Changes in Religious Behaviour in the Nineteenth Century

PETER OLEXÁK

ABSTRACT: In the nineteenth century, both changes of religious behaviour and changes in religious behaviour resulted from secularization as well as sacralization. The study of piety confirms the coexistence of the religious and the secular and of continuity and fundamental changes in religious behaviour of man. However, since the mid-nineteenth century, the process of change in religious behaviour in Europe had entered its epilogue at political, philosophical as well as cultural level. At the end of the century the exodus from the medieval concepts of religiosity was almost completed.

Keywords: 19th century, religiosity, secularism, Christianity

In the church-social panorama of the last decades of the 19th century, new philosophical movements tried to replace the revealed religion. The main political topic was the relationship between the churches and the state, with the whole range of new issues. In Europe, the era of ancien régime politics, generally viewed as an idol, was over for good.1 As a result, the perception as well as the status of religion gradually became to change. It was no longer possible to restore the close symbiosis of the altar and the throne. In addition, the rapid material and scientific development contributed to the departure from faith and religion was driven out by the trust in progress and material well-being. In the mid-19th century, the Romanticism was abandoned and the search for identity between tradition and the present was launched. Moreover, the rise of nationalism, conflicts in industry and the development of mass politics had huge consequences for the churches and religion.2 In 19th century European countries, liberalism, initially seeking to become a guarantor of personal freedoms, resulted in the care for the nation’s freedom and it began to be viewed as a real confirmation of the society and the state in the optimistic vision of enlightenment perspective, gradual development and collective material good. Liberalism would pervade every sphere of life, including the churches and religious groups. In 1830, Victor Hugo’s (1802–1885) play Hernani proclaimed the start of liberalism in literature.3 In the series of events which took place and followed after one another, it is not so difficult to discover the thread followed by various positions at the level of expressions of religious sensitivity, doctrinal and ethical-social expressions, contrasts as well as the expressions of consent and solidarity.

1. Secularization

Religiosity, with its vertical vision of life, was losing its positions in 19th century world view. This trend in the modern religious history is known as secularization, manifested as a struggle after successful Christianization in the previous period of religious renaissance and romanticism. While according to Hugh McLeod, however, by the 19th century the term “secularization” stood for the state confiscation of the church property and the apostasy of priests and monks, in the 19th century the term shifted to also referring to the decline of the population with a religious worldview as well as of the number of members of religious organizations or their participation in church services. In addition, “secularization” also denoted the process of decrease of religion’s influence within public institutions, laicization with fading religious power, and eventually the complete separation of the churches from the state or from schools or from other social segments.

Although most of historians dispute some of the details of the causes of secularization, they are still convinced that one of important sources of long-term religious changes was the development of industrial economy, i.e. social changes rather than intellectual progress. Most likely, there is not a definite answer and the two phenomena are interrelated. Admittedly, the transcendental world was eliminated in science, practice and research, but the man continued in searching for the values and ideas, which would be transcendental and metaphysical and which would be still recognized as such by the intellect.

Historical changes in religious behaviour were re-defining the concept of religion. August Comte (1798–1857), the positivist thinker, was seriously preparing his audience to encounter something new. Although his work was initially spread only in private circles, it was intended to become a public manifest. Comte defined a remarkable law of three stages of human thought: theological (fictitious), metaphysical (abstract) and positivist (scientific). He was convinced that the rise of science would gradually remove the religious age. Therefore, he proposed the positivist society a religion of humanity that would replace the churches with its own new service of rituals, morality and their interpretation. There was hidden the code of one of new definitions of secularization. It was the secularization of religion. Some scholars see this process as cyclical rather than linear. Therefore, led by Gérard Cholvy (1932-) they began to claim that, considering individual countries, it is not possible to talk about a long-term and permanent change. Paradoxically, we find that while the descriptions of secularization show that industrialization sought to eliminate the supernatural, the man, on the other hand, in the remaining horizontal dimension of his world, subconsciously continued to demand the superior

---

5 McLEOD, Sekularizace v západní Evropě, p. 9.
6 For the names of the authors and their ideas, see McLEOD, Sekularizace v západní Evropě, p. 14n.
truth, idea and theology that would be of absolute value and aim and would give meaning to human life.

Something has evidently happened to Europe during the last two hundred and fifty years. The anthropological and historical probe perceived with religious sensitivity shows that after the French Revolution the man desired to be free and he sincerely and passionately fought against the prejudices of the church, state, society, origin and conventions. He struggled for a free science, free love, free economy, for the freedom of thinking, press, assembly and for thousands of other freedoms. Emmanuel Mounier (1905–1950) said that the European “man had desired to discover too broad prospects, which brought him to the gradual loss of the capability to marvel and, if necessary, to find things offending as well”. This process would capture intellectual élites. Thus, it would cause Arthur Schopenhauer’s (1788–1860) conversion to Buddhism, and then also to Hinduism, in his desire to attain mystical peace in which his will would stop longing and reach voluntas. His pupil Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844–1900) turned this life pessimism inside out and replaced his teacher’s concept of freedom with an idea of power. He understood it as a desire for self-realization, for personal self-control, by which he surpassed the concept of Christian love and self-sacrifice for others and he spoke about the “death of God”. Hugh McLeod termed this stage the “Sale of God”, which can be carried out only by the chosen ones and for these Übermenschen, the result of the Darwin selection, the desire for power will become not only personal, but also social quantity. This would fully become evident in the twentieth century.

2. Secularization of religious ideas

In the 19th century, the religious revolution was caused by D. F. Strauss’ (1808–1879) Das leben Jesu [Life of Jesus] and by the work with the same title by E. Renan (1823–1892). It was a neoHegelian attempt of the left-wing interpretation of the genesis of Christianity that sacrificed the supernatural life of Jesus and it put everything incompatible with the idealistic concept of history and with the spirituality in the world in general under the line of scientific arguments. Strauss reduced Jesus’ life to ordinary eternal myth that is, in his opinion, appropriately updated in human spirituality and is only one of the top manifestations of the eternal religious poem in the history of mankind. Strauss’ revolutionary claims, willingly repeated by those who did not get to the heart of the matter of his one thousand fifty-page opus, massaged the religious consciousness especially of Protestant Germany. While by then critical theology had made a slow progress and it had been diffident when proving,

---

2 MOUNIER, Emmanuel. Co jest personalizm? Krakow : Znak 1960, p. 118. I thank Ondrej Želonka for providing the manuscript of translated version.
5 STRAUSS, David Friedrich. Das leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeiten. Tübingen 1835.
what of the historical life of Jesus was the inseparable base of collective religious experience, now it was gradually becoming emancipated and was leaving the original methods of the interpretation of Paleo-Christian texts. In less than thirty years, another Life of Jesus by E. Renan would be published in Paris. It would become an instant bestseller and raise serious doubts.

Ernest Renan entered the seminary in Paris that was in charge of the pious prelate Félix Dupanloup (1802–1878), a former educator of the princes of Orleans and papal advisor. David Friedrich Strauss had a significant influence upon the young seminarian of San Sulpizio. In 1845, prior to his diaconal ordination, Renan said that he was leaving and he announced his educators that he was also seceding from the church and giving up his faith. Despite being only twenty-five years old, this writer had been awarded several literary prizes. He began to publish La liberté de penser in which he printed several anti-Christian articles. He was famous for his fine style with gentle irony and humour. His dedicated audience came from the middle urban class. He claimed that, in the biblical criticism, there was no place for supernatural arguments, which were a sentimental projection of the faith of early Christians, and he became a promoter of radical rationalism. In reality, in the context of the historical period marked by the decadence of Christian spirituality, Renan’s Vie de Jésus (1863) constituted a sentimental and idealized image of Jesus of Galilee addressed to liberal Europe that in the mid-19th century was convinced about its capability to restore the paradise in the light of reason. According to Renan’s theory, which immediately took root, the last of the evangelist, John, was reportedly surprised in his old age by some inaccuracies of other gospels, already available in his time. He was offended by the highlighting of Peter’s person. John also wanted to play an important role in Jesus’ story. He had already filtered his experiences through new events like, for instance, the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and its tragic epilogue.

Nothing dramatic, which could be the last word in the drama noted by history. In the process of 19th century European culture, Renan became a symptom of enormous religious decadence and a coefficient of its subsequent deepening. Within the meaning of positivist historical reconstruction, he followed in the footsteps of Strauss and Bauer (1792–1860) in order to substitute metaphysics with science. He negated the revelation and miracles. He introduced Jesus as a man of genius, but only a man. All he found out of the research field of natural science and of detailed historical inquiry, Renan considered Christian myths. He explained Jesus and Christianity in a rational way. He sent a signal to test the nature of his allies. It is still surprising what impact he had upon American and European fine art. It has captured Renan’s men and women, typical for the same joy and hearty simplicity, the same, even instinctive and constant innocence, on the basis of which they gather at the feet of the gentle Rabbi in the continuous and permanent pose of profession: “You are Messiah”. Renan claimed that among Jesus’ disciples it had been the small

group of women that admired Jesus more than he wished. His zeal in fulfilling God’s will caused that he appealed to these belles créatures – beautiful creatures so much that he tolerated even when they ministered to him and through him they served God. Renan liked to say that the Galilee women, who accompanied the Rabbi, competed against each other in order to serve him during his mission as best as possible. Great attention he paid to Maria Magdalena who was healed by the young Rabbi. As a result, there was Jesus whose gentle and sweet preaching was leaving the honeyed scent of smile and bliss. In Renan’s view, it was Jesus’ followers who made him God. Jesus portrayed in such a liberal way became one of the most dramatic revelations of religion to the world. According to the German historian Joseph Lortz (1887–1975), it was particularly religious liberalism and anti-clericalism that profited from it.

3. The emergence of new experiences

Having vibrated scientific environment, Charles Robert Darwin’s (1809–1882) evolutionary theory also caused a considerable excitement. The concept of world short-circuited. On the one hand, there were scientific disciplines destroying religion and faith in the supernatural that created the emptiness, on the other hand the response to them contributed to the emergence of new religions and new forms of religiosity and theological reflexions. Thus, under the influence of Darwin and biblical criticism, the Anglican bishop John Colenso (1814–1883) said that it was impossible to introduce biblical books as real and truthful to the members of the Zulu tribe. Subsequently, after the controversies in the Anglican Church he established his own Anglican church in South Africa. Especially in America new religious groups sprang up. In 1872, Minister Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916) established the International Bible Students Association and a society for its authoritative interpretation – the Zion’s Watch Tower, known as Jehovah’s Witnesses. Similarly, in the late 1879, Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910) founded the pantheistic healing sect Christian Science.

Inside the mainstream churches a religious revival occurred and new religious movements emerged, too. The piety of Christians, especially of Catholics, was encouraged by 1858 apparition of the Virgin Mary to Bernadette Soubirous (1844–1879) in Lourdes and first miraculous healings, by the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and by the canonization of new saints. Missionary activities were also of considerable importance: there were dozens of new missionary Catholic orders as well as Protestant societies engaged in overseas missions. In Protestantism, however, spirituality failed to pick up the threads of the ever-vanishing echoes of the successful Pietist and Wesley’s Romanticism. If somewhere religiosity had not degenerated to religious philosophy, it became a prelude of natural religion, certainly not disrespectful but with no Christian base. At the

17 RENAN, Ernest. Život Ježíšův. Praha : J. Otto, 1918. (The first Czech translation dates back to 1864.)
19 MARONGIU BUONAIUTI, Chiese e Stati, p. 243.
20 John Wesley (1703–1781).
Protestant theological faculties, Christian dogmas were radically re-evaluated on the basis of the idealistic philosophical systems. They acquired a character of lay theology in terms of a new cultural phenomenon, where fundamental Christian experiences were deprived of their most authentic content. Now, it was only a step to immanent pantheism and radical dualism. At the faculties of theology these concepts were for the first time expressed publicly and without restraint. In general, all mainstream churches were losing their members and there was an increasing number of persons not professing any religion or openly professing atheism.

In the religious history this situation constitutes a turning point in the religiosity of society. Compared to the experience of the previous society, it appears to be new. But there is no need to exaggerate. In the church history, the issue of secularization has been topical for a very long time. The dualism of Christian and lay civilizations has been the most common situation for the existence of Christianity in the world. Some even admit that it was caused by the revolutionary ferment of Christianity, as the Gospel at first glance implies impetuousness sufficient to break up family, state, class relationships, ownership structures, boundaries, racial differences, what is appropriate, customs, i.e. almost every social relationship.

Many institutionalized results as well as many new experiences and new thinking began to be realized by Marxism. This had influenced several individuals. In the evolution of Protestant theology Paul Tillich (1886–1965) even called Karl Marx (1818–1883) a theologian and thus opened an interesting gate to religious socialism. In the work *Theology of Culture* (1959), there is the core of his essays that can be summarized in the following statement: “Religion is the essence of culture and culture is a form of religion.” This culture, however, had already been devoid of religious nature, it had a heterogeneous character and if there was a mention of religion, it was always only as of an additive that had been added to it from outside, giving it a theonomic flavour with its apocalyptic dissatisfaction and a certain sense of the supernatural.

Another predecessor of Marx’s system, Hegel (1770–1831), spoke about the spiritual essence as about the Spirit that had not reached its real essence yet. Marx adopted this construction and continued to develop it further. He rejected the idea of reconciliation of classes and argued that the truth is and must be only in relation to social situation. It can only be known on the basis of existential participation in the social structure in which one lives. He had built his rejection of religion on Feuerbach’s (1804–1872) theory that God is a “projection” and thus that a man creates God in himself. While Feuerbach’s view was based on the individual and he did not explain why there is the projection, Marx explained it in social terms: religion is a projection of absolute kingdom. This projection was created by superior

---

22 MOUNIER, Co jest personalizm?, p. 118.
classes in order to introduce an imaginary transcendent kingdom to the oppressed as a place where they can hope to realize their potential one day. Since the man as a person had become a thing, everybody in this system of capitalist class society was dehumanized. The proletariat became a poor class, most affected by this situation. The interests and Hegelian passions adopted by Kierkegaard (1813–1855) as expressions of religious phase, created the religion of revolutionary movement. Historical sociology, however, does not allow for a simplified interpretation of secularization proportionately associated with industrialization and the decline of agrarian and strictly hierarchical society, nor with the antireligious potential of science. In some cases, 19th century industrialization, as proved by Aland Gilbert, even contributed to the increase of religiosity. On the other hand, the opposite camp argues that, in the long term, the development of industrial economy substantially contributed to desacralization. Therefore, secularization is not a continuous process moving in one direction and fuelled by the same forces.

In the Protestant liberal theology, which succeeded to eliminate some of supernatural truths within the religious beliefs, there were also sincere attempts to free the man from the prison of limited finity, proceeding not from the sociological analyses in Marx’s way, but from the historical analysis of the Bible. Professor Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889), theologian and founder of a new religious school, derived his system from Kant (1724–1804) and from his search for religious certainty. In the religious spiral, Kant kept the ethical imperative open. According to Ritschl’s theological construction, the goal of religion was to have people realize their potential as moral persons. Christianity was understood as a producer of ethics. But religion had already lost its pre-eminence in the lives of many people. These assertions had serious sympathizers. They included Ernest Tröltsch (1865–1923) and Adolf Harnack (1851–1930). The revealed truth, increasingly negated by the historical-critical method, was replaced by morality and it was good if it manifested itself in the relationships with other people, in the social and professional life. Almighty God, sense of sin as well as the figure of Jesus as the Redeemer were sidetracked and salvation was interpreted as a victory of mind over human nature with its desires and shallow instincts. In the modern religious history, such explanation of ethical Christianity was a source of criticism. One of the exponents of the Ritschl School, Adolf Harnack, based his thinking, like his teacher, on the church history and on the historical-critical method of biblical texts in Renan’s way. He distinguished between the Jesus of Gospels and the Jesus whom he considered Paul’s Hellenistic image. Thus, the dogmas and the traditional revealed faith were negated. Christianity appeared only as a form of life and not as a doctrinal system.

26 McLEOD, Sekularizace v západní Evropě, p. 13.
27 MARONGIU BUONAIUTI, Chiese e Stati, p. 243.
4. The contribution of Catholic liberalism

In the 19th century, the churches themselves contributed to the autumn of Christianity by defending and attempting to protect their own interests. There was nobody to turn to. Paradoxically, this process inside Catholicism was initiated by the book entitled *Essai sur l’indifférence en matière de religion – Essay on Indifferentism in the Matter of Religion* by an ultra-Catholic author whose expectations on the effect of the book were quite opposite.\(^{30}\) The first volume was published in Paris in 1817. The author of the book was Félicité Robert de Lamennais (1782–1854), a priest of Breton, known in narrow salon religious and political environment for his writings with Montanistic and anti-Napoleon bias. The work had an ambition to launch a new style of religious and Catholic apologetics. And it would succeed. A rhetorical fervour and an intimate vibrancy of religious enthusiasm, which was flashing in it, made the book eventually known in much of the world. It was no philosophical treatise. Far from it. Outlined in advance, philosophical motives were supposed to be explained only in the following volumes in collaboration with August Comte. The first volume was complete as it was. It appeared as a passionate and resolute protest against the coldness and ruthlessness of any doctrinal severity, with particular regard to religious teachings. It was a sincere, absolute and urgent struggle for religious faith as precious and inviolable heritage in protection of which no one can be superficial or indifferent. The author argued that religious indifferentism was the cause of the decline and demise of both the individual and the human society in the 19th century. He demanded the restoration of the monarchy purged of any parliamentarianism as well as of the pact between the throne and the altar, with religion as the base of law. Lamennais considered the restoration of Catholicism as a state religion to be insufficient. He denounced the sacrilege law of 1825. He did so, however, not for its intolerance or harshness but because it protected other denominations too. For this reason he considered it to be indifferent in religious matters and thus atheistic. After the monarchy had refused to recognize the demanded exclusive position of the Catholic Church, disappointed Lamennais went over to the side of liberalism. The monarchy even compromised the church by attributing it the responsibility for the loss of the state’s popularity. In his view, the monarchy no longer constituted a universal conscience. The power was to be in the hands of people who would try to express it by obtaining their own freedom. Lamennais denounced the alliance of the throne and the altar. Bishops continued to keep their priests from speaking in public and ordered them to engage only in their spiritual service. The revolutionary years vindicated Lamennais who had preferred radical separation. In many countries the state laid its hands on the clergy’s salaries. The press appealed to its readers: “It is only up to you what decision you will make: if you let die on your sees a rich and corrupted episcopate or a poor one and worthy of your representation.”\(^{31}\) Lamennais introduced the term “modern slavery” to the Catholic vocabulary and argued that if no solution was found, a general revolt of the poor against the rich would be inevitable. He made

\(^{30}\) For the first volume of Lamennais’ book (Paris 1859), see <http://books.google.sk>.

sincere efforts to save the society from the irreparable spiritual decadence. In 1830 he started to publish the magazine *L’Avenir* in which he would write about the freedom of press, conscience, education, assembly and the separation of the church from the state. He tirelessly argued that “the church had to fully and joyfully rely on the free and providential help and protection and to surrender all material assistance from the state.” French and Austrian diplomatic circles were aroused by the Lamennais and his magazine. Lamennais continuously promoted the agenda of religious freedom. Elections of new bishops provoked many comments across Europe. There began to appear ambitious bishops devoted to the regime. Sympathizing with Lamennais, liberal Catholics of Belgium, Ireland and Poland expressed distrust toward the episcopate in their countries. The leading representatives of the new democratic movements within the church were affected by Jansenism. In 1834 Lamennais published a book entitled *The Words of a Believer* in which he had challenged the use of force in suppressing the revolt against the Poles and called the pope coward who supported the Russians. Afterwards, he seceded from the church, which he still unconsciously loved.

5. Anti-liberal encyclicals

Apparently, the belief in Revelation did not mark this period. Religion itself was being marginalized, broken apart and destructuralized by the process of social modernization. The latter was depriving religion of social primate by driving it out of human hearts and social sphere and by reducing it to a superficial, unclear matter and an object of changing interests and desires of individuals.

Within the space of one year, Pope Gregory XVI (1831–1846) published four encyclicals. The encyclical *Mirari vos* (1832) had been long expected. It was his programme speech. The letter had not been published earlier for the situation in the Papal State (Austrian occupation) as well as tensions among various factions (Carbonari, Freemasons, papal emissaries).

This encyclical, like all 19th century papal encyclicals, began with disillusion and expression of disappointment over the contemporary situation in the world. The pope addressed this document to his fellow-bishops whom he called to be witnesses of the present world. In the introduction he simply divided people into good and evil. He used the image of a vineyard and a wild boar rooting it and of the flock and wolves tearing the sheep. The encyclical opposed the “delirium of liberty” and all who insisted on the necessity of revival of the church in order to ensure its preservation and development. Although he did not mention Lamennais, it was clear that the encyclical was the response to his ideas. Gregory XVI briefly recapitulated Lamennais’ programme of the church’s revival and he labelled the author as a dangerous innovator. He resolutely denounced all his theories of religious and secular liberalism and his propositions on the necessary revival of the church.

---

32 BUONAIUTI, Storia del cristianesimo, pp. 1020-1021.
33 <http://books.google.sk/books>
34 LORTZ, Storia della chiesa, p. 329.
35 Encyclical Mirari vos (for the full-text version of the encyclical, see also <http://digilander.libero.it/magistero/g16mirar.htm>).
The pope confirmed the indissolubility of marriage and celibacy and condemned religious indifferentism as a perverse opinion according to which “it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion, as long as morality is maintained.” He denounced the liberty of conscience for all, which he considered to be a consequence of liberalism, the complete freedom of opinion without any restrictions and the freedom of press. In the pope’s view, freedom was a problematic issue which was weakening the faith and due respect for rulers and it fanned the flames of rebellion everywhere. He drew particular attention to the voices calling for the separation of the church from the state as well as to all associations and societies uniting people of all denominations and causing revolts. Thus, he alluded to the Act of Union, which was a movement established by Lamennais “to form a cell of humankind, which would be based on freedom and would be the voice that had never been heard before. This coalition would be open for all true fighters for freedom equal for all and its task would be to elevate the minds and ameliorate the material conditions of the lower classes, in order to permit them to share more and more in social advantages.”

After this encyclical and the encyclical *Singulari nos* (1834), liberal Catholics were disoriented. They felt that the disagreement of the Holy See meant the condemnation of laypersons and their subordination. Many of the Catholic Church’s members came to believe that they were the second class faithful and that they were responsible only for their own salvation. A convert from Protestantism, Count Charles Montalembert (1810–1870), wrote to Lamennais: “I feel like a child, forgotten layman, without any responsibility for the church and God, only for my own salvation.”

This was also supported by Catholic writings. The most commonly used catechism in France, published by D. A. Sibour (1792–1857), Archbishop of Paris, introduced the church as an institution and hierarchical society and the term “church” tended to denote clergy.

Intellectual life lapsed into an open anti-clericalism supported by large dailies and magazines. As mentioned above, internationally renowned writers had opposed the Roman Catholicism for a longer period of time. Yet, ultra-real liberalism had, apart from Lamennais, enough supporters among Catholics. The aim of the forming political Catholicism was to liberate the church from the pressure of state regime and to defend its own positions, which, in the course of time, were becoming crucial within individual states, e.g. Belgium with its constitution, but also Germany, where this programme was clearly presented and carried out by Johannes von Geissel (1796–1864), Archbishop of Cologne. In May 1848 the latter, together with his bishops, edited a political programme which functioned as a public programme requirements of German Catholics. This was also supported by the...
atmosphere in the church, because after 1846 liberal Catholics were witnessing the realization of their dreams. The conclave elected a liberal pope. Cardinal Giovanni Maria Mastai (1792–1878) became Pope Pius IX. Gas installation and building a railway in the Papal State were new gestures full of enthusiasm. However, they were soon beclouded by the first pope’s encyclical *Qui pluribus* (1846) on the attitudes of reason and faith, which summarized the teachings of the previous pontificate and re-condemned the principles of religious liberalism.

In September 1863 the Catholic intellectuals gathered at a congress in Munich. Led by Ignaz von Döllinger (1799–1890), they demanded for theologians freedom of research while respecting Catholic dogmas. The Archbishop of Paris pointed to Renan’s writings. The pope decided to respond publicly. At the end of December 1864 the encyclical *Quanta cura* was published (dated on 8th December, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception). It was complemented by a catalogue of eighty errors – known as the *papal syllabus*. In the catalogue, the pope condemned godless rationalism questioning the divinity of Jesus, liberalism striving for the separation of the church from the state, freedom of press and absolute freedom of worship and religion. Furthermore, he downgraded communism and socialism for having subordinated the family to the interests of state as well as economic liberalism accumulating wealth. The pope also rejected Gallicanism laying claims to the censorship of papal documents and he disagreed with the state monopoly on schools either. These condemnations were a challenge for the contemporary world and they gave the Catholic Church the hallmark of obscurantism. While the diplomatic representatives in Rome accepted the pope’s explanations presented by the Secretary of State Antonelli (1806–1876), the pope did not foresee the chaos that his encyclical would cause.42

6. *Homo ideologicus*

There were great differences in the chronology and the causes of the change of religiosity in the 19th century. In order to avert the danger of secularization, a wide range of radical, liberal as well as conservative strategies was applied. The very secularization of culture and social morality, the elimination of the impact of universal Christianity, the degradation of national sentiment in nationalism and the historical deepening of Romanticism led to the emergence of ever larger differences and peculiarities among nations and races. The emphasis on the scientific development led to the substitution of national superiority by one’s own material superiority and technologies and to the obligation to export one’s own forms of material life to other “immature” nations.

In the society, the axiom of freedom was tilted from its gravitation to God. A draft of political religion, preceded by the *homo ideologicus*, was being prepared.43 According to Julien Ries, the programme constituted a definite farewell to Christianity as an ethical and educational force of mankind.44 Its origins can be traced back

to the Enlightenment period. In our historiographical environment it is referred to as enlightened absolutism. This term was introduced by German historians in the 19th century when describing the rules of Frederick II of Prussia (1740–1789), Joseph II (1765–1790) and Catherine II (1762–1796). It underlined the contemporary unity of philosophy and power. Not religion. It is true that enlightened rulers did not study and analyze the theoretical nature of their own power. It just had to be enlightened and governed by reason. These people were convinced that reforms on behalf of the development in education, arts and decency can be carried out with more ease by way of despotic, rather than moderate rule. They considered it to be an ideal form easily adaptable to authoritarian manners. At religious level, a ruler was expected to reduce the power of churches, to tolerate all denominations and to secure the freedom of thinking. It was demanded from him so that he, at least de facto if not de jure, stop referring to the divine right. A sovereign’s rule was supposed to be based on a rational relationship between the ruler and the ruled. In this respect, of crucial importance was the argument made by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), a materialistic theorist of law and state. In his view, a ruler should be, above all, in the service of state and not God’s representative on earth.\(^4\) The enlightened sovereigns fully respected this principle. On the other hand, the contemporary political imperative and their personal interests impeded an excessive liberality of society. Despite their frequent admiration for Diderot, Voltaire and D’Alambert, they were makers of the cynical Realpolitik. They used political rhetoric in which they characterized themselves as sensitive and virtuous and with an undisguised magniloquence they referred to reason and judgment. Their reforms were real, especially in favour of religious tolerance. Frederick II guaranteed all his subjects the freedom of religion. While he never cancelled the censorship, he admitted several Jesuits, expelled from Catholic France, to Protestant Prussia. Similarly, Joseph II issued a series of decrees regarding the well-known religious tolerance as well as the right of Jewish students to attend universities, the abolition of contemplative religious orders (he considered them to be unnecessary and he used their properties to build new schools and hospitals) and the affiliation of priestly seminaries to universities. He also introduced the oath of bishops and interfered in the organization of parishes and bishoprics. Some of his decrees, however, could not be applied and after they met with the resistance of his subjects, they were even cancelled. While in some respects very despotic, Catherine II signed a number of laws in favour of religious tolerance. She granted a pardon to Orthodox dissidents and after the abolition of the Societas Jesu by the pope in 1773, she admitted the Jesuits to Russia. She also allowed the Muslims to build mosques and pray in her country. The impact of the new philosophy on these rulers was, however, much smaller than one might think. A good example is Frederick II with his centralist policy, which matches much better with the model of monarchy of the type of traditional French administration, rather than with a new form of rule based on laicization and democratization or on a new relationship between politics and religion. In Prussia the Lutheran Church continued to maintain its strong position. In some cases the

enlightened absolutism of state even helped itself with new ideas in order to further strengthen its despotic behaviour. As a matter of fact, the decisive changes regarding the political system and the depriving the authority of the legitimacy of ancient religion had not happened prior to the French revolution. After 1789, and especially after 1793 and 1794, the development was different. According to Edmund Burke (1729–1797), in that time Europe was really dismayed. This period witnessed two radical changes that would affect the secularization of religion as well: the criticism of religion in favour of reason and formation of the \textit{homo ideologicus} who was a prelude to modern totalitarianism. The ideology of reason was justifying the social constructions of injustice and repressive equality and the cold calculation led to new barbarities. Obviously, this proposition would provoke criticism of liberals who tried to prove that the misuse of reason can be avoided by ethical judgment, involving human rights, as well as by political judgment, involving democracy.

Ideology made the state god and it created other deities for it as well: homeland, freedom and compulsory education. The \textit{homo ideologicus} was born with promising future. In 1946 Raymond Aron (1905–1983) wrote: “I propose to call secular religions the doctrines that in the souls of our contemporaries take the place of a vanished faith, and that locate humanity’s salvation in this world, in the distant future, in the form of a social order that has to be created.” According to Aron, these basically social and political doctrines can be called religions, because they cause the same kind of behaviour in their adherents as can be seen in religions. There was also a belief in the truth of doctrine, absolute piety and devotion to the cause, intolerance or even fanaticism toward other doctrines. However, there is one more reason why these historically observable manifestations deserve the label of religion. It is because their ultimate goal is absolute – almost sacred. It served to distinguish what is good and evil and the means used for its achievement were justified. At the same time, these political doctrines offered a global interpretation of the world, they were explaining the current state of affairs, describing the future

48 RIES, Trattato di antropologia del sacro, p. 327.
49 Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger (1926–2007), who had many followers in the last century, argued in his numerous writings that there was a direct link between the Enlightenment and totalitarianism: “The century of the Enlightened failed to prevent the birth of totalitarianism, a kind of deification of human reason, which kept refusing any criticism.” LUSTIGER, Jean-Marie. \textit{Le Choix de Dieu. Entretiens avec Jean-Louis Missika et Dominique Wolton}. Quoted from the Italian translation: \textit{La scelta di Dio}. Milano : Tea, 1991, p. 161. The 19th century was marked by this kind of turbulence. “The experience teaches us that the reason is unable to defend itself, nor sufficiently resist excesses and the violent thirst for power. The hope of the enlightened, as it presented itself at the dawn of modern society, risks that it will submerge in a dangerous sort of abysmal darkness.” Simply, “it is not enough to entrust the rights of the man to the agreement of majority, in the face of always possible totalitarian errors and hedonism. The reason always needs to rely on the supernatural.” The concerns were legitimate and would be partially confirmed. LUSTIGER, Jean-Marie. L’Eglise, la Revolution et les droits de l’homme. In FURET, Francois. \textit{Le Débat}, 1989, No. 55, pp. 12 and 14. For the whole interview of Mons. Jean-Marie Lustiger with Francois Furet, see <http://tulipe7.free.fr/index.php/2010/02/15/leglise-la-revolutionet-les-droits-de-lhomme-j-m-lustiger-interviewe-par-f-furet/ >.
of mankind, liberating the man from its solitude and praising the individual by giving him a sense of greatness and importance in the implementation of collective tasks. On the other hand, they required great sacrifice and absolute faith. While some of these doctrines were inspired by rationalism and humanism and other were deeply irrational, like fascism, all of them had the common features of manicheist vision of the world, its salvation and the faith in own ideological victories. According to Comte, it was a transfer of sacrality with rituals, holidays and revolutionary liturgies. In the manifestations of the 19th century, traces of messianism and anticlericalism regularly appeared. Secularization began to manifest itself as a socio-cultural process. Its propagation was assisted by the schools in the hands of the state. The expressions like the kingdom of justice, the rebirth of mankind and progress were the cutting of the umbilical cord in the vision of the change of ancien régime. This was a sketch of political religion.

7. The field of cultural struggle

The declaration of papal infallibility and the subsequent schism of Old Catholics initiated a phenomenon extremely critical for the Church – the Kulturkampf. This cultural struggle constituted a fight of ideas. It demonstrated the omnipotence of the state and was directed against the Catholic Church. It considered the church to be an opponent and enemy of modern civilization and freedom.

Pope Pius IX (1846–1878) considered it necessary to find out an opinion of the ecumenical community and its hierarchic representatives or to gain their approval concerning dogmatic definitions that would offer a certain kind of single orientation in the world chaos, which germinated in Europe in the field of culture and originated in the moral and intellectual crises caused by French and German idealism. Dogmatic decisions and theological theories could not be separated from the inner Christian life, even if certain links do not seem to be so obvious. The intended definition of papal infallibility could, however, lead to the disposal or uselessness of convening a council and to solemn declarations in the matter of faith and morals. In Germany, Ignaz von Döllinger, dean at the University of Munich, launched strong criticism of the proposed definition of papal infallibility supported by Italian Jesuits. Eventually, the papal infallibility was still defined in the constitution Pastor Aeternus, which confirmed the primate of the jurisdiction of Apostle Peter and his successors. In Austria-Hungary, as well as in France and England, strong opposition movements emerged.

Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898) attacked Catholics and social democrats. The conflict was far-reaching. In cooperation with Protestant lawyers, Bismarck issued a law on Jesuits and ordered to cancel religious orders of this type. The monks were being exiled or imprisoned. Incompliant bishops were sentenced. To break Catholic resistance, the poverty or hunger law and the compulsory civil marriage law were issued (1875). The state, which had its own idea of secular society, would be seriously alarmed only by the arrival of socialism and the gradual loss of its au-

authority. Since 1880 Bismarck had began to dismantle his laws. Immediately after his election, Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) announced the restoration of religious peace in Germany as one of his top priorities and kept being obliging as could be to the Prussian government. These topics with different characteristics were spread in other countries, too.

In 1879, in order to create a model of secular state in France, Minister of Education Ferry (1832–1893) did not concede the right to confer academic degrees to the Catholic universities established only in 1875. In addition, he closed the Jesuit houses and schools and in 1881 all male congregations as well. In the following year, he secularized the cemeteries and courts and the state approved cremation of the deceased. There was also one secular specialty: a secular christening performed by a mayor in the suburbs of Paris with a secular formula instead of the church one. The name “Catholic”, as proved by inscriptions on walls and caricatures in the newspapers, was a badge of ignominy. The Paris city council had began to implement the programme of secularization of schools and hospitals even before it was required by state laws. This process had been launched as early as in the half of the century. In the elections of 1893, despite the special encyclical Au milieu des sollicitudes (1892), the Catholics showed an inability to create a single programme. In 1904, France was prepared for an absolute separation of the churches from the state. Minister Emilé Combes (1835–1921) made no secret of his anticlerical attitude and his draft of the law involved a complete prohibition of organizing cult events in parishes. Since the provision was also affecting the Protestants, they took direct and official action to prevent the clause from appearing in the new church law. The state council, who had authority in church matters, supported the exponents of left-oriented clergy and modernists who were in open dispute with Rome. The socialist Jean Jaurès (1859–1914) openly hoped that “if several democratically and freely minded priests left, they would be surely followed by their cult communities”. It was not a separation of the churches from the state but their elimination. There was supposed to be a transitional period in which the churches would be temporarily allowed to function as cultural associations with a programme of cultural administration. Then they would perish. Pope Pius X (1903–1914) denounced this law, which was a crown of the series of openly anticlerical measures, by his encyclical Vehementer nos (1906). He criticized the measures which were in contradiction to the teachings of the church, were separating social life from religion and were taken on the basis of unilateral decision, despite the bilateral agreement contained in the Concordat of 1801. The efforts for reconciliation failed. Since the Catholics would not ask for permission for their gatherings, there were mass arrests for holy masses. The left-wing press described horrible stories from church hospitals. It wrote about Christian laxity and published piquant stories from the clergy’s life. The number

---

53 McLEOD, Sekularizace v západní Evropě, pp. 300-301.
54 MARONGIU BUONAIUTI, Chiese e Stati, p. 259.
of priestly vocations decreased and the Union of Reformed Evangelical Churches ceased to exist. The Kulturkampf was affecting other European countries as well and in the church policy it served to equalize balance. Bismarck was convinced of finding an ally in the separation movement which referred to the Munich historian Ignaz von Döllinger. In 1871 a new church was established at the first congress of the movement. At its second congress in 1872 it adopted the name Altkatholiken. The polemics against the Catholic Church were intensifying. In 1900 even the Gesellschaft zur Ausbreitung des Evangeliums unter den Katholiken [Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among Catholics] was founded in Eisenach. The Old Catholics in Austria had an influence upon the movement Los von Rom Bewegung [Away from Rome Movement], especially in the regions with insufficient presence of the Catholic Church. These were industrialized agglomerations in Bohemia, Lower Austria and Styria. Almost 70,000 Catholics converted to Old Catholicism and Protestantism. This mass exodus continued after World War 1. Former confessional countries were gradually changing from religiously neutral into militantly secular states. On the other hand, in the Protestant Anglo-Saxon environment, which stayed free of secularism and religious Romanticism, there were movements, more or less conscious, for the return to the traditional church. The most famous was the Oxford movement.

The Austrian government cancelled the concordat with the Holy See as early as in 1870. Major conflicts were avoided only thanks to the Emperor Franz Joseph (1848–1916). The marriage matters in Cisleithania were exempted from the jurisdiction of the church courts from 1868. The school system was put under the state school supervision and according to the 1870 law no. 51 of the empire code, besides the members of registered churches, there were also persons without religion. These constituted a special group, which included those, who did not belong to any religious organization, as well as the members of denominations unrecognized by the state.

In Hungary, the church policy after 1890 was marked by the upsurge of liberalism with the remnants of Josephinism. The special legal norms published in the Hungarian territory differed from the Austrian legislation. The difference laid in the fact, that they were issued earlier, as well as in the more substantial legalization of Protestant denominations. In 1890 a christening regulation was issued in order to strengthen the 1868 law on mixed marriages according to which sons were to follow the religion of their fathers and daughters that of their mothers. While after 1890 Hungary headed towards liberalism, it did not show the signs of secularization and it belonged to traditionally confessional countries with population attending church services and Sunday congregations in large numbers. Moreover, in this period the Lands of the Crown of Saint Stephen witnessed increased construction activity, reflected in enlarging old churches and erecting new ones.

57 BOUYER, Spiritualità protestante e anglicana, pp. 229-234.
59 Law no. 49/1868 of the empire code on the inter-confessional situation.
The beginnings of periodical confessional press, as well as the developing fraternal activities of individual denominations, that were comparatively successful, can be also seen as a sign of vitality in Hungary. On the other hand, in 1894 the gradually adopted laws of regulated church policy introduced compulsory civil marriage, while guaranteeing the freedom of religion. In the same year the registry moved into the hands of state officials. In addition, the right of the churches to decide in the matters of marriage was limited and the whole matter was moved under the exclusive authority of civil courts. Hungarian laws allowed for the possibility of granting state approval for all new religious societies, i.e. their equalization with the major religious communities. 60 While they were formulated in a modern way and in Europe they belonged to the most progressive acts, the practice of recognition of denominations was quite different (the Baptists were a good example). To be a recognized religion in Hungary meant that the accepted denominations had a status of public, privileged and autonomous corporations and they fulfilled some of the functions of the state apparatus for which they were paid. Unlike in Cisleithania, there were almost no people without religion, because the secession from the church was connected with a number of official formalities, restrictions in civil life, waiting time and special taxation. 61 As a matter of fact, the population of the Kingdom of Hungary was divided only into three religious and cultural groups (Catholics, Lutherans and Jews) among which there were clear dividing lines and tensions. This division was supported by well functioning and funded confessional schools. Confessionalism was the main weapon of Hungarian political parties. Inter alia, it was strengthening their bond with their voters. However, the Catholic Church continued to maintain its exceptional position in the Lands of the Crown of Saint Stephen, which has a historical (Hungarian kings’ right of patronage) and national (statistical superiority of the bishops and prelates of Hungarian nationality) explanation. A similar situation was in existence only in the traditional Orthodox countries with autocephalous churches. Moreover, in 1885, 1894, 1898, 1902 and 1907, a very bad economic situation of Hungarian clergy improved. 62 Nevertheless, especially after 1880, this traditionally Catholic country was paradoxically in a latent conflict with the pope. The reason lay in the appointments of church dignitaries. In selecting bishops, the Hungarian government, unlike the Holy See, was taking into account its own political criteria, the fidelity of candidates, their loyalty to the government and particularly nationality. Besides nationalism, the tensions in the Hungarian religious scene also stemmed from the misunderstandings between episcopate and clergy who engaged in the Christian-social party established in 1894. 63

In these aforementioned countries, which differed from each other, one of the main features of the second half of the 19th century, was the expansion of the state’s roles during the cultural struggle, supported by democratic and social reforms, con-

60 JEDIN (ed.), Storia della Chiesa. IX, p. 64.
61 Legal article no. 43 (1895) on the free profession of religion.
centration of power in the hands of bureaucracy and centralization. The myth of nation was becoming here the main theme of state modernism. European countries preferred a secular society, in some cases with secularization turning into a synonym of an aggressive anti-Catholic campaign. On the other hand, the religiosity of the faithful was perceived as manifestation of anti-secular clericalism. Therefore, the major communities struggled on until the mid-20th century when they successfully defended secularity in their own internal church context. Their defending began in the late 19th century with the emergence of Christian parties, which were a sign of a certain lay autonomy. However, the revolutionary wave of 1848 showed that the balance of church and secular power in Europe was unstable and was facing big disappointments arising from every particular and permanent delimitation of respective areas of authority.

8. Urban phenomenon

Technical revolution accelerated the process of industrialization and urbanization. While in the early 19th century 19 European cities had 100,000 inhabitants, at the end of the century the same number lived in 221 cities, with 13 cities having more than one million inhabitants. Proletariat as a new social class appeared and its living conditions were getting worse. France with the strongholds of communism was a laboratory of urban secularization. It was joined by England, Germany and Austria. The struggle for material survival was becoming more intense and it was really tough. There was an increase in delinquency. The ups and downs in life were not leaving enough space for cultivating faith and religion. Tensions caused by prejudices, hatred and resentment were deepening. In cities, most people voted for the left. The destruction of tradition and religious practices was taking place. Anti-clericalism, a permanent constant of social press, was nurtured. In order to get a job in factories, thousands found themselves moved from the country to a new, limited city environment without any land and relationships among generations, which was forming masses with no tradition and inner vertical stability. This was also reflected on individual faith and formal religious practice.

While in the country processions, patron celebrations, liturgical holidays and first Holy Masses of new priests, which had a significant religious depth and participation in which had a certain exclusiveness, as part of folk religious culture were still very popular, pastoral opportunities in cities, inter alia due to negative policies, were very limited. The churches were fatally late in realizing this situation.

In the new worker’s neighbourhoods on the outskirts of cities, there were no churches and schools. The clergy usually came from a rural or craftsman environment. They did not understand a new urban situation, they did not come to worker’s colonies and they lacked efficient religious initiatives. Traditionally, the

---

64 LORTZ, Storia della chiesa, p. 386.
67 CHRISTOPHE, La chiesa nella storia degli uomini, pp. 650-652.
Protestant clergy constituted an obvious part of the well-educated bourgeoisie and a great number of them were university graduates. While their status had decreased by the end of the century, their social environment and life style did not much differ from that of the burghers. The Catholic clergy came from lower social classes. They used to attend seminaries, rather than universities. Moreover, this type of clergy was more conservative and would oppose innovations, state schools and scientific ideals. The Catholic priests also promoted an opinion that a school is primarily a religious institution and they denounced liberal and nationalistic policies of secular teachers. They considered nuns to be the best teachers. However, these, as well as physicians, were missing in the worker’s neighbourhoods. The clericalism of Catholic clergy became a synonym of backwardness and a basis of many objections to the Catholic Church by various anti-religious and anti-church groups.

The changes in religious behaviour in cities were connected with the number of population, too. According to the statistics of 1908, Budapest had four huge parishes with more than fifty thousand members each. In the same year, Paris had five parishes with more than eighty thousand members each. The situation in other cities was similar. Many workmen, originally from tiny traditional rural communities, were neither keen believers nor convinced unbelievers. The majority churches in cities were a fragment of preindustrial society. Women, whose role was to give birth and bring up children in the shadow of a household, were more faithful to these churches than their husbands. Nietzsche (1844–1900) also considered women to be more kirchlich. They more often drew strength and sense of protection from purely Christian sources, even though they did not avoid superstitions and spiritism. On the other hand, employed in factories and mines, where they experienced the tyranny of their bosses, men were more likely to leave their religion and it was often men who were less religiously conscious. If the head of family left religion, he was often followed by the rest. In contrast to France, however, there were not many examples of militant anti-religious attitudes in the rest of Europe.

Furthermore, in cities, besides the shows of laicization and secularization, interconfessional differences in confirming one’s own religious consciousness were also suppressed. In some territories, on the other hand, conflicts of identities and different forms of discrimination occurred, which also contributed to changes in religious behaviour. It manifested itself in creation of domestic pseudo-religious rituals, in flowering of private piety, in theatricalization and in creation of new forms of identity by means of the celebration of holidays and political orientation. In 1886, Nietzsche commented on the religious indifference of middle class by writing that “a typical trait of the vast majority of German Protestants is religious disinterest.”

---

69 McLEOD, Sekularizace v západní Evropě, p. 129.
70 FLICHE - MARTIN (eds.), La chiesa e la societá industriale, p. 130.
71 Quoted according to McLEOD, Sekularizace v západní Evropě, p. 119.
72 McLEOD, Sekularizace v západní Evropě, p. 251n.
The Catholics were regarded more as backward, while the Protestants were consid-
ered to be bearers of progress and consciousness, which would become ideological
arsenal of some political parties. The number of church marriages and funerals was
decreasing. These rituals were replaced by a secular alternative. To be a non-believ-
er in the city was considered to be a mark of progress, revolt, style, modern trend,
reaction, characteristic of profession and class level. Religious language was not
part of everyday life in secular society, even though in the Romanticism it was still
a natural thing.

However, in the cities, there were also vital elements that were resistant to secu-
lar ideology. Since 1868 the public veneration of the Sacred Heart had been becom-
ing worldwide among Catholics and since 1881 Eucharistic congresses with public
Eucharistic processions in cities had been spreading from France.74 These actions
were intended to encourage the Catholic community and help its members to over-
come the feelings of unimportance and shame in the world in which hatred was
spreading. In Europe very popular became the practice of dedication of the month
May to Virgin Mary and divine services with Eucharistic blessing. Besides outer
criteria, there was also an inner religious life and a life of prayer that transcends
many assertions about the 19th century.

The second half of the nineteen century was also marked by an expansion of Lu-
theran congregations in the cities, which was connected with urbanization as well
as with the decline of the congregations in villages.75 At the same time, the Protes-
tant religious vitality in the cities, in the chaos that accompanied the emergence
of new evangelical churches in the 19th century, focused on other issues as well,
which eventually resulted in modern ecumenism.76 In the industrial cities, recogni-
tion was won by Catholic charitable associations and new religious orders (Sale-
sians, Salvatorians and Claretians).

9. The significance of the social question

The Catholics were hoping for a change that might come with a new pontificate.
It was necessary to find out what new tasks lay ahead of the institutions which were
a deposit of religious charisms. After the demise of the Papal State, the Catholic
environment found itself at a dramatic crossroads. More or less logically, the church
decided to turn back to the past in order to find its paralyzed strength in the sense
of Machiavelli’s (1469–1527) statement that the tradition of Christianity would re-
gain its original virtues when it touched its roots.77 History had confirmed it on
the basis of the experience with Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) and Dominic Guz-
man (1179–1221). After the fall of the Papal State, the religious writings were giving
the impression that the traditional Christian values and their public impact had al-
most completely disappeared. On the other hand, the Magisterium was convinced
that it had done enough in favour of the security and survival of its own demands

75 NEŠPOR, Zdeněk. S čím se evangelíci nechline. In MAČALA Pavol - MAREK Pavel - HANUŠ Jiří
76 BOUYER, Spiritualità protestante e anglicana, pp. 224-225.
in the world. Later it turned out to be a sterile, though meticulous literary exercising, which involved scholastic speculations quoting the Summa Theologica by Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). The re-integration of the religious element, if it was to be lively and efficient, needed to be associated with such a renewal that would be reasonably connected with new needs of spirituality and new orientations of social life.

The liberals were supporting secularism. Marx and Engels (1820–1895) sent out a warning signal. On the other hand, there were anti-Marxist activities of Christian, and especially Catholic, circles.

After the disillusionment that arose during the pontificate of Pius IX, Leo XIII (1878–1903) ascended the chair of St. Peter. Many European leaders began to seek reconciliation with the Holy See in the sense of restoration of diplomatic relations. In the narrow sphere of the modern religious history, Leo XIII acted as the first modern pope with the necessary elasticity. Numerous thinkers in their correspondence proposed him a programme of complete religious renewal. The most remarkable was the convert John Henry Newman (1801–1890), who, as early as in the time of the serious injury to the papacy due to the humiliation by Napoleon III (1808–1893), drew the attention of the official religious circles to the need of return to the pure and simple roots of religious experience. The clergy, along with the church, was gradually gaining prestige. The better prepared clergy, largely thanks to the new pastoral theology, catechetics and interest in liturgy in the new regional seminaries, attended to special social groups. At the end of the century, there was a new type of homily and conferences for the associations of employers, associations of mothers and youth as well as pastoral care for workers, specialized spiritual retreat for various categories and folk missions. This situation was present in other countries as well.

Industrialization was configuring social behaviour. Many have studied the influence of the Rerum novarum (1891) on this change of the course of religiosity. Georges Bernanos (1888–1948) wrote in The Diary of a Country Priest (1936): “For example, the famous encyclical Rerum novarum, you read it calmly like a pastoral letter in the Easter season. But in that day it seemed to us that the earth was opening under our feet. What an enthusiasm!”

Religious issues were meeting with a clear response in the electorate. Religiosity corresponded with the movement of church centralization. It was uniting itself and had a Roman shade. It was caused by a situation that appeared after the pope’s loss of secular power and the decline of the Papal State in 1871 and after the pope had proclaimed himself a prisoner of Vatican. The pope was no longer an adjutant

---

80 LORTZ, Storia della chiesa, p. 478.
81 For the list of authors and literature, see <http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/resources/bibliog_rerum.htm>.
of any state and the church administration concentrated itself. There were worldwide expressions of liking and respect for the pope. The key themes of the new pontificate of Leo XIII were faith and science, the church and the state, and primarily the church and the society. The latter also became a subject of the first purely social encyclical. After a solemn introduction, the pope determined to define in his encyclical letter not only the theoretical positions of what he considered to be a possible and canonized Catholic sociology, but he also offered practical directives in favour of the Catholic renewal and the stabilization of society. First of all, however, before he did anything else, he condemned socialism. In the following parts of his encyclical, the pope dealt with the issue of human person, poverty and welfare, class struggle, human coexistence and the defence of private property. He focused on the details which had always been neglected by the Magisterium. In a number of countries, the Catholic Church transferred social speculations to which many thinkers had paid attention in the past, from the state of thinking into practice in order to make them concrete forms of life. The encyclical began to develop cooperation between public authorities and private church charitable organizations. In Germany, the majority of social activities was eventually performed by the Catholic Church. The encyclical also became a constitutive element of a number of people’s parties that would emerge and associate the Catholics. In many countries they became a solid stream that introduced the social teaching of the church into the legislative life of society. The pope did not waste his time after his ascension. He reformed the Catholic universities and faculties of arts. Since his very first encyclical of 1878, his intention had been to reconcile the church with the modern society, even though it had been clear from the very beginning that he would not look with favour upon democracy and free biblical interpretation and he denounced Americanism. Pope Leo XIII’s speeches of 1891 and 1892, in which he asked the clergy “not to close behind the walls of their churches and their priesthood, but to meet the people halfway and wholeheartedly care for the workmen and the poor”, caused the remorse of the priests who had separated themselves from the cooperation with the world. Some modern movements started that would valorise the spirituality in the responsible performance of everyday duties. There were various forms of engagement of people whose religiosity was a source of personal identity in politics, science and arts. The French industrialist Léon Harmel (1829–1915) experienced among his workmen an active charitable feeling in the spirit of deep Christian assistance. Especially the worker’s environment was a place of new pastoral opportunities.

The international success of this policy was proved by the congratulations which the pope received on the occasion of his priestly anniversaries from all over the world (1887, 1897). According to pope, no one could be forced to believe or to become a member of the Catholic Church. He took a new attitude toward the eastern churches as well. They were considered to be sisters rather than schismatic.

---

83 LORTZ, Storia della chiesa, p. 464.
85 LORTZ, Storia della chiesa, p. 464.
87 The encyclical Immortale Dei (1885).
or heretic churches. The pope talked about them with respect, especially toward
the forms of their cultural differences. Thus he built a wall against their excessive Latinization.88

In the nineteenth century, both changes of religious behaviour and changes in religious behaviour resulted from secularization as well as sacralization. The study of piety confirms the coexistence of the religious and the secular and of continuity and fundamental changes in religious behaviour of man. This period appears to be permanently marked by the clash between secularization and religious renewal as well as by a broader context of West European modern history.89 McLeod’s concept of cyclical patterns of decline and recovery of religiosity and its manifestations holds up. This is one of the reasons why this process appears to be a multi-layered struggle in which adherents of different views of the world and of society’s functioning meet.

In the nineteenth century, liberal and radical strategies as forms of secularization occurred inside majority churches as well. At the same time, in the same church environment, there were also conservative and reactionary tendencies. In them, an inventory check of the past was taking place. In the 19th century, Christianity was a religion under continuous development. There were permanent interactions among the base, hierarchy and intellectual environment. This found expression, for instance, in the issue of papal infallibility. The claim that each departure from the traditional form of Christianity necessarily presents itself as secularization proved to be untenable.90

However, since the mid-nineteenth century, the process of change in religious behaviour in Europe had entered its epilogue at political, philosophical as well as cultural level. At the end of the century the exodus from the medieval concepts of religiosity was almost completed.

This article was published in Kultúrne dejiny / Cultural History, Volume 1, Number 2, © Verbum 2010, pp. 220-243. ISSN 1338-2209

88 MARONGIU BUONAIUTI, Chiese e Stati, p. 293.
89 NEŠPOR, Hugh McLeod, p. 236.
90 McLEOD, Sekularizace v západní Evropě, p. 22.