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RELIGION BETWEEN STATE AND SOCIETY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

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Introduction

European differences

Religion and the state in preindustrial societies were linked in a specific way. Kings legitimated their power with the help of a particular relationship with a supranatural order. At first glance we may think that this is no longer applicable to the situation in industrial societies. However, that is spurious, because religion can also play an important role in modern society. In some industrial societies, like Japan, for example, religion is still fundamental to the state. In some countries ideology took over the role of a state religion during the twentieth century. However, in pluralistic democratic societies, too, religion has still been able to influence public life. In some cases, consciously or unconsciously, states use religious symbols and metaphors. The American statement, 'In God we trust', is an example of this. The use of generally accepted or at least tolerated religious symbols has been called civil religion. It is particularly visible in societies with a population adhering to different confessions, but in which Protestantism dominated in the past.

Even if we leave aside these forms of public religion, we may notice that states have some relationship with religion. Although the legitimation of power in industrial societies is no longer grounded on supranatural powers, as in, for example, the absolutist states of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the problem of legitimation still exists.

The concept of people's sovereignty, which has been applied since the French Revolution, seems convincing at first glance, but is a difficult one, because it is not clear how 'the people' has to be defined. The common practice of using the concept of the nation as a synonym of the people does not bring about any clarification.

The nation, as a group of people, who feel that they are belonging to a community, must provide the emotional bond, which the abstract state as such cannot give; it is, however, the state that defines the membership of the nation. The emotional bond also requires the symbolism and rituals, which have been so characteristic of religions. Myths and rituals are as important for nations as they are for the bonds of the community within religion. This applies to an even greater extent to those nations for which a common religion is the most important source of their nationhood.

Religion has customarily been identified with tradition and with a society mostly dominated by agriculture. For that reason one could expect a decline of the role of religion in nineteenth-century society at least in some areas, because industrialisation and urbanisation were important factors changing society during that period. However, it can be observed that during the first half of the nineteenth century a revival of religion took place. Although this revival diminished during the second half of the century, religion still influenced societies strongly in several ways.

In all West European states, with the exception of Britain, political battles between the state and religious institutions were fought over the control of the educational system. Also political parties with a religious affiliation developed. Although religion still dominated European society, the position of religion in society changed over the period in several respects, but these changes were influenced by various factors.

If we look to the countryside, the position of religious institutions was important, at least in many parts of Europe. It was there that clergymen and priests belonged to the local elite and played sometimes a role in the processes of societal change. Sometimes they stimulated innovations (one may think of farmers' leagues, cooperative movements etc., in particular at the end of the century), but sometimes they also slowed down developments.

In many cases clergymen were not born in the area, but came from outside. The Roman Catholic Church tried to avoid in its policy of appointments and displacements a strong emotional bond between the local priest and his parish. Sometimes the clergy identified with the established order. At least they belonged to a separate group. The Protestant clergy — at least the members of the established churches — saw themselves as intellectuals. Although their incomes were not very high,

they had a status comparable with the professions (notaries, doctors etc.). The Anglican clergymen in the UK even saw themselves as gentlemen. In the eyes of their Methodist critics they were, with their gardens and spacious livings, a leisured class. This relatively affluent situation did not exist in urban society, yet, there too the clergy had some influence. However, the situation could differ according to local or regional circumstances. Important factors could be the existence of an established church, or specific political or economic situations.

It is even possible that differences in family structures could have played a role, as Emmanuel Todd tried to prove in a recently published book.[1] He linked the process of what he called 'de-christianisation' (by which he meant the loss of influence of religious institutions in society) to specific family structures in different European regions. Although his approach is very interesting, at the same it is time debatable. In this contribution I will not discuss the outcome of the process of the diminishing influence of religious institutions as such,[2] but will stress the differences in the relationship between state and religion, or crown and altar. Also a sociopolitical and institutional approach will be applied.

For several reasons my attention will focus on developments during the nineteenth century: firstly, contemporaries had the idea that religion was losing its position in society and they had lively and sometimes fierce debates about this topic. The question arises how far their impression was true. Secondly, during this period societies underwent not only important political but also massive social change (one may think of the influences of the revolutions, industrialisation, urbanisation and the impact of migration). And finally, different tendencies could be detected during this period. In general we may see a revival of the position of religion at the beginning of the century, in particular in the aristocracy and also parts of the working class, whereas some parts of the middle classes stayed critical. During the second half of the century we can detect a change of position. Large parts of the lower class, at least during the first half of the century, stayed only nominal members, whereas the middle classes became more attracted to these institutions. However, before we can say something about these changes, we have to define religion as such.

A definition of religion

Any attempt to define religion will depend on the starting point taken, whether it is a sociological, anthropological, historical or psychological

viewpoint. It is clear, however, that although religion is related to individual ideas, social factors, such as community, are important. To quote the sociologist Talcott Parsons: 'Religion involves community.' Religion offers not only a system of significance and the possibility of understanding the world and one's place in it, but, with the help of rituals, these individual feelings and views are linked to those of the larger community. Rituals not only give a symbolic participation in this world, but also strengthen the feelings of community. Although there may be differences between various religious groups, in the majority of cases these communities have an institutional character.

Within nineteenth-century Christianity, four dominant institutional forms existed:

1. A hierarchical type without important influence of the laity, such as the Roman Catholic Church.

2. A hierarchical type with important influence of the laity and/or state such as the Russian Orthodox churches or the Episcopal Lutheran churches in Scandinavia and the German states.

3. A nonhierarchical type with important influence of the clergy, such as the Calvinist churches in the Netherlands, Switzerland and Scotland.

4. A nonhierarchical type with only minor distinction between clergy and laity, such as in the dissenting churches in the Netherlands, England, Wales, and in Switzerland.

Because these differences in organisational structure also influenced the relationship between religion and society we will return to this point later.

Religion not only has an important social impact, because it is formalised and institutionalised, but it also provides its adherents with norms of behaviour for the social setting. These norms and values can either be deduced from a supernatural origin or they can be rationalisations of what were originally mythical ideas. Ritual can also be important for the internalisation of values, and rituals can strengthen norms and normative structures. According to Parsons, particularly during periods of crisis, ritual serves as a safety net to bring structures back into balance.[3] But it may be clear that the existence of norms and values can have important social effects.

Secularisation

It is clear that religion plays an important role in many societies; but this role can change over time. In modern, pluralistic societies the influence

of formal religion on the various aspects of society is limited. The development towards this situation is generally referred to as secularisation. One of the confusing aspects of the debate about secularisation is that the concept itself is understood in different ways. Sometimes it is used in relation to the individual, namely, the behaviour and attitudes of individuals, and at other times it is applied to religious institutions.

The most generally accepted definition is that secularisation is a process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose their social significance.[4] That does not mean, however, that there needs to be a discrepancy between the individual and the institution. Individual forms of religiosity can exist, even if institutions lose their function in society. It is also possible that political or social movements can be inspired by religion, even though their adherents may no longer be members of a church in a formal sense.

For many people secularisation has been seen as a decline in the influence of religious institutions in society, including diminishing church attendance, a decrease in the income of the institutions and a decline in other aspects of religious institutions in the daily lives of their members. Although difficulties exist in the measurement of the institutional aspects of religion, it is questionable whether this decline in fact reflects a general decline of religion in society. Nevertheless, the institutional aspects are important, as we shall see.

If we attempt to define secularisation, several aspects come to mind. The word itself developed within the Christian world. This is not to say that this phenomenon did not manifest itself in other religions, but the concept seems to belong, at least in part, to the culture of Christian religions. Within Judaism, for example, similar developments can be seen, but these tended to occur later. It is clear, however, that within the major religions of Asia, such as Buddhism and Confucianism, the concept of secularisation does not exist. Also, to the third major religion of the Mediterranean world, Islam, the idea of secularisation is not a native concept. The only important exception to this general rule seems to be Turkey after Ataturk.

In Europe the idea of secularisation came into existence during the first half of the seventeenth century. By origin it was a legal term, involving the takeover of former ecclesiastical possessions by temporal powers. The concept itself was not new, because within canonical law during the Middle Ages, secularisation was used to describe the takeover of possessions of the regular clergy (i.e., monks living according to a rule) by the secular clergy (the ordinary priests). The devastating religious wars of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as well as the devel-

opment of the new absolutist monarchies in Europe, coined and used the term in this way.

With the emergence of new ideas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including expansion of the sciences, the idea of secularisation became embodied within other contexts. It became increasingly more desirable to separate the supernatural sphere (which was seen in stricter terms, as, for example, in deism) from the natural and verifiable sphere. Max Weber called this general process the disenchantment of the world (*Entzauberung der Welt*). It is debatable, however, as to how and to what extent this process was directly related to a diminishing influence of religion in general, and of religious institutions in particular. At least we may say that during the nineteenth century it was not a linear process.

The burden of the past

Although during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries religion had specific characteristics, which were partially moulded by society, these characteristics developed within a framework that had previously existed. This framework can be regarded as a result of national differences, or rather the result of state formation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These differences were a part of the former close relationships between religion and state policy, in particularly in the patrimonial states.

The French Revolution served to undermine this relationship, but if we try to detect more general structures, we see that within Europe four major zones existed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There was a predominantly Roman Catholic zone (including France, Spain, the Italian States, Belgium and the Habsburg countries), a predominantly Protestant zone (including the Scandinavian countries), an Orthodox zone (Russia, Greece and Bulgaria) and finally a mixed one (Britain, the Netherlands, Switzerland and a major part of the German states). This situation was largely a result of the outcome of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation movements during the sixteenth century and the fierce religious wars that followed in their wake.

In those areas in which the Counter-Reformation was successful, a close link between the crown and altar was established, although during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the state was gaining power over the church. A well-known example which illustrates this situation is the expulsion of the Jesuit order from many European states and

the development of the so-called national churches. In addition, general public education had become a state affair. The strict ties between the social and political establishments and the church, however, meant that in these areas political opposition was also opposition against the church.[5]

In the virtually homogeneous Roman Catholic areas, this led to the development of anti-clericalist movements, which were influenced by religion in both form and content. In France examples of this can be found within the Saint-Simonism and Comteianism movements. The state could be either religious or nonreligious. In contrast, the church was generally identified with political reaction in those areas, a situation different from that in the mixed areas.

A similar situation could be found in the largely homogeneous Protestant areas. In the Scandinavian countries some Free Churches existed, but their influence was not strong and they could not be seen as an alternative.[6] Their adherents were mainly lower class, whereas their members in the mixed areas were mainly middle class or so-called respectable working class. Nevertheless, the clashes between the church and its anti-clericalist opposition did not develop in the Protestant areas as in the homogeneous Roman Catholic areas. There are several reasons for this. During the first half of the nineteenth century Scandinavian Lutheranism was strongly influenced by Pietism. In Norway and Denmark particularly this led to specific movements of religious revival related to forms of nationalism and romanticism.[7] In Denmark Grundtvig, a parson as well as a poet and writer, had a strong influence on this movement, whereas Hauge, a merchant from Bergen, was the most influential person in Norway.[8] These movements not only stimulated popular attraction to Christianity, but also popular education (high schools for the people) and self-advancement for artisans and farmers. They also stimulated the democratisation of society.[9]

Secondly, during the nineteenth century it can be seen that when religion was related to some kind of national question there was no split in society between adherents and nonadherents of religion. This can be illustrated by the situation in Ireland and Poland, and it can also be seen in Finland, Denmark and Norway.[10] It is interesting to note that in Sweden, the only country in which religion and the national question did not play a role, these tensions developed to a greater extent.[11]

It was clear that within the Scandinavian countries the church was already totally subordinated to the state, therefore the establishment could not elevate the church as a sacred society above the state. This meant that the church adapted more easily to the state, even when the political structure of the state changed.

A third, mainly homogeneous area, was the Orthodox lands in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Here, too, the church was mainly monopolistic and represented an instance of extreme collusion between the church and the state – particularly in Russia where, since Peter the Great, the Orthodox church was in fact a state department under the autocratic rule of the tsar. This model could also be found in the Balkans, where the Russian church played an influential role. The Turkish Empire had also been dominating the majority of these areas for a long time; therefore, the Byzantine heritage was very important.

Mixed areas could be found mainly in the border areas between Reformation and Counter-Reformation lands, such as Switzerland, the Netherlands and parts of Germany. Britain also belonged to this model, although it was not a border area in the strict sense. In these areas nothing of the strong antithesis between religion and nonreligion can be found, as was the case in the nonpluralistic areas. Not only was there an important Roman Catholic minority, which contributed to the processes of democratisation and parliamentary control, but also denominational dissent within Protestantism was strong. These dissenting movements played an important role within politics during the nineteenth century. In Britain, for example, they contributed much to liberalism and later to the Labour Party, whereas Anglicanism and conservatism tended to be more closely linked.[12]

In the mixed areas Roman Catholicism was not the conservative force that it was in the homogeneous Roman Catholic areas. During the nineteenth century there was a period of collaboration with liberalism (as in the Netherlands and in Belgium, although the latter belongs to the more homogeneous Catholic area). Also later in the nineteenth century and during the twentieth century, when Roman Catholic parties already existed they tended towards the centre-left of politics (in particular if they had many working-class voters). In the case of Britain a Catholic party was absent and with a great proportion of the working class being members of the Roman Catholic Church, votes went directly to the Labour party.

Dissenting religious groups contributed in general to the process of democratisation and growing parliamentary influence. This was also the case with neo-Calvinism, with its specific orthodox characteristics. The reason was its strong populist undertones, being in the tradition of the Covenanters. For example, in the Netherlands in the 1870s and 1880s neo-Calvinism was the first movement not only to break with the Reformed Church dominated by a liberal establishment, but also to create the first modern party, with structured organisation of its voters. This movement attracted many artisans, shopkeepers and traders.

Two aspects were particularly important in the mixed areas. In contrast to the situation in the predominantly homogeneous Catholic areas, the break with religion was not so strong in the mixed areas. Although the distance between state and religion increased in the aftermath of the revolutionary period, governments used vague but unmistakable religious symbols in their rhetoric. This symbolism and rhetoric was very pronounced in the USA, but can also be seen in the Netherlands, Denmark, Britain, Switzerland, etc. It has been called civil religion.[13] But the most important aspect was the necessity in those societies to find solutions for the increasing problem of pluriformity. The lack of a dominating religious group required solutions through compromises.

In some cases this pluriformity could be found in a situation of decentralisation of power. In such cases the state only served as an overall 'umbrella' organisation. This was the case in Switzerland, where the more urban areas became Protestant, whereas the more rural areas remained mainly Catholic. In spite of some troubled periods, with a short civil war in 1847, religion as well as education was organised on the canton level. This was particularly strong during the second half of the nineteenth century when liberalism tended to play down its secularising and centralising policies in favour of some cooperation with Catholics and conservative Protestants against the Labour movement. Swiss Catholicism therefore kept within some form of distinct pillar, as did its counterparts in the Netherlands, Austria and Belgium.[14]

A similar situation could be found in Germany. Here, the extreme decentralisation, and the effects of the Reformation as well as the religious wars, led to the establishment of different confessions according to regions. Although during the nineteenth century this geographical basis changed, due to industrialisation and urbanisation (as well as changes in state boundaries as a result of political movements during and after the Napoleonic period), some regional differences persisted. Catholicism could be found predominantly in the south and in the western Rhineland, whereas the Protestants dominated the north and the eastern areas. Although Roman Catholics had a strong foothold in some areas, after the unification of Germany under Prussian supremacy in 1871, their position within the whole empire was relatively weak. Whenever the Catholics did not vote for the (Catholic) Centre Party, they tended to vote for the left-wing parties.[15]

The political and social developments in Germany led to the emergence of a confessionally pluralistic society in which, due to the dominating position of Prussia, Protestantism had a prominent place. State and church were, however, strongly related to each other, as shown

in the *Kulturkampf* (i.e. the conflict between Bismarck and the Catholic church, which was most violent in Prussia, but also played a role in other regions, such as Baden). As a result of the link between the state and the church(es), the nominal membership rates of the churches and synagogues were rather high.[16] However, by the end of the nineteenth century nonbelief was also rather high, at least in the larger cities.

Deviations from the model

We have seen that in the case of Scandinavia the effects of an almost monopolistic situation were different from the situation in the Latin countries. Also within predominantly Catholic areas, deviations could exist. The most well-known examples are those of Ireland and Poland and, to a lesser extent, Belgium. The Irish and Polish cases are examples of a situation in which external pressure or military and political occupation resulted in a close relationship between the nation and religion. The necessity for national unity tended to diminish criticism concerning the position and the role of the church. Consequently, religion seemed to play a unifying role and was generally accepted. Secularisation, defined as a diminishing influence of the religious institutions, was minimal in these cases.

Austria, too (at least the Austrian Republic after the First World War) seems to be an exception to the general rule within homogeneous Catholic areas. Although the development there – the autocratic right-wing government under Dollfuß – was similar to what occurred between 1934 and 1935 in other Catholic countries such as Spain and Portugal, the general tendency from the late nineteenth century was towards some form kind of pillarisation comparable to the Belgian, Swiss and Dutch situation.

Changes over time

Not only did the traditional cleavages within Christianity affect the position of religion within societies, but also general political and economic developments. Since the late eighteenth century, states developed from patrimonial monarchies towards more bureaucratic and centralised organisations, based on territory and legitimised by the concept of nationhood. This affected the role of religion within society in a different way. Whereas during the late eighteenth century religion was seen by 'Enlightened' monarchs as an obstacle to modernisation, these views

changed in reaction to the political and social upheavals that culminated in the French Revolution.

The period between 1789 and 1848 showed a remarkable religious revival, compared with the eighteenth century. This revival was rooted in two developments. Political elites and the governments came to believe that the established churches could be an important force to hold back the tide of revolution. Romanticism as a cultural movement to some extent contributed to this development. New territorial divisions also created the need to define the concept of established churches in a new way. Examples of this situation could be found in the new kingdom of the Netherlands (where the future Belgian and Dutch territories were brought together), in Bavaria (where Protestant strongholds like the former *Reichsstädte* (city states) merged with a traditional Roman Catholic area) and in the enlarged Prussian state (with the Rhine provinces and the former Polish territory of Posen).

Another contribution to the revival of religion in society was the fact that religious sectarianism appealed to many groups of the middle and lower strata, who were in the process of establishing their own identity and cultural autonomy.[17] Although comparable movements in Roman Catholic areas did not exist, the Catholic Church at that time gained new influence because it was more tolerant than during the eighteenth century to various forms of popular belief and devotion.[18] The recruitment of priests from the lower strata also contributed to a stronger link between the population, the church and the religious revival.

During the same period, however, religion was challenged by the fact that political radicals popularised deistic and atheistic ideas on a broader scale.[19] The revolutionary French government also conducted one of the first state-directed anti-religious campaigns, which gained a mass following for the first time. Nevertheless, the impact of atheism on society was less influential than was the thought of, for example, Engels (*Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse*),[20] at least during the first half of the nineteenth century. Royle investigated this topic for the English situation and concluded that atheism was not widespread among the working classes.[21] Although some relationship with Chartism existed (particularly among the artisans), atheism was, at least in England, a marginal phenomenon.

Whereas atheism did not increase during the second half of the nineteenth century, agnosticism increased remarkably. There were several reasons for the decline in active church membership. Urbanisation and industrialisation became more general phenomena in the majority of European societies. In particular, in the industrial areas, social conflict between the working classes and the middle classes, on the one hand, and

the upper class, on the other, increased. More traditional forms of poor relief, mostly related to church organisation, came under pressure. The state, to an extent, took over education and charity, areas previously dominated by the church. This meant that the necessity to attend church services diminished for the lower classes.

Moreover, the development of more well-to-do neighbourhoods with their own churches led to greater financial problems for churches in working-class areas, particularly where the church organisation was a parish system. Also, working-class movements developed a more anti- or nonreligious standpoint. They were particularly opposed to the unionism related to churches, which emerged in Catholic areas with the new social policy of Pope Leo XIII, and in Protestant areas with the development of neo-Calvinism.[22] The increasing influence of Marxism on the working-class movement on the Continent, particularly in Germany, also contributed to this situation, mainly because it propagated a more scientific view of the world. Besides that, some working-class movements adopted socialism as a substitute for religion.

In addition, within the upper and middle classes agnosticism became stronger during the second half of the nineteenth century. Intellectual developments including Darwinism, liberal theology with its biblical criticism, and the increasing prestige of science contributed to these developments, both in urban and rural areas. Scientific methods of agriculture undermined the more traditional forms, which were often related to Christianity. It was not only these developments, but also Judaism that affected the Christian churches.[23] Assimilation not only implied the adoption of a different lifestyle but also, in some cases, a more critical stance towards religion.

At the end of the nineteenth century new forms of leisure gained popularity, which often detracted from traditional forms of church attendance. Some churches tried to cope with this problem by offering a combination of worship and leisure activities, even sport facilities on Saturdays. But in general the majority spent their Sunday on other activities other than attending church.

Although contemporary writers complained about these developments, in reality the situation was not so unambiguous. Political fights about the relationship between the state and the church, as, for example, in Germany during the so-called *Kulturkampf* and in France during the Third Republic, strengthened the ties between clergy and people. Movements to combine more traditional religious views with some aspects of modernisation, as in Dutch neo-Calvinism and in Catholic neo-Thomism in

reaction to these developments, tended to strengthen the position of the churches. The development of the so-called People's Parties (*Volksparteien*) in Austria, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands also contributed to this situation. The *pillarisation* of society with a political party, associations and an educational system related to a religious organisation led to counter-reactions from socialist working-class movements. Although pillarisation in this sense did not exist in Germany, similar reactions against the Centre Party existed.[24] It is undeniable that during the second half of the nineteenth century there was a massive decrease in working-class participation in church life in most countries, although this development was partially compensated by the bourgeoisie's return to the churches, most notably in France. Questions about the relationship between the church and the state, particularly the problem of education, led to a greater sense of cohesion among members of the churches.

During the second half of the nineteenth century there was not simply just a general tendency towards 'de-christianisation'. In some areas, not only political parties and social movements related to specific churches, but also the clergy itself participated in the modernisation processes. In specific areas, like Belgium, the Netherlands and parts of Germany, the Roman Catholic Church was involved in the establishment of banks, the forming of cooperatives and the organisation of the sale of fertilisers.

Changes in society as a factor influencing religion

It was not only regional divisions between Catholicism and Protestantism (related to historical events and cultural developments) that influenced the relationship between religion and society, but also specific changes within society itself. The process of modernisation of society in general,[25] and the Industrial Revolution in particular, contributed to a changing relationship between religion and society. Two aspects were of key importance: urbanisation and the changing relationship between towns and the countryside. Migration also played an important role during the nineteenth century. Several factors were important in this process.

The general increase in population, particularly in the countryside, led to a constant and sometimes dramatic mobility (examples can be found during and after the so-called 'hungry forties').[26] The constant factor was that people tried to combine the income from small properties in the

countryside with temporary incomes elsewhere. Irish peasants went to England to earn a living, while their families stayed home to care for the animals and the property.[27] Similar situations could be found in Westphalia, where peasants worked in Dutch agriculture during harvest times, as well as in Denmark and parts of Germany. Besides the movement to other agricultural areas, people were also attracted by urban areas. Peasants from the mountainous areas in France went to Lyon or Paris to supplement their earnings in construction or other industries, as did the Flemish peasants from the North and from Belgium.

Although this pattern of migration was rather traditional (but in ever-increasing numbers), this was not true for other types of typically nineteenth-century migration. Political and economic changes led to a modified situation in the countryside and also to emigration. The most obvious example is the so-called enclosure movement of the British countryside, which also existed on the Continent in slightly different forms. The so-called Prussian reforms during the Napoleonic period had similar effects.[28] The result was a different division of property and, in particular, a rationalisation of agriculture. This led to an enormous increase in the mobility of the population.

Migration and urbanisation affected not only society in general, but also the role and position of religion within society.[29] Nineteenth-century authors, with their contemporary ideas about the strong influence of the environment on ideology and morality, took these trends and movements very seriously. Diminishing church attendance and widespread disbelief were anticipated. In reality, however, the developments were less clear cut. Religion, rather than ethnicity or geographical origin, tended to bind immigrants together, particularly in the United States.[30]

The expulsion of population led to a more definitive break with country life. Urban centres in general, and particularly the new industrial centres, experienced an enormous increase of inhabitants. Thus, the nineteenth century became a period of urbanisation. Cities such as London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Petersburg were striking examples of this process, as were the boom towns of the English Midlands, the Ruhr area, Northern France and Italy, as well as the traditional transport centres of Liverpool, Marseilles, Genoa, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Hamburg and Le Havre. The formation of nation states, with their policy of centralisation and their bureaucracies, also resulted in an increasing number of capital cities with rapidly growing populations.

Adaptation to urban environment and forms of identity

It is clear that these developments affected not only society as a whole, but also the position of religion within society. Contemporary authors, writing on this topic, feared a loss of belief and morality.[31] They considered that the environment influenced people and that the urban environment exerted a bad influence.[32] It is debatable, however, to what extent migration and urbanisation affected religion. Studies on specific groups of emigrants to the United States show that religion played a stronger role in group identification than factors such as language or ethnicity.[33] We have to remember, however, that in the USA the denominational model encompassed all groups, including Roman Catholics and Jews.

In Europe, where this was either absent, or related to specific Protestant groups, the situation was different – although here also religion could play a role in the adaptation of migrants to their new surroundings. In general, it seemed that the first generation stuck to their traditional belief. One of the greatest problems was a lack of money. The majority of the immigrants were of humble origin and the expanding urban areas were only provided with limited religious services. In many cases, the state was no longer inclined to contribute to the building of new churches.

In specific Protestant areas this problem was moderated by the activities of Free or dissenting churches, and the so-called 'internal mission' (a movement against de-christianisation of cities and towns, appearing in different forms in different European countries).[34] Churches with a parish system, like the Roman Catholic church and the Anglican church, were more vulnerable to the effects of the separation of the social classes into distinct urban and suburban neighbourhoods, than other types of church organisations which provided a system of solidarity between different local churches. Sometimes, however, the increase in the numbers of immigrants created new opportunities for specific churches. A good example was the influx of Irish migrants to English cities, which stimulated the Roman Catholic Church in England. Without such influx the position of this church would have been weaker, in spite of the upper-class interest during the last decades of the nineteenth century.[35] But even within the Irish Catholic community in England, church attendance decreased with the second generation. However, the popular anti-Catholicism in Victorian England was partially rooted in the strong Irish influence in English Catholicism.[36]

Similarly, for the Polish workers emigrating to the Ruhr area or Belgium and Northern France, religion was an important instrument for maintaining their identity. In the Western parts of Germany this led to clashes with the Prussian government, which not only had problems with Roman Catholics, but also tried to diminish Polish national feelings and the use of the Polish language.[37]

In general, however, the process of urbanisation and the migration to towns tended to decrease church attendance of the working classes. In Britain, where a strong relationship existed between Nonconformism and the working classes, even the dissenting churches were losing influence by the end of the century. Only the so-called respectable working class and labourers in the mining areas remained members of the church, rather than the traditional working class.[38]

Widespread migration also served to intensify tensions inside religious communities. Within the Jewish communities in Western Europe, complaints about the poorer and more pious Eastern immigrants increased towards the end of the century; this was also the case with some Christian communities. The arrival of masses of people from the countryside represented a threat to the established urban community.

As well as industrialisation and urbanisation, another important development was the emergence of the (nation) state, with its tendency towards homogeneity and centralisation. In different countries this led to a series of clashes, particularly on the subject of education. Although these developments influenced the role of religion in society, the effects were mainly political and do not need to be discussed here.

Conclusions

In spite of the general idea that religion is not important in industrial societies, we may conclude that – at least during the nineteenth century – there was no linear development towards a decline in religion. In the first half of the nineteenth century Christian churches were regaining ground in several ways. Agnosticism and nonbelief was not widespread, and also the working class – who later in the century had a widespread tendency towards lower church attendance – was involved in the church in many ways. Within the Roman Catholic Church, popular belief played an important role, and in Protestant areas dissenting churches and Free Churches were important, particularly for the artisans and lower middle classes.

This situation changed during the second half of the nineteenth century. Although many migrants moving to towns and industrial areas found that religion could play a role in the process of adaptation, giving them some feeling of identity, in the long run migration and urbanisation negatively affected the relationship between religion and society. Even in Britain, where the Roman Catholic Church benefited from the large number of Irish immigrants, there was gradual decline in church attendance over the years. Other factors contributed to this change, including the increasing influence of modern science and the development of a working-class movement with its rather anti-religious tendencies.

But even during the second half of the century, it is difficult to say that there was a tendency towards a diminishing influence of religion in society. Church membership remained attractive for the middle classes. New political and social movements related to church membership also played a role in this process, especially in Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands and in Germany (although a Roman Catholic political party only developed in the latter).

Europe in the nineteenth century showed many differences in the relationship between religion and society, and religion and politics. However, it was not so much the differences between the contemporary nation states that influenced these divisions. Structural divisions were a result of developments in the past, in particular during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. State formation in early modern Europe was also strongly influenced by these religious quarrels.

The areas with religious pluralism and the border areas were different from the more homogeneous areas. These differences influenced the outcome of the process of secularisation. This process was not a linear one, thus one cannot speak of a steady decline of religion in society. Finally, the role of religious institutions did become weaker, but the process was slow and was certainly not smooth. Even the results of the process of social and economic change, which affected Europe enormously, were partially influenced by this structural division.

Notes

1. E. Todd, *L'invention de l'Europe*, Paris, 1990.

2. The result was a decrease in the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in some areas during the eighteenth century and a stabilisation of this church during the nineteenth century up until the 1960s. In contrast to that there was a relatively lasting influence of Protestant churches until 1880 and a very rapid decline thereafter.

3. T. Parsons, 'Sociology of Religion', in *Action Theory and the Human Condition*, ed. T. Parsons, New York, 1978, pp. 167–324.

4. B.R. Wilson, *Religion in a Secular Society*, London, 1966.

5. D. Charlton, *Secular Religions in France*, Oxford, 1963; A. Dansette, *The Religious History of Modern France*, New York, 1962; F. Goguel, 'Religion et politique en France', *Révue française de science politique* 16 (1966), pp. 1174ff., A.C. Jemolo, *Church and State in Italy 1850–1950*, Oxford, 1969.

6. A. Hassing, 'Methodism in Norwegian Society', Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, 1973; J. Gusfield, *Svensk Kyrkogeographi*, Malmö, 1966; K. Kjær, 'Free Churches in Denmark', Ph.D. thesis, University of Copenhagen, 1968; M. Balle-Petersen, *Guds folk i Danmark: nogle synspunkter på studiet af religiøse grupper*, Lyngby, 1977; C. Bjørn, 'De folkelige bevægelser i Danmark', Fortid og Nutid 26 (1976), pp. 346–57.

7. G. Kaser, 'L'eveil du sentiment national. Rôle du piétisme dans la naissance du patriotisme', *Archives de sociologie des religions* 12 (1966), pp. 59–80.

8. D. Breistein, *Hans Nielsen Hauge, Merchant of Bergen: Christian Belief and Economic Activity*, Bergen, 1855; Bjørn, 'De folkelige bevægelser i Danmark'.

9. H.P. Clausen et al., *Kulturelle, politiske og religiøse bevægelser i det 19. Århundrede*, Århus, 1973; A.E. Christensen, *Danmarks Historie*, København, 1992; H.J.H. Glædemark, *Kirkeforfatningssporgsmaalet i Danmark, indtil 1874. En historiskkirkeretlig studie*, København, 1948; P.G. Lindhardt, *Vækkelse og kirkelige retninger*, Århus, 1977.

10. E. Allardt, 'Factors Explaining Variations and Changes in the Strength of Finnish Radicalism', in *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Sociology*, Washington, 1962.

11. G. Gustafsson, *Religion och Politik*, Lund, 1967; S. Rydenfelt, *Kommunismen i Sverige*, Lund, 1954.

12. T. Brennan, E.W. Cooney and M. Pollins, *Social Change in South-West Wales*, London, 1954; C. Davies, *Religion in the Industrial Revolution in South Wales*, Cardiff, 1965; K.S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*, London, 1963; H. McLeod, *Religion and Class in the Victorian City*, London, 1974; B. Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution*, London, 1974; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English working class*, 2nd edn, Harmondsworth, 1968.

13. J.A. Coleman, 'Civil Religion', *Sociological Analysis* 31 (1970), pp. 67–77.

14. H. Righart, *De katholieke zuil in Europa: Het ontstaan van verzuiling onder katholieken in Oostenrijk, Zwitserland, België en Nederland*, Amsterdam, 1986; H.H. Kerr, *Switzerland: Social Cleavages and Partisan Conflict*, London, 1974.

15. E.L. Evans, *The German Center Party 1870–1933: A Study in Political Catholicism*, Carbondale, IL, 1981.

16. H. McLeod, 'Secular Cities? Berlin, London, and New York in the Later Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', in *Religion and Modernization*, ed. S. Bruce, Oxford, 1992, pp. 59–89, p. 66.

17. There exists a vast literature on this theme for the UK. Examples can be found in: Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*; McLeod, *Religion and Class in the Victorian City*; D.H. McLeod, 'Class, Community and Religion: The Religious Geography of Nineteenth Century England', *Sociological Yearbook of Religion*

in Britain 6 (1973), pp. 29–73; Brennan et al., *Social Change in South-West Wales*; Davies, *Religion in the Industrial Revolution in South Wales*; C. Field, 'Methodism in Metropolitan London 1820–1920', Ph.D. thesis, Oxford, 1975; Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution*; Thompson, *The Making of the English working class*; J. Baxter, 'The Great Yorkshire Revival 1792–6', *Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, London, 1974. See for other countries: L. Brunt, 'The "Kleine Luyden" as a Disturbing Factor in the Emancipation of the Orthodox Calvinists (Gereformeerden) in the Netherlands', *Sociologica Neerlandica* 8 (1972), pp. 89–102; Hassing, 'Methodism in Norwegian Society'; Kjær, 'Free Churches in Denmark'; G. Tiegland, 'Study of the Haugean Movement as a Case Study of Mobilisation', Ph.D. thesis, Bergen University, 1970; L.H. Mulder, *Revolte der fijnen: een studie omtrent de Afscheiding van 1834 als sociaal conflict en sociale beweging met een bronnenonderzoek in een achttal Friese dorpsgebieden*, Meppel, 1973; Balle-Petersen, *Guds folk i Danmark*; Bjørn, *De folkelige bevægelser i Danmark*; Glædemark, *Kirkeforfatningsspørgsmaalet i Danmark indtil 1874*; Lindhardt, *Vækkelse og kirkelige retninger*; A. Pontoppidan Thyssen, 'De religiøse bevægelsers samfundskritik og den demokratiske udvikling', in *Kulturelle, religiøse og politiske bevægelser i det 19. århundrede*, ed. A. Pontoppidan Thyssen, H.P. Clausen and P. Meyer (Det Lærde Selskabs publikationsserie, Ny serie I), Århus, 1973; R.J. Evans, 'Religion and Society in Modern Germany', *European Studies Review* 12 (1982), pp. 249–88.

18. E. Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850–1875', *American Historical Review* 77 (1972), pp. 625ff.; W. Schieder, 'Religion in der Sozialgeschichte', in *Sozialgeschichte in Deutschland*, ed. V. Sellin, Göttingen, 1987.

19. Charlton, *Secular Religions in France*.

20. S. Royle and E. Royle, *The Infidel Tradition: From Paine to Bradlaugh*, London, 1976.

21. E. Royle, *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans: Popular Freethought in Britain, 1866–1915*, Manchester, 1980.

22. For a more elaborate list of literature on this topic see: Righart, *De katholieke zuil in Europa*; F.A. Isambert, *Christianisme et classe ouvrière*, Paris, 1961; Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*.

23. D. Bensimon, 'Aspects of the Abandonment of Religious Practice in the French Jewish Milieu. Preliminary Results of an Inquiry', *Social Compass* 18 (1971), pp. 413–25.

24. Protestantism in Germany did not create political parties in Germany: R.M. Biglers, *The Politics of German Protestantism: The Rise of the Protestant Church Elite in Prussia 1815–1848*, Berkeley, 1972; G. Hübinger, 'Kulturprotestantismus und Politik. Zum Verhältnis von Liberalismus und Protestantismus, Bürgerliche und liberaler Revisionismus im wilhelmischen Deutschland', in *Religion und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. W. Schieder, Stuttgart, 1993.

25. The concept of modernisation is rather unclear and controversial. A useful introduction for the historian is: H.U. Wehler, *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte*, Göttingen, 1975.

26. In particular the Irish migration to England and America was an example of the dramatic effects during a period of economic stagnation. See e.g., S.H. Cousens, 'Emigration and Demographic Change in Ireland', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 14 (1961), pp. 275–88.

27. S.H. Cousens, 'The Regional Variations in Emigration from Ireland between 1821 and 1841', *Transactions and Papers of the Institute of British Geographers* 37 (1965), pp. 15–30.

28. F. Tennstedt, *Sozialgeschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland: Vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Göttingen, 1981.

29. McLeod, 'Secular Cities?' in *Religion and Modernization*, ed. Bruce; F. Charpin, *Pratique religieuse et formation d'une grande ville: Marseilles 1806–1956*, Paris, 1964.

30. W.I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, 2 vols, New York, 1927.

31. E.g. Jacques-Victor-Albert, 4e duc de Broglie, Conservative French statesman and man of letters who served twice as head of the government during the early crucial years of the Third French Republic, but failed to prepare the way for the return of a king. He wrote the incompleted *L'Église et l'empire romain au IVe siècle*, 6 vols (1856–66).

32. L. Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses et Classes dangereuses à Paris dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle*, Paris, 1982.

33. P. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion*, London, 1969; Thomas and Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*.

34. H.D. Loock, ed., *Seelsorge und Diakonie in Berlin*, Berlin, 1990; D.B. McIlhiney, 'A Gentleman in Every Slum: Church of England Missions in East London 1837–1914', Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 1977.

35. G.A. Beck, ed., *The English Catholics, 1850–1950*, London, 1950.

36. E.R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England*, London, 1968.

37. C. Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet 1870–1945: Soziale Integration und nationale Subkultur einer Minderheit in der deutschen Industriegesellschaft*, Göttingen, 1978.

38. C. Field, 'The Social Structure of English Methodism', *British Journal of Sociology* 28 (1977), pp. 199ff.

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