A Narrative Analysis of Hungarian Evangelicals: The Public, the Political, and the Personal

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Abstract

This research sheds light on Hungarian evangelicalism; a global religious movement originally from the United States. Recognizing that these American roots still linger on, the thesis explores 1) those public matters that capture the attention of Hungarian evangelicals, and 2) the role of religion in informing these opinions. Based on qualitative findings, I offer two arguments. First, I argue that religion provides a frame that directs evangelical thinking, but it does not determine which concrete public issues evangelicals will engage with. This will be chosen by personally and divinely shaped vocations. Accordingly, I argue for a "religious individualism" among Hungarian evangelicals. While their concrete opinions do not seem to reflect religious influence, the locus of where they take action (in the personal dimension as opposed to globally) is rooted in their individualistic evangelical beliefs. These results contribute to understanding religion as a category that is elusive yet capable of providing a template to the believer's eyes.

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Introduction

This thesis started with an intriguing experience. After my initial interest in American evangelicalism, I turned to their Hungarian counterparts – and I was perplexed whenever I tried to draw a comparison. American evangelicalism is intertwined into the fabric of American politics.[1] Most recently, in the American elections, the (white) evangelical votes for Donald Trump formed a substantial support for the president.[2] Christian Smith famously asserted that American evangelicalism is strong because it envisions itself in a continuous battle with pluralistic society.[3] This is most salient when it shows its political aspirations: while evangelicalism is diverse, these political groups do see themselves at war, and are accordingly belligerent. Furthermore, evangelical Protestants make up a minimum 25%[4] of the predominantly (70-75%)[5] Christian American population. Evangelicalism therefore thrives, and – in Smith's account – it does so by clashing itself against the secular side of the country.

However, once we look elsewhere, evangelicalism no longer seems to have the same profile. In Hungary, evangelicals do not have a fierce political presence. Even when directly attacked by a Hungarian law[6] that changed the legal definitions of religions and thus pushed many religious groups, including evangelicals, out of the legal category of religions, evangelicals remained silent. This silence was puzzling. What do Hungarian evangelicals – a

[1] Sam Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide: The Conservative Protestant Subculture in Canada and the United States*, McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion, Ser. 2, 26 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 125–32.
[2] Gregory A. Smith and Jessica Martínez, "How the Faithful Voted: A Preliminary 2016 Analysis," *Pew Research Center*, November 9, 2016, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/.
[3] Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1998) Most notably Chapter 4, 89-119.
[4] Pew Research Center, "Religious Landscape Study," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, May 11, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/.
[5] Pew Research Center puts Christianity to 70.6% in 2014, Gallup measures it to be at 75.2% in 2015. Ibid.; Gallup, "Percentage of Christians in U.S. Drifting Down, but Still High," *Gallup.Com*, accessed April 27, 2017, http://www.gallup.com/poll/187955/percentage-christians-drifting-down-high.aspx.
[6] Act No. CCVI of 2011 on the Right to Freedom of Conscience and Religion and the Legal Status of Churches, Denominations, and Religious Communities.

small but not negligible group – say about the world? What are those themes that capture them? In sum: how do Hungarian evangelicals perceive and frame their society in public, political, or national terms? It is these questions that this thesis will set out to explore. The questions indicate that this is a work of social science: I was curious about the place of evangelicals in the fabric of Hungarian society. I was curious about how they relate to other groups and ideas, and I hoped to describe them from the disciplinary perspective of the sociology of religion. It is an exploratory work; Hungarian evangelicalism has hardly been studied at all. In everyday discourse, they seem suspicious to the outsider's eyes. For this reason, like other authors on evangelicalism (e.g. Randall Balmer, Christian Smith, Tanya M. Luhrmann),[7] I too dedicate my work to bridging the abyss between believer and non-believer, evangelical and non-evangelical. The context is different from what is in the United States, but the misunderstandings run similarly deep.

Following these initial questions, the research explores three dimensions: the public, the political, and the personal. By public, I mean the broadest and widest themes that people offer when they describe "how things in the world are". This means values and evaluations; opinions on social groups, ideologies, roles, taboos, and current public affairs. The political is a smaller category which refers to those public topics that concern leadership, party affiliations, political alignments, polarizing debates and figures, and most importantly power. Finally, the personal in this thesis refers to the dimension that concerns the mundane but important matters of personal life: feelings, opinions about the self, relations with other individuals, and personality. Evangelicalism has a place in all these large dimensions; in the thesis, I explore what kind of position religion takes in shaping the individual in these different aspects of social life.

[7] Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America, 25th Anniversary Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2014); Smith, *American Evangelicalism*; Tanya M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 2012).

In the research process, several concrete topics were used as proxies through which the evangelical position can be unpacked. I observe how evangelicals feel about national topics such as the recent refugee crisis, the 2016 American presidential elections, Hungarian national holidays, and about the role of Hungarian character in the identity of their churches. These topics localize the thesis in the discipline of nationalism studies. As I use these themes as highlights of how evangelicals approach current public and political topics, I can describe how Hungarian evangelicals identify themselves at the crossroads of religious identity and national affiliations. For this reason, the thesis does not only engage with the everydayness of religion but – building upon Rogers Brubaker[8] – also with the everydayness of national identity. Following Brubaker, I detect how religion becomes activated – rather than being simply a "civilizational" marker[9] (see later) – for Hungarian evangelicals. By offering an account of these concrete themes, the thesis offers insight to both recent evangelical opinions as well as to theoretical considerations about questions of nationalism studies, for instance the "protean"[10] nature of categories – such as nation or religion – in our social world.

In order to answer the question of how evangelicals perceive and frame their world, this research was built upon a horizontal and vertical qualitative methodology. I undertook participant observation in two Budapest-based evangelical communities to provide width to the research. Through this, I could give an accurate description of the evangelical landscape in Hungary: what they do, what they pray for, how their religious sermons respond to the current public affairs. Then, to provide depth to the research, I conducted in-depth interviews about what themes members of these communities found important in public life, and how religion

[8] Rogers Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, 2nd print (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 2008).
[9] Rogers Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationism: The European Populist Moment in Comparative Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 8 (June 21, 2017): 1191–1226.
[10] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10.

informed the opinions about these issues. Inspired largely by sociologist Nancy Ammerman,[11] I captured how their religion precipitates into the everyday meaning-making of Hungarian evangelicals.

The virtues of this methodology also mean that this research is not a quantitative sociological study. It is a clear methodological limitation that the thesis does not aim for representation – it aims for depth and validity. It is an important future task of sociologists of religion to map the growing community of evangelicals in accurate ways (and with accounting for all the challenges that a quantitative research poses about them, to which I allude in the methodology chapter). However, in this research, I decided to describe the thoughts, opinions, and internal pluralism of these communities, instead of describing them as a coherent group.

Through this exploration, then, the thesis achieves two purposes. First, by investigating what public matters seem important to Hungarian evangelicals, it introduces the vivid and multifaceted communities that are worth studying further. Second, the research question is how religion informs evangelical views on these public matters. As I will argue, religion matters by providing a general moral lens through which evangelicals view the world; yet it does not determine exactly which public topics evangelicals will find vital. Concrete topics and support for policies are rarely born of religious narratives; they instead grown from political and national socialization spheres. An illustrative result of how evangelicalism behaves as a frame is regarding agency. As their religion indicates, evangelicals look at the world in pessimistic terms: this world, for them, is "*beyond repair*", and warrants no action to ameliorate it. Yet in personal terms, evangelicals are highly motivated to take action. This is, as I will argue, in great deal due to their highly personal religion. The contrast between these two spheres – the public and the personal, or the global and the local – gives a snapshot of how Hungarian evangelicals

[11] Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

think about the world, where their dedication lies, and in what sense they are inspired by their religious convictions even outside the walls of their church.

The structure of the thesis starts with the theoretical framing of this discussion. As already indicated in the introduction, this involves themes of everyday religion, everyday nationhood, and the locus of evangelicalism in different societies. The literature review observes how the globally spreading evangelicalism adapts to its surroundings once it reaches new contexts. Accordingly, in the contextualization, I introduce not only the case of evangelical churches in Hungary, but the Hungarian religio-political landscape as well, both with regards to history and to the present. I discuss not only evangelicals but also the Pentecostal, Hungarian-founded Faith Church in order to further highlight the specificities of Hungarian evangelicalism by this small-scale auxiliary comparison. Following the methodology chapter, the public and political orientation of evangelical churches will be discussed in the first half of the results, where I look at what sermons and teachings reveal about certain highlighted national issues. Then, in the second half of the chapter, the discussion moves to the personal as I lay out the answers to the research questions. The final discussion section presents how the results relate to the theoretical frame and to the wider literature on evangelicalism.

Chapter I: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter charts the theoretical background of the thesis. This includes the definitions of the discussed groups, the localization of this thesis within the theories of nationalism, and the theoretical considerations of the deculturation of religion that are applicable to the discussion of this research. Discussion of the theories of nationalism includes classic and contemporary theories, group-forming processes, and the everydayness of nationhood and religion as group markers. Finally, the chapter discussion examines transnational group formation and international imagined communities in the case of contemporary religions.

On Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism

Who are evangelical and Pentecostal Christians? This is the first clarification that is in order. Although groups are never homogeneous, and their borders are always hazy,[12] evangelicals and Pentecostals pose an extra problem to this. Due to the hazy borders, the distinction between these groups is often recommended to be left undefined.[13] In addition, as each group often sticks with the same identification term 'Christian', their presence may decrease in visibility due to the lack of strongly pronounced denominational character.[14] This thesis primarily concerns itself with evangelicalism and its specificities, but because of the subsequent small-scale comparison, it is necessary to define the ways in which evangelicalism differs from Pentecostalism.

[12] Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 8.
[13] Simon Coleman and Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Introduction: A New Field?," in *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism*, ed. Simon Coleman and Rosalind I. J. Hackett (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 6.
[14] See footnote in: Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 13.

Evangelicalism, in many ways, is less of a denomination than it is a type of spirituality or a movement. This is the path which British historian David W. Bebbington takes when he identifies the common markers of evangelicalism.[15] In his account, these are; "*conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross."[16] Biblicism is understood as biblical literalism in this thesis, i.e. taking the Bible as divine and infallible in all of its words. In addition to these four markers, a fifth character ought to be added: the evangelical experience is a highly *personalized belief*. A key notion is experiencing God as a person and as a most intimate friend.[17] In this definition it is vital to see that evangelicals can belong to various denominations, even non-Protestant ones. Despite their own loose credos it is these five characters that demarcate whom this thesis classifies as "born-again", "Bible-believing", self-identifying evangelical.

It is of course difficult to define how Pentecostalism differs. After all, they too emphasize conversion, mission, personal relationship, biblicism, and the importance of the salvation of Christ. It is perhaps in this last character where a shift in theology can be detected. Allan Anderson, the leading scholar for the study of Pentecostalism states,

> the term 'Pentecostalism' is appropriate for describing all churches and movements globally that emphasize the working of the gifts of the Spirit, both on phenomenological and theological grounds (…) as a movement concerned primarily with the *experience* of the working of the Holy Spirit, and the *practice* of spiritual gifts.[18]

This is not to say that we cannot find evangelicals who, for example, speak in tongues (*glossolalia*), or that all Pentecostals practice spiritual gifts always. Nevertheless, in the

[15] David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1993), 1–17, emphasis in original.
[16] Ibid., 2–3.
[17] Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*.
[18] Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 2. ed (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6.

difficult task of clarifying what Pentecostalism and evangelicalism mean, the divergence lies here in the emphasis on textual interpretations and Christ-centrism as opposed to the works and gifts of the Holy Spirit. There may be other theological differences (e.g. the prosperity gospel)[19] that further distinguish Pentecostals from evangelicals, but the adaptation of these theological doctrines depends on the context, and thus cannot be seen as definitive. The same applies to the degree of engagement with the secular culture. While "engaged orthopraxy" (that is, maintaining conservative theology while engaging with the surrounding intellectual, cultural, social, and political life) is a characteristic feature of evangelicals,[20] the degree of this differs even in the individual's spiritual life, let alone in different communities, and therefore cannot provide an operative distinction between Pentecostals and evangelicals. In the end it is the shift towards the Holy Spirit that can most effectively capture the difference between the two movements. It is what I consider useful, in spite of the limitations, for the present discussion.

The difference between Pentecostalism and evangelicalism will be treated as subtle but at the same time real. It was not the central focus of my fieldwork but it was my impression that Hungarian evangelicals do not necessarily see the line clearly. There is no universal opinion about where to place Pentecostals vis-à-vis evangelicals. The closeness between the two movements has not led to the crystallization of boundaries and the polarization of differences. The similarities and subtle dissimilarities are what allow for a comparison in this thesis. The distinction exists and it is small enough to make the comparison meaningful.

What makes the comparison relevant to the larger discussion is the global spread of both movements. Yet even at this scale the distinction is not systematically accounted for in scholarly works. For example, historian Philip Jenkins highlights the shocking historical success of Pentecostalism.[21] Other work accounts for this globalizing trend by highlighting

[19] Coleman and Hackett, "Introduction: A New Field?," 9–12.
[20] Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 10.
[21] Philip Jenkins, "The Christian Revolution," in *The Globalization Reader*, ed. Frank J. Lechner and John Boli, 5. ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 429–37.

evangelicalism instead, and describing Pentecostalism as a sub-genre of it.[22] Nevertheless, this blurring only makes one pattern clearer; both movements have the same approach, and the same success in becoming transnational, and addressing audiences far from their original locus.[23] Although there are many contextual specificities to it, the reason behind the success is, in my view, rooted in three factors. Firstly, evangelicalism and Pentecostalism "[introduce] a new kind of voluntary religious organization into what was previously a uniform religious landscape."[24] This new feature encourages what Catherine Wanner calls "the ecology of conversion",[25] a contextual setup that fosters widespread conversion to these movements. In this way, secondly, evangelicalism and Pentecostalism each "foster practices that (…) bypass the nation and deterritorialize identity and culture";[26] thereby offering a new, overarching, but similarly 'imagined' global community to the believers. Thirdly, despite the "spiritual empowerment transcending language and nation",[27] there are still certain features that can serve as a basis for a noticeable transnational evangelical subculture.[28] A notable feature in this regard is, for illustration, the attitude towards themes of sexuality and gender. The evangelical discussion about it is vast and concrete, and the importance of sexuality is raised to symbolic

[22] Joshua J. Yates, "American Evangelicals: The Overlooked Globalizers and Their Unintended Gospel of Modernity," in *The Globalization Reader*, ed. Frank J. Lechner and John Boli, 5. ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 438–39.

[23] The global diffusion has been accounted for in enormous scholarship, most notably with regards to Latin America and Africa. See for example: Paul Freston, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa, and Latin America* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); David Smilde, *Reason to Believe: Cultural Agency in Latin American Evangelicalism*, The Anthropology of Christianity 3 (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007); T. O. Ranger, ed., *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa*, Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in the Global South (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Paul Freston, ed., *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America*, Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in the Global South (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); David Halloran Lumsdaine, ed., *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia*, Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in the Global South (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe, *A Short History of Global Evangelicalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[24] David Martin, "Homeland and Diaspora: The Case of Pentecostalism," in *The Call of the Homeland: Diaspora Nationalisms, Past and Present*, ed. Allon Gal, Athena S. Leoussi, and Anthony D. Smith, Institute of Jewish Studies, Studies in Judaica 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 355.

[25] Catherine Wanner, "Conversion and the Mobile Self: Evangelicalism as 'Travelling Culture,'" in *Conversion after Socialism: Disruptions, Modernisms and Technologies of Faith in the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Mathijs Pelkmans (New York: Berghahn, 2009), 163–83.

[26] Ibid., 164.

[27] Martin, "Homeland and Diaspora: The Case of Pentecostalism," 360.

[28] Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide*.

levels. It is by discussing this theme that the relation towards the secular culture is negotiated.[29] This remains a part of the subculture, even when most other themes are easily shifted.

As this last notion highlights, religions themselves have their own spheres where their self-identities are constructed, and where group boundaries are set out. It now becomes important to clarify how evangelicalism as a religion operates within, and sometimes co-operates with, other group-forming structures, most notably nationalism.

Religion in the Theories of Nationalism

Discussing religion and nationalism in the same breath has been done from various approaches. The classical theorists of nationalism – most notably Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Eric Hobsbawm[30] – preferred to look at the factors of modernity when seeking to explain the emergence of nationalism. For Elie Kedourie, nationalism was the direct replacement of religion,[31] thus painting nationalism not only as inherently modern, but also inherently secular. Following 1990, this paradigm has been changing. Religion ceased to be an obscure phenomenon that would only matter to the attention of the anthropologist. In the post-9/11 era, "the place of religion in public life has become more prominent and more controversial".[32] This is a trend in the theories of nationalism too. The most notable scholarly work here is that of Rogers Brubaker and Philip Gorski, whose approaches offer more than a nod to the social existence to religion. In fact, they make it clear that the relevance of religion in social inquiry is strong. For Brubaker, religion "has tended to displace language as the

[29] Amy DeRogatis, *Saving Sex: Sexuality and Salvation in American Evangelicalism* (Oxford University Press, 2014).
[30] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Reprint, New Perspectives on the Past (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised ed. (London: Verso, 2006); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[31] Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 3rd ed., reprint, Hutchinson University Library: Politics (London: Hutchinson, 1979).
[32] Daniel Philpott, "Has the Study of Global Politics Found Religion?," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, no. 1 (June 2009): 184.

cutting edge of contestation over the political accommodation of cultural difference in Western liberal democracies".[33] For Gorski, "[o]utside of Western Europe, organized religion is flourishing, even resurging. So, too, is politicized religion. (…) Which is to say that the definition of the secular and its relationship to the religious are as hotly disputed now as ever, and that the scope of the debate is probably wider than ever."[34]

In addition to the valuable work these scholars have done by bringing religion back to the scope of debate on nationalism, the classics are still useful as a larger framework for the present discussion. Benedict Anderson's terminus, the 'imagined communities', remains useful for the understanding of how a vast, overarching community can be construed and sustained. Anderson himself regularly compares national sentiments to religious affiliations. He points out that nationalist imagining appears to have "a strong affinity with religious imaginings",[35] and he critiques Ernest Gellner for making a distinction between the imagined communities of nations[36] as opposed to any other such community, for example religious ones. Erasing this distinction is important because "[r]religion, like the nation, is not «just there» in any objective sense of the term but must be rediscovered, reinvented, and reconceptualized",[37] indeed reimagined. More concretely, Anderson argues for certain tools that contribute to imagining a national community. For him, these are the novel and the newspaper that ensure that "a sociological organism [is] moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time."[38] This homogeneous time is filled by the shared, simultaneous activities that for instance newspaper grants. This means that any member of the community will know that millions of their fellow community members are doing the exact same activity at any given time. This argument for

[33] Rogers Brubaker, "Language, Religion and the Politics of Difference," *Nations and Nationalism* 19, no. 1 (January 2013): 16.
[34] Philip S. Gorski and Ateş Altınordu, "After Secularization?," *Annual Review of Sociology* 34 (2008): 76–77.
[35] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 10.
[36] Ibid., 6.
[37] Catarina Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security," *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (2004): 741–67.
[38] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 25.

the time-based, ritualistic imagination of the community provides a solid framework to contemporary communities too.

This argument is especially applicable to religious communities. Anderson too compares newspaper reading with morning prayers.[39] For global evangelicalism in the 21st century, where religious services are regularly live-streamed, televangelism is widespread, and where religious rituals are decreasingly accentuated to maximize evangelizing, it seems that relying on shared temporality for building a global, transnational, imagined religious community is still as crucial as Anderson considered it to be in the construction of national camaraderie.

This notion appeared in previous works on understanding religion. Durkheim famously understands the religious community as "[a] society whose members are united because they imagine the sacred world and its relations with the profane world in the same way".[40] While Anderson's argument on temporality focuses on the coeval *actions* of the members of a community, Durkheim's definition seems to refer more so to the *content* of the sacred-profane relations, in other words, shows a more creedal approach. Naturally, Durkheim remains the depository of the functionalist understanding of religion, but his understanding of the community is much less fit to describe the realities of the socially constructed world, such as individual creeds, globalization-induced alterations, or the distinctive ways in which religion can be practiced *or* believed. Anderson's understanding is more helpful in unpacking the social aspect of religion, that is, its group-forming, community-creating character.

In this social aspect of religion, Brubaker makes fundamentally important observations. In the quest to localize religion within the theories of nationalism, the way he places religion

[39] Ibid., 35.
[40] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 41.

next to ethnicity and nationalism gives a social dimension to the previously made comparisons that understood nationalism as its own kind of religion.[41] Brubaker instead argues this:

> Ethnicity and nationalism have been characterized as basic sources and forms of social and cultural identification. (…) Religion, too, can be understood in this manner. As a principle of vision and division of the social world, to use Bourdieu's phrase, religion too provides a way of identifying and naming fundamental social groups, a powerful framework for imagining community and a set of schemas, templates and metaphors for making sense of the social world.[42]

This argument is valuable because it does not only see religion and nationalism as the mirrors and surrogates of each other, but understands them as phenomena that can create boundaries, in-group and out-group dynamics, political alliances, and powerful imagined communities that reach far and remain pervasive.

While bringing religion closer to ethnicity and nationhood, it is also important to see religion as in some ways distinctive. Firstly, religion is "a totalizing order capable of regulating every aspect of life"[43] by installing a moral, normative content upon it. Secondly, religion is "transformative":[44] the conversion experience has a profound change on the individual's life (traced in self-narration,[45] language use,[46] and thorough resocialization).[47] From this perspective, it is not surprising that religions create new social dimensions; ones that often cut through other, previously existing social groups.[48] This is especially valid for religious groups

[41] Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*, Reprint (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[42] Rogers Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches*," *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 4.
[43] Roger Friedland, "Money, Sex, and God: The Erotic Logic of Religious Nationalism," *Sociological Theory* 20, no. 3 (2002): 390.
[44] Brubaker, "Language, Religion and the Politics of Difference," 7.
[45] Peter G. Stromberg, *Language and Self-Transformation: A Study of the Christian Conversion Narrative* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[46] Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
[47] Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 328–29.
[48] See for example László Fosztó, *Ritual Revitalisation after Socialism: Community, Personhood, and Conversion among Roma in a Transylvanian Village*, Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia 21 (Berlin: LIT, 2010).

like evangelicals and Pentecostals, where the conversion experience is described in terms of new life and identification, namely the "born-again" experience. Conversion brings a new lens through which the world is observed, and this new lens means that the overarching in-group will be religious rather than ethnic or national. This does not mean that previous categories cease to be relevant or will no longer carry out their structural influence on the life of the individual. It is these lingering social allegiances whose effects on transnational religions become particularly fascinating.

Everyday Nationhood

For Weber, "it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists" that would form the basis of ethnic membership; "it is primarily the political community, no matter how artificially organized, that inspires the belief in common ethnicity."[49] This focus on political community is relevant for the present inquiry because political communities are pervasive. The current international system still operates with the nation-state structure. By being born into a certain country and a certain citizenship, the individual enjoys different rights, and this structural existence of nationalism leaves little room for individuals to cease thinking of themselves in national terms. As Anthony Smith put it, "because so many people feel their nation performs important social and political functions, it is going to take more than a Maastricht Treaty to wean them away from these deeply felt national allegiances."[50] The connection between the political presence of 'the nation' and the individual experience of nationhood is that these political structures precipitate within the individual's life.

[49] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley London: University of California Press, 1979), 389.
[50] Anthony D. Smith and Ernest Gellner, "The Nation: Real or Imagined? The Warwick Debates on Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 2, no. 3 (November 1996): 363.

The way this occurs is most accurately traced by Michael Billig's work. In his words, "ideology comprises the habits of behaviour and belief".[51] Interestingly, the example he uses is that people may not use their nationality as their primary identification, yet they are unlikely to forget it. It persists. Nationhood is therefore an everyday phenomenon because its reproduction is constant. Its identifying power remains, and this persistence is particularly important when underlying power of national narratives is pitted against religious sentiments. Individuals with their degree of everyday, devoted religiosity are likely to cite their Christian identity first when asked who they are, though their national identity will not disappear.

This persistence of the national identity is something that is not unique to the present case study. It is a feature of the previously mentioned overarching structure of nationalism.

> "Nation" is so central, and protean, a category of modern political and cultural thought, discourse, and practice that it is hard indeed to imagine a world without nationalism. But precisely because nationalism is so protean and polymorphous, it makes little sense to ask how strong nationalism is, or whether it is receding or advancing.[52]

This quotation forms the heart of this discussion. Despite the capacity of religious identifications to overshadow national allegiances, the presence of 'the nation' remains. Moreover, because of this ubiquity it is impossible to capture. As it is elusive, it tints most, if not all, discourses. Billig's previous example of how, when prompted, everybody remembers their national identity is in fact a severe methodological challenge. This has been best tackled by Brubaker et al.,[53] whose work provides a theoretical and empirical milestone in tracing when and how identities co-exist and become activated. Operating with the constructivist anthropological notion that social identities "are not given once and for all, but are

[51] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2010), 37.
[52] Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 10.
[53] Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*.

negotiated",[54] and indeed, increasingly chosen,[55] the authors sought to detect how and when ethnicity and nationhood occur in a small-scale community, "in the ebb and flow of ordinary social life."[56] Religion fits well into this scheme. Used hand in hand with nationalist and ethnoreligious rhetoric, it occurs in varied ways in its everyday manifestations. Despite the four typical approaches on the matter,[57] the conceptualization of the interaction between religion and nationhood in this natural ebb and flow remains at the center of inspection in this study.

Everyday Religion

While religion as a theoretical concept has been examined for over a century, its everyday dimension has been considered primarily in recent scholarship. Everyday religion captures how individuals understand and practice their religious beliefs, which may or may not be different from the institutionally prescribed words of the clergy. This everyday dimension in fact a core aspect of religion. Nancy Ammerman argues that what people name as the core of their religious identity is a "way of living".[58] Everyday religion, like everyday nationhood, is epistemologically important because it provides insight to how people live and understand the world without the prompts of the researcher. When everyday religion of evangelicals is brought up here, it is done so in the sense that evangelicals narrate their experiences religiously (that is, with explicit reference to a religious concept, practice, or object) and that this phenomenon occurs naturally.

For the study of evangelicalism, everyday religion is particularly important. Evangelicals are on a quest to transform their lives completely and endow every mundane moment with

[54] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, Anthropology, Culture and Society (London: Pluto Press, 1993), 3.
[55] Brubaker, "Language, Religion and the Politics of Difference."
[56] Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, 15.
[57] Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism."
[58] Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 214.

religious significance.[59] For evangelicals, the ideal is to live every moment in the presence of God. This refers to the awareness to God's personal and continuous providence which sacralizes every moment and space that evangelicals occupy. Thomas Tweed critiques the contributions to everyday religion by highlighting that "blurring the boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary (…) risk[s] creating a meaningless category that fails to identify their subject of study and is unable to distinguish what is not religious."[60] This critique is useful and valid, but is inapplicable to the study of evangelicals. By the call of their faith, they are doing exactly this; they blur boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary (as Tanya Luhrmann documents in an illuminating fashion).[61] When the study of evangelicalism describes this phenomenon, it is not a scholarly blur but the description of a spiritual-psychological practice that evangelicals do as they learn to perceive the divine in the world.

Everyday religion is furthermore important because it identifies religion in a social world rather than in a vacuum. Religious beliefs and practices are in constant interaction with spheres beyond the palpable borders of the church. These spheres influence how religion is practiced, and religion influences how the individual relates to other social phenomena. Everyday religion lies at the crossroads of these interactions. Researching it is not only useful for shedding light on individuals rather than on elite discourses, but also because it is everyday religion that is most likely to demonstrate how practiced religion relates to the world or to concrete affairs that take place in the world.

Looking at everyday religion can shed light on how opinions about the world are informed by religion, or, in abstract terms, how religion matters in meaning-making. Here, we set out to explain the role of everyday religion in meaning-making, in contrast to the puzzle of

[59] Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*, 101–32.
[60] Thomas A. Tweed, "After the Quotidian Turn: Interpretive Categories and Scholarly Trajectories in the Study of Religion since the 1960s," *Journal of Religion* 95, no. 3 (July 2015): 374.
[61] Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*.

Ammerman who wondered "how religion and spirituality find their way into everyday life."[62] Instead, from "religion as prescribed" and "religion as practiced"[63], this thesis looks at *religion as narrated*, and identifies where religion becomes important as the discourse that shapes attitudes of believers towards public matters.

Deterritorialized Religion

Evangelicalism has been described as possessing a "chameleon-like ability to adapt",[64] and this ability is not without theoretical frames. Here, the French political scientist Olivier Roy provides useful observations. Roy describes the deterritorialization and/or deculturation of religion as part of the contemporary transformation of religion. For him, deculturation means not only the globalized movement of people, but also "the circulation of ideas, cultural objects, information and modes of consumption generally in a non-territorial space. But to circulate, the religious object must appear universal, disconnected from a specific culture that has to be understood in order for the message to be grasped."[65] In other words, deculturation is the ability of religion to convey its content effectively by robbing that content of its cultural context which otherwise hinders its spread. With activism for spreading the faith as its core character, evangelicalism effectively applies deculturation. Therefore, it is chameleon-like. Roy himself uses the similar Pentecostalism as an example for this trend.[66] In line with the long Protestant tradition, by removing the cultural content of Christianity, most notably the rituals and sacred objects, evangelicalism can simultaneously proselytize with success and be compatible with globalization.

[62] Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 289.
[63] Tweed, "After the Quotidian Turn," 369.
[64] Mark A. Noll, "Canadian Evangelicalism: A View from the United States," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. G.A. Rawlyk (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 11.
[65] Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways*, Comparative Politics and International Studies Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 6.
[66] Ibid., 7.

In addition, Roy adds a second aspect to deculturation. What we have seen so far is the universalization of religious objects that allows religion to move easily and freely across the globe. However, the trend is not only spatial, but also "*in situ*". It occurs within the societies in which religious communities are embedded. This is because "[s]ecularization prompts religion to distance itself from a culture now perceived as indifferent, even hostile."[67] By doing so, religions are on a trajectory which brings them further away from the culture in which they are situated, and this cultural context "is no longer perceived as simply secular, but as pagan".[68] Each religion reacts differently to this phenomenon. While fundamentalists choose to withdraw from this pagan culture, evangelicals feel compelled to engage with it through religious activism, and incite conversion in the 'pagan' circles of society.[69]

This aspect of deculturation that distances religion from its cultural context is highly relevant for the group-formation of religious communities. As Roy argues, a fundamental consequence of deculturation is the following:

> it transforms the gap between the believer and the non-believer into a barrier (…) [s]o all the intermediary spaces of non-practicing believers, nominal followers, culturally religious non-believers are vanishing. (…) [T]o the non-believer, the believer appears incongruous, even fanatical. (…) Believers feel themselves to be minorities surrounded by an atheist, pornographic, materialistic, secular culture which worships false gods: money, sex or man himself.[70]

As Roy shows, by the increasing thickness of this barrier, the polarization of religious and non-religious follows. In addition to the thickness of this barrier, religions hold onto the notion of having to cross it via conversion. It is via this conversion that the believer becomes part of the religious community. This notion was present in Max Weber's thoughts already. He remarks

[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] This distinction is discussed in detail in Smith's work. In short: "[i]n keeping with their nineteenth-century Protestant heritage, [American evangelicals] were fully committed to maintaining and promoting confidently traditional, orthodox Protestant theology and belief, *while at the same time* becoming confidently and proactively engaged in the intellectual, cultural, social, and political life of the nation." Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 10.
[70] Roy, *Holy Ignorance*, 8.

how the first conflict of religious communities is with the "natural sib". In order to overcome this, religions create "a new social community (…) [t]hereby the relationships of the sib and of matrimony have been, at least relatively, devalued."[71] By jumping over to this other social community, the born-again believer becomes part of a new, brotherly community. However, as Roy's account shows, this jump is no longer above a gap but through a barrier which makes it much more difficult for the individual to return. The change has more long-lasting implications on the individual's life.

This new community is very different from being just another identification that the individual may subscribe to. Catherine Wanner, scholar of religion in post-Soviet spheres, demonstrates this. In addition to their local church community, born-again believers have access "to an abstract, global one, assuring all members that they are 'saved'."[72] The special feature of this transnational imagined community is this:

> the arrival of global Christianity and the creation of tight local and broadly transnational evangelical communities (…) challenge traditional ties that link a particular religion to a certain ethnic group, social hierarchy, territory, and state.[73]

Wanner, too, describes this phenomenon as "deterritorialized" identity and allegiance.[74] These new transnational communities are furthermore self-sustaining by, for example, the globally diffused worship songs, or the vast evangelical literature that remains the same whether one walks in an American, Canadian, or Hungarian evangelical bookstore or library.[75]

At the same time, contextual factors are not negligible. As historian of American evangelicalism George Marsden remarks, "[t]he peculiarities of the American environment to

[71] Weber, *From Max Weber*, 328–29.
[72] Wanner, "Conversion and the Mobile Self: Evangelicalism as 'Travelling Culture,'" 171–72.
[73] Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism*, Culture and Society after Socialism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 208.
[74] Ibid., most notably pp. 174-175, 207-209, 254.
[75] Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide*, particularly pp. 5-6.

some extent determined the specific forms the conflicts [of fundamentalism in the 20s] took" as "Americans had an unusual degree of diversity in their acquaintance with new ideas and values."[76] According to him, and indeed quite logically, American evangelicalism was heavily influenced by its historical specificities. In the same vein, the lingering presence of previous social allegiances and structures will not leave newly emerging evangelical groups unaffected either, in spite of the deterritorialization process.

As Sam Reimer remarks in his comparison of Canadian and American evangelicals, "[s]ince evangelicals have historically resisted outside «worldly» influences, the tendency to parallel their national environment should at least remain an open question."[77] Subsequently, he demonstrates that "Canadian evangelicals seem to take their political cues from their national context, not from the evangelical subculture".[78] Yet in the overall comparison of the two groups, Reimer concludes this:

> In sum, the evidence suggests that evangelical Christians both seek and are influenced by a "structured" evangelical "organizational field" that is surpraregional and international in scope. As a result, core evangelicals show surprising similarity throughout North America. Further, because core evangelicals are group conscious, they are influenced more from inside the institutional sphere than from outside in areas of religiosity.[79]

In other words, despite the political differences he found, the overall tendency of evangelicalism is to shift closer than to become overly influenced by the local national context. In line with Roy's argument on deculturation, evangelicalism seems to become devoid of national content which then aids its spread to other places. However, Reimer's data suggests that it does not fill this emptiness with new national myths upon arrival. Furthermore, the data

[76] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2. ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 201.
[77] Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide*, 23.
[78] Ibid., 127.
[79] Ibid., 158–59.

shows that the political dimension – the area where Canadian and American evangelicals differed strikingly – is particularly important where the differences still require further thought.

In this section, then, the thesis covered those theoretical considerations that were deemed most relevant in unpacking (Hungarian) evangelicalism. In addition to clarifying the most important terms, there are two central theoretical themes. First, the everydayness of religion and nationalism, which makes for an important trajectory in understanding categories as both protean and elusive. Second, the transnational, globalized travel of evangelicalism was described. Here, the clash is between the local context and the developed but also flexible nature of evangelicalism. This is why deterritorialization and deculturation were discussed in order to shed light on how a religion can adapt while still preserving family resemblance.

Next, as this study looks at particularly the Hungarian specificities of evangelicalism, and its approaches to the public and to the political, the next chapter provides an overview of a religio-political landscape of Hungary.

Chapter II: Contextualization

Grace Davie described Western Europeans as "unchurched populations rather than simply secular. (…) [M]any Europeans have ceased to belong to their religious institutions in any meaningful sense, but they have not abandoned, so far, many of their deep-seated religious aspirations."[80] In Davie's argument, the phenomenon – casually called believing without belonging – is not necessarily straightforward in post-socialist countries like Hungary, and I would argue that the patterns are the same. As we observe data representative to the whole population, it becomes clear that attendance hardly plays a role, whereas identity and belief remain at more considerable levels.

Affiliation: religious denomination	**Belonging/attendance:** religious attendance	**Identity:** identification as religious person (regardless of attendance)	**Belief:** importance of God
Roman Catholic: 47.2% Protestant: 14.7%[81] Evangelical: 1.6%[82]	More than once a week: 1.6% Once a week: 7.2% Once a month: 5.8%	46.1%	5.41 mean on a 1-10 scale (1=not at all, 10=very)

Table 1. Data on the religious landscape of Hungary
(Source: World Values Survey – Hungary 2009)[83]

[80] Grace Davie, "Patterns of Religion in Western Europe: An Exceptional Case," in *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion*, ed. Richard K. Fenn (Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 266–67.
[81] The World Values Survey makes no distinction between Reformed (Calvinist) and Lutheran traditions which is important in the case of Hungary. However, the percentage seems to cover their sum considering the data from the 2011 census. The census lists 11.6% as Reformed and 2.2% as Lutheran. The reason why – despite the lack of distinction – the WVS was chosen as the main source of data is the international comparability, as well as the fact that WVS offers a category for evangelicalism.
[82] While the fact that evangelicalism has a separate category was essential in choosing the World Values Survey, it is important to remember that "evangelical" (properly translated as "*evangéliumi keresztény*" lit. evangelical Christian; rarely, in elite circles, "*evangelikál*") is often confused with "Lutheran", in Hungarian "*evangélikus*". The word comes from German where this similarity is also present ("*evangelisch*" for Lutheran, and "*evangelikalisch*" for evangelical). Academic discourse is aware of this linguistic phenomenon; in surveys, however, it may always have a minor skewing effect.
[83] World Values Survey, "Hungary," Wave 5 (2005-2009), 2009, http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV5.jsp.

This is arguably because Hungary, too, is a country that lives under the spell of Christianism. This is "Christianity as a cultural and civilizational identity, characterized by putatively shared values that have little or nothing to do with religious belief or practice."[84] Hungarians might not go to church, but their identification remains (post-)Christian; secularized, and with Christian symbols to connect citizens to their nationally framed past. As Brubaker argues, the right-wing tendencies are increasingly civilizationist in highlighting the 'Christianness' of the country and being a "bulwark of Christianity",[85] as opposed to the presence of Islam which is perceived as increasing and threatening.

A secularized society with a scarcely religious Christianism that cares little about beliefs. This combination may not seem conducive to evangelical conversion, but in the following I will give an overview of the socio-religious context evangelicalism arrives to, and describe a Hungarian "ecology of conversion"[86] – the fertile soil for the spread of evangelicalism. In this, three factors can be identified. First, the multidenominational character of Hungary. Second, the post-transitional, post-socialist social context in which churches often feel unable to navigate (part of this is engagement with Christianism that does not satisfy those who hunger for genuine faith systems). Third, the previously described ability of evangelical churches to overcome, but not eliminate, previously binding boundaries.

The multidenominational character is a significant aspect of both contemporary and historical Hungary. Historically, the Roman Catholic majority has been accompanied by the second largest Reformed church. This has a strong presence in Transylvania particularly, which is a key region for Hungarian national myths and narratives. It is no surprise that Miklós Tomka, Hungarian sociologist of religion, would describe Hungary as traditionally

[84] Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationism," 1199.
[85] Ibid., 1209.
[86] Wanner, "Conversion and the Mobile Self: Evangelicalism as 'Travelling Culture,'" 163–83.

characterized by the sometimes peaceful, sometimes volatile, but nevertheless constant cohabitation of Catholics, Protestants, Eastern and Western Christians, and Jews, which then led to the stabilization of a diverse religious society.[87] This multidenominational context offers a soil for the spread of evangelicalism, because it is arguably less difficult to penetrate a society that is already accustomed to tolerating the presence of many religions. This is exactly what occurred in Tomka's observation, after the post-socialist transition. Two notable features arose concerning religion in Hungarian society; the drastic increase of non-believers and the mushrooming presence of new religious movements.[88]

The second character of the Hungarian context is similarly historical, but more so political. Political scientist Anna Gzymała-Busse makes the argument that the grasp of churches on politics and authority largely depends upon a historical fusion (that may or may not have become mythicized) against a common enemy.[89]A typical example for this in the case of Poland is the Soviet regime where the strength of the contemporary church is determined by how fierce the resistance was to communist oppression. In the case of Hungary, although churches did not have the formidable Polish level of resistance to communism,[90] they nevertheless became the "last refuge" to those with right-wing orientation during the times of state-socialism.[91] In 1989, the post-communist transition brought the immediate return to Christian-nationalist parties and allegiances.[92] Churches could rebuild and maintain a strong grasp on authority and, consequently, on the voting patterns of the population. This leads to

[87] Miklós Tomka, "Egyházak Egymást Közt a Rendszerváltás Utáni Társadalomban [Churches amongst Themselves in the Society after the Post-Socialist Transition]," in *"...És Akik Mást Hisznek?" Hívek És Egyházak Egymásról ["...And Those with Different Faith?" The Faithful and the Churches about Each Other]*, ed. Lajos Szabó, Miklós Tomka, and Pál Horváth (Budapest: Balassi kiadó, 2000), 16.
[88] Ibid., 18.
[89] Anna Grzymała-Busse, *Nations under God: How Churches Use Moral Authority to Influence Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 8–9 in particular.
[90] Ibid., 32.
[91] Jason Wittenberg, *Crucibles of Political Loyalty: Church Institutions and Electoral Continuity in Hungary*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 237.
[92] Iván Szelényi and Szonja Szelényi, "The Vacuum in Hungarian Politics: Classes and Parties," *New Left Review*, I, no. 187 (1991): 121–37.

two results. First, as traditional churches seek and gain political power, their political strength increases, and their presence grows salient. As such, churches can more effectively inculcate people across the country by having access to schools, or being able to push for religious education in national legislation. If this inculcation is done well, churches are supposed to see an increase in membership and in religious thinking. That is, in both dimensions which surveys on religions commonly measure.

However, this is not necessarily the result. This brings the thread of discussion to the second aspect of the contemporary Hungarian society's relationship to religion: the inability of traditional churches to engage with the changing context. As Gzymała-Busse herself warns, by engaging with politics, churches often put the favorable opinion of their own 'flock' at risk.[93] In addition, churches are not only at the mercy of their followers. According to Tomka, due to the underground nature of the churches in the socialist era, they now "have little understanding of the social environment in which they manifest."[94] By not understanding the demands of contemporary society, churches can easily lose followers. For Gzymała-Busse, it was political engagement that risked losing followers This study echoes her argument. It looks like the politicized nature of traditional churches leaves believers unhappy. What they see is a trend where churches want to exploit the Christianism of the national populist discourse which is "concerned with symbols of belonging, not with practices of worship".[95] Therefore, these disillusioned, religiously oriented people seek communities that place religious teaching at the heart of their services always. Evangelicalism, with its strict biblicism and deculturated content, offers exactly that. The political engagement of historical churches with Christianism, while it

[93] Grzymała-Busse, *Nations under God*, 5–7.
[94] Tomka, "Egyházak Egymást Közt a Rendszerváltás Utáni Társadalomban [Churches amongst Themselves in the Society after the Post-Socialist Transition]," 22. In original: "az egyházak kevéssé ismerik azt a társadalmi környezetet, amelyben önmagukat megvalósítják." All translations are my own.
[95] Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationism," 1199.

may have given them increased visibility, influence, and discursive importance, has also built up the "ecology of conversion" that helped evangelicalism flourish.

Third, the literature review discussed the ability of born-again Christianity to "challenge traditional ties that link a particular religion to a certain ethnic group, social hierarchy, territory, and state".[96] Considering Hungarian scholarship, this notion seems applicable to the Hungarian case as well. See for instance the way anthropologist Richárd Papp discusses Hungarian "small churches", which in the Hungarian terminology includes evangelicals and Pentecostals:

> In the religious practice and ideology of small churches, emphasizing multi-ethnicity is a particularly significant point. This is that, similarly to early Christian churches, in the words of Paul the Apostle, there was "no longer Jew or Greek", it no longer matters what ethnic or religious community one was born into. The sacred, in this case, dissolves the relevance of ethnic ties. This is expressed in the bilingualism of worship sermons, in the teachings and Bible studies, and, during interviews, in the identity strategies and the definitions of the group and the self as well.[97]

This feature is remarkable, but why has it emerged? This is an extremely powerful discursive tool for evangelicalism that contributes greatly to its local success. In societies where inequality is rampant, the message that accepting Christ as a personal savior can override previous ethnic belongings and redraw social status, will attract many. It should not come as a surprise, then, that evangelicalism can talk to young people who seek to balance modernity[98] with religious convictions. These people want to hold onto their faith without the galvanized power structures like that of the marriage between church and politics. In addition to this demographic character that traditional churches often struggle to maintain, evangelicalism

[96] Wanner, *Communities of the Converted*, 208.
[97] Richárd Papp, "A szakralitás tétje a zsidó és keresztény példák tükrében [The Price of the Sacred in Jewish and Christian Examples]," in *A szakralitás arcai: vallási kisebbségek, kisebbségi vallások [Faces of the Sacred: Religious Minorities, Minority Religions]*, ed. András A. Gergely and Richárd Papp (Budapest: Nyitott Könyvműhely, 2007), 17.
[98] Gediminas Lankauskas, "The Civility and Pragmatism of Charismatic Christianity in Lithuania," in *Conversion after Socialism: Disruptions, Modernisms and Technologies of Faith in the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Mathijs Pelkmans (New York: Berghahn, 2009), 107–28.

talks to another important group; Roma people.[99] The fact that Roma people are receptive to evangelicalism suggests that Hungarian communities, too, aim at circumventing ethnic and national ties for Christ and have local successes with this.

The cited arguments about "small churches" illustrate one more feature of the literature review. The bilingualism of worship sermons is an interesting feature, and so is the fact that evangelical churches commonly operate with two pastors; one Hungarian and one American. This is traceable in the literature they engage with. James Bielo discusses the importance of books for evangelical believers which include not only the Bible but other "scriptures [that] circulate through the words, texts, and institutions of [e]vangelical culture."[100]Anthropologist Luhrmann also points out the importance and application of reading evangelical books in the communities she observed.[101] Hungarian evangelicals are in alignment with this trend. They, too, consume literature to learn more about how to live an evangelical life.[102] Harmat Press (www.harmat.hu) was founded by the Hungarian movement (MEKDSz) of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, and it translates and popularizes American evangelical authors. In their "about us" section, they list Gary Chapman, John Stott, Philip Yancey, Timothy Keller as their most important authors. They are also the press to have translated or reprinted numerous C.S. Lewis novels, and popularized Francine Rivers. These books cultivate faith, evangelize, engage with apologetics, and spread Christian ideals about interpersonal challenges. What is more, these authors are all read, discussed, and appreciated by evangelicals worldwide. It seems, then, that the bookshelf of a Hungarian evangelical is likely to be very

[99] Fosztó, *Ritual Revitalisation after Socialism*; Paloma Gay y Blasco, *Gypsies in Madrid: Sex, Gender, and the Performance of Identity*, Mediterranea (Oxford: Berg, 1999); Paloma Gay y Blasco, "Gypsy/Roma Diasporas. A Comparative Perspective," *Social Anthropology* 10, no. 02 (June 2002).
[100] James S. Bielo, *Words upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study*, Qualitative Studies in Religion (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 159.
[101] Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*, 115–17.
[102] Bielo, *Words upon the Word*, 93–113. This chapter provides an overview into how evangelical literature (in this chapter, Philip Yancey) are incorporated into the discussions and discursive negotiations of evangelicals on how to live a religious life.

like to that of an American evangelical, which suggests a Hungarian application of the distinctive evangelical subculture that Sam Reimer argues for.[103]

The existence of this press illustrates, firstly, the deterritorialized nature of evangelicalism. While Olivier Roy argued that religious objects must appear universal to circulate, by relying on a universal *Christian* thematization, these evangelical cultural artefacts make it to those segments of Hungarian cultural life that are receptive to Christian spirituality. In other words, we see a trend of making objects universal *within Christianity.* This decultured literature then reaches far. The existence of this press illustrates, secondly, a remarkable degree of evangelical organization. Though "evangelical Christianity" in numbers may seem low in percentage or in visibility, through this organization the adaptation of evangelicalism can effectively occur. While publishing evangelical authors from the Anglosphere, the press also appropriates and publishes the work of Hungarian religious figures (e.g. Calvinist pastor Kálmán Cseri), thus embedding itself in the local Hungarian context. As deculturation and a kind of re-culturation takes place in the works of this press, it is now time to turn to the believers themselves who pour their work into these organizations.

About Evangelicals

To keep the scope of the study wide, and the narratives within varied, I chose two evangelical churches to gather data from. These churches were similar enough in their teaching and their sermon structure that examining them together did not harm the inquiry. At the same time, the differences in the community of these churches seemed distinctive enough to gain contrasting perspectives. Throughout the analysis, I refer to my results as evangelicals, combining the two churches into one community, except where a distinctive and strong narrative theme shows up in which they differ.

[103] Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide*.

A Mainstream Evangelical Church: Golgota

Evangelical churches in Hungary are tiny but plentiful. One of the largest is Golgota (*Golgota Keresztény Gyülekezet* which translates to Calvary Christian Church), a church that belongs to the international Calvary Chapel association of evangelical churches. There is no verified data, but the leading pastor Phil estimates regular Golgota-goers of the Budapest church to be around 1400. Calvary Chapel has existed in Hungary since 1991, and, because the Budapest-based community is located at the very central Blaha Lujza square, Golgota remains highly visible. It runs a coffee shop, the community has its own gospel choir open to non-members which regularly offers concerts, and it has a well-kept presence on the internet where every Hungarian member church has its Golgota website with its own media and archives (e.g. www.golgotabudapest.hu). In addition to various charitable projects, Golgota runs a theological college, and a "Bible school" in Vajta. The church is not only an urban phenomenon, but is present in more than 20 other locations in addition to the capital. It would be difficult to find a Hungarian evangelical who would not know what Golgota is, and Golgota enjoys a salient presence within Hungarian evangelical subculture.

In addition to this, as suggested through the example of the choir, Golgota maintains an open-door policy that is traceable in the internal religious life of the church as well. Taking the Lord's Supper (the only sacrament, alongside with baptism, that evangelicals recognize) is completely open and unsupervised. Whoever who believes in Christ may take it regardless of denominational and theological position or church membership. The same principle applies to house/home fellowships (*házicsoport*: small communities that meet weekly, formed to grant believers a space where they can reflect on their faith and have a familial circle within the large church). They too are accessible, and do not require official membership in the church. The structure of the sermon does not exert pressure either. As it is made up of 45 minutes of singing (worship / *dicsőítés*) in the first half, and 45 minutes of teaching in the second, there is no time

specifically dedicated for testimonies and other conversion-inducing practices. A non-believer may come and go without being addressed to convert at all. This is arguably rooted in the evangelical notion that conversion needs to be highly personal. It is not sufficient to prompt people to acknowledge Christ's lordship over their life on the spot. It needs to be an utter transformation, a born-again experience; in which the pastors are, of course, ready to help. They always remain near the pulpit after the sermons and are easily approached for prayer request or a short chat. This openness was reflected in my interviews. Informants often referred to Golgota as a "*pass-through house* (átjáróház)" where "*people are not kept on a leash*". This refers to the fact that in Golgota, no one will inquire if one happens to disappear from the church for weeks or months. The body of believers is therefore tied together loosely. It does not reflect the typical tight-knit character of other evangelical communities, like the other observed community Agóra, where the members are acutely aware of each other's lives, and a member regularly missing church would elicit concern. In brief, Golgota has a very approachable profile aimed both at visitors and at the regular community.

Finally, Golgota has a very international character. Its leading pastor is Phil Metzger who arrived here from California at the age of 19. His teachings are translated into Hungarian during each sermon, sentence by sentence. Similarly, Hungarian teachings are translated to English. This pattern seems to follow in other cities and towns too. As we will see, this feature will be applied by many other Hungarian evangelical churches too, though certainly not all.

As per this international profile, Golgota is loosely tied to the Calvary Chapel churches in the United States. The Calvary Chapel movement originates from California where it was founded by Chuck Smith in 1965 who had been inspired by a prophecy to do so. This reference to a prophecy in this story signals that from the beginning, Calvary Chapel belongs to the theologically continuist evangelical movements, i.e. those that embraced prophecies, visions, and other such gifts of the Holy Spirit. This was in line with American trends at the time. For

historian William McLoughlin, 1960 marks the beginning of the Fourth Great Awakening[104] that brought the clashing of sexuality, alcohol, and drugs against simple life, a dedication to family, and striving for mystical experience[105] to the forefront of religious discussions. Calvary Chapel was born in this environment. For some years, it remained a local congregation, until in a personal turn, through his daughter's boyfriend, Chuck Smith got in touch with Lonnie Frisbee. Frisbee was the now well-known charismatic hippie who had been attracting more and more people around himself at the time, and who would later become the main figure of the Jesus Movement; pejoratively known as Jesus freaks due to their readiness to engage with supernatural gifts like shaking, visions, and speaking in tongues. Already at the time when Smith and Frisbee met, Frisbee had practiced elements of Pentecostalism, and regularly spoke in tongues.[106] His charisma worked like a charm, and with his help, Calvary Chapel became unique, and developed the originals of its approachable character:

> Smith thought the kids on the beach were hungry for God but couldn't find God in the mainstream church life they knew. So he changed his church. Services became completely casual. (…) [He] invited the hippie bands to play their music, and he invited back the bands that the audience liked. (…) The Jesus who presided over these sessions was the hippie and countercultural Jesus: personally attentive, unconditionally loving, a Jesus with a great big bear hug of acceptance. Smith believed in that Jesus.[107]

However, Calvary Chapel's history followed a familiar structure of normalization. After this initial growth, Pentecostal tendencies seemed no longer necessary. Chuck Smith therefore cracked them down, and chose to go *sola scriptura.* In the sermons, he kept the Bible teachings only. Lonnie Frisbee left, and soon, in 1982, with the leadership of John Wimber, the church

[104] William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (University of Chicago Press, 1978), 1.
[105] Robert William Fogel, *The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), 18.
[106] Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*, 18.
[107] Ibid., 27–28.

split. This led to the development of the Pentecostal Association of Vineyard Churches.[108] By the time the historian of evangelicalism, Randall Balmer visited Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa in the late 80s, asking about Pentecostal theology, the answer he received was this:

> We believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit in this day—divine healing, prophecy, word of knowledge, speaking in tongues—but we differ from [P]entecostals in that we do not believe in emotionalism. In fact, we shy away from emotionalism. We believe that a faith grounded in emotions is rather shallow, that it will dissipate when the emotions disappear.[109]

In other words, Calvary Chapel consolidated. The initial Pentecostal presence of spiritual gifts was abandoned for teaching the Bible. As for the content of these teachings, the Scripture was interpreted "literally and in its plainest sense, with the presumption of inerrancy, but (…) remarkably undogmatic by nature".[110] What Calvary Chapel did retain after the consolidation was its original charm of approachability and casualness.

How much of this history has been translated to the Hungarian Calvary Chapel? The answer is that no Pentecostal elements have been adopted. The pastor first arriving to the region – to then Yugoslavia and to Hungary – was Brian Brodersen, son-in-law of Chuck Smith, in 1990. By this time, Calvary Chapel in the US was already past its charismatic phase. As such, from the very beginning, Calvary Chapel in Hungary was based on the minimalistic worship-and-teaching structure that it still uses today. This was perhaps helpful for the church as the Pentecostal Faith Church had been already gaining members in these years. The different, simplistic style of Calvary Chapel could have aided its own success.

[108] For a short retelling of early Vineyard history from a member, see Bill Jackson, "A Short History of the Association of Vineyard Churches," in *Church, Identity, and Change: Theology and Denominational Structures in Unsettled Times*, ed. David A. Roozen and James R. Nieman (Grand Rapids (Mich.): Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 132–40.
[109] Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 27.
[110] Ibid., 26.

Brian Brodersen, Mike Harris, Greg Opean, and Rod Thompson were all affiliated with the Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa. Brodersen was the first to arrive, originally to Novi Sad, but it was in Subotica where he found an audience and in Baja, Hungary, right across the Yugoslavian-Hungarian border. Upon his return to California, he looked for people who could continue this work, and this is how Mike Harris began to work in Subotica, and Greg Opean and Rod Thompson ended up in Baja. In both locations, what bridged the linguistic abyss between the missionaries and the local people was music. The Americans brought the kind of worship music that Chuck Smith had insisted on introducing to his church, and had once captured audience of hippies and rough kids from the streets of California. It worked in Hungary and Yugoslavia too. The Hungarian Baptist pastor Lajos Hetényi who, with his family, looked after Opean and Thompson, insisted that his Baptist church did not provide the setting to which kids from the streets of Baja would like to go. This is why Opean and Thompson decided to found a Calvary Chapel in Hungary which, upon Hetényi's recommendation, they translated as Golgota.[111]

It is a unique feature of Calvary Chapel in Hungary that its ministry began in small towns as opposed to the capital. First, they arrived to Baja (37,000 inhabitants), and then to Tompa (less than 5000 inhabitants). Szeged was the first municipal city where they spread, and only after being in Esztergom would Calvary Chapel make it to Budapest in 1994. The most recent addition to the network of Calvary Chapels is in Győr.

Having covered its history, I asked the leading pastor Phil about the vision of Golgota, and where it is heading currently. I learned that Golgota's current challenge is "*helping people feel connected*" – the challenge of how to be a constantly growing, large (by Hungarian evangelical standards) church that "*feels small*", that still retains a community, no matter how

[111] Phil Metzger, *A Kegyelem Útjain [The Story of Grace]*, 1st ed (Budapest: Golgota Keresztény Gyülekezet [Calvary Chapel], 2015), 27–58.

loose the ties holding it together may be. This is challenging for Golgota not only due to its size, but due to its audience. Phil tells me that "*we are not trying to care for just Christians. We're trying to reach the city. And if we were only caring for Christians, then maybe membership was a good idea."* But Golgota caters to "seekers" by exerting "*no pressure to stand out*". A person can become connected, and more involved with the community, but they can also maintain a low profile if they so prefer. This, for Phil, is more important than the established Christian members themselves. "*If they come, they come, if they don't, they don't.*" This is an almost radical stretching of the original evangelical call to engage with the world for the sake of "winning souls for Christ".

This is exactly what interviewees appreciated about this church. According to Golgota-goer Péter, who arrived here from the Faith Church, Golgota is "*a perfect place for those who have been harmed spiritually*", whether by another similar church or those converts who come to evangelicalism after being raised in, and disillusioned by, one of the traditional churches. In Péter's eyes, this casual, loose nature of Golgota makes it useful for a first encounter with evangelicalism. From here, it is easy to find another, more tight-knit community if needed. The fact that the church can give home to former Catholics and former Pentecostals without friction shows that it keeps together a diverse, fluctuating community through its ability to forge a middle-ground, "mainstream" evangelicalism that can be accepted by a wide spectrum of evangelically oriented believers.

A Tight-Knit Evangelical Church: Agóra

Compared to Golgota, Agóra is tiny. It counts approximately 50 official members. On an average Sunday, a sermon will have 20-25 participants, and a couple of children who get to play in a separate room during the teaching. Agóra is seven years old, and is located in a small semi-basement in the 8th district of Budapest. Although the district is quite central and easily

accessible, the location itself is an unfrequented street. Unlike high visibility Golgota, a pedestrian is not informed about the significance of this basement. There is no sign on the door, nothing that would reveal anything about the church. Nevertheless, the place is most certainly designed to be a long-term hub for the community. The walls were painted a friendly teal by the church members, and illustrated biblical passages are painted upon them.

For Agóra, being small is a virtue. Based on their impressions of the early Christian communities which they see as ideal, Agóra as a church aims to be intimate. A striking first impression is made by the extensive use of one particular evangelical tradition in their service structure; personal applicability. This means that a great effort is made to apply and relate the scriptures, teachings, and all religious sources to one's own personal life. The structure of sermons is the familiar evangelical make-up; worship songs followed by the teaching itself. However, what Agóra adds is a small group discussion that offers a chance for individuals to express what the preaching has evoked in themselves. Believers have an immediate place to share how what they have just heard could be applicable to their lives. Even when the service ends with a closing prayer after this group discussion, it is easy to pick up some line of thought and continue mingling with the others. Once they leave the venue, people often have lunch together in the nearby shopping center. This way, sermon does not quite end when it officially ends. Church members find time to develop their own narratives about their faith – and everything else. This, in addition to being a unique feature in its exercise of evangelicalism, made Agóra a perfect place for participant research. The follow-up talks made it possible to track down which themes capture the imaginations of the church members, and the post-sermon mingling revealed the life situations in which these themes were interpreted.

To cultivate an intimate atmosphere, Agóra has membership. It is easy to acquire; all it requires is a short talk with the pastors and a little ceremony. Yet it is necessary for taking the communion with the church and participating in the home groups. Soon I learn that the situation

is looser than this; communion can be taken if you quickly ask the pastor before the service, and the home group leaders could let you in without that much hassle. Yet the membership is there, and by its existence it is meant to keep the community tight-knit. This is a special feature because, as we will see later, the leading pastors do see the church as non-believer-oriented, but as Phil argued, membership does not cultivate that. In short, unlike Golgota which keeps together its diverse community by remaining loose, Agóra's strategy of maintaining membership and facilitating discussions, creates both a tight-knit community and an outsider-oriented platform for questions.

Agóra is led by two pastors; Dávid Hamar and Trey Shaw. They have just recently added one more pastor to the team, Balázs Hajde. Dávid is a very charismatic figure. With his bright smile, open face, and stylish casual clothes, he is surrounded by an air of approachability rather than with that of authority. Now 39, he is originally from Golgota, where he befriended Trey. Trey is from a Southern Baptist church in the United States, and had been sent to Hungary to "*plant churches*". Their friendship soon turned into a call to create something new and different from Golgota. Thus Dávid and Trey founded Agóra in September of 2010.

What Dávid envisions is a neo-Calvinist, missional (i.e. proselytism-oriented) church that follows the footsteps of American pastor and apologist Timothy Keller, and can engage with intellectuals. The people he wants to see proselytized the most are the educated middle class. Accordingly, Agóra has no strong vision to spread to other places in the country. In the words of Balázs, Agóra is a "*Budapest church*". For Dávid, the most important vision is that his church is intellectual. He problematizes that "*believers often feel that they step in the door of an evangelical church and they need to leave their brain* [ész] *outside – only their heart is welcome".* Instead, Dávid wants a church that is both ardent in faith and knowledgeable in theology. This explains why Dávid has a clear view about the theological and ecclesiological characteristics that he wants to plant in his church. Yet the community has not necessarily

internalized what Dávid hopes to teach them. Most of the church members have no strong theological orientation. As Agóra lacks the institutional strength of Golgota which has a Bible school of its own, a theological education is somewhat out of reach. Therefore, what Dávid believes in is present in the teachings, even though it is hardly present as a systematic standpoint for community members. As evangelicals, labels like neo-Calvinist do not matter much to them. A creed too complicated reminds them of traditional churches and therefore shoos them away.

In line with this intellectual, middle class oriented approach, Dávid wants to see his church engaging with those themes that other evangelicals may find too worldly. He highlights politics and sex as examples. Accordingly, Agóra has a strong debate culture. "*It is important that instead of splitting groups apart due to, say, political disagreements, we can discuss them.*" The previously mentioned post-sermon discussion groups are also imagined as venues for voicing disagreements. Dávid's vision of discussing politics and sex is a feature that Agóra members are beginning to pick up. While they are not very political, they want to listen to what church members say about politics. In this sense, Agóra is a link between the politically unengaged Golgota and the politically active Faith Church (more to follow). While Dávid does not agree with the standpoints of Faith Church, he sees their political activism as positive. The occasional political workshops that Agóra organizes are therefore here to stay.

Furthermore, Dávid envisions a Hungarian church. Agóra has no such American roots as Golgota does. It has always been English-speaking, but initially due to the presence of Trey, and then because "*we, as a missional church, wanted to be Hungarian with an international outlook* [arculat]". For Dávid, it is more central that his church is Hungarian, although he was the one who insisted to keep it bilingual. For Balázs, the multicultural aspect of the church was much more exciting. He would talk at length about the values and challenges this posed. Again,

in this sense, Agóra is a link between Golgota and the Faith Church. Pronouncedly Hungarian, yet still evangelically international, it has a little bit of both churches.

At the same time, Agóra is much more influenced by contemporary American evangelicalism and its political repercussions. Phil from Golgota has not been to the United States for over two decades, except for short visits. For all intents and purposes, he considers his church and his leadership Hungarian. Dávid from Golgota has been to the US for theological workshops and trainings. He connects his church to American figures, most importantly to Timothy Keller whom he repeatedly brings up, but also to John Piper and other notable American apologists. He is acutely aware of the current theological trends that US evangelicalism discusses, and he is eager to localize Agóra among these trends. While Agóra is not American, the American influence on the theologically oriented Dávid is so strong that Agóra, in its official theology and in its leadership, is closer to American evangelicalism than the American-founded Golgota is.

In the group discussions, it became clear what themes the members themselves engage with. Despite these intellectual plans, one of the recurring themes that Agóra-goers ponder about is the proper locus of an evangelical Christian. That is, the narrow path between the Scylla of fundamentalist separation from the world to be secure from its negative influences, and the Charybdis of engaging with the world. The discussed notions of Olivier Roy about religions seeing their surrounding culture as "pagan" is applicable to this discourse. As Roy, the word 'world' gains a double meaning of a place that is hostile but in need of evangelicals to hear the gospel – the good news.

This is not a unique feature to Agóra. Teachings in Golgota also discuss strategies for the healthy relationship between evangelicals and the world. What makes Agóra interesting is the post-sermon discussions. The typical themes in the teaching are certain activities and how evangelicals ought to relate to them (such as sexuality). In Agóra, it becomes clear that what

believers themselves discuss is often much less abstract, such as whether it is right to watch a movie so "*violent*" and "*provocative*" as the Marvel movie *Deadpool*. Popular culture that might not make it to sermons therefore remains food for evangelical thoughts. The leadership of the church itself seems to favor engagement with the world. As Dávid put it in a group discussion when arguing against isolation: "*the Amish and the fundamentalists tried to separate themselves, but then evil appeared within their own circles too*" – after all, "*we all breathe in the air of evil*". Accordingly, members use light swearwords, even Dávid did so during preaching. Yet in Agóra, these little questions become immediately salient and discussed, thus leaving space for the believers to identify their own position within that of the church.

As we can see from these introductions, the distinctions between evangelical churches in Hungary are subtle. Instead of drastic shifts in religious content, the differences are primarily in the mood and atmosphere of the communities. This is so because the leadership has no straightforward way to "enforce" a certain theology. They might use somewhat different hermeneutical frameworks in which they teach and explain the Bible. Golgota specifically, as a member of the Calvary Chapel association, has concrete tenets on this. Nevertheless, these differences do not make it to the congregational level. A general fluctuation, such as visiting another community, between evangelical churches is very common. The reasons why an individual ends up at a certain community will usually have a "mood"-related reason (e.g. preference about the size of the congregation), a practice-related reason (e.g. preferring the sharing groups of Agóra), or miscellaneous prosaic reasons (such as interpersonal pull-factors, or simply the location). In other words, these theological shifts at this early stage of evangelicalism in Hungary simply do not precipitate to the level of the believers themselves.

This constitutes a very important factor in the evangelical/Pentecostal presence in Hungary. Due to the free movement between evangelical churches and their non-denominational character, evangelicalism and Pentecostalism in Hungary maintain a similarly

close relationship. Evangelicals are eager to visit Pentecostal communities just as easily as they might visit an evangelical one. A conversion in a Pentecostal community did not stop several of my informants from seeking another community (Golgota) for themselves. As alluded to before, evangelicals in Hungary will find it difficult to delineate a border between their identity and Pentecostalism. In short, Hungarian evangelicalism and Pentecostalism do not have strict and salient borders between them, especially for the members of these communities. It is therefore legitimate to take a closer look at the largest Pentecostal church in Hungary, too.

About Pentecostals: Faith Church (*Hit Gyülekezete*)

Faith Church is currently the fifth[112] largest Christian denomination in Hungary (following the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformed/Calvinist Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Greek Catholic Church).[113] Its website (www.hit.hu) provides extensive information on its self-identification, history, and theology. It categorizes itself as a Pentecostal Charismatic church built upon the "Judeo-Christian revelation", i.e. the Bible. "[The community] aims to deliver its message free from the religious traditions placed upon this clear revelation throughout history."[114] This shows a clear step taken away from traditional churches, and a discursive means to carve out the identity of Faith Church. Cultural historian Holly Folk gives a detailed historical overview of the church in her fresh (2017) publication of field notes.[115] What I highlight from her points are three factors about the church.

Firstly, like most Pentecostal churches, Faith Church subscribes to the tangible gifts of the Holy Spirit. The believers emphasize joy (my interviewees liked to cite for instance

[112] It is often listed as fourth – this is so because in the census tables, Catholicism is listed as one denomination, with Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics taken as sub-categories.
[113] Központi Statisztikai Hivatal [Central Statistical Office], "2011-Es Népszámlálási Eredmények [Results of the 2011 Census]," accessed April 19, 2017, http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak_vallas.
[114] "Hit Gyülekezete Hitvallása [The Creed of Faith Church]," accessed April 20, 2017, http://www.hitgyulekezete.hu/hitvallas.
[115] Holly Folk, "Hit Gyülekezete," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 20, no. 3 (February 1, 2017): 101–16.

"[p]raise him with tambourine and dance", Ps 150:4a), and ecstatic expressions are common. In addition to glossolalia that is common in other Hungarian Pentecostal churches too, Faith Church embraced the Toronto Blessing, a Pentecostal religious awakening that took place in 1994. New practices associated with this awakening include ecstatic laughter and other particularly loud charismatic gifts which are since practiced in Faith Church. In addition, the church ascribes to more controversial religious beliefs, such as the prosperity theology, that the other Protestant churches reject,[116] and even worldwide not all Pentecostal churches accept.

Secondly, Faith Church has "negative publicity"[117] which is comparable to that of Jehovah's Witnesses. This could be ascribed to this theological trajectory, to the unusually strong charisma of its leader, or the below discussed political positioning. This atmosphere makes fieldwork particularly challenging. Compared to evangelicals who are easily approached, interviews are significantly less easily conducted with Faith Church members. They often suspect further ridicule from the researcher.

Faith Church is led by a charismatic leader, pastor Sándor Németh, who founded the church in 1979. He is the ultimate authority on both matters of faith and matters of power in the church. Another ethnography done in Faith Church reveals that the believers themselves listen closely to him. His authority is internalized by the church members themselves, and his religious charisma brings out spiritual experiences and miraculous healings from the members of the church.[118] It is only natural then that what Németh says is very influential. As I will demonstrate, Faith Church is a politically vocal church, and any political utterance by Sándor Németh will heavily influence the private political decisions that the members make.

[116] Ibid., 102.
[117] Ibid., 103.
[118] Zofia Pazitna, *Experiencing the Closeness of God: Mediated Religious Experience and the Role of Authority in the Faith Church in Budapest*, CEU Sociology Department Master Theses: 2008/11 (Budapest: Central European University, 2008), 38–41.

Thirdly, Faith Church is a unique case within the Hungarian religious landscape due to its political positioning. It differs from other Hungarian churches, but it also does not strictly fall into the American Pentecostal position either. In its religious convictions, Faith Church is conservative. For example, it supports a strict moral code on family values, it is conservative on sexual morality, and it opposes LGBT rights and immigration. It is a civilizationist church in Brubaker's sense. It envisions a Judeo-Christian European culture which needs to stand strong against Islam.[119] In non-religious matters, however, Faith Church is less clear. "Faith Church helped found the Alliance of Free Democrats [a liberal party existing between 1990 and 2010]. (…) [I]t owns ATV, a private news and current events television channel generally seen as politically liberal",[120] or at least critical of the conservative right-wing Fidesz leadership of Hungary. Whenever probed on this multifaceted political identity,[121] Faith Church positions itself as a church that appreciates democracy, rule of law, and pluralism, while maintaining their conservative religious and liberal-leaning non-religious position.

Furthermore, Faith Church is highly critical of the ultra-nationalist right-wing party (Jobbik), primarily for its antisemitic history. This is so because Faith Church is known for its very strong philosemitic and Zionist stance. Condemning antisemitism and maintaining close relations with pro-Israel groups remain core parts of the sermons as well as the activities of the church. This stance is not simply on ethical grounds. For Faith Church, antisemitism is a "spiritual force" rooted in the intention of Satan to disrupt God's plans. Antisemitism is therefore not purely directed against a certain people, but against God.[122] In other words, antisemitism gains a strong spiritual dimension in the understanding of Faith Church.

[119] Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationism."
[120] Folk, "Hit Gyülekezete," 103.
[121] "Nem Kötöttünk Titkos Paktumot ["We Haven't Made a Secret Pact" - Interview with Sándor Németh, the Leading Pastor of Faith Church]," *Népszava Online*, accessed April 20, 2017, http://nepszava.hu/cikk/453026-nem-kotottunk-titkos-paktumot.
[122] "Antiszemitizmus [Antisemitism] | Hitlexikon [Encyclopedia of Faith]," accessed April 20, 2017, http://www.hitgyulekezete.hu/lexikon/antiszemitizmus.

Nevertheless, this stance grants the church a strange position. While in the United States, pro-Israel sentiments are characteristic of the born-again theology[123] as well as the politics of the Christian Right,[124] in Hungary, philosemitism is often a discursive symbol for leftist ideology, as antisemitism in history has become an identifying code of the right.[125] Due to the differing perspectives on the opinions about Israel, the position of Faith Church becomes politically unique both in Hungary and in an international Pentecostal context too.

This unique position was important in choosing to add Faith Church to the analysis. As discussed, Evangelicals and Pentecostals have enough in common to make the distinction subtle. In addition, they have little problem with moving between these groups. Furthermore, in the discussion about Agóra, I localized its stricter neo-Calvinism as a gradual step between the "*wishy-washy*" nature of Golgota (Phil's words), and the highly conservative, anti-Islam civilizationist stance of Faith Church. While Faith Church itself is a complex topic, often chosen by sociologists to research, here it is only an auxiliary presence. Adding Faith Church brings out where evangelicals are unique and where these movements are similar. Therefore, references to Faith Church help to crystallize the evangelical position that the thesis discovers.

[123] Yaakov Ariel, "'It's All in the Bible': Evangelical Christians, Biblical Literalism, and Philosemitism in Our Times," in *Philosemitism in History*, ed. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 257–89.
[124] Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); B. Eugene Griessman, "Philo-Semitism and Protestant Fundamentalism: The Unlikely Zionists," *Phylon (1960-)* 37, no. 3 (1976): 197–211.
[125] András Kovács, *A Másik Szeme: Zsidók És Antiszemiták a Háború Utáni Magyarországon [The Eye of the Other: Jews and Antisemites in Post-War Hungary]* (Budapest: Gondolat, 2008), 246.

Chapter III: Methodology

This research started with frequenting the communities that I was curious about: From September 2016, I regularly attended the services of Agóra and Golgota. Initially, this was meant for a preliminary mapping, but as I listened and took notes, I came to see two methodological limitations that at first shaped, but later determined the methods I would use.

First, during the services the religious and the public themes would often interact. This, however, would not easily translate to the micro-level of believers themselves, who, even when probed right after such sermons, would focus on something completely different (usually very internal, personal, and spiritual) from what the pastor's discourse was. I began to see that a quantitatively oriented discourse analysis of the teachings simply does not answer the questions I was interested in. The discourse of the churches was too different from what believers seemed to take home.

Second, considering the first notion, I then began to consider the most bottom-up method: participant observation. Initially, this proved very fruitful, and I heavily rely on this early part of the research. However, the fact that I would not guide the conversations to public themes proved limiting. Evangelicals I encountered enjoyed personal discussions. They prefer to talk about friendships, relationships, experiences of God (*istenélmény*), and interpersonal challenges. The only theme that would resemble their opinions on public and political affairs was their reflections demarcating the line between right or wrong. This *per se* was a very exciting pattern, yet I was more and more curious about what seemed to be missing. What did they consider important social themes? It became clear from their discussions about the refugee crisis that evangelicals are politically active – at least as far as voting goes. They do not belong to the high percentage of the Hungarian population that abstains from visiting the ballot (in the

2014 elections, the voter turnout was 61.73%).[126] If their religious in-group does not discuss these topics, what then informs their opinion? What are those themes that motivate them and capture their attention? Are they religiously inspired? The data from the early four months of participant observation saturated and would not answer any of these inquiries. If I intended to investigate these questions, I had to intervene.

This is what led to adding semi-structured in-depth interviews to my data gathered from participant observation. I found this to be an appropriate mixed-methods technique. It is rather common for anthropologists to enhance their presence with interviews. This blend resulted in an intensive qualitative research with a small but focused scope that can successfully reveal new dimensions of evangelicalism in Hungary – a group that so far has hardly been researched.

Qualitative Research: Ethics and Contextual Factors

Qualitative research fought its battles against the positivist mindset that implies that the only good data is quantifiable data. Now, in the shift towards postmodern epistemology these methods are increasingly important, with much discussion written on its advantages, techniques, principles, and ethics.[127] Accordingly, this section first addresses the ethics of my research, and second, in line with the thought that qualitative research reaches validity through the transparency in the choices made,[128] it discloses the contextual details that I believe had an influence on the fieldwork.

[126] "Nemzeti Választási Iroda - 2014. Évi Országgyűlési Választások [National Election Office - Parliamentary Election of 2014]," accessed April 26, 2017, http://www.valasztas.hu/hu/ogyv2014/858/858_0_index.html.
[127] These are the books I mostly gained from in developing my stance on qualitative research. David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, 4th ed (Los Angeles, California: SAGE, 2013); Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods* (Los Angeles, California: SAGE, 2011); Clive Seale et al., eds., *Qualitative Research Practice* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2007); Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed (SAGE, 2005).
[128] Andrew Moravcsik, "Transparency: The Revolution in Qualitative Research," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47, no. 01 (January 2014): 49.

What qualitative research needs to address first is the ethical concerns. Denzin and Lincoln start their book with emphasizing the fact that in research in any kind, but particularly in qualitative research with its dark history of colonialist approaches, there is always an "Other".[129] Concurring with this argument, this Other is what researchers describe, and in doing so they have a responsibility to account for the power imbalance between the informants and themselves. Indeed, no matter how privileged an informant may be vis-à-vis the researcher, the researcher always has the upper hand in the power structure of the research. It is her words, her representation of the informants, that will be brought to the academic discourse. It is common that the power imbalance between the researcher and the informants is not highly sharp. So was the case in my research. However, research brings a different context in power. Once informants agree to disclose information and trust the researcher, they put their stories and their identities into a vulnerable position. This position is what the researcher ought to respect. This respect includes appropriate and secure data protection, anonymization, the freedom to withdraw before, during, and after data gathering; and it also includes the fact that in writing up the analysis, the examined group is not misrepresented. Only then can the researcher claim that the rapport built between the participants and her was not misused.

The reason why it is vital to see the above as the guideline and principle for ethical research is because every other tangible factor is easily problematized. This posed a challenge during my research because at the beginning of participant observation, consent is not directly gained. Prior to conducting research, it was the pastors, whom I considered to be the gatekeepers[130] of the community, who consented to my presence and to my research. Then, in Agóra, the small church, my presence was always clear and noticeable. Since people knew each other, they also came to know of my research. They expressed interest and enthusiasm

[129] Denzin and Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 1–2.
[130] Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 92–96.

about it, and so their consent was palpable. In Golgota, due to its size, offering consent individually was never clear during the participant observation. While I avoided directly citing data collected this way, time spent among them nevertheless provided insight that this research benefited from.

An ethical theme, but also an important contextual detail, is the identity of the researcher. Since I recruited most of my participants after worship sermons, they all had a level of security and comfort regarding my identity towards their faith. It is an often-recurring phenomenon in the setting between researcher and evangelicals that the latter see the former as a "seeker" and in need of conversion. This is excellently documented by the anthropologist Susan Harding when she discusses testimony narratives that she was exposed to especially at the beginning of her research.[131] Due to the fact that I was perceived as a member of the in-group due to my extensive knowledge of evangelical networks in Hungary, my evangelical language use, my familiarity with the reality of evangelicals, my contacts (such as an evangelical friend who was monitoring this research closely), and my regular attendance of the services, I did not face conversion narratives. Instead, I was given insight into how evangelicals use religious narratives in their stories and argumentation vis-à-vis someone they see as belonging to them. While this may have been an ethically grey area – I do not identify as an evangelical Christian – I chose to maintain this position unless explicitly asked, due to the valuable results this position has brought. Considering that the literature on evangelicals is mostly written by researchers who seemed outsiders to evangelical eyes, this insight is extremely useful in revealing more about the group dynamics and internal negotiations that take place in evangelical communities.

During the interviews, this identity was particularly useful in maintaining a common language and building rapport. Interviewees regularly expressed their comfort about my

[131] Chapter 1 in: Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, 33–61.

knowledge of their faith and their communities. "*I could cite the Bible, but you know this anyway*", Tamás from the Faith Church asserted, when he referred to the fruits of the Holy Ghost. As I find the comfort of the interviewees particularly important – throughout my research, I emphasized that this fieldwork is just as much their work as it is mine – this gave space for a high degree of trust. This means that as an assessment of the success and quality of the interviews, the participants seemed at ease, they understood the questions, and answered appropriately, without miscommunication or any hindrance posed by a distance of some sorts.

Fieldwork and Interviews

Participant Observation

The fieldwork of the research was conducted between September 2016 and January 2017. It resulted in numerous handwritten notes, field diaries, and quickly written citations. More importantly, it offered a great deal of contextual information without which the interviews would not have obtained the degree of rapport and easiness that they did have. As such, I consider this fieldwork preparatory, rather than to be the actual method. Ultimately, this fieldwork contributed most to the contextualization chapter.

During this period, and after consulting with the pastors, I attended the services of Agóra, and spent time with the members of its community. As the services of Golgota and Agóra overlap on Sundays, both communities were kept track of in part thanks to the video archives of Golgota that are accessible online. During these months, several such public, social, national, and international events occurred that enriched the data set. In my results, I chose three such events to describe and discuss. These are the national referendum in Hungary about refugee quotas, the American presidential elections, and the national holiday commemorating the

Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The description of the elements of these events are part of the analysis, and will illustrate the context that the religious community means.

The reason for choosing these three events as analytic tools is threefold. First, the national referendum was chosen as an acute political event. This referendum was initiated by the conservative right-wing Fidesz government, and it concerned the quota system of the European Union to stop refugees of the European refugee crisis of 2015. Therefore, this referendum was another element of the Fidesz strategy of politically positioning refugees, the European Union, or foreign influence over Hungary as adversaries to solidify the *status quo*. It was preceded by an extensive and hostile campaign which had been internationally denounced for distorting facts and inciting xenophobia.[132] This referendum stood out because, due to this publicity and politicized nature, it invited people to the polls. Consequently, even the politically careful evangelical communities addressed the theme. This referendum offers an example of a hot political issue through which national sentiments can be detected.

The national holiday of 1956 is the opposite. As a national holiday, this day always has certain political connotations, especially so since 1956 is still alive in the memory of the elderly. As a symbol of resistance against the Soviet Union, its slogans remain used in contemporary Hungarian political life. The year 2016 was dedicated to the anniversary of the revolution, with billboards plastered all over the country reminding the audience to "remember the heroes". Historian András Mink analyzes how the political role of 1956 is always used and revised in Hungarian political life.[133] Yet, it is still a holiday. As much as it is political, brings the re-invention of tradition,[134] and offers a chance for banal nationalism to turn hot,[135] it is still

[132] Lydia Gall, "Hungary's Xenophobic Anti-Migrant Campaign," *Human Rights Watch*, September 13, 2016, https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/13/hungarys-xenophobic-anti-migrant-campaign.
[133] András Mink, "The Revisions of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution," in *Past in the Making: Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, by Michal Kopecek, Hors Collection (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), 169–77.
[134] Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 263–309.
[135] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 43–46.

a routine. A holiday, but one that repeats each year, and thus may not elicit strong national sentiments each time. Brubaker et al. draw the attention to this phenomenon[136] where a salient national frame does not always turn to an everyday frame that people rely on. In light of this theoretical consideration, it was therefore interesting how evangelical communities narrate a national holiday, and how much meaning this day retains for them.

Finally, the American presidential elections were chosen as a massive international political event. In addition to this international character, it was also – due to the American roots and ties of evangelical communities – an event that might be more important for these communities. In observing the discussions on the week of the election results, the analysis will paint a picture of how Hungarian evangelicals evaluated the American presidential elections, thus giving insight to subcultural differences between the communities. Furthermore, there is one more methodological element to choosing the American elections. As there is a distance between Hungarian participants and American politics, the elections as a theme can be used as a kind of opinion vignette; that is, a tool to detect the thought process behind value-based decision-making. When discussing the American elections with church members, the informants felt more confident to make their judgments and opinions more polarized, and sharper. This was more so a naturally occurring positive side-effect than a reason for choice.

These events are used as contextually illuminating, but they do not provide the main core of the analysis itself. That was the job of the interviews which were conducted after the participant observation. By the interplay of these two qualitative methods, the explorative fieldwork provided a strong basis for these interviews to offer valid and trustworthy results.

[136] Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*.

Interviews

In addition to the described fieldwork, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in April and May 2017. These were preceded by very extensive piloting throughout March, and discussions with the community members themselves about the research topic of the thesis. The data I analyzed primarily is that of the interviews. As such, this section covers their details meticulously. First, let us look at the participants. They, alongside with their basic sociological characteristics, are summarized in Table 3., and I discuss these features after. Before that, I start with Table 2., with the non-anonymized participants of the research.

Real Name	Church	Role
Balázs Hajde	Agóra	Newest pastor
Dávid Hamar	Agóra	Founder, leading pastor
Phil Metzger	Golgota	Leading pastor

Table 2. Overview of the non-anonymized interview participants

As seen here, I interviewed three pastors from two evangelical communities. They constitute elite interviews as the participants – as pastors of their churches – are deemed as particularly knowledgeable on the subject. Their understanding of their communities, while different than mine, is still more insightful than what this fieldwork with limited time scope could have provided. I concur with Jennifer Hochschild that we "do not necessarily mean someone of high social, economic, or political standing; the term indicates a person who is chosen by name or position for a particular reason, rather than randomly or anonymously."[137] It was this position as leader, and this knowledge that brought me to interview these informants.

However, their position was that of a pastor and, consequently, they were used to informal communication. There was no sense in applying the typical strategies of elite

[137] Jennifer Hochschild, "Conducting Intensive Interviews and Elite Interviews," 2009, https://scholar.harvard.edu/jlhochschild/publications/conducting-intensive-interviews-and-elite-interviews.

interviews[138] that are recommended with high status individuals in mind. My interviews therefore resembled my anonymized in-depth interviews, only with different questions. The methodological approaches were applied, but the questions focused on their own leadership and on their views about their community. The answers were useful throughout the thesis, but most centrally in comparing their views with that of the anonymized participants. This led to increased clarity in what was a micro-level narrative and what was a commonplace discourse within the church.

It is the following anonymized participants who constitute the core of the methodology:

Pseudonym, Gender	Church	Age	Hometown	Education
László (M)	Golgota	41	Budapest	University
Viktória (F)	Golgota	70	Budapest	University
Péter (M)	Golgota	41	Budapest	University
Mirjam (F)	Golgota	28	Satu Mare	University
Miklós (M)	Golgota	33	Pécs	University
Barnabás (M)	Golgota	39	Budapest	University
Kinga (F)	Golgota	27	Budapest	University
Fülöp (M)	Agóra	25	Szeged	University (in progress)
Patrik (M)	Agóra	29	Budapest	Secondary Education
Nóra (F)	Agóra	43	Budapest	University
Levente (M)	Agóra	26	Budapest	University
Bálint (M)	Agóra	25	Miskolc	University
Fanni (F)	Agóra	25	[village near Eger][139]	University
Csilla (F)	Faith Church	23	Nyíregyháza	University (in progress)
Tamás (M)	Faith Church	22	[village near Szolnok][139]	University (in progress)
Sári (F)	Faith Church	29	Salgótarján	University
Beáta (F)	Faith Church	23	Budapest	University

Table 3. Overview of the interview participants

[138] For example: Glenn Beamer, "Elite Interviews and State Politics Research," *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (2002): 86–96.

[139] Due to the small population of the village, its name is not released in order to protect the anonymity of the informant.

As the table shows, their ages were between 22 and 70. An unplanned but valuable feature of the participants is the considerable diversity in hometowns. This gave place for narratives other than that of the Budapest-based believer. Education showed practically no variation, almost each participant had a degree from a university or was currently a student. Although this research is not quantitative, I do not think this is a coincidence. It is my estimation that evangelicals are in larger numbers from the highly educated percentage of Hungarian society.[140] This estimation is solely based on my time spent in these communities, and thus requires further clarification before taken as a sociological fact. Finally, a peculiar piece of information is that every participant except Mirjam who comes from Romania, makes sure to vote at elections and referendums. This will be important referential information throughout the analysis. In sum, the sample consists of 13 evangelicals (7 of which were affiliated with Golgota, and 6 where affiliated with Agóra), and 4 Pentecostals from the Faith Church.

In terms of recruitment, for evangelical Christians recruitment occurred after Sunday sermons in Golgota and Agóra. For Faith Church members, the same was attempted but no member would agree to an interview. Instead, snowball method was used with the help of two acquaintances who were members of this church. In other words, recruitment was possible only through such means in which personal relations were more saliently present.

In the selection, only one criterion was used. The person had to see themselves as evangelical Christians or adherents of the Faith Church, respectively. The importance of this identity in their lives was not important. I was aware that dual identities or dual religious communities are common (e.g. someone attending an evangelical service but going to a

[140] It might also be important to emphasize again that evangelicals go to bilingual sermons. They therefore have better competences in, and more exposure to the English language. This is not a negligible factor considering that Hungary still needs performs poorly on tests that measure foreign language skills. See: "Foreign Language Skills Statistics - Statistics Explained," *Eurostat*, 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Foreign_language_skills_statistics#Level_of_command_of_best_known_foreign_language.

Catholic mass on the same day), so the research relied only on the mere existence of such identity. As a clear bias of this recruitment, this identity was accompanied with practice within the evangelical participants, considering that the recruitment took place right after church.

Every interview took place in a public place, most often in the coffee shop of Golgota which then provided a quasi-evangelical setting to our talks. They were recorded, transcribed, and fully anonymized. Two participants refused recording, so notes were taken and were similarly digitalized. This was necessary for the analysis which was done via the use of ATLAS.ti. The interviews lasted for 40-60 minutes, and none were discontinued or hijacked in any way that would have rendered them impossible to use for the analysis of this thesis.

The interviews were semi-structured in-depth interviews. In line with Tim Rapley's argument on how interviews ought to look like normal, natural conversations between participant and researcher,[141] I mildly engaged with the points of my interlocutors. This mostly meant short verbal agreements if something they mentioned felt relatable to me, or expanding on the discussed examples. Follow-ups and *ad hoc* probes were highly common. This is the regard in which the interviews were unstructured. The structure of the interviews was provided by the open-ended, qualitative questions summarized in the topic guide overview in Table 4.

[141] Tim Rapley, "Interviews," in *Qualitative Research Practice*, ed. Clive Seale et al. (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2007), 19–20.

Questions and Common Probes:	**Intentions:**
Can you tell me about your life? **Probe**: How did you like the bilingual sermons first? (when discussing how they ended up at evangelicals)	A general open-ended question to situate the discussion in the life and reality of the informant.
If you imagine an ideal word, what are its most important characteristics for you?	This question investigated "morality tales"[142]: those values (often public or social) that the participants consider crucial to their lives.
Follow-up: What can we do to get closer to this ideal world? **Probe**: What is it that you're committed to in bringing this ideal world forth?	As the previous question is often answered in abstract terms, this follow-up aims to bring out what the person themselves finds important to do in action, or what she/he personally engages with, or is committed to.
There are many evil things in this world, for you personally what seems to be the most wrong, most unethical?	As a reverse of the previous question, this question investigates what the informants see as most problematic in their society.
Follow-up: What can we do to prevent these from thriving? **Probe**: Is there anything that you personally do?	This question about wrong was even more likely to elicit abstractions (e.g. theology). These follow-ups and probes were designed to overcome this.
Where, in which direction, are things going right now in the world or in Hungary?	This question aimed to detect optimism, pessimism, apathy, etc., as well as the potential political opinions and values of the informant.

Table 4. The topic guide of the interviews

These questions were in great part inspired by Nancy Ammerman's recent work *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes.* The author in this work traces the everyday religion of Americans that does not fall into any typical, service-attending, sociological category. In addition, the book "listen[s] for spiritual narratives among the stories people tell about their everyday lives."[143] Ammerman dedicates a chapter to the narratives of religion and public life. She finds that religion is more likely to appear in "local needs than when the focus is political contention over national issues."[144] It was in this field where I decided to probe Hungarian evangelicals further, and I was inspired by the questions that Ammerman used in this chapter of her research.

[142] Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 213.
[143] Ibid., 9.
[144] Ibid., 249.

> Here we will listen to their stories about everyday routines but also their reflections on what the world *ought* to look like. How do they name the world's ills, where do they draw the boundaries of concern, and how do they identify the necessary moral virtues for living in the world? Do the stories about what they actually do grow out of or contradict the vision they describe? What activities and organizations embody their moral concerns?[145]

As I found these questions insightful and practical, I based my topic guides on them. Ammerman's observations also proved useful in analyzing the answers; contradictions concerning individualism take part in my analysis too. The narratives about the world and its moral character are revealing because they show where religion is used concerning the virtues and vices of the world, in other words, where religion informs the believer. As the author argues, "[w]hat our participants say about changing the world and what they report about their activities will provide an intimate look at the place of religion in everyday public life."[146] This locus is what the interviews reveal among Hungarian evangelicals.

Methods of Analysis

From the discussion of Kathleen Eisenhardt on how case studies can be utilized,[147] this thesis works with two such means. It aims to provide description, and to apply theory. The analyses were carried out accordingly. Participant observation provided description, and interviews applied the theoretical considerations that the literature review brought forth.

Providing description is fruitful on this topic because Hungarian evangelicalism has practically no academic research on it. As such, any initiative brings new data to the surface. After taking notes on sermons, mingling before and after church, group discussions, and even

[145] Ibid., 212.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, "Building Theories from Case Study Research," *The Academy of Management Review* 14, no. 4 (1989): 532–50.

at casual outings, participant observation revealed what captures the imaginations of the communities in religious settings and on a daily basis. From this immense amount of information, the following themes mattered the most: What are the challenges, hopes, and mundane habits of these people? What are the norms and values of the community, and how do these individual aspirations fit into those? Identifying the norms was crucial. This is how I could identify the out-of-place occurrences and taboos.

Paying close mind to the extraordinary became the main thread of analysis. In the discussion of the participant observation, I chose three extraordinarily events – a referendum, a national holiday, and an internationally relevant election – to analyze how they influenced the mundane. In this, my leading questions were the following: does the extraordinary change the routine? Does the extraordinary change the individual discourse? By answering these leading threads, the participant observation can estimate the significance of these events for the community. Knowing what is (in)significant for a community provides a clear description about a segment of its life, thus fulfilling one of the aims of the analysis.

The analysis of the interviews was done with testing and applying theories to this case study. The research question inquires about how religion matters in orienting the thinking of Hungarian evangelicals about public matters. In light of the theories, I was therefore curious about how political religion gets, and more specifically how religion matters in everyday musings about the day-to-day exposure to these public matters. In the process of the analysis, the content of the transcribed interviews get coded. For this, I used a qualitative research analysis software, ATLAS.ti. The codes essentially function as categories into which the utterings can be placed. These codes were then observed as to how they occur within the narrative of the interviewee, how these codes interject with other codes, and how a code appears in the narrative of a different interview.

There are three limitations of this methodology. First, the sampling occurred in two such communities that have a lot in common. Therefore, it is unable to account for the broader varieties in the Hungarian evangelical subculture, although I deliberately chose communities that were not too dissimilar to allow for a wider scope without losing the focus. A second limitation is that during the participant observation, there was no way to be present at both services as they took place at the same time. This was counterbalanced by video archives, avoiding comparisons, and tilting the focal point of the analysis towards the interviews. Third, as the communities mostly got together for religious purposes and the observed interaction took place in this setting, thus there was always a risk of the overrepresentation of religious themes. Connected to this, I refrained from attending another religious setting; the weekly home group meetings. They are a very intimate setting, and no doubt my research would have benefitted from those personal narratives. However, attending them felt disruptive to their intimacy. Unlike the research of James Bielo,[148] my research is not focused on home groups. I agree with Bielo that they constitute a core locus of where evangelicalism is recreated, and I concur that it is important to add them to subsequent research. However, the current scope of the thesis did not seem to be worth the invasiveness that my attendance would have meant to these small and heartfelt group communities.

[148] Bielo, *Words upon the Word*.

Chapter IV: Results and Discussion

Results of the participant observation

As noted earlier, the participant observation offered three notable events that were used as proxies through which the political and public orientation of evangelical communities could be described and analyzed. These events are the Hungarian national referendum about refugee quotas in the European Union, the national holiday commemorating the 1956 revolution, and the American presidential election. The core question here is this: Do these events change the normal routine of the community? In this section, I cover what observing these events brought forth from the evangelical and Pentecostal communities.

The National Referendum: Refugees and Islam

The Hungarian national referendum was clearly the most powerful event out of the three. For evangelicals, this meant a severe moral dilemma. As believers who took the Bible to heart, and for whom the application of faith is a daily activity, the refugee crisis resonated with the commandment to do unto "*one of the least of these who are members of my family*" as one would do to Christ (Mt 25:40). Considering this religious theme, it was curious whether it would be suffocated by other factors such as the propaganda, or differing views on the appropriate immigrant policies. The religious theme of this event could be drowned also by what Ammerman's observed: "If there is a secular place in public life, it is surely the voting booth."[149] It is no place for spirituality. It was then curious whether evangelicals brought their religious narratives into the referendum.

[149] Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 245.

The referendum took place on October 2, 2016. The preceding Sunday (September 25), both Agóra and Golgota referred to the upcoming event. In Golgota, the matter was addressed by remaining within the framework of the routine; through a prayer.[150] Phil prayed "*for refugees and for peace, because we talk about the problems, but there's the solution, we need God.*" He then told a story about how they met a refugee in Austria whom they had earlier helped in Golgota's ministry at the Hungarian refugee camp Röszke. The man, a former Muslim, converted to Christianity and currently belonged to an Austrian Calvary Chapel church. For Phil, the answer to the refugee crisis was talking to God. He prayed for "*wisdom and mercy*" by which they could love their neighbors. This narrative is fully religious. The solution is simple; it is God. Nevertheless, it is important that refugees are described only in positive terms. They need to be welcome, if only because they might be the next brother or sister in faith, and they need to be helped. No further political dimensions were present. Then, in accordance with the Golgota policy on going through the Bible systematically, the sermon proceeded with the upcoming verses in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The extraordinary was therefore blended into the mundane; addressing the referendum was done solely in religious terms, and did not influence the normal proceedings of the church.

Unlike this, Agóra dedicated the entire day to discussing the topic. In the teaching, Dávid talked about the refugee crisis, and in a following program, Balázs gave an interactive lecture on the different aspects of the theme. The following discussion looks at this day in the church. It is nevertheless already clear that here, the extraordinary overwrote the mundane. The referendum was so important that it changed both the teaching the church members heard and the afternoon activities they might have planned.

[150] The sermon from which these quotes were taken is also found here: https://youtu.be/IlK-WCYcU4c, accessed May 6, 2017.

The central Bible quote on which the content of these teachings was based was not earlier selection from the Gospel of Matthew that commands Christians to care for the least of the strangers. It was another direct quote from Jesus: "*For what will it profit them* [the followers of Christ] *if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?*" (Mt 16:26) It was interpreted in such terms that helping others is of no profit if it leads to losing one's own saved life, and thus the latter shall be put first. The premise of Agóra was that the decision ought to be made individually, with regards to avoid forfeiting their individual lives in Christ and minding their own religious integrity first. Only then, rooted in this integrity, can one decide how to proceed. Accordingly, this interplay of religion and personal agency will be a recurring theme throughout the interviews.

This premise about individual decision-making was important because Dávid then made the dilemma clear for the church. For him, the politicization of the refugee crisis was "*messing with our Christian identity*" by forcing people to make a choice between two premises. One is that humans are worthy of love, and the other is that humans are inherently sinful and thus dangerous. For Christianity, these premises are true at the same time, and thus when taking a political position Christians are forced to let go of one of their two simultaneous convictions about human nature. "*They want to make you deny one part of your faith,*" Dávid warned the community. Therefore, there is no simple solution for Christians, and there is no religious answer on how to behave in this situation. They need to "*fight their own battles in making this decision* (végig kell harcolni a kérdést)".

Instead, the two possible answers for the church were the following. First Dávid described the incentive to help. This includes the Word of God commanding action to help the helpless; that Christians cannot stay in the "*60%*" of those who do not care what happens in the world, and that it is important to offer love and care to refugees personally in the same vain that a relationship with God is also formed personally. Second, he described what are the

incentives that are valid reasons for "*this natural fear*". "*Mercy is not the sole aspect of this*", Dávid argued, basing it on Paul's words, "*Honor widows who are really widows.*" (1 Tim 5:3)[151] This verse was interpreted to show how Christians do not need to deconstruct every condition of help. After having established this premise, the discussion proceeded to the reasons for worry.

Dávid started with the statement that "*we shouldn't be afraid of Muslim people, but we need to learn about the dangers in Islam.*" Dávid suggested that Islam in its original form was a violent religion, and as such it is sensible to be afraid of it – this without putting Muslims on a discriminatory list "*with a hardened heart*". The rejection of Islam was strong despite Dávid's statement that "*we are not afraid of a colorful* (sokszínű) *community, because the church of God is the most colorful, it is the real multiculturalism.* (…) *We have a glue: the cross of Christ*" that Europe does not have and thus will end up in conflicts. This seemed supported by the increasing terrorist attacks for him. In his conclusion, he emphasized that "*if they make it to Hungary, as Christians we need to work on helping them integrate and protecting them from being mistreated*." But it is "*easier to give rights than to integrate*".

In sum, the worry of evangelical communities concerning the refugee crisis was solely generated by the idea that the asylum-seekers are supposedly Muslims. Welfare chauvinism or petty xenophobia could not be defended in light of their first premise that humans are worthy of love. Instead, the fear is centered around the assumed religion of the refugees. Nevertheless, evangelicals felt conflicted. In the following interactive lecture, it became clear that their political decision is hardly made, and their thoughts are malleable. Balázs asked people to stand into blocs depending on what people think they would be voting for. There was no universal pattern. They were worried. Women signaled their fear that sexual assault would increase.

[151] He also referred to verses 9-10: *"Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old and has been married only once; she must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way."* (1 Tim 5:9-10)

There was a mistrust of the current political regime. Evangelicals hated feeling so manipulated by "*the world*", a favored Christian symbol of sinfulness and dirt. There was a worry about doing the just thing (another recurring theme in the analysis). An American member made a statement on how her home country is made up of immigrants and "*it has all come together for good*". This lingered in the room, too.

It is unknown what their final decision was. Yet this overview presents three valuable aspects of Hungarian evangelical communities. First, evangelical communities are diverse in political thought. While Golgota deals with this diversity by keeping the topic on the level of praying for peace, wisdom, and mercy, Agóra deals with the diversity by offering a wide spectrum in which the followers can find the narrative to their liking. Pastors understand that in such a ubiquitous question like the referendum, they need to say a word to their community. Nonetheless, there is no crystallized, plainly given political message that they would argue for. Secondly, it is most likely that evangelicals get their political input from places other than their church. Unlike in those constructs where nation and church merge, and the church has moral authority on political matters,[152] the previous socialization of evangelicals matters more than what input they gain from their religious communities. Being born-again means a complete religious resocialization, but in Hungarian evangelicals, this resocialization avoids the political positions. Third, this brings forth the matter of individualism. We see that political positions remain a private issue which the believer ought to make on a personal, biblically oriented, but still individual basis. This agency will become a recurring theme about Hungarian evangelicals, a theme so strong that it will influence their mindset on matters political, public, personal, and religious. The fact that the pastors trust their flock with their political decisions is only the first part of the agency that evangelicals possess in other areas of their lives as well.

[152] Grzymała-Busse, *Nations under God*.

These specificities are even more unique to evangelicals once Faith Church is taken into consideration. Discourses in Faith Church do not tiptoe around different perspectives the way evangelicals did. In Faith Church, the political is concrete – not prayer-like. Unlike in Agóra the leadership does not engage with different premises or opinions. It is concretely present in the advertising of books that takes place during the worships. The most recently advertised book was *George Soros* by Andreas Von Rétyi, which approaches the figure of George Soros from an extremely right-wing angle. The recent right-wing trends equate the figure of George Soros with "globalist interference", "disregard for national sovereignty", and "cosmopolitan-liberal and international opposition [of Prime Minister Viktor] Orbán's illiberal practices".[153] Picking up on this does not only demonstrate the political dimension of Faith Church, but also the fact that they follow the day-to-day, hot button politics, rather than focusing on a limited package of themes. Concerning immigration policies, they are firmly exclusionary as well. Unlike evangelicals, they use various arguments to support this stance. For them, opposing immigration is just as much about Islam as it is about national homogeneity. In short, then, Faith Church in its political stance is much more outspoken than the evangelical churches that cater to a wider spectrum of political alignments.

Hungarian National Holiday of 1956: "Spiritual But Not National"

The holiday of 1956 is, as described before, a history both in the past and in the present. It is in the past, but there are still people who remember it. It is "just a holiday", but it has significant repercussions in contemporary politics of Hungary in 2017. During my participant observation in 2016, the holiday (23 October) fell upon a Sunday. As such, there was a straightforward moment for churches to acknowledge it or ignore it. The overwhelming

[153] Gabor Simonovits and Jan Zilinsky, "Analysis | This Is Why Hungary Is Trying to Close George Soros's Prestigious University," *Washington Post*, accessed June 2, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/04/07/why-is-hungary-trying-to-close-george-soross-prestigious-university/.

experience during the participant observation was ignorance. The national holiday did not matter to evangelicals. They came to church, they spent time together like on any other day, and they spared no words or time at any holiday events taking place elsewhere in the capital.

The sermons were similarly brief in both evangelical churches. In Golgota, Phil said his thanks for believers coming to church on the national holiday. In Agóra, Trey remarked that today is a national holiday, but did not engage with it either. There was no reference brought up during the teachings, in Agóra, the group discussions did not mention the holiday.

What was interesting in Agóra was a short remark from a member who leads the worship songs. She prayed "*that we know that our revolution is spiritual, that it is an uprising against the devil.*" By doing so, she dismissed the national dimension of the day and elevated it to a spiritual level. The national aspect of the holiday was reappropriated so that it fits into the religion thematization of the day.

This lack of engagement was puzzling for two reasons. First, it was puzzling because traditional churches in Hungary are likely to discuss the national holiday in their preaching. Catholic masses offer the largest flexibility for the priest regarding the text on which he will base his teaching. In Calvinist churches, they might play the national anthem at the end of the sermon on national holidays. Traditional churches with churchlike buildings might choose to put up the national flag. In other words, while it of course comes down to the individual church leadership, in Hungary, traditional churches are likely to engage with the national holiday, or at least engage more than just remarking what day it is. Second, it was puzzling because in the home of evangelicalism, in the United States, regarding America in messianic and chosen terms has a long and prevalent history that evangelicalism has incorporated.[154] Benedict Anderson makes it clear that nations imagine themselves in a world of nations (as opposed to being

[154] Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). See for example: 14-16.

"coterminous with mankind").[155] As such, appreciating Hungarianness would not run against an American evangelicalism that adapts to the Hungarian context by taking up its local national themes. Yet this is not what happened.

Therefore, this phenomenon brings up various questions. How do Hungarians evangelicals approach national holidays? Does banal nationalism pale only vis-à-vis the religiousness of the day, or is this a general trend, indeed an absence? If so, is it simply routine or does it have another reason? While these questions are not answered by this thesis, they remain important for the future considerations concerning the globally spreading evangelical subculture. How does the evangelical subculture relate to the events of the wider national community in which they are embedded? The initial steps taken up in the following sections will start unpacking what Hungarian evangelicals do concern themselves with.

American Presidential Elections

At first sight, the American presidential elections might appear unrelated to describing a Hungarian community. It was presented in the methodology chapter that the reason for the usefulness of the American elections is capturing its framing. This in turn can highlight how Hungarian evangelicals see something on which American evangelicals also have an opinion. Therefore, what the participant observation revealed about this topic is likely to be the most useful platform on which a potential comparison can be built.

Starting with Golgota again,[156] the Sunday following the election (13 November) Phil dedicated a word to it before he began his prayer. "*Seems like the only thing in the world right now is Trump and Clinton*", he remarked. Then he spoke of how there are so many nationalities represented in the church, and how he wanted everyone to pray for their leaders, and their

[155] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.
[156] This sermon is available here: https://youtu.be/cq7yvij-Ew4, last accessed 6 May, 2017.

country's leadership. "*Try your hardest: Orbán, Trump*", he said with an exasperated, exaggerated sigh. Church members later told me that Phil was always careful about keeping politics away from his teaching, although "*of course he doesn't like Trump*", a pilot interview informed me. This is hearsay, we cannot know for certain, and Phil himself is distant from the American political situation. He says he has been living in Hungary for decades, and can offer more insight on Hungarian matters than he could on American matters.

In Agóra, Trey's reaction to the election of Donald Trump was similar. A sigh, him softly shaking his head, and the word "*terrible*" are what revealed how he feels about the election results. Then, like Phil, he dedicated the rest of his preaching to what was coming next, rather than to any further comment. After the end of the service, the mingling church members discussed the American elections in a light mood – as something that is important, surprising, but not very relevant to their lives. Their own political opinions were hardly traceable. The discussion focused on the figure of Donald Trump who seemed "*bizarre*" or "*weird*". They wondered how he would tackle the role of being a president.

The extraordinary event was indeed extraordinary for the communities. It was extraordinary enough to deserve a mention in the service and to lead to chit-chat. The American pastors (to whom this felt more relevant) retained a hint of moral judgment in the narratives, whereas for the church members, this was only another topic to share with each other. Their tones lacked religious tales, a moral dimension, or indeed any in-depth political argumentation. The extraordinary feature of the elections therefore influenced the community in a different manner, most likely due to the nationality factor present.

I learned only later that concerning American elections, evangelicals and other Christians did have their fair share of discussion. There was a similar interactive lecture offered by a PhD candidate in political science in early September at one of the annual Christian camps that the Hungarian member (MEKDSz) of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students

organizes. Csilla from Faith Church described what it was like. The participants were divided into groups, and had to argue in favor of Trump, Clinton, or no vote. They were given a list of policies that Trump or Clinton, respectively, were committed to. For Csilla, this was a difficult experience. As a law student, she was extremely critical of Trump, but at this interactive session, she "*could not look at anything else on that list than at the early stage of pregnancy at which Hillary wants to allow abortions*." She was grateful she did not have to vote.

Later, in the interviews, there were more comments on American elections. Donald Trump was brought up as an example of why things are not going in the right way. Péter and Fülöp were both critical; Fülöp highlighted how "*the fact that he is elected is a sign that from here, it'll only get worse*", Péter simply mentioned the president on the list of negative things without elaborating. For Patrik, Trump seemed more sympathetic because "*Trump won not even by little, and everybody was shocked. What happened? Those people simply didn't speak up who had a different opinion because they were never asked; if they were, they got stigmatized as stupid."* This is more so an application of American domestic politics to the Hungarian reality of the interviewee. Being on a different opinion, being stigmatized as stupid – these are themes that evangelical Christians recognize and relate to.

Nevertheless, what the participant observation presents and the interviews reinforce, is that the American elections show up in the observed discourse. This *per se* is not an interesting result. Whatever happens in the United States feels relevant elsewhere as well. The diversity is somewhat interesting concerning the opinions on the presidency of Donald Trump; Hungarian evangelicals do not have a clear opinion on American domestic politics. The politicized evangelical voices from the US do not make it to the Hungarian ears. However, what is particularly interesting is the reactions of the pastors to the results. Both American, yet both

seemingly quite against Trump, they are different from American white evangelicalism that predominantly voted for the Republican candidate in the 2016 election.[157]

These themes bring up similar questions like the discussion concerning the national holiday. Sam Reimer remarks how Canadian evangelicals are "quick to notice" the difference between Canadian and American evangelicalism concerning the evangelical political orientation in the two countries.[158] What differences would Hungarian evangelicals notice in a transatlantic comparison? It is in the following interviews where the answer is given to what themes Hungarian evangelicals are interested in. This opens the discussion to whether the political alignment also diffuses with the global spread of the evangelicalism.

Results of the Interviews

On Injustice and Politics: The Elusiveness of Religion

The interviews were designed to reveal evangelical minds when they ponder about public themes. The most prevalent theme is injustice. Evangelicals often and thoroughly think about demarcating what is just and fair – or sometimes more tangentially, what is genuine and honest. This is what I saw as a catch-all umbrella value that they channel their opinions into. In this section, I present how religion appears and disappears in the discourse of the believers. Through presenting their views on injustice, I detect where religion appears, and I hope to explain why. These results show how evangelicals and Pentecostals see, and differ on, the nature of politics, which will become a vital topic for understanding the results as well.

Injustice, it seems, has as many forms as there are evangelicals. For Miklós, injustice was encompassed by capitalism. For László, injustice was narrated in national terms such as

[157] Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "White Evangelicals Voted Overwhelmingly for Donald Trump, Exit Polls Show," *Washington Post*, accessed May 8, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/09/exit-polls-show-white-evangelicals-voted-overwhelmingly-for-donald-trump/.
[158] Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide*, 125–26.

Trianon. For Kinga, a school teacher, favoritism was unjust. For more respondents (Péter, László, Fülöp, Miklós), environmental concerns were important; not being green was unjust. Again, for more respondents, politics was the scene of injustice (Barnabás, Miklós, Péter, Patrik, Nóra). Péter emphasized injustice done against refugees. For female participants, manifestations of sexism were unjust. For instance, Nóra, a single mother, was deeply upset at how mothers get no chance and support to be mothers, and they are forced to choose between dedicating their lives to parenting or having personal commitments too which then brings the neglect of children. She could not bear the latter, and so she gave up her life and career to look after her daughter, but she was bitter at this strain placed upon women. Fanni worried about sexual assault. Csilla was concerned about how women were affected by abortion. In sum, injustice was everywhere. It was the fourth most frequently used code in the analysis. It was the central framework in which participants understood public events. And, as Nóra's voice demonstrated, injustice evoked highly emotional responses from the participants.

Injustice matters, and evangelicals do their best to hold themselves to a standard in which they are fair. Does this have a religious overtone? Apparently, yes and no. Religion is why injustice is wrong, but in choosing what injustice *is*, religion is no longer decisive. Religion is present, yet it does not seem to be an exclusive or even the strongest factor in the thought process. This will become a recurring theme throughout this thesis. Religion is oftentimes implicit only. Its role is reduced to hints, verbal ticks, and quick – sometimes almost irrelevant – biblical citations. Yet by these ways of speaking, it is present.

Where is religion, then? If evangelicals are prompted why injustice matters so much, they rely on the moral set-up that religion offers. "*It's obviously wrong*", Levente says, and after an everyday example about the unjust treatment of siblings, he adds "*This is in biblical stories too. Both the Old Testament and Jesus give us examples on how God is just.*" While concerning the ideal world, evangelicals want to see Jesus and justice restored. Their concern with injustice

is not highly charged with religious imagery. It is more so a frame in which the wrongness of injustice can be explained rather than the motivation.

The themes of (in)justice come up as people respond to what is ideal and what is unethical Especially concerning the ideal world, it is typical that evangelicals await religious success.

> In an ideal world, Jesus rules in his thousand-year reign. There is, then, a just leader, just faith, a leader who is an example to everybody. There is peace in the world; peace in families, peace among nations, peace among people. (László)
>
> The good answer is that ideally everybody is a cool born-again believer (…) and then there's no issues with the woes [rákfene] of injustice and the like. (Patrik)

This vision about the ideal world is informed by religion. Yet when probes come to the actual discussion of injustice, it is personal examples that dominate. The previously mentioned examples ranged from everyday (e.g. siblings) to structural (e.g. environment), yet they did not have a clear religious thread. Sometimes a religious argumentation was lazily added to the end, sometimes there was none, but its discursive weight and significance was always negligible.

This ambiguous presence of religion is difficult to unfold. When religion has a "now you see it, now you don't" character, it is challenging to unpack where its influence is exerted. However, this is exactly what one expects of a phenomenon so elusive. As Brubaker notes, "[i]f identity is everywhere, it is nowhere."[159] The same can be said about religion. If we identify religion in everything, then it blinds us to every other social construct that makes an appearance in the everyday of the individual. These casual appearances give us insight into how exactly religion is present for humans. It is there as a frame of reference, and the content needs to be filled accordingly. Yet this content is looser and more dependent on other variables

[159] Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 29.

instead of being a direct result of a certain religious affiliation, even when the believers are highly committed.

What are those themes in injustice that seem to form a pattern? There are two important themes that will recur throughout this thesis and therefore are worth highlighting. Firstly, a recurring pattern was the severe disgust evangelicals felt upon the domestic abuse of children. We have seen that feminist issues are also addressed somewhat in the frame of the family. The abuse of children seems to follow the same pattern. It disrupts the heavily idealized and elevated symbolic status of the family. Domestic abuse of children poses the classic challenge of what an evangelical ought to choose when two immoral acts coincide. Here, the choice is between the abuse of the most vulnerable and the rupture of the family. Evangelicals struggle with this decision and thus find the scenario utterly unjust to the child.

Second, Hungarian evangelicals have a conflicted relationship with politics. Politics for evangelicals is an ultimately "worldly" matter. There is considerable discussion in sociology about the locus of religion in society, especially vis-à-vis the public sphere. For evangelicals, politics is a sphere where religion is, in Ammerman's word, mute.[160] Similarly to their non-religious counterparts, Hungarian evangelicals are suspicious, unhappy, frustrated, and very distant from politics. Nevertheless, they do vote (in the disillusioned political atmosphere of Hungary, this is already important) and this usually marks the end of their engagement.

> I know we could do it with Jesus that there would be no games and lies in politics. I think this word 'politics' is often an excuse, "it's politics, it's gotta be like this". No, it doesn't, why would it have to be like that? (Barnabás)

> From the human side, the ideal world is the manifestation of justice. When everybody aspires to do something good with a genuine motivation, and there is no need to play political tricks in order to reach

[160] Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 212.

> your goals. And by tricks, I mean this thinking about how what I say will manipulate or just motivate that other person. (Péter)

The way evangelicals imagine ideal politics reveals how they see politics currently. It is an utterly negative concept – one that only Jesus could make better – that is present in many, if not all, areas of life but ought to be avoided. Barnabás and Péter highlight the phenomenon to be "worldly" (for Barnabás: "*dishonest*", for Péter: "*manipulative*") in political aspirations. Thus, along with other evangelicals, they express a desire to be distant from political activities.

This is an important feature considering the politically oriented dimension of American evangelicalism. It is not unsurprising. At Hungarian elections, the turnout is generally low. Yet it is surprising considering the methods used in the churches. In Golgota, the response to political phenomena is always via ministry or prayer. It is not an influential or strong response, but it might bring a degree of political awareness. In Agóra, as we saw, there is a strong drive to raise awareness and initiate discussion. The political manifests differently in these two churches, yet the community members react with the same kind of resentment that seems present among most Hungarians. The negative reputation of politics leaves evangelicals, and citizens, with no mood to participate. Evangelicals therefore settle with voting, and with vague and uncertainly spoken prayers that ask for reconciliation, but list no concrete expectations.

Ambiguity is an important feature for one more reason. Relying on Foucault, in his fieldwork British scholar Guest draws attention to what evangelicals omit from their discourse, and what that reveals.[161] In a similar fashion, omission matters when discussing injustice. Evangelicals do not talk about social justice, minorities, or inequalities. Since social justice is so associated with a type of liberalism that evangelicals reject, it becomes a theme only in fragments – such as the inequality of women – and not as a cohesive narrative.

[161] Mathew Guest, "'Friendship, Fellowship and Acceptance': The Public Discourse of a Thriving Evangelical Congregation," in *Congregational Studies in the UK: Christianity in a Post-Christian Context*, ed. Mathew Guest, Karin Tusting, and Linda Woodhead (Aldershot, Hants; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 57–71.

Injustice and politics are a good starting point for the discussion of the thesis for one more reason. They present why a small-scale comparison with Faith Church is useful to highlight the specificities of evangelicalism. Faith Church, as this thesis will present, is both dissimilar and similar to what evangelical discourses show. This case already presents an interesting phenomenon. Unlike evangelicals who are wary of politics, Faith Church members find it valuable and "*unavoidable*". Evangelicals are looking for ways to avoid politics and Faith Church members are ceaselessly looking for ways to incorporate it into their proselytizing activities. This was most noticeable using the "work" code. Save for their introduction, and their musing about their interpersonal relationships at work, evangelicals did not place any special significance to their workplaces. Living their faith was important, and so was the notion that their life must reflect and share Christ, but career growth was not. Faith Church members seemed to talk more about work, and wondered how a certain profession could bring forth those religious values that they deem important. Csilla wondered about how to synthetize law and religious values as a research. Beáta emphasized that "*the political sphere is a battleground of the war between right and wrong"*.[162] For her, participating in this battleground was a nigh religious duty. Sári is a musician, and Tamás studies programming. They are not very warlike. Yet Tamás insists that his job brings him the chance to lead people to Christ. He was considering praying for healing when his colleague had tooth pain. Sári started her entire interview with her identity in her work, "*I am a musician*". Her service in church is just as centered around music as is her life. Like Tamás, she insists that doing well at work is a key aspect of Christian life.

However, in the discussion about the ideal world and injustice which they also found relevant, Faith Church members were not significantly different from evangelicals. The

[162] On the concepts of cosmic war applied in religious discourse, see for example Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3. ed., Comparative Studies in Religion and Society 13 (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2007), 10.

religious imaginary was powerful, perhaps more powerful than with evangelicals, but the content varied. Religion was there, as a referential point, only to justify what they had already envisioned. The language is more charismatic. Evangelicals unsurprisingly use their own language,[163] and for Faith Church members, this seems to color their vocabulary even more.

> Without having found God's way for you in your life, you're obviously gonna be miserable. Jonah was miserable. But I understand what God tells me, so I know that my place is here, in this job, in this field. I'm good at this. And so I think it's really important for people to self-reflect, and to find a job where they can excel. There is one for everyone. (Tamás)

Yet within the actual content, their choices were also personal, diverse, mundane, and unmotivated by religion. Sári mentioned disinformation, fake news, and advertisements. Beáta outright described her own life as ideal. They all mentioned families in some way or another as "*the safest, most important community on Earth*" (Tamás). Comparably to evangelicals, it was not the content that was the religious. Religion served only as the frame.

As a summary of this chapter, what seems to be the most important result is the elusiveness of religion. As I will wonder in the discussion chapter, it is this nature of religion that I think is worth analyzing further. It is where we find just where religion really matters instead of taking individual believers as sheep who simply regurgitate what the official teaching is. This blinds our inquiry when we want to understand how religion – or, more sharply said, evangelicalism – operates in its bottom-up manifestation. The way people adopt and enact religion in selected parts of their lives has its unique narrative logic in each case, and by diving into this logic research can reveal more about the nature of religion in the fabric of social life. Results show how religion works more so as a frame rather than actual content in discussions of injustice. It has been demonstrated that content van vary without losing the loose religious

[163] Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*.

connection in which believers wrap it all up. Politics provides an interesting sub-topic mainly because it serves as a means for future comparison with American political evangelicalism. The discussion chapter will go in-depth about the questions and thoughts this elicits. This section, for now, shows the first micro-level contrast between evangelicals and Pentecostals. The matter of politics will be a result elsewhere, when discussing the apolitical taste of evangelicals concerning global matters. Presently, I have shown that the discourse about children and families seem to be important for the evangelical and Pentecostal imaginations, and it is then in the next section that I look at those results that reveal why.

On Family: When Evangelicals Are Shy Nationalists

The fact that family and children showed up in the results was not a surprising turn. It is known in research that "evangelicals cannot stop talking about sex".[164] Their abstinence-based policies do not mean that evangelicals would not have endless talks about what constitutes proper sexual conduct, appropriate gender expressions, and sexuality in the interpersonal dynamics. It is a curious result where Hungarian evangelicals draw the lines compared to their American counterparts, especially concerning gender where the line between "appropriate" and "inappropriate" is subject to more negotiations than for instance the proper locus of sex which is in a marital, heterosexual setting only. Yet it is even more curious why these themes showed up at all. I was not asking people about them, but sexuality and gender provided a short, marked, and recurring theme in almost all interviews. When I asked Balázs what public themes he as a pastor thinks Agóra should further discuss, he responded "*homosexuality*" without hesitation. Even when probed for other themes, he could not think of any. For Dávid, it was crucial that Agóra has an opinion on "*sex*". This topic therefore remains complex and significant, not only for American but also for Hungarian evangelicals.

[164] DeRogatis, *Saving Sex,* 1.

This section presents how evangelicals and Pentecostals see family as a public theme. In accordance with the importance they place on proper sexual conduct, "family values" – that is, the desire to keep up the dominance of the heterosexual, cisgender, monogamous, and divinely invented families – remains a topic that occupies evangelical minds when they think about public affairs. Below, I discuss the degree of religious discourse in their thoughts and opinions about families. As a crucial topic to evangelicals and Pentecostals, I cover the public and even political steps the believers consider or are willing to take concerning family values.

Approaching this in the broadest sense, the lack of families and family values are a symbolical proxy for a perceived moral decline. As a later section about the results will present, evangelicals are sure that the world is only getting worse. The decisions that other people might make about their lives, like their sexual identity, or their choices regarding family, are not private matters for evangelicals. They have global repercussions, negative consequences, and are a threat to how evangelicals would want the world to proceed.

> I think that a country can proceed further if there is life in it. If young people could get married and form a family; if there was life inside it, if there were children. Perhaps this is the problem of young people that there is no hope. It's been promised that we'd reach the West, which is not necessarily good, because we can see now that the West is in decline. We see this mostly in morals. And I think that the countries in which there is life (…) they will remain on the surface. They will be stronger. (László)

For László, the issue of family is important not for the religious argument. For him, the presence of families matters because it brings welfare to the country – any country. This is his notion about how the world works. While the religious narrative is there when evangelicals are prompted on *why* families are important, the primary reason does not seem to be religious. The primary reason is identified in a large-scale trend. For László, it is about the future of the country. Without families, countries fall apart. Families are fundamentally important in the

larger community evangelicals are part of. This narrative is traceable elsewhere. Patrik and Viktória discuss how societies are, and should be, universally constructed of families.

> Families have always been the building stones of all societies. I don't get why we invent this now that the family is an unimportant thing. It's like a brick: we've been using bricks in buildings, but let's skip them from now on, perhaps the building will stand on its own. Nah. (Patrik)

> With my family having fallen apart, I think it is good families [that can constitute an ideal world]. Good families that stick together. Where spouses love each other, are loyal to each other, and genuinely care about the fate of each other, and with the children. This is where it all starts; this is the foundation of society. This is what I wanted too. (Viktória)

Family, sexuality, and gender are recurring topics for religions. That is hardly news. However, it is surprising that families would be seen to matter for large-scale, global purposes. Instead of framing their views on families in a religious way, evangelicals highlight the importance of family in terms of societal and national risk. While these are not a zero-sum game, the striking turn is the almost complete absence of the religious argument. The risk is not about the devil, or the sign of end times. The risk is about the structure of society. Similar to how injustice was only in its frames about religion, here this is the case again. Religion comes to play when there needs to be an imperative frame that explains these opinions. Religious (re)socialization may result in the divinely elevated role of the family, yet it seems that the appreciation for family runs deeper than that because it is not religiously framed as to why families are so vital.

What underlines the suggestion that this is a critique about society rather than a conviction about the religious way of a family-oriented life is that evangelicals are not as focused, as an outsider at first glance might think, on settling down as soon as possible. Mirjam is not interested in having a family of her own. She does not want to have the life scheme where

university is followed by marriage and children – "*this gray routine scares me*". Even then, for her, families do retain their crucial role of preventing large-scale negative repercussions.

> For me being raised in faith is what is normal because I was raised like that. How can you not have God in there, I don't even know… My assistant has a 14-year-old daughter (…) but she has nothing, zero, she's got a divorced parent whose life is chaos (…). There is little chance for good decisions, for good relationships with such family background. This is sad. In a non-Christian family, everything is relative. If parents were in open relationships, so will the child, and it gets worse and worse. It will never get better, they will never learn morals, parents like that won't teach them what morals are. (Mirjam)

This shows that families matter to evangelicals on a completely different scale than just the religious or personal. Non-traditional family models are frightening, but not because they disagree on religious grounds. They are frightening because they undermine the current structures of the world we live in; patriarchy and the nation-state structure. There is nothing religious in evangelical considerations, though the justifications are most commonly so:

> [Families] are threatened. The fact that there are many divorces, this already means a threat. Emancipation too; gender, and the like. (…) And if you look at the Bible, male and female he created them [Gen 1:27b], I say that people, regardless of their beliefs, they can fight for these traditional things more, because these things are so deep-rooted. [To be against] family, for that, the thinking must have mutated very much. For that, we have to consciously resist those things that are inherently inside us. (László)

This excerpt illustrates two points. First, it is typical in these narratives that the Bible is cited only after other arguments have been exhausted. The religious narrative arrives only after the previously described grand-scale risk narratives. The Bible is the justification, not the basis of the argument. For example, the argument that families matter for small-scale practical reasons, such as the well-being or the emotional safety of the family members, never occurs. Families are located at the frontline of a polarized war between right and wrong. Their status

matters because if it changes or, worse, decreases, then it will severely harm the world. This prospect is frightening. Therefore, the ideal of the family needs to be protected.

Second, we see that László takes social constructs like the family as perennial and given. He recognizes how deep-rooted they are, and he takes it as a natural rather than a social phenomenon. This is not a surprising turn; yet this is what brings us to the next point. The results on evangelical attitudes towards injustice, specifically the sexual abuse of children, make more sense when we understand the perennialism evangelicals ascribe to the family. Such sexual assault is not only unjust towards a vulnerable child, but violates the evangelical notion that takes the heterosexual family as the divinely given, natural norm. While queerness is an outsider threat, domestic sexual assault tears families apart from within. It is not only unjust, it justified the frightened narrative that rushes to the protection of the construct of family. It is a sin not only in and of itself but also because it contributes to a threat that evangelicals see as globally occurring and ubiquitous.

Due to the grand-scale significance of the family for evangelical minds, this narrative does influence their political orientation too. Evangelicals do not sympathize with the current right-wing Fidesz government of Hungary. Even if they vote for it, they are wary. We have seen already how they are not that interested in politics that much because it is unjust and dishonest. Yet what does capture their political attention is family issues – almost exclusively.

> If I look at what [the Fidesz government] supports currently: they support the traditional families. I feel it is a good step to support that. The style can be unfortunately too much, I understand this. But the strategy of the current government – that it supports traditional families – is good because people feel closer to these values, than to gender or to this huge freedom. (Levente)

Already in this segment we notice a critique towards the government. This seemed typical. As indicated, evangelicals are not keen even if they support the government. Several

political steps, such as the refugee crisis and the hostile nationalistic discourse, or an earlier law of the government that cracked down religious groups, including Golgota and Agóra, are problematic in their eyes. They are not receptive to any of the discursive agenda of right-wing parties, except on the issue of families. The Fidesz government goes to great length to support families in discourse and in policy attempts. PM Orbán dedicated 2018 as the "year of the families" when he attended the World Congress of Families in Budapest.[165] This is very positive in the eyes of evangelicals, to the extent that it can swing their votes towards the government's direction. While it needs to be emphasized that there is no clear political preference that evangelicals would present (among the informants there were Fidesz supporters and heavily anti-Fidesz voters alike) what is most likely to be politically convincing to evangelicals is the symbolic theme of the traditional family. This is a surprising result, considering that, as mentioned, there has been a law implemented by this same government that attacked religious groups including evangelicals. Yet the theme of family is so powerful that this move on the part of the government is all but forgotten.

Religion is, therefore, surprisingly absent from the evangelical thoughts concerning families. It is there latently, providing arguments to support this discourse, but it does not lead them. The opinions on families are more so a theme where religion reinforces and provides a toolkit for an already existing ideology and worldview. Yet these opinions are strongly present in the way evangelicals frame their world and its public themes. In fact, these opinions are so strong that they bring the politically quiet evangelicals to political words.

It is concerning the family theme that evangelicals and Pentecostals have the most significant overlap. Faith Church members were highly mobilized for political family issues. They, like Levente, are devoted to the current Fidesz government, and primarily due to this:

[165] "2018 a Családok Éve Lesz [2018 Will Be a Year of Families]," *Kormányzat [Government]*, accessed May 27, 2017, http://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/hirek/2018-a-csaladok-eve-lesz.

> We are committed to voting for Fidesz. We are very happy with their family policies, and we also support their refugee policy. This support to families is decisive for us, and no other party offers it. (Beáta)

Beáta informs me that Faith Church members are encouraged by the leading pastor Sándor Németh to go to the 11th World Congress of Families that takes place in Budapest in 2017. She explains that politics is "*worth bringing up in church*", these causes need to be discussed "*on biblical grounds*". For Faith Church's leadership, politics is important *per se,* but once politics is about the family theme, the everyday believers find themselves called to at action as well.

The fact that family issues are strongly present in both evangelical and Pentecostal discourses, and that they seem to be able to mobilize these groups on political levels is an important result. As shown, evangelicals are not the most politically oriented group of Hungarian society. However, families matter so much to evangelicals that they can be addressed even by a party that they do not actually like all that much and that can still earn their support. The power of this discourse is, while not unexpected, still surprising in its strength, and might be a warning sign in regards to where Hungarian evangelicalism and Pentecostalism will proceed politically as their numbers grow.

On Individualism: Personal and Ideological Clashed

Evangelicals place a great emphasis on personal matters. Their religion is all about the personal. Without an intimate relationship with Jesus, one is not a born-again Christian in the evangelical consideration. The importance placed on the personal relationships is central in evangelical narratives. However, as we will see, it is not without contradictions. In this section, I will present how the personal is present for evangelicals. Building upon this, later I will identify the spheres where evangelicals are ready to act, and where they are unlikely to do so. I discuss the forms in which evangelicals see themselves as capable of igniting change. These

results will present a narrative technique by which evangelicals distance themselves from ideological buzzwords ('liberalism') they dislike, and demonstrate what ideologies are incompatible with the religious beliefs of evangelicals, and how those ideologies are kept at arm's length.

First it is necessary to understand its importance for evangelicalism. In the analysis of responses to the semi-structured interview, the "religious theme" was the most frequently used code, which is unsurprising considering the circumstances of recruitment. But it was "personal" that was the second most frequently applied code. For evangelicals, the answer to every question was sought in some manner of personal application. Kinga outright mused, "*I am trying to give a personal example*" when responding to questions. Tanya Luhrmann discusses this phenomenon in detail. Evangelicals go to great lengths to not only experience God personally, but to apply this personal relationship with Jesus to their lives. They have several faith practices for this,[166] like spending date nights with God;[167] a God who is an intimate friend[168] who asks and hopes that evangelicals take every step of their lives in accordance with his will. Evangelicals might struggle with applying this, but this is what they are drawn to do.

This is equally true for Hungarian evangelicals. They are just as engaged with the personal dimension of their beliefs as those American evangelicals whom Luhrmann described. Hungarian evangelicals are highly individualistic thinkers. In the following narratives, there is a visible emphasis placed upon developing a sense of self, acting in accordance with one's own integrity, and – in a religiously motivated approach – appreciating unique individualism as a result of one's religious convictions.

[166] Chapter 4 in Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*, 101–32.
[167] Ibid., 121.
[168] Ibid., 312.

> In my opinion, it is in your own life where you can aspire to be better, to live life better. I mean this about everything, from financial matters, to most importantly human matters. To live life better, wiser, more sensibly, and more and more with love. This is what we personally need to aspire to. But I notice that I cannot live life instead of others, I can't make decisions in their stead, I can't do their time management better – these things are the responsibility of the individual. (Péter)

> The first and foremost is my own behavior, and to set an example with that. (…) If I don't set an example, then I can't expect the same from others. I lose credibility. If I make an exception, just now, just this one time, then how can I hold onto what's important to me? Anyone can come and say, you haven't done it that way either, you haven't followed the rules or the unwritten agreements of social scenarios. (Kinga)

> [Becoming a missionary] has been in my heart for years. I thought I was more than other people. I love it that I'm different, I have different perspectives, I don't like this idea of model person who goes to university, then marriage, then kids – this gray routine scares me. I like to believe that the Lord has a bigger plan that is personal for me, and personal for others too. I don't need to be afraid: I can step up and say that I am different and I want my life to be different. (Mirjam)

Evangelicals love to know who they are. They spend considerable time reflecting on their selves. Then, once they have localized a recurring theme, they speak in self-descriptive terms ("*I am a very sensitive person*", Bálint describes himself). In reverse, they often talk about their "*boundaries*" and limits too. They localize what is most challenging for them and then eagerly disclose it (for Patrik, it is emotions, another internal and highly personal feature). They often wonder about finding their own calling, vocation, and deepest desires. Accordingly, they emphasize "*self-realization*". They highly enjoy popular psychology, especially from religious authors. They are interested in forming their own theories about self by creating a synthesis of their psychological readings and their religious convictions. At the end of the day, this constant process of self-reflection is about finding God in their lives. His call, his "*footsteps*", his presence and guidance on an everyday basis. Self-realization for evangelicals is not only about

finding out who they are. It is about finding out who they are in God's plans. It is a subtle difference but for evangelical thinking it is crucial.

The evangelical approach to their self-exploration gets more complicated once evangelicals talk about individualism. With all their talks on their personality and on the personal dimension, evangelicals are also likely to associate negative connotations with the word 'individualism'. The concept is associated with selfishness and with lack of care and attention for their fellow human being. It is therefore not suitable for the evangelical ideal.

> The biggest problem in society is that people don't value each other. They do not value each other in the slightest, they do not care. I'm not talking about love; I just mean that people should consider each other human beings. This is the most awful. People can't care about each other. The other person is no longer a person but a tool who satisfies some need I have at the moment on my own individualistic path. (Viktória)

> We Christians need to stop being so individualistic. Jesus did not put himself first. If he did, we wouldn't have salvation." Yet later: "God personally calls people to do things. A very important part of our life is to find out what this call is. I am so excited to find out where God leads my life, because I am sure it is a path designed for me, personally and individually (*egyénre szabottan*). (Tamás)

We see this especially in the narrative of Tamás that there is a substantive contradiction in evangelical discussions about the personal. While they appreciate the personal both in their self-development and religious life, certain aspects ("selfishness") are seen negatively. This dismay gets an ideology marker, an "-ism", which they can connect to features of the world that they dislike. For Viktória, individualism was connected to "*liberalism*" and "*anarchy*". Patrik found that "*liberalism*" was rooted in selfishness. Mirjam did not bring up a political ideology in her narrative, but she too dislikes "*freedom and democracy*" which brings "*chaos*", and stated that children born into this freedom end up living a "*jungle life*" in which they only fight for themselves (i.e. they are selfish, they show no care just like how Viktória perceived).

What we see is an interesting narrative technique that connects negatively valued concepts to certain negatively perceived ideologies, while the positive aspects are retained and internalized.

On Religious Agency: Pessimists Globally, Activists Locally

The so far presented results have already suggested that evangelicals are not very optimistic. They identify problems they see in the world, and these problems matter to them. We have seen how injustice and the perceived threat towards families troubles evangelicals. We have seen how they identify problematic personality patterns and connect them to wider ideological networks. But how do they see *themselves* in this environment? How much agency do they feel they have? What role does religion play in narratives on agency and, *mutatis mutandis*, in the decision-making processes?

To the question about the role of religion, the answer is that religion has a great role. The themes of injustice and family values had an underlying religious hue only. In contrast, the topic of agency was clearly and solely framed in religious terms. Religion mattered the most when it came to identifying spaces of agency; the spheres where action is warranted. In this discourse, two spheres – the global and the personal – are contrasted. Global action is deemed pointless and personal action is the most valuable in the discourse of the faithful.

Evangelicals are terribly pessimistic about global issues. This is an ambivalent pessimism; some are scared, some are angry, but they all find peace in their religious conviction that this is how it must be. They are theologically preoccupied with the second coming of Jesus. Though it is not a central theological point for Hungarian evangelicals (unlike for Seventh-Day Adventists) they do share the notion that the second coming is imminent. Accordingly, when asked about the state of the world, the evangelical position is essentially a skeptical shrug. They may worry about certain topics (e.g. family values) but overall they find the perceived decline

of the world inevitable. "*It's written in the Bible*", they echo, clearly identifying that it is their religion that informs this approach.

This religious stance however has a paralyzing effect on evangelical action. On global issues, evangelicals remain indifferent. They keep those issues at arm's length and do not want to know about them. They find them contaminated, and they feel completely powerless about them. This powerlessness can be either the result of the previous religious argument – if it is divinely prescribed, then there is no point in action – or it can be the result of the general trend of people feeling incapacitated. Either way, evangelicals are in unison about their lack of willingness to engage. Before the in-depth look, here are the quick and straightforward ways in which evangelicals dismiss any responsibility about global issues.

> There is an obvious decline, but I don't think I need to explain this in light of the Bible. But I don't like to think about this too much. There are tendencies – the big things in the world – that I have no influence over. By thinking about where things are heading in Hungary or in the world, I ruin my own life. I think about something to which I have no insight, over which I have no influence. I can't change it, but my days, my mood, my thoughts are ruined, and I'll be a pessimist because I will be thinking about something that I cannot fix or treat. (Kinga)
>
> This world is ruled by money and power. There is nothing you can do against this. (Barnabás)
>
> I don't know how politics work; I can't form an opinion about such global things. Faith is what matters to me. (…) There has to be a great awakening everywhere in this world. And I have faith that it will happen soon, in my lifetime. (Mirjam)

There are two patterns present in these excerpts. First is the notion of powerlessness. As Kinga explains, global, or even national, issues poison her everyday personal life and are not worth thinking of. Considering the importance that evangelicals place upon the personal, whatever threatens this personal growth is deemed problematic. This explains why Kinga decides to stay nonchalant. As she believes in the Bible literally, the decline of the world is not

even a question for her. In Barnabás's narrative, money and power are the religious theme. They encapsulate the contaminated nature of the world, expressing how it is "*beyond repair*". Mirjam describes a direct opposition between religion and politics. Politics do not matter. Faith does. It is what will matter at the awakening that she feels to be close. This is how Mirjam approaches the matter of agency, while staying far from concretely political issues.

Mirjam and Kinga foreshadow the next argument: Importance of the personal is not negligible. At first sight, evangelicals might seem just as apathetic towards the woes of the world as non-evangelical Hungarians also seem to be. Since the questions approached their interest from a wide angle, asking about their ideals and their most disapproved evils the informants were prompted to answer with something large. As I dug deeper in our conversations, however, evangelicals gradually revealed the areas in which they think they do have power. This will be the personal and interpersonal outreach of evangelicals.

> What we can do is prayer. Without that, there is nothing we can do. We try to change to the image of Christ in that we do try to serve people, and pay attention to their interests, even when this is difficult, even when it clashes with ours. (…) It is prayer, and identity: our identity in Christ, that God accepts you the way they are. This is how we can take up the burden of responsibility, and be a change in the world. (Barnabás)

Barnabás's narrative captures the trend in evangelical thinking. First, an evangelical can make a difference if they reach out and makes a difference in their personal sphere. In addition, what an evangelical can do is bring religion into this sphere. For Barnabás, this was to be accomplished through prayer. For others, it was *"showing the face of God*" or "*being salt*" (see: Mt 5:13). The religious dimension was ubiquitous. Out of all informants, Kinga, as a school teacher, was the most careful about the salience of her religion. She must be ethical about this in the classroom. Yet she too makes sure to let her students have a personal channel with her,

and on school trips her faith always becomes known to students. The presence of religion is not only strong in these given narratives. It is strong and salient in the lives of the individuals.

Hungarian evangelicals run on the fuel of religion. It has been discussed before how and why the personal matters. In these talks, it becomes clear that this personal sphere is soaked in religion. Everyday interpersonal interactions are constantly screened through and reflected upon. Consequently, evangelicals grow to be more and more committed to personalized behavior in accordance with the previously discussed synthesis of religion and the self.

The agency they feel in personal matters is as powerful as the powerlessness felt in global matters. By having this religious boost, evangelicals see themselves able to reach what they have their eyes on. Indeed, this is not simply a personal experience but a conviction; anyone can achieve anything so long they have Christ by their side.

> As the Bible says, ours is the light of the world, and the salt of the earth, and we need to represent this. Exactly as Jesus showed it to the disciples [when he taught] how to relate to others. This is sometimes successful, sometimes not. Obviously we aren't different from others in that we always succeed; we are different because we can do it if we want. We can achieve anything that we want. (Barnabás)

In contrast to the pessimism that evangelicals feel about large-scale matters, they are at peace with their personal lives. The agency they have about being able to carry out personal change in their micro-reality is sufficient. By the virtue of their faith, they feel able to reach fulfillment, self-realization, and happiness. They are ready to find meaning in every setting and despite hardships they face, by ascribing divine meaning – God's plan – to everyday experiences. This personal agency and tranquility is achieved through religious understanding.

This contrast between global passivity and small-scale personal activism is captured here:

> This world is not meant to improve. It will always take a step back. This world is moved by the devil: money is a tool of it. We cannot expect spiritual growth on a global scale, only decrease. I also think that the person has a way out (*kiskapu*), because, no matter how the devil rules it all, he is not the ultimate power, and God can lift you out of this scene, and can find a place for you. So if I think about what I should be doing, I think the individual needs to rather focus on finding their own happiness in this environment, instead of changing things globally. I don't think that's possible. (Miklós)

It is important to localize where and how action is born. Who are those who act in a heterogeneous religious group, and what brings them to do so? Based on these results, I argue that evangelicals do act. Their actions are small but regular, and their involvement is ideological and committed. The locus of these actions indicates where evangelical discourses can be addressed. It is unconvincing to an evangelical to hear arguments about global concerns, but they can be brought to action by well-organized groups that emphasize one-on-one interaction. More importantly, however, these results show similarity with Ammerman's observation concerning the relationship between action and spirituality. She argues that "people *outside* congregational life" discuss their thoughts about improving the world in large-scale long-term solutions with a "critical political perspective" that the actively religious citizens share less. Yet they were less likely than the actively religious to make concrete steps to reach these goals.[169] It seems, then, that Hungarian evangelicals follow this categorization. They are religiously active and religiously committed, but the grand scheme of things does not capture their attention, nor does it motivate them to step forward. In the following discussion, I will provide a discussion of how I think this is theoretically and practically relevant to the social presence of religions.

[169] Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 225.

Discussion

The original aim of this thesis was to discover what political or national themes Hungarian evangelicals engage with, and where these themes have religious grounds and overtones. Previous literature, particularly Billig's theory on banal nationalism and Brubaker et al. on everyday nationhood, are helpful because they have already tools for identifying nationalism in everyday life. What I captured in this thesis was religion in everyday musings. As opposed to an approach informed by the sociology of religion, which would have revealed where and how religion matters for people *in general*, in this thesis I looked for the role of religion in a narrow, focused field. These are the discourses and opinions about those "worldly" things like politics and public matters. Instead of "religion as prescribed" and "religion as practiced",[170] the thesis shifts to identifying how religion as a narrative provides "a set of schemas, templates and metaphors for making sense of the social world".[171] This thesis contributes by identifying those schemas that matter to Hungarian evangelicals the most.

By doing so, the results highlighted those concrete themes that evangelicals wonder about. However, in a wider scope, it is important to discuss what suggestions these results make about religion and evangelicalism in a theoretical sense. In this section, I go through the implications of the public, political, and personal dimension of the results, and I present further questions that the Hungarian evangelical landscape still offers to future research.

The results showed that religion was indeed used as a template; a frame which the informants could then fill with the content of their liking. It was evangelicalism that led the informants to identify injustice as problematic, but as to *what* they considered unjust – this was as varied as the individuals were. The interviews identified where religion does matter, without forcing it to show up surrounding topics where it does not, and we can detect where religion

[170] Tweed, "After the Quotidian Turn," 369.
[171] Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism," 4.

exerts its influence. This information suggests that evangelicalism plays a constructive role in opinion formation. For evangelicals, religion was neither an overriding rule, nor an empty vessel. While social sciences have often tried to localize religion as either of the two, what these results suggest instead is quite akin to Sam Reimer's suggestion about evangelical subculture. What I mean by this is that, exactly as Reimer observed, the international religious subculture seems to be present in recognizably evangelical ways. Hungarian evangelicals are quite similar in their religious language, beliefs, and the emphasis on the individual – a particularly characteristic feature of a religion born of American individualism and culture. Concerning the public and the political, just like the differing Canadian and American evangelicals, Hungarian believers choose their political opinions on non-religious grounds. Due to this non-religious content, it is not only religious frames that are worth paying attention to, but also how believers give various meanings to a religious template (e.g. injustice) that is abstract enough to make radically diverse reinterpretations.

In what sense does religion matter then? Even though religion does not create the content for the template, it is the way evangelicals *perceive* the world that is influenced by religion. It guides evangelicals in their decision-making and in choosing action or inaction. This demonstrates that evangelicalism has a hold over its followers. While in Faith Church it is visible how a religious group can have a united political stance, Hungarian evangelicalism does not provide concrete policies to its followers. Concerning the political, then, it is comparable to Canadian evangelicalism (i.e. another instance of adaptive evangelicalism) which is "more diverse in party affiliation"[172] than its American origins. Instead of political mobilization, evangelicalism in Hungary can bring the believers to interpersonal action and it demarcates the areas where action is warranted. The grasp of religion is there; not in concrete terms or politically measurable opinions, but in the way the world looks through evangelical eyes.

[172] Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide*, 127.

Religiously speaking, the world is beyond repair in the estimation of a Protestant theology that is preoccupied with waiting for the second coming Jesus. This religious conviction prevents action on the global level, and shifts it to interpersonal activism. Evangelicals act, but the locus of this action lies within the individual's personal sphere of influence, and is ultimately determined by their religious beliefs.

The contrast between global passivity and interpersonal activism brings the discussion to the personal sphere. Concerning personal variations in religions, Ammerman wonders "whether this plethora of [religious] practices should be taken as evidence for modern pluralist individualism or seen as the tenacity of tradition."[173] I argue that Hungarian evangelical can be characterized by religious individualism. By this I mean a worldview that blends emphasis on the personal that modern pluralist societies offer with the deeply felt personal action that religions prescribe. This is how evangelicals engage with modern societies, and what determines how they use their agency. The parts of modern pluralism that are acceptable are incorporated into this religious individualism, while those that are not ("*selfishness*") are pushed away. By seeing themselves as "*colleagues* [munkatárs] *of God*", evangelical agency is naturally varied, individually chosen, and is visible not only in the differences in religious practice, but in their approaches to public values and woes. Feeling empowered in interpersonal activities, evangelicals are uninterested in issues where the personal dimension does not play a role. As I argue, they do not care about global challenges of inequality, but if they are faced with an interpersonal challenge to solve, they will be determined to make a difference. Rooted in this, it seems that defining evangelicals from the social scientific perspective should set personal agency as criterion. This feature is what seems to be most able to travel across borders.

The personal dimension as a core feature of the evangelical thinking is also used in group-forming discourses. As the results show, religious individualism can operate using a narrative

[173] Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 290.

technique by which believers push away those attitudes they do not like. They then tie them into a negative concept (individualism) that they can localize in an ideology (most often liberalism) that they can then reject. They give the negative attitudes a name, and by connecting it with other things they reject, their worldview is formed. This is a powerful way of creating intergroup boundaries. By pushing the secular world away, and as Roy said, understanding their contextual culture as pagan and utterly sinful, evangelicals can construe their position in such ways that, by engaging with the world, they still maintain the borders of their own group. When the different groups have so much in common, and their values about the personal overlap too much, then the discursive strategy is to negatively evaluate elements of the personal dimension, and thus construe group boundaries.

By having covered the public, political, and most importantly the personal, this thesis poses further questions about the political dimension. Based on Reimer, this seems to be the most fascinating part of evangelicalism. As discussed, Hungarian evangelicals approach politics cautiously. In this regard, they are different from their American counterparts. However, Agóra provides an example of an evangelical group which is being pushed to further political engagement by its leader. It remains an interesting question how Hungarian evangelicalism will be effected by its growth and the direction it will take over time. It is Faith Church that accentuates the validity of this question. It is political, conservative, and highly talkative about public issues – in other words, it is more like the nature of evangelicalism (and Pentecostalism) in the US. It is also a much larger church than the tiny communities of evangelicals. Sam Reimer implied that the difference between Canadian and American evangelicals is in the clash of national context versus transnational subculture, but it is an interesting question of how minority position (and the accompanying invisibility) influences these tendencies.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to determine how religion informs evangelical views on public matters; on "where things are going". By asking this question, the research explored what public matters evangelicals engage with, how they feel about political and national matters, and what their personal responses and actions are. These results are valuable because they provide a snapshot of current evangelical thinking. We have seen how evangelicals approached the refugee crisis, the American presidential election, and a Hungarian national holiday. We have seen that Hungarian evangelicals characterize the woes of the world in terms of sinful injustice. This explains their aversion to politics, which they see as tainted by unfairness and dishonesty. We have seen that their political allegiance can nevertheless be captured with a topic framed in non-religious but nationalistic terms: family values. The thesis then demonstrated that agency is influenced by religion. Evangelical commitment to global woes is little as they consider those troubles already given over to evil in the cosmic war between God and the devil. This does not stop them from finding themselves able and religiously assigned to act. Hungarian evangelicals showed what I called "religious individualism"; a mixture of modern pluralist society and religiously felt agency. By this religious individualism, evangelicals are ready to engage with small-scale interpersonal organizations, while they are unmoved by global, "worldly" organizations.

Through these qualitative findings, I offer two arguments. First, by introducing religious individualism, I argue that evangelicals constitute an individualistic group that, when facing interpersonal initiatives, are easily mobilized. By this religious individualism, Hungarian evangelicals engage with the world around them, and look for opportunities that give a venue for their personal agency to unfold. Understanding evangelical thinking will grow easier if one recognizes the importance of the personal. This personal dimension, I argued, was rooted in

their religious convictions given the importance of a personal relationship with God. Instead of being a product of the modern pluralist society, evangelicals create their own religious individualism by infusing it with this deeply felt personal relationship with the divine.

Second, this religiously-originating thinking about the significance of the personal becomes salient in how evangelicals see the world. Injustice, global moral decline, the ability to make a change in interpersonal ways – these are all ideas that evangelicals get from their religious beliefs. Religion, I argued, provides a frame that directs evangelical thinking, but it does not determine what evangelicals will be specifically "*called to*" address. This, again, will be an individual choice, resulting in a wide spectrum of evangelical priorities concerning public issues. In other words, my argument was that religion for evangelicals in respect to public matters is elusive. It is strongly there as a moral compass and a general direction, but it does not lead all evangelicals to the same place. This is interesting for two reasons. First, because religion is often given either too much or too little emphasis as a sphere of influence, and second because it shows that even for evangelicals – a highly committed religious group – religion does not provide a framework to every matter in life. Other allegiances and identities remain influential.

Perhaps the most pressing future research theme is about the lingering transnational relations. What transnational similarities and dissimilarities can we detect when we compare Hungarian evangelicals to evangelicalism elsewhere? Sam Reimer compared American and Canadian evangelicals, and it now seems warranted to carry out a transatlantic comparison. Evangelical subculture penetrates other religious landscapes and as the fieldwork shows, retains a degree of American character. When the literature and the theology remain influenced by American evangelical figures, it seems important to investigate the transnational links that evangelicals worldwide cultivate with American evangelical communities.

As presented in the literature review, global evangelicalism and Pentecostalism are increasingly successful. It is timely and crucial to understand what makes them so. This thesis was led by this objective, and after observing and interacting with Hungarian believers I provided insight into how these local evangelical communities think, and what themes inspire and concern them. This is the most important contribution of this thesis; accounting for this Hungarian adaptation of global evangelicalism, and by exploring a new context setting a foundation for further research on this phenomenon.

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Furthermore, the research relied on the digital archives and/or other information found on these evangelical and Pentecostal websites: www.hit.hu, www.golgotabudapest.hu, www.harmat.hu.