The Dynamics of Religious Reform in Church, State and Society in Northern Europe, c.1780-c.1920.

Volume I: Political and Legal Reform
Co-ordinator/editor: Keith Robbins

Religious Reform in this period, widely interpreted, was a significant aspect of the life of all the states and nations coming under scrutiny in this collaborative project. It became necessary to try to identify what a ‘church’ was and how far the ‘state’ should accord special status, in the form of ‘establishment’ to one as opposed to another. That this involved ‘testing the boundaries’ in such matters as education and welfare provision is obvious, but will be pursued in particular detail within other sections of this project. This section highlights the impact of broad political change which we may label ‘democratization’. Competing political parties expressed sharply contrasting views about whether ‘the state’ should be ‘neutral’ or whether it should in some way give particular support to one or other churches. This underlying ‘agenda’ has been identified in all of the countries under consideration. The project investigative team, however, in their preliminary assessments, have become aware of the extent to which there was no simple, ‘one size fits all’ solution to the problems that were thrown up. This was scarcely surprising, given that some countries were multi-confessional (Protestant and Catholic in general orientation) while others were still in some sense ‘confessional’. Nor was it the case that there was a single ‘Protestant’ framework. In almost all instances, ‘religious identity’ and ‘national identity’ had long been intertwined.

The contributions to this volume will address, with individual twists, a common set of problems and circumstances coupled with an understanding, whether in ‘Scandinavia’, in the territories of the United Kingdom, in the states of ‘Germany’ and the German Empire or in the Low Countries, that particular factors led to outcomes which were, and to an extent still remain, ‘different’ in specific respects. Each contribution will need to discuss (to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the national context) all of the following core elements:

- religious freedom and (dis)establishment (incl. civil rights, church autonomy)
- democratization, in particular the claim of majorities on the state (incl. role of intermediate groups)
- financial support of the church (incl. church extension, salaries, buildings, regulation of church taxes)
- nation building (incl. role of the monarchy, relevance of colonies)

That the project is firmly historical in its research objective needs little emphasis but at the same time how ‘the state’ deals with ‘the church’ (and ‘the church’ with ‘the state’) in a multi-confessional and multi-faith European Union is a live and pressing public issue. It is in need of the clear historical dimension which this project aims to provide.
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Volume II: (Internal) Ecclesiastical Reform
Co-ordinators/editors: Joris van Eijnatten and Nigel Yates

Developments in church-state relationships in north-western Europe between 1780 and 1920 had a substantial impact on reformist ideas, projects and movements within the churches. Conversely, the dynamics of internal ecclesiastical reform prompted the state to react in various ways, through direct intervention or by adapting its policies and/or promulgating laws. The extent to which church and state mutually influenced each other in matters concerning ecclesiastical reform, and how and why they did so, are questions that have never been examined from a comparative perspective. These questions are central to Theme II of ‘the Dynamics of Religious Reform’. To avoid overlap with Theme I, which focuses on religious reform in the realms of politics and law, Theme II will concentrate especially on reform generated by the churches themselves and on the way political and legal reform impacted on the churches.

The collaboration of the various contributors will result in a substantial volume on internal ecclesiastical reform. The volume will make clear how processes of church reform evolved differently in different countries. Focusing on the churches as semi-independent or independent ‘organisations’ in which church leaders on various levels, in order to ensure the continuity of religious tradition in a rapidly changing world, experimented with institutional and intellectual reform, volume II addresses topical issues. The authors collaborating on Theme II will need to discuss (to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the national context) all of the following core elements:

- church organisation (incl. administrative and financial reform, church orders, restoration of Roman Catholic hierarchy, monastic orders)
- clergy (education, professionalization, pastoral leadership)
- separatism and reunion
- theology and doctrine
- mission and outreach (incl. lay-led organisations, ‘secularization’, use of media)

The influence of organised religion on the modern state, and vice versa, is a matter of continual debate. It requires an understanding of developments in the past. The projected volume offers such historical insight.
Volunteer and Editor Andreas Gestrich

In late-eighteenth-century Europe educational reform was at the centre of a widespread public debate on Volksaufklärung (enlightening the lower classes) and general social and economic improvement. Endeavours to enforce compulsory schooling, growing interest in the revision of curricula and the improvement of teaching methods were closely interlinked and reform efforts were directed at all three aspects. At first the emphasis of reform efforts was on improving primary schooling. However, during the course of the nineteenth century curricula and teaching methods in secondary and tertiary education became included in this reform process which in itself changed during the nineteenth century, lost its enlightenment impetus and was more driven by the practical as well as social needs and conflicts of industrialising/modernising societies and new forms of religious experience and piety.

Along with the ‘secularisation’ of school organisation (although very often particularly primary schools and primary school teachers stayed under church supervision on the local as well as on the state level and confessional schools survived right through the 19th century) we find a change in the curricula away from religion towards more practical subjects with specialized school books. To a certain extent this development was also sparked off by evangelical groups which were great supporters of vocational training. The development of curricula and school books should also be studied in this section. One of the main supports for all reform attempts in primary school teaching was the professionalisation of teachers and the installation of teacher training colleges which during the 19th century gradually replaced the old system of “apprenticeship”.

The authors collaborating on Theme II will need to discuss (to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the national context) all of the following core elements:

- primary education (and to a limited extent also secondary and tertiary education, in no more than one subsection)
- legal and financial issues concerning education
- curricula and school books
- professionalisation of teachers and installation of teacher training colleges

Wherever possible and/or applicable, contributors should pay due consideration to influences (e.g. Pestalozzi), gender (e.g. masculinity, femininity), religious considerations (“saving souls” as an important motivation), and the social position of teachers. Some attention should be given to relevant statistics concerning e.g. number and distribution of schools, divisions between rural and urban settings, etc.
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Volume IV: Social Reform
Co-ordinator/editor: Liselotte Malmgart

During the nineteenth century the European Churches became increasingly anxious about the ‘social question’. This pressing issue concerned a general increase in poverty among large parts of the population, caused by demographic, economic and social change. In many cases the social question was seen primarily as an urban problem. Since the churches took care of Christian souls in the expanding cities, where new patterns of work and family life rapidly evolved, the social question was at least in part an ecclesiastical concern. To some extent the social question also became a question of dealing with the self-organization of the new “working classes” in the form of labour movements and trade unions.

The Christian answer to the social question varied greatly, depending on e.g. regional conditions and theological traditions, and not least on the correlation between private philanthropy and social support by the state. Voluntary societies developed within and outside the churches as an intermediate structure between direct church support on the one hand and state provision on the other. The voluntary societies also gave laypeople a unique possibility to engage in both the church and society, contributing through their practice and/or reflection. Especially women were offered new opportunities, both on the labour market and in terms of education, when they became involved in social problems.

This theme will focus on two central issues: A. Poor Relief, B. Health Care. For the comparative purpose of the project it is important that all contributions present an overview of both issues. These may be illustrated using case studies. The social issues of this period provide the contributors to this volume ample opportunity to discuss the boundaries between church and state and the changing perceptions of the role of the churches in society. It is important to set the contributions within this framework.

In addition to the two central issues, each contribution will need to discuss (to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the national context) all of the following core elements:

- The changing role during this period of Christian voluntary societies, associations and religious orders (e.g. the relationship between philanthropy and the growing public sector).
- The way in which social involvement helped to define the role of the church in society.
- The political influence of the churches on reforms in social legislation, if applicable.
- Different perceptions of religious and moral values with implications for the discussion of social questions and social reforms (e.g. was poverty seen as an objective, providentially ordained state or a sign of moral corruption?)

Due attention should be paid to “organised charity” rather than only “professional(ised) charity”; this will allow better consideration of gender (role of women in care), motivation (saving souls), and different forms of knowledge transfer (practice as well as training). All contributors should address (to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the national context) the relevance of (a) the temperance movement and (b) trade unions to social reform.

The attempt to find the roots of the welfare state in the nineteenth century has been subject to criticism, but at the same time it is evident that the churches have played an important part in the development of the different welfare models within Northern Europe. This project aims to give a comparative historical background for this interaction.
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Volume V: Reform of Piety
Co-ordinator/editor: Anders Jarlert

Reform is “the conscious pursuit of renewal with the aim of adapting organized religion to the changing relations between church, state and society.” We use no general definition of ‘modern’, and reforms may well be opposed to what we now regard as ‘modern’. Piety is “religious devotion and practices, public and private, institutional and popular”. Please note the difference between ‘piety’ in general, and a special form of piety, i.e. ‘Pietism’, but note also that Pietist devotional literature was read in pious practice also in non-Pietist circles, and that Pietist practices spread outside of Pietism. The spreading and reading of old devotional literature (from Medieval or Reformation times) might have been important to the reform of piety also in our period.

Volume V should not repeat the contents of Vol. II, Ecclesiastical Reform. For example, when vol. II deals with reform in theology, Vol. V should deal with the interaction between theology and piety. On the other hand, the reform of the structure of piety must be dealt with in vol. V. This includes also changes in liturgy. In general, Vol. V should describe the implications and result of ecclesiastical reform in real devotional life. Social Reform is dealt with in Vol. IV. Piety and social responsibility will be dealt with in the introduction to Vol. V, written by the editor. Contributors are welcome to send the editors reminders of Piety and Social responsibility in their respective areas.

Different national or geographical elements in reform of piety are of great interest, as are the class and gender dimensions of piety. The importance of piety to religious identity is to be emphasized, e.g. by special popular marks, such as if milk was to be collected on Sundays or not (if this example is relevant in the area). The following points are not to be regarded as an outline for each article, but as a help not to forget important parts.

1. Piety and concepts of Modernity: Which were the actual concepts of modernity? Were they positive or negative towards piety? Was (traditional/conservative) piety being communicated in modern ways (f.e. mass media and other mass methods)? Was a certain kind of pious books being spread as a substitute for novels/song books etc.? Was there a ‘massification’ of devotion? How was music used (popular songs as well as concerts)? Was individual piety regarded as a purely personal thing, or as part of a collective piety? What about individual piety within the framework of common service (especially in Catholic worship)? How did piety create new collective forms, bodies, or new religious movements – or vice versa? What about self-institutionalisation or de-institutionalisation? National or regional concepts of piety. Anti-piety.

2. The interaction between theology and piety: At the universities or seminaries? On a regional or local level? Different in different denominations? Interaction between liturgical theology and reform in liturgy? Between homiletical theory and reform in preaching? Between hymnology and reform in hymn singing?

3. Piety, gender, and family: How was gender and the role of women constructed in popular piety? In words and pious forms? In organisation – different in early and later phases of popular religious movements? Were there reactions to a supposed ‘feminisation’ such as efforts for a ‘remasculinisation’ or different activities and institutions for men and women, respectively? Was there a female and a male piety, or distinct variations within a common piety (e.g. the Catholic Holy Joseph-ideal)? The communication of piety to families and children: In Sunday-schools or other activities and organisations? Was there a Child Jesus-ideal and/or -worship? Was children’s piety being combined with foreign mission, nationalism, or other activities? Were children regarded as future men/women, or as children as such? How was soul-care and families described? Was there a ‘homefication’ in the communication of piety? An interaction between the public and private spheres? Were the homes presented as an alternative to Church and state?

4. Foreign mission and piety: Did piety change because of mission? Was there a discussion of piety, truth, and (fictitious) missionary stories? Economic aspects in piety? How are foreign mission and home mission
combined in piety? The Transatlantic impact (emigration, ‘mission in return’ in hymns, etc). Other aspects of internationalisation (Rome, returning emigrants, etc).
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Volume VI: Material Reform
Co-ordinator/editor: Jan De Maeyer, Peter Jan Margry
[text to follow]