by their opportunities to access the political system. These depend on a number of factors:
 - a. Church-state law: regulations concerning the legal status and public presence of religious organizations and their functionaries, their material position and similar considerations.
 - b. Constitutional regime, determining key institutional players and key decision-making opportunities for societal actors.
 - c. Party system, including the presence of religious (Christian Democratic) or other parties sympathetic to the religious actor's agenda.
 - d. Current condition of a political system (stability vs. transition), modifying the extent to which institutional and partisan players are susceptible to the pressure from religious actors.
 3. In an attempt to realize their mobilization potential within the political system, religious actors employ a number of strategies to influence other actors. These strategies are either
 - a. Shared with other societal actors (electoral campaigning, lobbying, mass protest etc.) or
 - b. Religion-specific (i.e. sanctioned by religious rewards).
 4. When it comes to the actual decision-making process, the ability of religious actors to promote or block political change depends on the following:
 - a. The strength of the coalition of which the religious actor is a part relative to the strength of the opposed coalition, as well as the congruence of the two coalitions and the corresponding extent of possible change.
 - b. The power, as measured by popular support, of the religious actor *in perception* of other political actors. This is the reverse, subjective side of the actual mobilization potential referred to in

I.1; the two may often diverge significantly, and the overestimation of a church's potential by other actors may provide it with additional leverage.

Note that the model described corresponds closely with the theoretical approaches in political science of religion discussed in Sect. 2.4 of Chap. 2. Part I of the model is largely covered by SMT, part II is equivalent to what SMT calls political opportunity structure, part IV employs the transactional perspective, with part III establishing a link between the SMT and transactional approaches by showing the mechanism of transmission of mobilization-backed demands of religious actors to coalition games in the course of the decision-making processes.

6.2 POLAND SINCE 1989: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AS A VETO PLAYER

The Catholic Church entered the post-communist era in Poland with considerable assets. Its role of “a counter-culture and alternative social space to the official ideology” (Haynes 2006, 17), the only relatively autonomous social institution prior to the rise of the “Solidarity” movement, and the one which proved instrumental in defeating the communist regime, was widely recognized and earned it enormous authority.¹ At the same time, a transition from an authoritarian political system with clearly defined friends and enemies to a liberal democracy with a multiparty system into which “Solidarity” quickly disintegrated turned out to be a serious challenge for the Catholic Church in its institutional dimension (religious organizations as institutions [ROI]). In spite of occasional disappointments and failures, it was, in the end, mildly successful in realizing its public agenda, learning to apply varied strategies in dealing with other political actors in the process.

The Catholic Church in Poland: A Sociopolitical Characteristic

In accordance with the model set out in the previous section, let us begin our account of the political role of the Roman Catholic Church in post-1989 Poland with the internal characteristic of the organization (part I). It was assumed that its mobilization potential depends on the number and religiosity of its adherents, but precisely which indicators should be used

to measure these values? Referring to the three components of sociological definition of religion formulated in Chap. 2, religiosity can be related to beliefs (doctrine), practices (cult) or belonging (organization). These three aspects are partly independent, because people may belong to a church or participate in its ceremonies for non-religious reasons (the extreme category of practising non-believers comprises 2% of the Polish population), while sincere believers might abstain from the life of a religious community (Łabędź 2016, 88–89).

When it comes to belonging, more than 95% of Poles have been formal members of the Catholic Church throughout the entire post-communist period (*Religijność Polaków* 2018). In terms of beliefs, similarly, as many as 92% regard themselves as believers (including 8% of strong believers). This does not mean, however, that what they believe in is the orthodox doctrine of the church. In 2014, only 39% of respondents declared they believe in God and adhere to the church's teachings (a decline from 66% in 2005), while the share of people "believing in their own way" rose from 32% to 52% (*Zmiany* 2015). Only around a third of Polish Catholics subscribe to the church's precise conception of the afterlife, while about the same number believe in reincarnation and twice as many in destiny (good and bad luck) (*Kanon wiary Polaków* 2015). As far as religious practice is concerned, nearly 50% of Poles attend church regularly (i.e. at least once a week), a relatively mild decline from the average 58% in the period of 1997–2005, although not more than 16% take communion on a regular basis (*Annuario* 2018, 34).

Additionally, there is another dimension of broadly conceived religiosity, distinct from, though not unrelated to, belonging, beliefs and practices, namely, the acceptance of moral views of the church by its members. For starters, as of 2016 only 21% of Poles thought one ought to have firm moral principles and allow no exceptions to them (a drop from 31% ten years earlier), the rest subscribing to some version of moral relativism or situational ethics. More surprisingly, merely 15% think God's law is the proper source of moral judgements ("what is good and what is evil"), while nearly 70% regard this as a matter of individual conscience. Analogously, the number of people thinking that only religion can constitute a foundation of morality shrank from 24% in 2009 to 12% in 2016. Even those who do actually ground their morality in religion, but do not deem it necessary for others, are now just 30% of the population. The rest, some 50%—nearly all of them believing Catholics, let it be remembered—do not feel the need to invoke religion in justifying their moral principles;

they prefer to rely on their conscience (*Zasady moralne* 2017). The survey on the significance of religion in people's lives yielded similarly inconclusive results: while for 77% of the population religion is either "rather important" or "very important", it ranked a distant seventh among the most important values in respondents' everyday lives (after health, happy family, honest life, job, respect of others and peace of mind) with just 28% placing it in their top five (*Znaczenie religii* 2006).

Combining all of these statistics, we will find that the "hard core" of the church members—people practising frequently, holding orthodox religious beliefs and treating the church's moral teachings as ultimate guidance in their lives—are probably no more than 15% of Poles. Does it render the church politically powerless? Not necessarily. First, some of these numbers declined markedly only recently, and the scores on some aspects of religiosity, especially orthodoxy of beliefs and significance of religious morality, were higher in the 1990s and 2000s, the decades of the church's intense political activity. Second, while this certainly means that the church could not realistically hope for either some version of confessional Catholic state, or full implementation of its moral and social teachings, it does not preclude the effectiveness of more limited efforts to legislate some elements of its agenda on issue-specific basis.

All in all, there are around 94% of the faithful in the Catholic Church in Poland,² varying considerably as to the acceptance of some of the church's fundamental doctrines and moral teachings, half of whom practise regularly. The key research question, for our purposes, is: Which of these dimensions of religiosity—formal belonging, belief or practice—is most relevant for politics? In other words, which is the best predictor of political attitudes and behaviours, and, thus, of the church's mobilization potential? Belonging, potentially significant in religiously diverse societies (for the changing role of religious affiliation in the United States, see McTague and Layman 2009), has little analytical value in Poland, where it is almost a constant. There are indications, however, that it is the level of religious practice that matters most for Polish politics.³

First, a statistically significant relation has been found between the frequency of church attendance and voter turnout: in four parliamentary elections between 1997 and 2007, people who went to church more often were more likely to vote (Czeńnik 2009, 26). This could be explained in two ways. Without a doubt, "faith is a politically relevant resource, and churches equip members with civic skills that can be applied in the political arena" (Wielhouwer 2009, 407). By actively participating in the life of

their religious community, also outside of religious services, the members acquire certain skills and attitudes which increase their propensity for, and capability of, political participation (Secler 2016, 103–104). Moreover, during religious services, they are exposed to strong persuasion by religious functionaries with considerable moral authority (Cześniak 2009, 25). Whether priests actually suggest particular candidates or parties (a practice largely abandoned by the church in its institutional capacity since the late 1990s) or not, the church has always urged the faithful to vote; the chief of Polish episcopate, in a homily at Jasna Góra sanctuary, even labelled it “a sin of neglect” to abstain from voting (Gądecki 2015). These two aspects of religious organizations’ influence on electoral behaviour of their members are captured theoretically by the distinction between “skill producing” and “politically mobilizing” churches. The former serve as spaces of civic socialization without engaging in overtly political activities, while the latter expose members to political stimuli: either expressly political messages or requests for political involvement of some sort (Verba et al. 1993, 486).

Second, people who are thus mobilized to vote are obviously more likely to support conservative or right-wing parties with platforms closer to the church’s teachings, especially that the bishops do not forbid priests to express their political opinions, provided they are not presented as official views of the church. For instance, 75% of the supporters of the centre-right Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (“Law and Justice”) attend church at least once a week, compared to the 46% of the voters of its main political competitor, Platforma Obywatelska (“Civic Platform”), and to 50% of the entire electorate (*Kim są wyborcy* 2015). Third, the adherence to the church’s moral teachings is related significantly more strongly to the level of religious practice than of religious beliefs (*Zasady moralne* 2017). Similarly, regular churchgoers are more likely to regard John Paul II as an important moral authority (79% of those who practise at least once a week “strongly agree” and 20% “moderately agree”, compared to 33% and 38%, respectively, among non-practitioners) (*Memory of JPII* 2018).

Moving on from the community (religious organizations as communities [ROC]) to the institutional (ROI) dimension of Polish Catholicism, the *goals* of the church were partly dictated by the particular historical situation it found itself in after the collapse of communism, and partly defined by its doctrine and teachings. They included (a) *safeguarding the church’s legal status and public presence* by pre-empting any attempts to constitutionalize a strict separationist model of church-state relations,

gaining access to key spheres such as public education and other public institutions (chaplains), as well as securing special legal status by virtue of the concordat; (b) *negotiating beneficial financial arrangements*, including restitution of church property confiscated during communism, state subsidies for various church institutions and tax exemptions; and (c) *maintaining the position of moral authority* the church inherited from the communist era, in order to be able to implement its preferences in the process of public policymaking. In Poland, these preferences were heavily weighted towards issues of sexual ethics, to the relative neglect of other issues, notably social problems such as poverty or social injustice (Ramet 2006, 124). As stipulated by the model, the church's positions on these ethical issues were mostly at the extremes of the spectrum, which, on the one hand, made it impossible to implement them fully, but, on the other, allowed the church to perform the function of a veto player by preventing a change of the status quo in the direction away from its preferences. The typical case in point is the abortion issue, where the church initially lobbied for the tightening of a liberal pre-1989 law, and later successfully defended the "compromise" against liberalization, even though it obviously was not strict enough from the point of view of the Catholic doctrine. Similarly, while the church could not realistically hope for the constitutionalization of ideological primacy of Catholicism among other religious and secular doctrines—a sort of a *primus inter pares* model resembling pre-war Poland—it was able to veto attempts at institutionalizing a strictly secular state, settling at a version of benevolent separation of church and state, or their "autonomy and mutual independence, each in its own sphere" (*Constitution of Poland* 1997, art. 25).

Finally, the Catholic Church is a highly centralized, hierarchical organization, more so than any other world religion. The Polish Church is no exception. As a result, in spite of a variety of opinions and sensitivities within its ranks (it could hardly be otherwise in such a large organization), it was generally able to maintain a high level of ideological *cohesion*: no major divisions appeared on either key doctrinal or moral issues, particularly since the late 1990s. This was achieved, to a large extent, by emphasizing and enforcing discipline and silencing dissenters, mostly liberals (Rev. Adam Boniecki, Stanisław Obirek, Krzysztof Mądel and Wojciech Lemański) but also a nationalist-chauvinist (Rev. Jacek Międlar). The "silencing" consisted mostly in banning the priests from expressing their opinions in public and suspending them in case of non-compliance. All these disciplinary measures, to be sure, were directed to lower-ranking

clergy: no such dissent occurred among the bishops despite the internal power struggles within the episcopate. Notwithstanding all the media talk of the rift between the “Łagiewniki” (liberal) and “Toruń” (conservative) Church, the cohesion of the church as an institutional actor was never seriously threatened. The differences of opinion within the episcopate—which at times were quite substantial when it came to general policy directions, such as the shape of the new constitution (Borecki 2008, 364–378), the relations with political parties and government, or positions on the EU membership—did not paralyse its ability to unite over key policy issues, particularly in the domain of morality politics. Even the ambivalent relation of the church towards the conservative, traditionalist Radio Maryja media concern—detested by many hierarchs, but never fully condemned—was, arguably, strategically convenient. There is no denying that Radio Maryja, led by its ambitious and powerful founder Fr Tadeusz Rydzyk, developed a partly independent political dynamics, actively supporting party initiatives and candidates when the episcopate shied away from such a direct involvement. But precisely for this reason it could be used as a mobilization platform over issues such as abortion or same-sex marriage, while the church could easily distance itself from its strictly “political”, that is, partisan positions, and overly extreme, for example, xenophobic, views (Zuba 2010, 121).

Access Opportunities

Among the external determinants of the church’s political activity—its structure of political opportunities or points of access to the political system—three groups of factors merit special attention: legal-political status of the church (formal model of church-state relations), the characteristic of the political regime and the dynamics of the party system. At the most fundamental level, the Constitution of Poland of 1997 does not provide for the explicit separation of religion or church from the state. Instead, it talks about equality of religious organizations, impartiality of the state towards religious and secular world views, and mutual autonomy of religious organizations and the state, each in its own sphere (par. 25). Religious freedom is protected in the standard manner, resembling most Western or international regulations (par. 53). God is mentioned twice in the preamble to the Constitution—but not addressed directly in the classic *invocation Dei* manner—as a source of universal values and moral responsibility for the believers among citizens.

Besides the constitutional provisions, legal status of the Catholic Church is regulated by a separate act of parliament (14 religious organizations enjoy similar regulation, the rest being registered on the basis of an *Act of the guarantees of the freedom of conscience and religion*) and the concordat with the Vatican state. In the concordat, the state, by emphasizing the unique role of the Catholic Church and the pontificate of John Paul II in Polish history, as well as the church's contribution to the development of the individual and the strengthening of morals (*Concordat 1993*, preamble), recognizes and legitimizes the church's public presence. The concordat, together with other lower-level regulations, authorizes the access of the church to certain spheres of mixed competence, such as public education (religious instruction in schools was introduced already in 1990 by the order of the Minister of Education, and thereafter confirmed in the concordat), marriage (religious wedding is legally binding in civil law) and institutions such as the army, police and other formations, as well as prisons and hospitals, where recognized religious organizations can delegate chaplains. The financial situation of the church has been settled to its moderate satisfaction, too. There is no church tax in Poland, but the state subsidizes the Catholic Church (and some other religious organizations, but obviously on a much smaller scale) in several ways. It pays salaries to schoolteachers of religion, many of whom are priests or nuns, and to chaplains; it supports institutions of higher education (church colleges and theology faculties at some state universities) controlled by the church; and it returned or compensated for all church property lost during communism (a unique instance of full reprivatization), among accusations of overvaluation, corruption and considerable loss for state or local government budgets (Łazarewicz 2010). Additionally, right-wing governments often finance the church under the rubric of culture, historical heritage, education and so on to circumvent the ban on direct funding of strictly religious activities of churches.

It is worth stressing that most of these legal and financial provisions, although I present them as, in a way, given, external determinants of the church's public activity, were in reality themselves the subject of the church's bargaining with the state and a part of its political agenda. In addition to these legal ramifications, in the domain of political culture, religion has been traditionally a welcome ingredient of various state ceremonies, with priests blessing everything from monuments to new army equipment and government officials attending masses on national holidays. All in all, while Catholicism has not been declared the official state

religion and institutional separation of church and state has largely been kept, there were never any signs of privatization of religion in Poland. After 1989, the Catholic Church maintained the high public profile it enjoyed in the communist era. Jose Casanova is certainly right that, because of “the strong hold the church appeared to have over the public mind of the Poles on so-called national issues [...] Polish Catholicism historically has served more as a public civil religion than as a private religion of personal salvation” (Casanova 1994, 113).

In terms of a type of political regime, Poland is a parliamentary democracy with dual executive, bicameral parliament and, most often, coalition cabinets generated by the proportional representation electoral system. The acts of parliament are subject to approval by the president and their constitutionality can be challenged before the Constitutional Tribunal. All these factors create a relatively large number of veto players in the system (as compared to systems with unicameral parliaments or monistic executives, for instance), which, in turn, decreases the probability of changing the status quo. The church experienced both pros and cons of this situation. It proved a blessing when the church defended the abortion law against liberalization, and the bill, having passed all stages of the legislative process, was only struck down by the Constitutional Tribunal; however, it was an obstacle in the long battle for the ratification of the concordat, signed in 1993, but ratified only in 1998, after the post-communists-led coalition lost the election.

Poland has a multiparty system, which, until 1993 (when a 5% electoral threshold and the d’Hondt formula were introduced), was also extremely fragmented, with nearly 30 parties in the parliament. The cabinets have been coalitional ever since 1989, with post-communist parties alternating with post-Solidarity ones until 2005, when the latter finally dominated the political scene. Voter volatility was among the highest in Europe, reaching 38% in 1993 and 49% in 2001 (net volatility, Pederson index; Szczerbiak 2006, 106) and lifespans of political parties were short, especially in the early 1990s. Such conditions had two major consequences for the church. First, weakly institutionalized parties with unstable social basis were likely to seek support from such a strong partner. Second, the situation rendered a permanent alliance of the church with one political party or the creation of its own Catholic party strategically unviable. Such a party would simply be too likely to disappear in the chaos of the first years of political transition and the church would risk losing significant part of its authority. Instead, after a few such abortive attempts at the initiative of some bishops in the early 1990s (Zuba 2010), the church chose to negotiate over par-

particular issues with whoever was in power, rather than trying to build a permanent political representation. In view of this, the conclusion that “[n]o doubt aware of its declining influence, the church did not bother to sponsor or even overtly support a political party in the following years” (Haynes 2006, 18) misses the point. To sponsor or overtly support a political party is a costly and risky strategy, given the specificity of a church’s assets and high transaction costs (Warner 2001, 28–31). A preferable strategy, from the perspective of a church, is to influence other actors without making irretrievable political investments. It is thus a sign of the Polish Church’s strength, not weakness, that it has been able to achieve many (though certainly not all) of its goals without overt partisan engagement, and without a significant Christian Democratic party on the Polish parliamentary arena.

Moreover, in spite of the relative pluralism of the Polish political system (at least until 2015, when the Law and Justice government embarked on a way towards a version of centralist democracy) and the resulting need to negotiate with many actors and build larger coalitions, the political parties themselves are quite centralized with strictly enforced parliamentary voting discipline on most issues. This makes lobbying easier, as it may be restricted to a relatively small number of key party executives. All in all, the Polish political system offered a number of access points for socially powerful organizations like the Catholic Church: political parties, government institutions, judicial organs, elections and occasional referenda. At the same time, due to the fragmentation of the party system and high volatility of voters, it provided little incentive for strictly partisan involvement. These findings are summarized in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Selected features of the Polish political system and their consequences for the Catholic Church as a political actor

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Systemic consequence</i>	<i>Consequence for the church</i>
Dual executive, bicameralism, coalition cabinets, judicial review	Multiple veto players	Easier to defend the status quo; more difficult to change the status quo
Proportional representation, high electoral volatility	Fragmentation of party system, short average lifespan of parties	Little rationale to create or permanently support a political party
Hierarchical party leadership, voting discipline	Centralized decision-making within veto players	Easier to focus the lobbying activity

The Church's Political Agency

It is a notoriously difficult task to actually demonstrate that an actor, religious or otherwise, was politically effective, that is, did bring about, contribute to or block a change, in the status quo, thereby going beyond the general talk of “influence”, “power”, “public presence” and so on. For instance, Haynes’ intuitive conclusion about “the swift decline [of the Church] into relative political irrelevance in the 1990s—when Catholic views were unable to prevail on a range of political, social and moral questions” (2006, 18) is unsubstantiated, because it ignores developments such as religious instruction in schools, more restrictive abortion law and constitutionalization of some of the church’s postulates, all taking place in the 1990s. But even with a more discerning approach, it will remain difficult to fulfil our criterion for identifying veto players, namely establishing a causal link between them and the events under analysis.

A theoretical step in this direction is to distinguish between political agency, defined as the ability of actors to make things happen or prevent them from happening by causing other actors to behave in a certain way, and political power—a generalized potential of modifying behaviour of other actors (Potz 2019b). Political power, held by virtue of a formal or traditional position in a political system and ascribed to an actor by its subjects, may not always result in political action, while political agents may not be identical with the power holders. Political agency is thus, in a way, the actualization of political power. In expounding the difference, I suggested that agency may be exercised on three distinct levels: behavioural, where an actor directly causes another actor to do something (by issuing a command, bribing, threatening, bargaining etc.); structural, where the agent shapes aspects of the political system (legal regulations, leadership structures, decision-making procedures etc.) to facilitate the desired outcomes; and cultural, where the agent’s influence is on the cultural environment of the political system, containing world views, societal norms and values (ibid.). Ideally, a causal relation of one of the five general types (Mahoney et al. 2009, 118–128) should be demonstrated to ascribe agency to an actor in any of these senses. While it is usually possible, if never easy, in the behavioural type, structural and especially cultural agency is certainly much more elusive.

The distinction between power and agency is particularly useful for societal actors such as churches, since they may exercise political agency without holding any institutionalized power position. The Polish Catholic

Church did this at all three levels with various degrees of success. At the behavioural level, its functionaries met with, wrote letters to and otherwise pressurized decision-makers; threatened Catholic politicians with religious sanctions; and persuaded the faithful to vote in elections. The tangible effects of these actions were, respectively, the inclusion of the church's postulates into normative acts, ranging from the constitution, through parliamentary legislation to ministerial orders; the existence of the "church lobby" in the parliament (see Sect. 5.4 of Chap. 5), an informal political representation of the church; and the relatively high voter turnout and support for centre-right parties among regular Catholic churchgoers. On the structural level, the church attempted, mostly by lobbying the decision-makers, to shape the religion-state relations, and to increase its financing by the state. It was considerably successful in the former two endeavours: a strictly separationist model of church-state relations was rejected and the autonomy of the church, as a legitimate participant of the public sphere, was guaranteed in the constitution, while money flow to the church from state coffers was established in various forms, as indicated in the previous section. Finally, in the cultural dimension, the church has tried to maintain its position of public authority, the protector of the nation and the guardian of public morality. The results have been mixed. While the majority of the public recognize the bishops' moral right to speak out on public issues (but not to dictate to the faithful whom to vote; see *Religia i Kościół* 2013), most Catholics ignore many of the church's teachings, particularly in the sphere of sexual ethics.

Nonetheless—and this is a token of its political effectiveness—the church has retained the ability to block unwelcome developments (liberalization of abortion law, state financing of *in vitro* procedures resulting in the creation of multiple embryos etc.), increase the importance of religion in public schools and increase the state funding of the church in the first and into the second decade of the twenty-first century (*Informacja* 2018, 18). This may be due to two general factors. The first is objective: the church maintained high mobilization potential, both in terms of conventional (the positive correlation between churchgoing and voter turnout mentioned earlier) and unconventional political participation (mass events, often organized by Radio Maryja). The second is subjective: the church is widely perceived as a powerful institution, an impression many politicians might have inherited from its influence during communism and political successes in the early 1990s. When they act on this assumption, the power of the church becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Admittedly, some politi-

cians might sincerely identify with the church's positions on issues or hold them for other, non-religious reasons. The majority, however, approach the matter as a transaction—the purchase of votes—in which, I argue, they overestimate the assets and bargaining power of the church. For instance, for most of the post-1989 period public opinion was more liberal on the issue of abortion than the actual law regulating it. This was particularly true for the early 1990s, when the law was enacted. While the actual legislation bans abortion as a general rule, allowing it only in specific cases (when a mother's life or health is in danger, when the foetus is severely damaged or when pregnancy resulted from crime), 65% of respondents in 1993 thought it should be legal when the mother is in a difficult material situation, and as many as 42% would allow it for no particular reason, “on demand” (Kowalczyk 2012, 400). Judging from this, a more permissible version of the abortion law or its subsequent liberalization would probably not have resulted in a major social upheaval. And yet, most politicians, including some leaders of left-wing post-communist parties, preferred not to antagonize the church, fearing its mobilization potential at the crucial veto points: the constitutional referendum of 1997, the EU accession referendum of 2003 and the national elections along the way. Similarly, although most people have consistently regarded the influence of the church as exceedingly large, it has shown no signs of abating. Indeed, as a general consideration, such ability of an actor to implement its policy position against the public opinion could be used as one measure of the actor's political effectiveness.

The Church and the Making of the Constitution

Let us conclude with an account of the church's agency in the shaping of the Polish constitution. This long process was initiated already in 1990 and ended with the enacting of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland in April 1997 and its approval in a national referendum in May 1997. To gain maximum legitimacy for the outcome, the proceedings were open to a wide spectrum of political and social actors, including religious organizations. Many actors—institutional, partisan and societal—could put forward their bills for the consideration of the Constitutional Commission of National Assembly. They could then participate in the process by monitoring the proceedings and testifying on the Commission's meetings. The church was, thus, able to interact with a pluralistic constellation of players from which to build its coalition. In certain respects, it was a blocking

coalition, since the post-communist parliamentary majority could potentially attempt to create a secularist regime with little public role for the church. But it was also a change coalition, given that the existing constitution of the Polish People's Republic was hostile to the church as a public institution and the church sought to have constitutionalized both the favourable *ad hoc* regulations introduced by post-Solidarity governments between 1989 and 1993 (e.g. religious instruction in public schools, pro-life legislation), and the still unratified concordat of 1993.

The Catholic Church was active throughout the process. Its interest in the constitution, and particularly the confessional clauses contained in it, was not surprising given the church's goals of retaining access to most spheres of social life, regulating favourably its legal and financial status and remaining the guardian of public morality. The church's position as a societal veto player was defined, on the one hand, by the assets discussed earlier (large membership and high social prestige, translating into considerable mobilization potential, additionally magnified in the perception of political decision-makers) and, on the other hand, by its ideological positions, articulated into concrete political postulates. They included the decisive rejection of the notion of the separation of church and state, which, the bishops argued, was used to justify the communist repressions of the church and, they feared, would now promote atheism or agnosticism and relegate religion to the private sphere (Gowin 1995, 87–88); the invocation of Christianity as the foundation of the nation's heritage and the source of moral values; religious freedom; the guarantees of religious instruction in schools; and the protection of life from conception and of the traditional model of family. Occasionally, even more extreme desiderata were voiced, such as granting the church, together with other religious organizations, the right to challenge the constitutionality of legislation before the Constitutional Tribunal (*List bp. Alojzego Orszulika* 1991), but they only served, consciously or not, to raise the stakes and make the final regulations appear a compromise.

In realizing these objectives, the church was active at all three levels of political agency distinguished earlier. In the cultural dimension, it set out the normative foundations of its postulates. In a document entitled *The Position of the Polish Bishops' Conference on the Axiological Premises of the New Constitution* (*Stanowisko Konferencji* 1990), presented to the Senate's constitutional commission, the bishops declared that the fundamental rights of a person and a community of citizens are grounded in the natural law which the Creator inscribed in human souls. As a consequence, the

church reiterated its conviction, expressed more than 40 years earlier in a document called *Catholic Constitutional Postulates*, that “the Constitution draws its credibility mostly from being grounded in God’s will, the source of all political power” and that Poland should be a Christian state of the Catholic nation, “recognizing God as the ruler of the entire creation” (*Stanowisko Konferencji* 1990, 118–119).

Armed with such sweeping ideological assertions, the church could then, on the structural level, proceed to proposing particular formulas of the key provisions, in accordance with the postulates listed earlier. In particular, it opted for constitutionalizing relations between church and state not on the basis of separation or state neutrality, but on “autonomy and mutual independence, each in its own sphere” as well as their cooperation for the common good (*Constitution of the Republic of Poland* 1997, art. 25, p. 3)—a formula which is almost a direct quote from *Gaudium et Spes*, a major Second Vatican Council document (*Gaudium et Spes* 1965: 76). The episcopate also demanded, in a letter to the chairwoman of one of the Sejm’s constitutional commissions, the parents’ right to obtain religious education in public schools for their children and a sort of legal autonomy for the church (“The Catholic Church is governed by its own law”) (*List zastępcy Sekretarza* 1990). Additionally, the bishops, without submitting their own bill, supported two drafts of the constitution—the so-called Senate’s and citizens’ bills—which expressly invoked Christian values and sought to protect life from conception.

Finally, on the behavioural level, the bishops engaged in direct lobbying by means of

- sending letters to politicians in key decision-making positions, including chairs of constitutional commissions and subcommittees (*List zastępcy Sekretarza* 1990; *List bp. Alojzego Orszulika*, 1991);
- speaking during the Senate’s Constitutional Commission’s meetings (*Wystąpienie przedstawiciela episkopatu* 1990; *Relacja z wystąpienia* 1990);
- personal meetings with politicians, including primate Glemp’s meeting with Marian Krzaklewski, the leader of “Solidarity” (at that time a politically active trade union, not the enormous social movements of the 1980s) regarding the organization’s constitutional bill (*Komunikat Sekretariatu Prymasa* 1994); and several meetings of both Aleksander Kwaśniewski of the post-communist Democratic Left Alliance, the chairman of National Assembly Constitutional

Commission, and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, ex-prime minister, major “Solidarity” and later Freedom Union (UW) leader and member of the Commission, with bishop Tadeusz Pieronek, Secretary General of the episcopate.

In addition, the episcopate’s expert, legal professor Rev. Józef Krukowski, testified during the National Assembly Constitutional Commission’s working meetings on confessional clauses of the Constitution, presenting the church’s perspective and effectively, if informally, vetoing propositions that sought to introduce the principles of separation of church and state or state neutrality (Borecki 2008, 258 ff.). The Polish Bishops’ Conference had been closely monitoring the proceedings (a special committee was established for this purpose, called the Polish Episcopate’s Group for the Constitution), issuing, between 1990 and 1997, a dozen announcements after the Conference meetings in which the proposed constitutional provisions were reviewed and criticized from the perspective of the church’s moral and social doctrine (*Kościół i organizacje* 2012).

It can be demonstrated that the major changes in the wording of the confessional clauses of the Constitution were the consequence of this intense lobbying activity on the part of the church. This refers to, specifically, the change from “separation” to “autonomy and mutual independence” formula and from “neutrality” to “impartiality” of state with regard to religious and philosophical views. In the latter case, at first the church’s representative bishop Pieronek seemed to grudgingly accept “neutrality” (he even signed his approval on a draft of the clause during a meeting with A. Kwaśniewski), but then, at the Bishop’s Conference meeting in March 1995, it was decidedly rejected at the behest of the traditionalist fraction led by the primate as allegedly “historically burdened” (by association with the communist regime’s attitude to religion). Following a series of meetings with Secretary General Pieronek in March 1995, and a public critique of the “neutrality” version of the clause by primate Glemp and Professor Reverend Krukowski, the chairman of the Constitutional Commission A. Kwaśniewski finally accepted the “impartiality” formula proposed by Tadeusz Mazowiecki and steered the Commission into voting in favour of it in early April 1995 (Borecki 2008, 289–230).

There is thus a clear causal link, demonstrating that the church exercised actual political agency in the situation under analysis. The lobbying by the bishops was a necessary condition of the enactment of the “impar-

tiality” and “autonomy and mutual independence” formulas by the Constitutional Commission. This can be established counterfactually: conservative parliamentary groups that did support these formulas, such as “Solidarity” (NSZZ “Solidarność”), Confederacy of Independent Poland (KPN) or the right wing of Freedom Union (UW), did not have the majority in the SLD-PSL-dominated National Assembly and its Constitutional Commission, and would have been unable to force these formulas through, had it not be for the intervention of the church.

In conclusion, the Catholic Church’s involvement in the constitution-making process resulted in a considerable, if not full, success. Apart from the protection of life from conception (total ban on abortion) and the principle of the superiority of natural over positive law—clearly at odds with democratic legal philosophy—the majority of the church’s constitutional postulates had found their way into the Constitution (Kowalczyk 2012, 240). At the final juncture—the constitutional referendum held in May 1997—the episcopate did not take a firm position. Having recognized the historical significance of the situation, but also observing that the “text of the Constitution raises serious moral concerns” (*Komunikat* 1997), the bishops left the decision to the conscience of the faithful. The failure to take an unequivocal stand might reflect any, or most likely some mixture, of the following reasons: (a) the divisions in the episcopate (the conservative wing of primate Glemp with bishops Michalik and Orszulik vs. liberals, such as bishops Pieronek and Życiński) (Borecki 2008, 372); (b) the fear of betting on the wrong horse, losing and compromising much of its social authority; and (c) mildly satisfactory results of the constitutional bargaining, especially when compared to the alternative of remaining under the regime of the Polish People Republic’s constitution of 1952, still in force and hostile to religion, with only *ad hoc* amendments and with the unratified concordat. But this final washing of hands by the bishops does not mean that the referendum was not an important veto point for the church. The hierarchs made it abundantly clear that they were determined to use it to their advantage. In the words of Bishop Pieronek, the separation formula “will not be accepted by the Church” and if it is enacted by the Commission, “the Catholic community in Poland will have no choice but to rely on the referendum, which can be won” (Nowakowska 1995).⁴ As a result, in a nearly universal perception of the entire political elite of the time, with a decisively negative position of the episcopate, the referendum would have been doomed (Stawrowski 2007, 59). Having capitalized on this conviction in the process of drafting

the constitution, the church did not have to deliver on its veto potential when it came to the citizens' vote.

6.3 AMERICAN CHURCHES AS POLITICAL STAKEHOLDERS

From the point of view of the first two parts of our model, the internal organization of religious actors and political opportunity structure that restricts their choices, the United States differs from Poland across many dimensions—including confessional structure of the society, type of political and party system, legal status of religious actors and political culture—that have a bearing on the political role religion and religious organizations can play. Let us briefly summarize these differences and look at some of their implications.

1. Confessional structure of the society is virtually homogeneously Catholic in Poland but very heterogeneous in America at all levels. Not only do Christians coexist with a significant number of Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and representatives of countless other faiths, but each of these religions is in itself divided. Of the largest Christian traditions Catholics, and mainline Protestants and evangelical Protestants, both varieties of Protestantism are further split into denominations, and these are often divided along liberal/conservative lines, with potentially important political consequences expounded by the so-called ethnoreligious and religious restructuring research perspectives (Smidt et al. 2009).
2. The internal structure of most Protestant denominations is diverse and decentralized. Frequently, particular congregations are only doctrinally linked to their denominations or traditions, but quite independent in terms of organization and leadership. Even the somewhat more centralized denominations, for instance Presbyterians, are certainly less cohesive than the Catholic Church. And the market share of the ones that are indeed strongly integrated and hierarchical, such as the Catholic and LDS churches, is insufficient to provide them with a real veto potential in American politics.
3. In contrast to Poland, where Catholicism has been traditionally associated with Polishness, none of the American religions can claim to exclusively represent American national identity. A religious-nationalistic political ideology is thus not a realistic option.

4. In general, all religious organizations in the United States enjoy the same legal status, as opposed to various forms of state recognition in Poland. The state acknowledges non-profit or public good character of religious associations by granting them tax exemptions, although these may be revoked when the church engages in overtly political activities (for instance, election campaigning for a candidate or substantial lobbying). While the ban potentially limits the political activity of churches (no such restrictions exist in Poland), it is very rarely enforced.⁵
5. The architecture of the American political system generates a greater number of veto players. The US executive is monistic (as opposed to the dual president–prime minister structure in Poland), but this is offset by symmetrical bicameralism, while in Poland the lower chamber can overturn the veto of the higher chamber. Primary elections at various levels offer additional access points for organized interests, according religious organizations “opportunities to cast faith-based ballots in presidential contests” (Bass and Rozell 2009, 487). Furthermore, the checks-and-balances system and the federal structure of government “have provided activists in the politics of church-state relations various access points to political decision making” (Jelen 2010).
6. As a result of the single-member district first-past-the-post electoral system, congressional voting discipline in American parties is low. For religious interest groups this is, in theory, a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it is easier to organize bipartisan support for the organization’s policy initiatives; on the other, lobbying may not be effectively focused on just a few powerful party leaders.
7. In neither system there exists a religious or Christian Democratic party that would represent the interests of religious groups. In the United States, by the very nature of the two-party system, none of the two catch-all parties can afford to exclusively represent any narrow interests and the struggle has naturally transferred onto the level of interparty factions, where the Christian Right has had some success within the GOP.⁶ In Poland, as shown earlier, the Catholic Church has had no incentive for contracting out political tasks to “its own” parties. Thus, in both cases, religious functionaries act on their own or through the network of various social organizations, but without the intermediary of Christian Democratic or religious political parties.

8. A system of deconcentrated judicial review—the competence of each court to rule on the constitutionality of a law—provides a number of veto points where the change of the status quo can be blocked. Coupled with the enormous political role of the courts, with the Supreme Court as the last instance, in interpreting the Constitution, litigation becomes an attractive and relatively low-cost strategy for actors who do not have resources to stage massive direct or grass-roots lobbying campaigns. Indeed, this kind of political strategy has become increasingly popular among religious groups in the last decades, although it is by no means clear to what extent this enhanced activity has influenced the content of judicial decisions (Wahlbeck 2009, 533). In Poland, judicial review is concentrated in a single institution, the Constitutional Tribunal (since 2016, with the *de facto* takeover of the Tribunal by the ruling party, the control of constitutionality is only nominal, in any case). However, since the Catholic Church had an opportunity to influence the process of drafting the Polish constitution, it did not have to resort to courts to obtain its favourable interpretation.
9. In both political cultures, the public presence of religion is readily accepted: churches are generally welcome, in view of the majority of citizens, to take position in political disputes, especially from a moral dimension. There are also significant differences. In contrast to “a discernibly religious mode of public argument” in America (Noll 2008, 2), Polish politicians rarely invoke God in their speeches or discuss their religious convictions. There is no religious motto on the Polish currency or invocation to God at the opening of court sessions. On the other hand, the Polish state regularly finances church-owned universities or religious instruction in public schools, something American federal or local governments, for constitutional reasons, wouldn’t dream of doing.

Under these circumstances, the political activity of religious actors assumes various organizational forms. The clergy may mobilize their congregations directly to conventional (registering to vote, voting) or unconventional (demonstrating, petitioning, letter-writing etc.) political participation, support politicians (by inviting them to speak in church or otherwise) or engage in social movements, with prominent examples of black pastors leading the civil rights movement. The propensity of clergy to get involved in politics varies with denomination, traditionalism, race,

region and other factors, some abstaining from politics completely, while others, especially the black protestant clergy, actually expected by their congregations to do so (Olson 2009). In more centralized and hierarchical churches, political mobilization may take place above the level of a local congregation (e.g. nationwide campaigns of the Mormon Church against Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and same-sex marriage, see Potz 2016; or the Catholic anti-abortion campaigns).

Equally often, however, religion leaves its mark on American politics through the intermediary of the so-called faith-based organizations (FBOs), voluntary associations situated in the sphere of civil society which draw their inspiration from religion but remain in various relations to religious groups themselves. While the term “FBO” is most often used with reference to providers of welfare services, it could be employed for associations engaged in a wide array of social activities. FBOs can be classified, on the basis of the level of their religious commitment and the role religion plays in their activity, into faith-permeated (strong religious component in the formulation of goals, personnel recruitment and services provided), faith-centred (linked to a specific religious community and relying on expressly religious principles in its activity), faith-affiliated (inspired or created by a religious group, but not incorporating religious practices into its activity), faith-background (fully secular in its operation, but rooted in a religious tradition) and faith-secular (a secular organization using resources of a religious community) partnerships (Sider and Unruh 2004, 119–120). As far as institutional relationship with religious communities is concerned, FBOs can be organizationally a part of a church, when it is created and managed by religious functionaries; formally linked to a church, when it needs the approval of church authorities to use its “trademark”, but is not organizationally incorporated into the religious community; or only ideologically inspired by a church, but entirely independent in its operation (Kamiński 2018, 520). In this last case, FBOs are sometimes referred to as religiously motivated associations (RMAs) to underscore the lack of institutional connection to religious groups or places of worship (Göçmen 2014, 100).

In discussing the role of religious factors in American politics (and, indeed, anywhere else), it is crucially important to distinguish between the ability of ROI to impact the policymaking processes—something the veto player–stakeholder dichotomy is designed to address—and the significance of religion as such in “shaping voting decisions, party alignments and electoral outcomes” (McTague and Layman 2009, 331). These two dimen-

sions of religion's political influence are certainly related, but quite independent. It may well be that religious affiliation, beliefs and practices are significant variables in explaining political choices, attitudes and behaviours—through various mechanisms, such as viewing political issues through moral teachings of one's religious group or skill creation and political mobilization in churches discussed in Chap. 5—even if religious actors are for the most part unable, for structural reasons discussed earlier in this section, to bring these faith-based attitudes to bear on major policy decisions.

The influence of religion on political choices of Americans is usually explained by the three “B” factors we have also taken into account when discussing the Polish case. *Belonging*—membership in one of the major religious traditions in the United States, also referred to as the ethnoreligious perspective—has lost much, though not all (see, e.g. the evidence from the 2004 presidential election in Guth et al. 2006) of the potential to shape political attitudes, including party affiliation, it had until approximately the 1960s–1970s. With the restructuring of American religion—a divide between modernist/liberal and traditionalist/conservative camps which runs across faith traditions and denominations (Wuthnow 1988)—*belief*, understood as alignment with one of these camps, seems to be a more reliable predictor of political choices, with traditionalists mostly supporting the Republican party and modernists the Democratic party. Finally, *behaviour*, measured by the frequency of religious practice, correlates positively, for reasons similar to the ones discussed in relation to Poland, with voter turnout and other forms of political participation (Wielhouwer 2009, 402–403).

Whichever of these explanations (or some combination thereof) is the most plausible in particular cases, there seems to be a wide perception that the impact of religion on political choices of Americans and on the decisions of the country's leaders is considerable and perhaps growing (Phillips 2006, viii–ix). There are, however, indications that religion's influence on some spheres of American politics may be somewhat overestimated. David O'Connell's study of the effectiveness of presidential religious rhetoric demonstrates that people are generally unpersuaded by religious arguments made by presidents and are, on average, equally or even less likely to support the proposed policy when it is backed by religious rhetoric (O'Connell 2015). These results, obtained from an experimental study, find support in the actual failures of American presidents to implement policies backed by religious arguments (*ibid.*). As a consequence, it does

not suffice to show the increasing use of religious language in political discourse over the last decades (Stecker 2011) to jump to the conclusion of the growing impact of religion on political attitudes and behaviours of the public. At the same time, religious rhetoric has been demonstrably more effective in the sphere of electoral (as opposed to executive) politics, where its influence “depends largely on how it activates emotions and a sense of shared identity in the public” (Chapp 2013, xi).

In another interesting study concerning the influence of religious convictions on the attitude towards democratic procedures, the majority of a religiously balanced group of respondents stated they respected the results of legitimate decision-making procedures (democratic or not), even if these results went against their substantive preferences, including those rooted in religion (Evans 2014). Institutional/procedural legitimacy of the American political system is thus, in the perception of these citizens, relatively dissociated from their normative convictions: they would certainly welcome implementation of their faith-based preferences into public policies, but only through legitimate decision-making procedures. These procedures, importantly, are not expected to be grounded in religion (*ibid.*, 160), that is, theocratic in my sense of the term. All these suggest that religious convictions, however deeply held and meaningful in a person’s life, are not subversive of democratic political process, as some critics warn (e.g. Phillips 2006).

In conclusion, of all the circumstances listed at the beginning of this section, the enormous religious diversity, both between and within religious traditions, and the resulting inability of any religious organization to occupy a dominant position on the religious market—is probably the main factor inhibiting the political impact of religious actors. As a result, “there is no single religious actor that can negotiate with the state” (Mohseni and Wilcox 2016, 197). It also impairs these actors’ coalition-building potential: broad interconfessional coalitions are possible, but only occasionally, when a salient moral issue with considerable public resonance is at stake (such as abortion, ERA or same-sex marriage), but not over issues such as the legal model of church-state relations. It is not clear, either, to what extent religious organizations can make a difference in electoral politics. To revert to our model, because of the diversity, decentralization of leadership and lack of cohesion of American religious organizations (part I) and due to insufficient veto points offered by the party system and political system in general (part II), religious actors in America are, for the most

part, and in contrast to the Catholic Church in Poland, more of stakeholders than veto players in the sense elaborated earlier.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter sought to address the fundamental research question: to what extent can religious actors influence key decisions that fall within the sphere of their interest? I have condensed the continuum ranging from all-powerful churches to totally impotent or neutralized religious organizations into two discrete types: religious organizations as veto players and stakeholders. It is important to note that, while the former are situated towards the “strong church” and the latter towards the “weak church” ends of the scale, both are, in fact, quite far from these extremes. A veto player is a part of a network of interconnected actors rather than a single decision-maker, while a stakeholder is not powerless: even though it cannot block decisions, it inheres in collective forms of power. One limitation of a veto player’s power is evident in my proposition to consider the religious actors’ impact on key decisions on issues that *fall within the sphere of their interest*. The sphere is, to be sure, defined by the religious actor itself. But such self-determination may already reflect this actor’s realistic assessment of the boundaries of its power. This is certainly the route the Catholic Church was forced to take, from the nearly universal scope of its claims at the climax of its political power in the Middle Ages to a much narrower area it aims to control nowadays.

A model of religion-inspired political activity taking into account the internal organization of a religious actor, with its members, resources of various types, leadership structures and level of ideological cohesion; the external political opportunity structure offering access points but also checks on the political ambitions of churches; and the strategies it chooses, facilitated by the comparison of Polish and American religious actors in terms of their potential impact on the political process. Using the case of the making of the Polish constitution, I attempted to demonstrate the Polish Catholic Church’s considerable veto power in important areas of public policy. With regard to American religious organizations, I submitted on theoretical grounds (although without a comparable case study) that they are usually able to exert their influence in a more issue-focused manner, in comparison to the generalized political influence of the Polish Catholic Church. It is important to note that, while the relatively high number of veto players in the American political system provides religious

actors with multiple access opportunities, they are not themselves these veto players; nor are they permanently associated with institutional players, and are only weakly linked, at best, to partisan players (in the way some Religious Right organizations are linked to the Republican Party). Thus, while American religious organizations are certainly involved in many political issues that fall within their sphere of interest—there are political stakeholders in these issues—they rarely are capable of blocking or promoting major policy decisions in the way that the Catholic Church in Poland has been.

This is not to imply that the role of religion in American society and politics is small or less prominent than in Poland. Such statements are just too general to be meaningful. The purpose of the foregoing discussion is precisely to avoid such sweeping assertions and ground our understanding of the political impact of religion in empirically viable categories. Specifically, to assign a veto player type of agency to an actor it is necessary to demonstrate a causal link between its (in)actions and the outcome, while for a stakeholder it is sufficient to show the actor's interest and involvement in the outcome. To say that *religious organizations* as political actors are, for the most part, unable to become actual veto players does not automatically render *religion*, as a non-institutional force, politically powerless. Indeed, numerous studies, of which only a fraction could be referred here, indicate that belonging to a community of shared beliefs, norms and practice, which promotes common identity, homogeneous world view and shared ethos (see Fig. 2.1 in Chap. 2), can affect citizens' political attitudes and behaviours.

On a more general level, the switching of perspective from the place religious organizations occupy in the institutional-legal setting of a political system to the scope, extent and types of influence they exert as political actors on the decisions made within this system—and thus affect the distribution of political power—is a fundamental, defining move for the project of political science of religion.

EPILOGUE

Political science of religion, rather than being a theory of everything religio-political, is a set of concepts and ideas of how to most effectively approach the relation between politics and religion from the vantage point of political science. And since political science deals primarily with power relations, religion is seen, in this perspective, as a power resource, while

religious organizations are political actors attempting to realize their goals within a political system.

The critique offered at the outset has been just a jumping-off point to formulating two basic methodological principles in studying the political role of religion: *non-normativism* and *political focusing*. The former is worth reiterating (even if it seems a bit of a positivistic pedantry), since the subject of religion is so value-laden. It postulates understanding religion non-theologically as a social phenomenon which influences political attitudes and behaviours of individual and collective actors, but which is neither true or false, good or evil, necessary or redundant for politics. The latter principle, what I refer to as political focusing (or reduction), insists on looking at religion primarily from the perspective of its political significance, with other aspects of religion coming into focus only insofar as they help explain its relationship with politics. Such a view is not, however, necessarily superficial. It is narrow, but deep: narrow, because it focuses solely on the political aspect of the role religion plays in human experience; deep, because it seeks to explore this relationship on various levels. This is precisely why I proposed to combine three main approaches I identified in the scientific study of the subject—the cultural, the social movements theory and the transactional—into a single explanatory scheme, in which these approaches are not treated as alternative and mutually exclusive, but as addressing various layers at which religion impacts on politics.

The cultural perspective explains how individuals come to espouse religious ideas related to political power, how they use them to assess the validity (legitimacy) of power claims of other actors or to put forward such claims themselves, and how these ideas predispose them to political mobilization. Note that “culture” in the cultural approach is understood broadly in the extended anthropological sense, where the extension reaches as far as evolutionary origins of human psychological traits and patterns of political behaviour. SMT can then be used to explain how, at a sociological level, a range of material, symbolic and other resources are employed to organize these religion-induced dispositions into politics. Finally, the economic/transactional models show how religious actors thus constituted pursue their agendas in interaction with other actors populating political systems, employing a variety of strategies, both general-purpose and religion-specific. To integrate all these levels of analysis into a thorough explanation of religio-political phenomena would indeed be a great accomplishment, something which is rarely if ever attempted. This book is no exception: it postulates such a synthesis, without actually

achieving it in relation to every issue it deals with (tentative examples of such integration are discussions of legitimation of power in Sect. 3.1 of Chap. 3 and of religious extremism in Sect. 5.4 of Chap. 5). But it does offer a number of conceptualizations and ideas which, I trust, may facilitate further inquiry into the subject.

These contributions come, first, in Chap. 2, in the form of general theoretical and methodological guidelines (the “nine theses” of political science of religion). Next, in addition to the three approaches discussed earlier, constituting separate but integrated levels of analysis, a conception of a political system is developed, viewed functionally (“black box”) or structurally (“white box”), in which religious actors, perceived either as institutional units or as internally diverse communities (ROI vs. ROC), engage in power relations as either veto players or stakeholders.

I then focus on the three thematic fields political science of religion should cover: internal power relations in religious organizations; theocracies; and religion and religious actors in non-theocratic political systems. All the specific topics that have been discussed—religious legitimation of power, religious leadership, religion-based political mobilization, religion-induced political protest or violence and so on—pertain to or are closely related with these fields. In theorizing theocracy (Chap. 3), a non-procedural understanding of the term was proposed (based on supernatural legitimation of power), which facilitates its integration with typologies of political systems by making the source of legitimacy an important dimension of these classifications. I then discuss how religious legitimacy of power is achieved (“sacralization” of power) and how theocratic power relations are created and maintained through a series of interactions (exchanges) between religious functionaries, secular rulers and their subjects.

The analysis of theocratic power relations (Chap. 4), both in theocratic states and non-state political systems (e.g. of various religious organizations), addresses the three key issues: how political power is gained and lost, how it gets institutionalized and by what means it is maintained against potential resistance. These three issues—theocratic succession procedures, institutional regimes and political control, respectively—are discussed using examples of mostly North American theocracies, particularly the New England Puritans, the Shakers and the Mormons.

In the second part of the book, I use the notion of survival strategies to explain the persistence of religion in democratic political systems (Chap. 5), where it lost its legitimating function for political authority, but never

withdrew completely from the public sphere. Religious organizations are conceived of as political actors using a spectrum of strategies, both emulating political behaviour of their secular counterparts and employing religion-specific methods. Religion itself can be a source of conflicts, both violent and symbolic, intense and protracted, with stakes ranging from the assertion by a religious actor of its public presence to thorough reconstruction of states and societies.

Finally, in Chap. 6, the varying ability of these actors to affect the policymaking processes is conceptualized with a dichotomy of veto players against stakeholders, with only the former being actually able to block the change of the status quo. Methodologically, to assign the status of a veto player to an actor, one should be able to demonstrate a causal link between this player's actions and the outcome in question—something I have attempted to do in relation to the Polish Catholic Church in the process of enacting the constitution. The ability of an actor to exercise political agency depends on a number of variables, such as confessional structure of the society; internal organization, patterns of leadership and cohesion of the religious actor; the strategies it uses; and the political opportunity structure it encounters, featuring factors such as the type of political regime, dynamics of the party system, model of church-state relations, patterns of political competition and political culture. The comparative analysis of these variables between Poland the United States served to explain the differing potential of religious actors in these political systems.

In sum, to answer Steven Kettell's question: yes, we do need a political science of religion. We need it to promote the awareness of the enduring significance of religion for the sphere of politics among political scientists and, perhaps paradoxically, to convince them to study it with similar categories and methods they apply to other political phenomena. When these goals are reached—when religion moves into the mainstream of political science—political science of religion, having accomplished its mission, might rest in peace.

NOTES

1. For an account of the political role of the church in Poland prior to 1989, see, for example, Ramet 2017, Potz 2019a.
2. Formal membership in the church is even higher, since most non-believers who have been baptized into the church as children fail, for various reasons, to perform the official act of apostasy. The membership in other religious

- groups (the Orthodox Church and Jehovah Witnesses being the largest) is around 1–1.5%. This does not take into account the significant recent Ukrainian immigration, mostly of Orthodox confession.
3. For similar findings on the United States, see Wielhouwer 2009, 405–407.
 4. He was backed by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, generally sympathetic to the church's claims, who warned that, if the opponents of the separation formula were outvoted in the Constitutional Commission, "we will transfer it to the referendum" (Nowakowska 1995).
 5. In fact, the Internal Revenue Service revoked the tax-exempt status of a church because of political campaigning only once, in 1995 (for the legal analysis of the case, see Hatfield 2006, 137–138).
 6. Mohseni and Wilcox go as far as arguing that "[i]n some ways, the Republican Party has evolved into a type of Christian Democratic party, with the noticeable absence of support for the welfare state" (2016, 199). But isn't this precisely the definition of a conservative (not Christian Democratic) party, which the Republicans really are?

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