

**WHY LIBERALISM?  
State, Church, and Party in Western Europe**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Liberal political reform fundamentally transformed Western Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The success of liberal movements varied considerably from state to state, ranging from near complete supremacy in Switzerland and contested victory in France to conditional defeat in Belgium and co-optation in Germany. While comparativists have emphasized patterns of economic development or culture in explaining such variation, this paper argues that the success or failure of liberalism can best be explained through identifying the distinct patterns of church-state relations that shaped key social groups' attitudes toward liberal reforms. First, I show how the historical-institutional development of religious institutions determined whether actors such as clergy and provincial social groups decided to support liberal reforms. Second, I show that the support of these actors was essential to liberal movements' successes. Finally, I argue that Western European liberal development contains important lessons for scholars interested in liberal institution-building in new democracies.

## **RESUMEN**

La reforma política liberal transformó fundamentalmente a Europa Occidental en el siglo XIX y a principios del XX. El éxito de los movimientos liberales varió considerablemente entre estado y estado, desde la casi completa supremacía alcanzada en Suiza y la disputada victoria en Francia, a la derrota condicional en Bélgica y la cooptación en Alemania. Para explicar esta variación, los comparativistas han puesto el acento en los patrones de desarrollo económico o culturales. Este texto sostiene, en cambio, que el éxito o el fracaso del liberalismo pueden ser explicados mejor a través de la identificación de los distintos patrones de relación entre la iglesia y el estado que dieron forma a las actitudes de grupos sociales clave frente a las reformas liberales. Primero, muestro cómo el desarrollo histórico-institucional de las instituciones religiosas determinó el apoyo o el rechazo hacia las reformas de parte de actores tales como el clero y los grupos sociales provinciales. Luego muestro que el apoyo de estos actores fue esencial para el éxito de los movimientos liberales. Finalmente, sostengo que el desarrollo liberal europeo-occidental contiene importantes lecciones para los especialistas interesados en la construcción liberal de instituciones en las nuevas democracias.



## Introduction

One of the most fundamental political transformations in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the emergence of liberalism as a movement for political reform. Under pressure from liberal reformers, the practices of aristocratic and monarchical rule yielded to new institutions as basic as broadened representation for society, constitutional procedures for government, legal protection for private property in free markets, and the distinction between religious and political authority. Liberal movements across the region were, of course, by no means uniformly successful at building these new institutions; many of the conflicts in Europe during the past 200 years were inextricably linked to strikingly different levels of success attained by liberal movements in different countries. The success of liberal movements ranged, for example, from nearly complete supremacy in Switzerland and contested victory in France to conditional defeat in Belgium and cooptation in Germany.

The goal of this paper is to seek explanations for variations in the strength of liberalism among these four countries. As scholars have recently underlined, middle classes and working classes both offered variable and in some cases important support to movements for political reform (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Collier forthcoming), yet these do not exhaust the list of social groups important for the success or failure of liberal movements. Liberals faced key obstacles and opportunities when it came to broadening their initial support among urban elites to include another group with substantial institutional authority, the clergy, and larger social groups that exercised potentially decisive influence under many electoral systems, the provincial middle classes and peasants. These distinct group responses that posed the key challenges to liberals are the focus of this paper, for they help to account for the divergent fortunes of liberal movements. This paper thus seeks to add to the existing literature by focusing on the responses to liberalism among clergy, in various churches and sects, and among social classes outside of the major urban centers.

The paper confirms two generalizations and develops a main finding about the emergence and survival of liberal institutions in these cases. The first confirmation is that liberal institutions developed in the course of struggles among elites striving to define the boundaries of their authority within particular institutional contexts. The second confirmation is that the different arrangements of political and religious institutions shaped the responses of clergy to proposed liberal reforms. While it is not surprising that clergy who stood to gain in authority through liberal reform of the state favored such reform, it is worth spelling out the consequences of this relationship. The principal finding regarding the cases in this paper is that when liberal elites won support either from members of the clergy or from a political movement seeking to curtail the

authority of a church, then liberals acquired the support necessary to sustain a liberal political regime.

It is the task of this paper to show how the particular institutional configurations of political and religious authority in four countries affected the fortunes of political movements and, ultimately, the types of political regimes that emerged. In my view, the wide variety of relationships among economic development, social classes, ideologies, political movements, government policies, and regime types in Europe cannot be explained without taking into account the institutional arrangement of political and religious authority. This view is part of a larger research tradition in various subfields of political science which seeks to understand how institutions organize the interactions of social actors and thereby affect the outcomes of those interactions (Thelen and Steinmo 1992; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Scholars emphasize that while social cleavages are important raw materials for political actors, political institutions nevertheless strongly shape the society in which they are located (Mainwaring and Scully 1995, 479, n. 13). Working within this tradition, I am thus seeking to identify those causes of political outcomes that figure between social and economic structures, on the one hand, and political 'process(es)' on the other (Karl 1987). Like other scholars in the structuralist tradition, I am attempting to delineate "the historical dynamics of real social types" (Lichbach and Zuckerman 1997, 7).

The next section highlights three central features of liberal regimes and shows why an understanding of the politics of urban middle classes, although essential, only serves as a partial guide to understanding liberal movements more broadly. It ends with a discussion of case selection in studies of liberalism. The paper then turns to its main section, where it seeks to show how church-state relations conditioned the various responses of key actors to emerging liberal parties and argues that the responses of clergy and rural social groups to liberal reform help account for the different degrees of success attained by liberal movements. Each of the four cases is considered separately, beginning with the countries where liberals encountered both successes and failures (Belgium and France), and moving on to countries where liberals experienced more consistent results (Germany and Switzerland). The conclusion draws together some of the main points and takes up the issue of the contemporary relevance of liberal institutions for new democracies.

### **Defining Liberal Regimes and Analytic Scope**

At the most general level, the matter addressed in this paper is the manner in which a type of political regime developed. I follow Robert Fishman's definition of a regime as comprising "the formal and informal organization of the center of political power, and of its relations with the broader society. A regime determines who has access to political power, and how those who are

in power deal with those who are not" (1990, 428). As a type of political regime, nineteenth-century liberalism contained three core elements: constitutional and parliamentary government, protections for private property in free markets, and the separation of religious and political authority.

The constitutional and parliamentary aspirations of liberals—the first core element of liberalism—reflected liberal opposition to the authority of kings and, especially, objections to the manner in which kings ruled. Liberals sought to replace the unpredictable, arbitrary actions of royal officials with predictable decision-making based on written law. From the liberal perspective, the source of sovereignty was the nation, the maker of law was the legislature (or a monarch and legislature together), and the actions of officials were bound by that law. As part of the constitutional order, a series of rights establishing individual freedom were typically sought by liberals: freedoms of speech, press, and association, an independent judiciary and public trial by jury, and civil equality, which entailed the abolition of the nobility's privileges and the traditional bonds on peasants. These changes in the form of political authority marked the transition from absolutism to constitutional authority.

The second core element of liberalism involved the desire to create and expand markets. Marketization first involved destructive tasks: Liberals sought to end mercantilist policies, royal monopolies, and other traditional restraints on economic activity. Among the traditional restraints on trade that liberals opposed were guild restrictions, local tariffs, and prohibitions on the sale of land. The doctrine of *laissez-faire* underscored the liberal opposition to mercantilism and internal barriers to trade. Liberals thus followed Adam Smith by arguing that the pursuit of enlightened self-interest within the market would produce public benefits. Marketization also involved the creation of new institutions, as occurred when liberals established uniform systems of justice in which contracts could regularly be enforced. Liberals, in other words, sought to create national markets and adjudicate the disputes that market relations typically entail. They also promoted economic growth through state support for railroad, canal, and port development. These measures established infrastructure for the benefit of commerce and industry in general and also supported specific localities and particular industries—especially coal, iron, steel, heavy machinery, and shipbuilding.

The third principle of nineteenth-century liberalism held that religious disputes should not be settled by political authority. As heirs of the Enlightenment tradition, liberals believed that social order and the regularities of political life emerged out of human interactions rather than from divine will. Liberals further claimed that "society can be 'held together' by secular norms and common interests" (Holmes 1993, 263) without additional support from an established church. In removing faith from the political realm in this limited way, liberals deprived rulers of an important source of legitimation that had previously been cultivated assiduously. This loss had its

compensation for rulers, as liberals simultaneously freed various states from the many competing claims to religious authority that were proffered in modern Europe by Protestant churches, dissident Protestant sects, the Roman Catholic Church, Gallican and other national Catholic Churches, and also by local systems of belief. While it is true that some liberals were hostile to religious belief itself, most confined their opposition to the conflation of political and religious authority; indeed, the liberal theological claim was that true faith would grow, were the corrupt, decayed, and decadent administration of religious affairs to be ended.

The threefold common program did not preclude disagreements among liberals about the pace and extent of reform, especially concerning whether to consolidate existing gains or extend reform to new issue areas. Once elections were in place, for example, liberals of the consolidating tendency favored granting the franchise only to those who met relatively strict financial criteria. These liberals distinguished between active citizens, who would exercise the franchise and other civic rights, and so-called passive citizens, who would not vote but would have some other civic rights. For example, in France in the 1830s and 1840s, Adolphe Thiers argued that consolidating liberal gains in this way minimized the risk of undesirable and perhaps uncontrollable change. A further illustration of the tendency to consolidate, one notes, is that many liberals expected, or at least hoped, that most people would defer to the political judgment of their social superiors—that is, to propertied or urban liberal elites. Furthermore, most liberals in the nineteenth century believed that the principle of equality did not apply to differences between men and women. On the question of gender, a few liberals—notably, Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill—sought to apply the principle of civic equality to women and men alike.<sup>1</sup> In other matters as well, extenders argued for applying liberal principles to new areas in order to fulfill the true meaning of liberalism. Odillon Barrot, for example, countered Thiers and favored a broader franchise in the late 1840s; at other times, liberals of the extending tendency proposed to reduce the authority of a legislature's upper house and curtail the monarch's remaining influence over government formation. Most liberals, however, did not seek to end social respect for all hierarchy but sought to add new respect for wealth, formal education, and 'merit' to partially reformulated inequalities of status and gender.

Distinguishing among degrees of liberalism along the three basic dimensions adds some nuance to the characterization of various liberal movements and their opponents. Thus, although liberalism can be defined as a set of attributes accepted by many actors, it is also true that actors either favored different aspects of the liberal program with unequal intensities or accepted only certain parts of the overall package. To take just one example from the cases to come, Belgian

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<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to the complex relationship between liberalism and feminism, see Vogel (1993), Hause with Kenney (1984), Di Stefano (1991, 144–86), and selections on "Gender in Democracy and Politics" in C. Gould, ed. (1997, 317–93).



liberals advocated private property and free markets, democratic constitutionalism, rights, religious freedom, and the separation of church and state, yet until the 1870s many Belgian liberals were not ready to eliminate the Church's role in education completely. Similar ambiguities in the other cases can also be clarified by separately examining the economic, political, and religious dimensions of liberalism. Likewise, whereas the label 'conservative' can be unambiguously applied to leaders and movements that rejected each of the three dimensions of the liberal program, it is also true that particular leaders and movements sometimes accepted parts of the liberal program even as they opposed the others. To take the same national example, Belgian conservatives generally accepted private property and free markets and professed their acceptance of democratic constitutionalism, yet they unreservedly defended the institutional authority of the Church in state education. Belgian liberals and conservatives generally agreed on the economic and political program of liberalism and even agreed on church-state relations for a time, yet it was ultimately the religious dimension of the liberal program that distinguished the two parties. If a phenomenon as broadly important as liberalism is to be analyzed systematically across varied national settings, the analysis benefits from a definition that both distinguishes liberals and their opponents and exhibits the extent to which the ideological terrain that separated them was in dispute.

### **Liberalism and the Middle Classes**

The social group or coalition that supports a government's incumbents affects the regime but is not a component of the regime itself. This definitional strategy has proven highly productive in comparative politics (Munck 1996, 20–21), yet it is often overlooked in the study of liberalism when the middle classes and liberalism are conflated. Although middle classes and liberal political regimes were strongly linked, a causal analysis can proceed more easily if strong middle classes are not defined as an element of liberal regimes.

There is much to support the view that the rise of the middle classes helped liberal ideas and institutions to flourish. In Harold Laski's words,

In the period between the Reformation and the French Revolution a new social class established its title to a full share in the control of the state... The control of politics by an aristocracy whose authority was built upon the tenure of land came to be shared with men whose influence was derived solely from the ownership of movable capital... New material conditions, in short, gave birth to new social relationships; and, in terms of these, a new philosophy was evolved... This new philosophy was liberalism (1936, 1–2).

Anthony Arblaster locates the beginnings of liberal institutions at the end of the seventeenth century in the two countries where the bourgeoisie was the strongest, the Netherlands and England, and notes that wherever the landed aristocracy continued to dominate in the rest of Europe, by contrast, feudal absolutism was firmly established (1984, 146).

Declines in the middle class's enthusiasm for liberal reform have been attributed to the rise of the working class and its demands for social justice. With the emergence of the French working class, according to Karl Marx's famous analysis of the events surrounding the Revolution of 1848, "every demand of the simplest bourgeois financial reform, of the most ordinary liberalism, of the most formal republicanism, of the most insipid democracy, is simultaneously castigated as an 'attempt on society' and stigmatized as 'socialism'" and then cast aside in favor of authoritarianism (1977 [1852], 25). Alexis de Tocqueville, although himself a member of the nobility, was just one of many liberals who showed little sympathy for the politically active working classes in 1848—as his memoirs reveal—and the Parisian uprising in June pushed him to quite conservative positions (Jardin 1988, 416).

The mere emergence of a particular social class should be carefully distinguished from the undeniable influence of what was called 'the social question.' It was not the presence of misery among increasing numbers of workers that chastened liberals but the actions of new social and political movements. Guido de Ruggiero put it like this: "The appearance of Socialism on the political stage in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the rapid progress which it made, created a profound perturbation in the Liberal mind" (1981 [1927], 381). Ruggiero emphasizes the rise of socialism, a political movement, rather than the working classes *per se*. A careful distinction between a social class and social and political movements is required in a comparative perspective because classes and movements had variable relationships.

The political actions of people, even in similar economic situations, reflect specifically political calculations. For this reason I do not assume in this paper that the middle class in any one country took the natural political position of a middle class. Rather, I seek to follow Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John Stephens, who focus on the variable political choices of class actors without privileging the choice of any one actor as the expected choice for an entire set of similar actors (1992, 101, 145). Relatedly, I do not assume in this paper that social classes are defined solely by their position in the division of labor or by their material conditions. Here, I seek to employ an insight developed in the political constructionist research tradition, in which it is emphasized that the politics of classes are shaped by social organizations and ideologies in addition to market and technological forces (Herrigel 1996). If this insight applies in the case of various classes and their responses to liberalism, then we should find that actors define themselves politically and understand their relations with other actors through particular struggles and with the aid of ideas of self-interest. By considering social actors in

particular contexts, we can discover why social actors pursued particular political goals with specific strategies; in particular, we can discover why clergy, peasants, and provincial middle classes offered variable support for liberal reform. From both a structuralist and a political constructionist point of view, then, it makes sense to consider the institutional conflict that provided the context in which liberal elites sought to build support for their reform program.

### **Case Selection in Studies of Liberalism**

The selection of countries in this paper offers comparisons that are largely new to the study of liberalism. British liberalism, arguably the most successful liberal movement of the nineteenth century, has benefited from intense analysis (Biagini, ed., 1996, Jenkins 1988). The connections between religious conflict and support for liberalism in the United Kingdom (Ellens 1994, Parry 1986) prompt the questions of whether similar forces were at work in other countries and, if not, why. Yet Anglo-Saxon scholars typically highlight liberalism in the United Kingdom and its former colonies to the detriment of a full examination of the experience of liberal parties on the Continent. Within comparative works, some authors implicitly compare German liberalism to British liberalism but not to other Continental varieties (Dahrendorf 1979 [1967]), or draw insights from an explicit comparison of the United Kingdom and Germany (Breuilly 1992). Exceptions to this type of focus in studies of liberalism can be found in scholarship that seeks to place German political development in its full European context, as does the work of Dieter Langewiesche (1988 ed., 1988a, 1988b, 1990, 1993) and Jürgen Kocka (1986 ed., 1988). While it is difficult to generalize about rich historical work, these studies emphasize the vibrancy of German middle classes and thus raise the questions of how to understand the apparent defeats of German liberal parties and whether or not a similar understanding applies to other cases. These questions are also forcefully posed by Anglo-American revisionist approaches to German political and social history (Blackbourn and Eley 1984, Blackbourn and Evans, eds. 1991, Eley 1991). Anthony Arblaster (1984) and John Hall (1987) compare important liberal theorists and crucial events in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the United States. Guido de Ruggiero's classic study leaves out the revealing dynamics of liberalism in smaller countries such as Belgium and Switzerland (1981 [1927]). The present study analyzes a different set of cases in an attempt to shed additional light on the liberals' comprehensive victory in Switzerland, contested victory in France, conditional defeat in Belgium, and coopted defeat in Germany. Even with its new scope, this paper still excludes countries where liberals were least successful, as they were in Spain, Portugal, Scandinavia, and other countries east and south of Germany, and Italy. By focusing on cases at the center of the distribution, the analysis is arguably less open to the potential for distortion that is introduced by examining only the most and least successful liberal movements. This paper is

thus an attempt to elucidate the building of liberal institutions in cases where liberalism was guaranteed neither success nor failure and where the only guarantee was simply a possibility of success and a possibility of failure.

### **Church-State Relations and Liberal Reform Dynamics**

An important causal pathway began with church-state relations prior to the onset of liberal reform. In general, the character of the institutions involved in the relationship between church and state prior to attempted reform helped to determine the type of reform that liberals proposed and, in connection with liberal reform, the clerical response. In this paper I shall temporarily bracket a full explanation for different types of liberal reform and focus on church-state relations and clerical responses to liberal reform. The well-known case of the Catholic Church and Italy clearly exhibits the logic governing the effects of the initial institutions on the clerical response to liberal reform. In 1815 the Pope exercised territorial sovereignty over the Papal States. Unification of the Italian states system under any other ruler threatened to diminish the territorial sovereignty of the Pope and offer reduced institutional authority to the Church. Indeed the Church vigorously opposed those forces—liberals among them—seeking to unify Italy. Here it is especially evident that reform which reduced the institutional authority of a given set of clergy met with opposition from that set of clergy. Although the Vatican focused on Italian events for understandable reasons, there were other segments within the Catholic Church that pursued less reactionary policies. While less obvious than in the case of Italy, the interaction between the prior arrangement of church-state institutions and the clerical response to liberal reform can also be seen in the other national cases, even in cases with various Protestant churches.

In a study that emphasizes the variety of clerical responses to liberal reform, it may be useful first to address a myth of uniformity in clerical behavior that many liberals themselves helped to propagate. It is true that European Catholic and Protestant clergy frequently opposed liberal political reform. The Roman Catholic Church opposed political reform in the wake of each major regime transition or possible transition: The Revolution of 1789 evoked the papal bull *Quod aliquantum* (1791); the Revolution of 1830 brought forth the papal encyclical *Mirari Vos* (1832); and the Revolution of 1848 eventually met with the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (1854) (Durand 1995, 25–55). Yet there were also crucial national peculiarities and divergences. National particularities included the more favorable relations between liberals and the Catholic Church in Belgium and Ireland, the perception of widespread Catholic support for the Revolution of 1848 in France, and the many varieties of political Catholicism in the German states. Theology alone provides an insufficient guide to explain the mix of liberal and conservative sympathies among the clergy that developed within Protestant and Catholic churches alike. In the Protestant

churches clergy could be found on both sides of virtually every movement for liberal reform, although to varying degrees in each country. Dissenting Protestant ministers were prominent in British liberalism for much of the century and in Prussian liberalism around 1848, yet were virtually absent from the liberal leadership in Switzerland; some leaders of the small Protestant community in France supported conservatives in 1848 and 1851.

National peculiarities in the clerical response to liberalism deserve attention, partly because these variations were linked to the dynamics of liberal reform in each of the cases. The country-specific sections below examine how varied configurations of the state-church institutional nexus and different clerical responses to liberal reform contributed to different patterns of elite and popular support for liberal movements and different types of political regime.

### **Conditional Defeat in Belgium**

Belgium presents an intermediate outcome with respect to the success of the liberal party and the type of political regime. Liberals and Catholics shared power in a compromise system from 1830 to 1846, liberals predominated from 1847 to 1883, and the Catholic party won every election and formed every government from 1884 onwards. As for the regime, Belgium was a constitutional monarchy from 1830 onwards, and the only major change in regime that accompanied the coming to power of the Catholic party in 1884 was the granting of substantial authority over state education to the Catholic Church. The eventual defeat of the Liberal party in Belgium was in this way conditioned by its prior successes, by the Catholic party's acceptance of most liberal principles, and by the survival of the main features of the liberal political regime. It is of assistance in understanding this pattern to consider the institutions of state and church prior to the onset of liberal reform and examine the clerical responses to liberal reforms.

When a church's institutional authority was impaired under the old regime, as was that of a Catholic Church under a recently imposed Protestant monarch, some types of liberal reform could actually increase the institutional authority of Catholic clergy. The Catholic Church in Belgium was newly subordinated to a Protestant monarchy, the Dutch House of Orange, by the Restoration settlement arranged by the 1815 Congress of Vienna. With the church and the state in a mutually antagonistic position, Belgian clergy soon favored liberal reform of the state. Belgian liberals sought to free themselves from the autocratic powers of the Dutch king, while members of the clergy sought religious freedom for the Catholic faith, which was restricted by the established Protestant church. Together, liberals and political Catholics opposed the Dutch crown in the Revolution of 1830, gained the independence of Belgium, and authored a constitutional compromise of liberal and Catholic interests. A crucial push for the creation of liberal institutions came from liberals and prochurch political Catholics working in concert because of their shared

interests in national independence; together they supported a constitutional regime (Lijphart 1981, 11). From independence in 1830 until 1847 all governments were self-proclaimed 'unionist' governments, whose policy was a permanent compromise between liberal and prochurch positions. Unionist cabinets included liberals and political Catholics; unionist governments received support from a joint liberal and prochurch majority, with opposition from a fluid 'party of movement'; under this system political Catholics did not oppose liberals in principle (Stengers 1965). The consensus position extended even to the issue that would later drive liberals and political Catholics apart—the role of the Church in education. At least until 1846 the official consensus over the content and function of primary instruction asserted that education ought to include the moral guidance of religious instruction in the interest of social stability (Gubin and Lefèvre 1985, 334).<sup>2</sup> According to this view, priestly control of religious instruction best ensured socially necessary moral guidance.

In contrast to the implication of views that focus exclusively on the middle classes and economic development, Belgium's comparatively advanced industrial development did not immediately work to the advantage of political liberalism. Leading industrialists, for example, opposed the Revolution of 1830 and advocated the return to sovereignty over Belgian provinces of the Dutch House of Orange. These industrialists viewed independence from the Netherlands skeptically, for independence seemed to portend the loss of markets, yet they shared liberal views on economic policy and an anticlerical attitude toward the Catholic Church (Witte and Craeybeckx 1987, 21, 37). Other industrialists supported unification with France, because of the access to its large market this would offer. The hopes of Orangists and French nationalists were dealt severe blows by foreign developments: As for the French claim, Louis Philippe renounced any authority over Belgium shortly after the Revolution of 1830, and as for the Dutch, the House of Orange acknowledged Belgium's independent sovereignty with the Treaty of Twenty-Four Articles in 1839. Most Orangists and French nationalists joined the liberal movement in the 1830s.

The early liberal reform and the compromise between liberals and Catholics set the stage for the emergence of what Arend Lijphart terms a consociational or consensus democracy that could channel politics peacefully in a culturally divided society (1977, 1984). Under constitutional innovations in the 1970s, Belgium adopted the limits on majoritarian rule that made it "a complete example of consociational democracy: it is the most perfect, most convincing, and most impressive example of a consociation" (Lijphart 1981, 8). Lijphart interprets the reforms of the 1970s as a "formal continuation of informal consociational practices [such as the Unionist

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<sup>2</sup> This may have been the view of urban industrialists as late as 1866 (Gubin and Lefèvre 1985, 333). See also Puissant (1982, 157–59).

governments of the 1830s and 1840s] that have long been used for the solution of religious and ideological conflicts" (1981, 11). A detailed examination of the political impact of linguistic (Flemish/French/bilingual) and cultural (Fleming/Walloon/Bruxellois) cleavages would be necessary for a full account of Belgian development, but it is important to note that the cooperation and conflict between liberals and Catholics created institutions that channeled conflict over language and culture in distinctive ways (Lorwin 1966,1971; Zolberg 1978; Huyse 1981).

A second wave of liberal reform sparked mobilizational efforts from the Catholic Church that ultimately lead to a decline in the Liberal party. In the 1870s liberal leaders confronted both demands for franchise expansion and a largely Catholic peasantry that, when combined, were likely to reduce the liberal share of the vote sharply. The liberals' solution to this dilemma was to attempt to change religious attitudes in the countryside *before* expanding the franchise. The lack of any other shared program also pushed liberals toward an ambitious program for educational reform (Lefèvre 1989, 81–82). The plan was to remove the countryside from the supposed thrall of the Catholic Church by providing the youth with secular education. As one prominent liberal put it, "happily, liberals have finally understood...the necessity of conquering future generations, which they will do insofar as the battle is pressed on religious terrain."<sup>3</sup> Or again, "Liberty is the essence of our Constitution. Public education will raise children in liberty; it will thereby become the strongest guarantee of our institutions and our nationality."<sup>4</sup> Liberals intended the new secular education system to free future voters from the influence of the clergy.

Secular education required major changes in the education system. Religious instruction was mandatory in state primary schools, and in regions where the Church was strong, as it was in most of the countryside, the clergy enjoyed a veto power over all other elements of the curriculum and the hiring and firing of the instructors themselves. The Liberal party's new 1879 Law on Education required each local administration to establish at least one secular school. Religion was to be removed from the curriculum and instructors were required to have earned diplomas from state institutes of education.

Unfortunately for Belgian liberals, promoting secular education undermined strict limits on political participation. Most importantly, the attack on church privileges in education provoked an

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<sup>3</sup> Goblet d'Alviela, in the *Revue de Belgique* 25 (15 February 1877, 216, author's translation). D'Alviela was a thoroughgoing anticlerical himself, and the anticlerical position was ascendant when he wrote these lines in 1877. A 15 November 1878 article in the *Revue* (signed by the editorial committee: Alb. Callier, Laveleye, D'Alviella, and Ch. Potvin among others) outlined the journal's mission as anticlericalism, ascribed the 1878 electoral victory to this position, and asserted that the first task of liberalism was educational reform.

<sup>4</sup> F. Laurent, "La Loi de 1842," *Revue de Belgique* (15 November 1878, 237, author's translation).

unprecedented reaction of defense from the Church and the countryside between 1879 and 1884. The Church and parents organized politically, well before their children could be educated in the liberal creed. As liberals soon realized, the plan to secularize the electorate by eliminating the Church from primary education did not succeed. Rather than secularize the youth, the Education Law of 1879 mobilized the hitherto politically inactive parents into political action directed at the state. The result was a spiral of intensifying political conflict between liberals and an increasingly organized Catholic sector. The Liberal education policy sparked explosive growth in support for the Catholic party, especially in the countryside. Catholics in Flanders boycotted state schools, which the Liberal government continued to build at considerable expense, even as the government cut financial support for the Church. Meanwhile, parents helped to finance and support new parochial institutions: in 1879 just 379,000 students attended Catholic primary schools, while only three years later, in 1882, fully 622,000 children did so (Kossmann 1978, 362). The school struggle also provoked the founding of formal political organizations, such as the *Union nationale pour le redressement des griefs*, which reshaped political Catholicism in the direction of more active opposition to liberalism and less compromise (Kossmann 1978, 364).

The causes of the liberal defeat in 1884 were examined by liberal pamphleteers during the immediate aftermath. After considering grievances in other areas such as tariff policy, one pamphlet concluded, "Believe us, one cannot hide the fact that the law of 1879 was the principal cause of the fall of the Liberal ministry." Confessing that liberal leaders were out of touch with the temper of the countryside, the author remarked that "the voice of the last peasant in Flanders counts as much on election day as that of Monsieur Frère-Orban" (*Le Dix Juin* 1884, 26). This statement contained a measure of hyperbole, as fewer than 10% of adult men had the right to vote in 1884 and many peasants were excluded from the franchise. The liberals' attempt to secularize the future electorate failed so completely that the Catholic party was able to seize power prior to franchise reform. With the adoption of suffrage for men in 1893, parties were forced to reach even deeper into mass sympathies and incorporate urban lower-middle classes, workers, and peasants, which, in the context of strong Catholic organization, only served to solidify the minority status of the Liberal party.

Belgium is best seen as the site of a conditional defeat for the liberal movement. On the one hand, the party lost its predominant role in government formation well before the decline of other electorally successful liberal parties. On the other hand, the political regime remained within the basic outlines of the constitutional compromise established in 1830. One change in the regime was directly related to the coming to power of the Catholic party: legal status for clerical control of public education. In sum, the constitutional nature of the regime cannot be understood without taking into account the positive clerical response to liberal reform of the state, and the



ultimate defeat of the Liberal party cannot be understood without reference to the organizing activity with which the clergy met the Liberals' attempt to secularize public education.

### **Contested Victory in France**

France also presents an intermediate outcome with respect to the fate of liberal parties and the type of regime. In a setting that variously and significantly reflected liberal advances, liberal reforms from 1815 to 1848 repeatedly failed. Despite these early defeats and the continued presence of a nonconstitutional opposition, French liberals constructed a liberal regime in the 1870s and defended it successfully until 1940. The early defeats can be explained by examining the strong clerical opposition, while the later victory and persistence of a nonconstitutional opposition can be understood as the product of renewed clerical opposition, though in a context that supported a provincial middle-class and peasant backlash in favor of liberal reform.

As a condition of the restoration of the monarchy after the fall of Napoleon, Louis XVIII agreed to set out the framework of his rule in a written charter, thus steering a course between full-scale return to the old regime and a thorough acceptance of liberal principles of government. As did the old regime, the charter located sovereignty in the will of the monarch and gave the legislature virtually no role in selecting ministers; yet the acceptance of the Civil Code and the Revolutionary land transfers marked a significant departure from pre-Revolutionary absolutism. Even more than in the realm of politics, in economics and social relations the period of the restoration did not represent a total reversal of liberalism; rising trade and the growth of the urban middle classes testify to this. The Restoration Monarchy fell to the brief Revolution of 1830, and the subsequent regime—the July Monarchy—was even more liberal in its recognition of the authority of the legislature and the sovereignty of the people. Yet in the Revolution of 1848 this regime too fell. The failure of the liberal movement to reform the constitutional monarchy requires some explanation. In other words, if the Restoration enshrined some liberal principles and if economic and social developments favored many forces generally supportive of liberalism, why did subsequent attempts at reform fail to take hold?

The post-1815 Restoration in France placed the Catholic Church and the state in a mutually supportive position. The Charter declared apostolic Roman Catholicism to be the official religion of the State of France, and a formal declaration of religious toleration amounted to little more than government supervision of the small Protestant and Jewish communities. During the 1820s the more reactionary potential of the Restoration arrangements developed even further: all levels of education came under clerical control, and sacrilege became a civil crime. In 1824 the crowning of Charles X at Reims Cathedral symbolically demonstrated the tightened connections

between Church and state. In this situation of mutual support, the Church opposed liberalization in the 1820s and 1830s and offered crucial support to the most right-wing forces during the 1840s.

The possibility that the Church would instead depart from its alliance with the crown was tested by a social and political movement led by a few radical clergy. The main goal of Fr. Félicité de Lamennais and his followers was to disentangle the authority of the state and the Church and give the pope a clear line of authority over a newly centralized hierarchy free from state interference.<sup>5</sup> The Mennaisians reached the peak of their influence in 1830–1831, that is, not until after the initial success of the Revolution of 1830. The Revolution—and its anticlericalism—seemed to validate the Mennaisians' argument that Restoration-style ties between church and state did not help the Church in the long run, but an equally important effect of the Revolution of 1830 lay in the newly liberalized conditions for political organization that the regime change provided. The Mennaisian movement surged in the moment of opportunity and then collapsed under decisive opposition from the Church hierarchy, once the hierarchy acted against it. Pope Gregory XVI's 1832 encyclical, *Mirari Vos*, condemned every aspect of the Mennaisian doctrine: religious toleration, freedom of conscience, and the freedom of publication were each rejected. In a direct attack on the movement, the pope stated that priests were "forbidden by ancient canons to undertake ministry and to assume the tasks of teaching and preaching without the permission of their bishop." "All those who struggle against this established order," continued the pope, "disturb the position of the Church."<sup>6</sup> The encyclical asserted that the Church was already sufficiently centralized in its structure of authority. Within a few months Lamennais spoke out against the pope, and in 1834 he published another popular pamphlet, *Paroles d'un croyant*, which marked his final break with the Church (he died without last rites or a Catholic burial in 1854). Few of Lamennais's adherents followed him during his final journey outside of the Church.

The difficulties encountered by a liberal movement opposed by clergy can be seen in the course of the constitutional July Monarchy, which lasted from 1830 to 1848. Conservative politicians gained control of the government, maintained the political exclusion of newly mobilizing sectors of the population, and attempted to insulate themselves from popular pressure, in part by relying upon reinforced ties with the Catholic Church. Like the regime in Belgium, the French constitutional monarchy in 1830 was initially liberal but not very democratic. The Chamber of Deputies wielded more power than it had under the preceding, restored Bourbon monarchy

<sup>5</sup> On various movements within the Catholic Church in France, see Reardon (1975).

<sup>6</sup> "*Mirari Vos*: Encyclical of Pope Gregory XVI on Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism," 15 August 1832, paragraph 8. "*Singulari nos*" of 1834 continued the papal denunciation of the Lamennaisian doctrine.

(1815–1830). Even as the chamber acclaimed the new king, Louis Philippe of Orleans, they amended the Charter of 1814 to limit royal power: the king henceforth was required to share law-making authority with the chamber and no longer had the right to exercise emergency authority. Louis Philippe appointed several ministers whom he disliked and rarely opposed leading figures (Collingham 1988, 148–49). All of the ministries of the July Monarchy won majority support in the Chamber of Deputies. Political actors expected elections to take place with a degree of regularity into the indefinite future—a central feature of a liberal regime—and, in fact, elections were held about every three years.

The undemocratic aspects of the regime could be seen in the narrowness of what Robert Dahl labels participation (1971). In 1831 only 166,583 men paid the 200 francs per year in property taxes that qualified them for the franchise (2.8% of men over 21 or 0.5% of the population). In the early 1830s few liberals expressed any strong support for extending the franchise; in fact, many liberals sought to stifle the emerging Republican and democratic movements (McPhee 1992, 53). As incomes increased over time, the ranks of the enfranchised grew only marginally—to 240,983 (0.7% of the population) by the elections of 1846.<sup>7</sup> The regime also lacked some of the institutional attributes of modern democracies. The fluidity of political groups in the chamber allowed the king to influence cabinet formation; the cabinets thus formed relied on variable and narrow majorities.

The struggle between liberals who rejected political authority for the Church and conservatives who allied their cause with the Church increasingly came to define the political alignments of opposition and government under the July Monarchy. When one thinks about French conservatism, it is important to distinguish between two different groups. One group included firmly conservative Legitimists—supporters of the Bourbons—who had long been more closely tied to reactionary elements in the Church hierarchy. The other group included the Orleanists—supporters of the junior branch of the royal line—who were initially more moderate in their attitude toward the Church. Once in the government of the July Monarchy, however, the Orleanists seized the opportunity to increase their own power within a restricted electorate by appealing to the Church and its supporters. For example, the leading Orleanist in the king's cabinet, François Guizot, argued against popular sovereignty (not just a popular *franchise*, but popular *sovereignty* itself) and repeatedly attacked constitutionalism (Manent 1994, 100), thus placing himself in the broad group of European conservatives.

The Orleanist government promised to grant the Church more authority and more state resources. Guizot and his supporters made state-church relations a central topic of debate in

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<sup>7</sup> Among the many franchise figures in the literature, those cited in the text appear in Collingham (1988, 71), Cobban (1991 [1961], vol. 2, 98), and MCPhee (1992, 54).

parliament. As early as 1833 Guizot proposed an educational law that would have given priests *ex officio* seats on local boards of education, and in 1838 he called upon Catholics to support a government that maintained social order (Johnson 1963, 206). In the 1840s Guizot's government adopted proclerical measures in education, foreign, and dynastic policy. Guizot proposed to curtail the state's monopoly on the certification of teachers and recognize the rights of the Catholic Church to exercise authority in this area. In a speech to the assembly, Guizot declared that the rights of parents and of religious beliefs took precedence over those of the state (Dansette 1961 [1948], vol. 1, 240). In external relations Guizot offered to join with Austrian reactionary Prince Metternich in protecting the Catholic cantons of Switzerland against Protestant liberals in Zurich, Geneva, and Bern. As for dynastic politics, Guizot's government supported the conservative Bourbon dynasties in Spain and Naples, among the members of which Louis Philippe sought marriage partners for his sons. Guizot was not as far to the Right as many of his supporters, as is suggested by the long delays in the enactment of the new legislation on education; in this situation Guizot tacked between his supporters on one side and Adolphe Thiers and the anticlerical opposition on the other. Opponents of Guizot, such as Thiers and Victor Cousin in the Chamber, or Jules Michelet and Edgar Quinet in the Collège de France, were equally quick to use anticlericalism in the attempt to unseat the government (Furet 1992, 351 ff). The government's new policies and the opposition's opportunistic reaction reintroduced religious issues into ministerial politics and helped to replace the ill-defined and variable parliamentary groupings of the 1830s with the more enduring division of the 1840s.

The new emphasis on religious issues strengthened the conservative government's position within the narrow electorate. Conservative forces grew throughout the debate over education and as Montalembert mobilized the conservative Catholic electorate in favor of the government. With no other major topics of national debate to affect the outcome, Guizot judged 1846 a propitious year to call an election. Guizot was proven correct when the elections produced a majority for the government of about 100 deputies, the largest government majority in the life of the constitutional monarchy. Among the government's supporters were 146 deputies endorsed by Montalembert; in 1847 these deputies would provide the votes necessary to enable conservatives to thwart franchise reform (by 98 votes). As Louis Girard argues, "The July Monarchy remained without roots. To make up for this defect, it tried to unite itself with a party of social conservatives who feared the Jacobin and the revolutionary tradition" (1966, 121).

Alexis de Tocqueville argued that the refusal to extend citizenship rights more broadly helped to provoke the Revolution of 1848 which brought to an end France's first liberal experiment (1970, 1-58). Progressives offered several franchise reform proposals that failed in the chamber during the 1840s, and their final strategy—to mobilize mass support in the form of public banquets—unwittingly became the occasion for the public riots in February that quickly

brought down the regime. Ironically, its resistance to reform deprived the government of the option of responding with force, since the government's main armed support came from the National Guard and the middle-class men it comprised. These men were socially conservative but excluded from the franchise by the high tax requirement, according to Tocqueville. Thus, an enfranchised National Guard could have protected a government against urban riots in early February; or the National Guard could have imposed a liberal regency after Louis Philippe's abdication in late February. If the reforms had been made in time and at least a modest fraction of the middle classes enfranchised, the constitutional monarchy could have continued through 1848.

This explicitly counterfactual argument of Tocqueville's should not be taken too far. Nondemocratic governments have often survived with the implicit support of middle-class groups that are formally excluded from participation, although it may be true that long-term survival can be made more difficult by formal exclusion. Tocqueville's argument assumes that progressive regimes are more stable than conservative ones, at least in some circumstances. Other conservative regimes in France and elsewhere in Europe engineered suffrage extensions that did not undermine their power, but these did not take place until after 1848. Whatever one makes of the possibilities for progressive suffrage reform in France before 1848, key problems for the survival of the regime lay in the government's decision to develop clerical rather than more democratic support. As Gordon Wright observes, "It is tempting to conclude that no other regime in modern French history missed so good an opportunity to perpetuate itself as a durable system" (1987 [1960]). The failure of the constitutional monarchy either to survive on its own terms or to develop more democratic institutions illustrates the consequences of an influential, antiliberal clergy aligned with conservative political leaders.

The intermediate outcome in France can also be seen from the fact that the early defeat of liberal reform was followed by an authoritarian dictatorship in 1851 and, starting in the 1870s, a liberal regime and an electorally strong liberal party. In the context of mass political participation, members of the clergy opposed the liberals and unwittingly provoked the formation of new autonomous institutions that provided critical organizational resources and key votes for a liberal movement. While there were many causes of the eventual success of the Third Republic and the Radical-Republican party, a full account must also include the interaction of clergy, provincial middle classes, and peasants.

French liberals generally did not use the 'liberal' label to describe their position, but they fit within the threefold definition. After the failure of the attempt to sustain a constitutional form of monarchy and the equally conspicuous failure of the unconstitutional plebiscitarian dictatorship of Louis Napoleon, French liberals came to support the idea of creating a republic. The idea of a republic combined constitutionalism with the electoral legitimacy of a plebiscitarian system while

sacrificing the old liberal hope for a moderating influence from a monarch. Adolphe Thiers is a figure who exemplifies the transformation of liberals from supporters of constitutional monarchy into Republicans.<sup>8</sup> For all of Thiers's antipathy toward Louis Philippe's favorite ministers, he had been a committed supporter of the constitutional monarchy. Thiers's speech given in 1864 as a member of the minority opposition in the assembly of the Second Empire is seen as a key moment in development of liberal support for a republican system. Thiers and other 'new' Republicans served as the main opposition to Louis Napoleon, especially after 1860. Republican and radical programs built on the essential features of nineteenth-century liberalism.<sup>9</sup> Republicans and radicals shared the key liberal principle of constitutionalism, the progressive desire to distinguish between church and state, and respect for private property. Republicans and radicals went further than many other nineteenth-century liberals in their attention to social inequality. Nevertheless, policy proposals to ameliorate inequality, even from radicals, were aimed towards the gradual evolution of society with varying degrees of state intervention.

The survival of liberal institutions seemed to be a very open question in the 1870s, not least because conservatives predominated in the early assemblies (Berstein and Berstein 1987). As J. Samuel Valenzuela writes, the 'democratic consolidation' in France took decades to complete (1992, 70). The first elections, held in February of 1871, centered on the issue of peace or continued war with Prussia; conservative local notables campaigning to end the war won the majority of seats. The Assembly did choose a leader of the opposition under Louis Napoleon, Adolphe Thiers, to lead the government, but conservatives forced him out when they could do without him in 1873. Many conservatives viewed the emerging Republican institutions as a temporary expedient until conflicts between the royal pretenders and the intransigence of the senior pretender could be resolved, if by no other means than the natural death of the elderly Comte de Chambord. The presidency of the conservative Count MacMahon, the so-called government of Moral Order (1873–1879), was intended to be a brief holding regime, not, as it turned out, the years in which the Republic was given a constitutional foundation.

Beneath the surface of this apparent conservative predominance, the Republican movement was strongly influenced by the structure of political opportunity (Tarrow 1994, 85 ff,

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<sup>8</sup> For a description of Thiers consonant with this view, see Agulhon (1993, 240).

<sup>9</sup> The Republican tradition was broad enough to leave open the question of exactly how fully liberal each aspect of the tradition was. However, even writers who do not formally classify Republicans as liberals also emphasize the links between them:

En 1875, une constitution d'essence libérale par son équilibre des pouvoirs, par son souci de freiner les impulsions du suffrage universel, est léguée à la France républicaine qui jusque-là avait des traditions bien différentes. Elle s'en accommodera et les pouvoirs républicains habiteront cette constitution avec quelques aménagements intérieurs jusqu'à la Seconde Guerre mondiale (Jardin 1985, 416).

232, fn. 13). Even before the 1870s, the political opening of the first direct election of a president under male suffrage in 1848 had made possible a national Republican organization with a central committee in Paris and a total of 353 branches in 62 of France's 86 departments (Aminzade 1993, 30–31). During the subsequent period of repression, under Louis Napoleon, the nascent Republican movement had been organized into *chambrées* (village or drinking societies), educational, and other implicitly political organizations. Beginning in the 1860s, Republicans developed a culture of opposition to the empire, mainly by organizing “in opposition to the power and privilege of the counterrevolutionary Church—its exemption from laws restricting free association, its immunity from press censorship, [and] its decisive control over education and public assistance” (Auspitz 1982, 18). Once the repression ended in the 1870s, the Republican movement became mobilized in explicitly political ways. Educational societies offered direct support to Republican candidates, and Republicans also garnered support from other middle-class social organizations such as the Masonic lodges. As secret societies, the Masonic lodges were repeatedly attacked by the Church. By the 1870s Masonic lodges came to serve as a training ground for Republican politicians, often providing key social networks for urban middle-class men with political ambitions.

Educational societies flourished in the 1860s and 1870s. The most important educational society, Jean Macé's Ligue de l'Enseignement, “gathered, sustained, and in some measure reconciled the nation's secular democrats....it helped these men to prevail” (Auspitz 1982, 165). Since the mid-1860s, members of the league had actively sought to destroy the Church-controlled educational system and create a unified national identity through a fully secular system of primary education. The league itself was born out of opposition to the Falloux law of 1850, which had given control over primary education to the clergy. Begun in the Alsace region, which was predominately Catholic, the league's first members were Protestants. During the 1870s under MacMahon's presidency, members of the league along with Republicans were targeted for harassment by prefects, police, and government informers (Auspitz 1982, 123–60). Thus, the natural affinity based on secularizing goals shared by the Republicans and members of the League was solidified in the first years of the Third Republic through their common interest in defeating conservatives. By 1885 Jean Macé had been elected senator, and one-third of the Chamber of Deputies were members of the Ligue. Support for Republicans among members of the Ligue de l'Enseignement centered on the issue of anticlericalism and educational reform.

Electoral support for Republicans grew in the critical decade of the 1870s. In the last elections under the Empire, in 1869, Republicans won in urban areas only (Nord 1995a, 45). However, anticlericalism had historical roots in the countryside due to the Church's involvement in land tenure and the rural economy. The Church had been a more substantial landholder in France than in Belgium (Pounds 1990, 229). Belgian landholding differed in that feudal obligations

under the old regime had declined even further than in France, and the proportion of the land held by the clergy was smaller (Mitward and Saul 1973, 47–53, 60). As a result, there was more animosity toward the Church in France, more land expropriated and sold, and more potential for rural anticlericalism to play a role at critical moments in the nineteenth century.

The 1876 election gave Republicans a majority in the assembly, and the question of whether France should return to a monarchy or preserve a Republican form of government was put to the voters decisively in the next year when, in the so-called Crisis of 16 May, President MacMahon appointed a conservative government without support from a majority of deputies, dissolved the assembly, and called new elections. Anticlerical peasants decided overwhelmingly in favor of a republic. In other words, once the theme of 'war versus peace' receded, anticlerical peasant support for conservative local notables evaporated. When issues centered on the question of regime type (monarchy versus republic), anticlerical peasants supported the party that opposed the authority of the Church. Combined with middle-class social movements, these anticlerical peasants made possible an enduring Republican majority in the assembly.

Peasant support for Republicans after 1877 cannot be attributed to narrow economic interests, but it has been interpreted as relating to the interaction of broadly conceived peasant economic interests and the prereform institutions of clerical authority. Regarding narrow economic interests, despite the increasing economic pressure that peasants faced they continued to support Republicans throughout the 1880s. During this time Republicans offered only mixed support for tariff protection and passed legislation that protected industry rather than agriculture. Nevertheless, peasants supported Republicans against conservative, proclerical candidates who promised full tariff protection.

In the 1870s France was the first country to make a transition to a broad-suffrage electoral democracy in which the full extension of liberal institutions was uncertain. The other broad-suffrage countries in Europe during the 1870s had either previously experienced continuous elite contestation within liberal institutions or remained under strongly authoritarian regimes (as we shall see in the cases of Switzerland and Germany, respectively). Consolidation of the post-transitional system in France relied upon the continued activity of a set of organizations that had initially emerged under the authoritarian regime. What made the French transition and consolidation possible, according to this line of argument,

is the prior elaboration, while dictatorship is still in place, of a counter-elite anchored in autonomous institutions and buoyed by an alternative political culture. The more articulated and coherent that culture and the institutional frame on which it rests, the more powerful the thrust toward democratization and, in the end, the more likely the endurance of a democratic transition (Nord 1995b, 9).



Freemasonry, educational institutions, the Paris chamber of commerce, Protestant and Jewish consistories, and especially educational societies were these essential autonomous institutions. They fit within the broad liberal movement because of a shared anticlericalism regarding the authority of Catholic clergy. Support from the urban middle classes and workers, as well as continued support from anticlerical peasants, succeeded in holding the liberal regime together through quasi-electoral challenges from the Right such as the Boulanger Affair in 1889. Republicans adopted school reforms in the 1880s that effectively eliminated Church control over primary public education, and in 1905 Republicans passed formal legislation separating church and state.

Although the Third Republic lasted through the First World War and the interwar years of economic growth and depression, it may still be considered an intermediate outcome with respect to the strength of the liberal regime. One must note that the Dreyfus Affair roiled the political scene from 1894 onwards; the persecution of a Jewish officer on false charges of espionage for the German army may be seen as an attempt, albeit an ultimately unsuccessful one, on the part of the Catholic Church and the Army's High Command to exercise institutional authority over citizenship and office-holding in the state. Strength is a relative concept, and it is certainly important that an anticonstitutional opposition persisted among the royal pretenders and within sectors of the army, the aristocracy, and elements in the Church. Once the Third Republic fell in 1940, the Vichy regime quickly came together and returned power both to the military and to socially conservative, proclerical political groups (Paxton 1982 [1972])—the same groups excluded by a Republican coalition that included the urban middle classes and anticlerical peasants.

### **Coopted Defeat in Germany**

Although there were periods of some electoral strength for German liberal parties, for the most part liberal parties in Germany lost to conservatives. Similarly, neither the individual regimes in the separate German states nor the regime of the unified Germany that began in 1871 can be termed liberal, given the continuing predominance of the executive, the weakness of the legislature, and the nonconstitutional exercise of government power. Even so, these party and regime defeats could be described as coopted ones, for conservative governments at times adopted economic and social policies advocated by German liberals. In addition, and in the face of their continuing weakness and a strong executive, many German liberals supported conservative measures, at least as a way-station to a fully liberal system.

While there were many causes of the coopted defeat in Germany, it is helpful to examine the strongly negative response of the clergy to proposed liberal reforms and clerical successes in

enrolling provincial middle classes and peasants in their view. When a church was more thoroughly subordinated to the old regime, as was the case for many established Protestant churches, the aspirations of clergy could be controlled largely by positive and negative rewards from the state. For example, by 1815 the Protestant churches in the most powerful German state, Prussia, had been reduced to a bureaucratic arm of the state, and the clergy were effectively forced to oppose liberal reform of the state. The absence of a separate clerical order and the clergy's clear submission in a system of aristocratic patronage, along with the fact that Protestant kings and princes served as the highest bishop in their territories, offered vast administrative power over churches to German territorial rulers (Krieger 1972 [1957], 11; Kocka 1993, 28). Potentially liberal movements within the Protestant churches were crushed from above, allowing the churches to act as firm defenders of the status quo.

Liberal tendencies among Catholic clergy in Germany were pushed aside under the force of persistent attacks that liberals themselves supported. German liberals generally favored early conservative attacks on Catholic clerics in German states, sponsored a splinter group in the 1840s that directly challenged the authority of the pope, and pushed for a state-led cultural struggle against Catholicism in the expanded German state after 1870. Catholic clergy responded in the following ways: they sought to make peace with conservative opponents and then helped to mobilize the Catholic electorate within a strong Catholic party; outside of the electoral arena *per se*, but arguably equally importantly, they encouraged antiliberal movements in the realm of popular religious practice. Taken together, both Protestant and Catholic clergy can be seen as having offered important opposition to liberal reform.

The fate of liberalizing tendencies amongst the clergy reveals the impact of the strong ties between churches and states in Germany, which is similar to that seen in the case of the Mennaisian movement in France. However, the institution that guided German Protestant clergy to follow an antiliberal line was not a higher religious authority (as it was in France) but the state itself. In 1815 many clergy held rationalist and Enlightenment theological views that were quite compatible with the liberal emphases on status-equality and individualism. "A rational and just society," according to the prevalent view, "should be based on achievement and merit, and denied the innate superiority of any classes or persons" (Bigler 1972, 50). Even at the highest levels, the ideas of leading church administrators fit with a liberal accommodation of religious differences. For example, religious affairs in the Prussian state before 1840 were dominated by Baron Karl von Altenstein, who as Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Education sought unity within the Prussian state church by tolerating divergent tendencies within it. Altenstein himself favored the Right Hegelian approach, yet he opposed the appointment of extremist conservatives (such as Otto von Gerlach) and stalled the drive to force a liberal theologian

(Friedrich Schleiermacher) from office. But the prevalence of Enlightenment ideas was not enough to turn the Protestant church into an ally of liberal reform.

A conservative movement acquired the support of the king and transformed Prussia's Protestant clerics into effective opponents of all forms of liberalism. The conservatives' leading organizer, Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, was determined "to make religion an instrument of reaction," purge the church of the influences of rationalism, and root out all possible forms of opposition to the will of the king. At least four journals that had previously been dedicated to religious issues now "bent every effort to convince the evangelical clergy that the political turmoil was essentially over religion...[and] to abandon their own rivalries and support the conservative cause" (Shanahan 1954, 80, 201). Hengstenberg, as a professor and widely read journalist, came to dominate the formation of religious policy and changed the spirit of tolerance within the Prussian church. The 1840 appointment of a Hengstenberg sympathizer, Johann Albrecht Friedrich Eichhorn, as Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Education signalled the start of transition away from Altenstein's latitudinarian toleration: Eichhorn announced that the government would no longer remain neutral in theological controversies and that the government "definitely favored those clergymen who identified themselves with its struggle against the political opposition." By the early 1840s the movement had achieved a key goal: "rationalism and Hegelianism in the theological faculties no longer presented serious threats to the Hengstenberg faction's dominant influence over the clergy" (Bigler 1972, 118–19).

Church officials used the administrative power to discipline lower clergy who threatened the new conservative spirit. For example, rationalist Pastor F.W. Sintenis was out of step with the new conservatives. He condemned as idolatrous the public exhibition of a picture of Jesus and an accompanying verse commending the picture as a source of inspiration for intercessory prayer. According to pastors like Sintenis, Hengstenberg and his followers were *Finsterlinge* (Sons of Darkness), or *Dunkelmänner* (Men of Darkness). Sintenis was quickly censured for his views. In sum, the pietist movement purged the state church of rationalist influence and made it into a unified force against liberalism in the 1830s and 1840s.

The Prussian state church absorbed into its own structure the conservative Pietist movement and thereby reinforced conservative political and social forces; similar developments can be seen in the other predominantly Protestant states. German Pietism, much like religious movements elsewhere in northern Europe and Britain, called for religious revival and renewed spirituality, but in Germany it was a movement based in the countryside that quickly became linked to aristocratic and state patronage (Fulbrook 1983). Unlike dissenting movements in Britain, Pietism did not link up with the defense of Enlightenment values such as individualism. Nor did Pietism lead to the formation of a separate religious organization; it was instead incorporated into the existing state church as an ideological justification. The Prussian state church rewarded

conservative religious leaders who sought to turn the Protestant churches into agents of antiliberalism. Leading dissidents in the church were disciplined and eventually forced outside the established religious institutions.

Among Catholics, ultramontanism can be seen not so much as a continuation of age-old tradition but as a modern conservative phenomenon (Blackbourn 1991, 779 ff). Ultramontanism became an important stream in the German Church in the 1830s and 1840s and gained strength under Pope Pius IX (1846–78). The orientation to Rome was novel because, by the end of the eighteenth century most national Catholic Churches were effectively controlled by territorial rulers rather than the pope. Ultramontanism's modern character can also be seen in its reciprocal relationship with institutional secularization: a reduction in state control of ecclesiastical matters gave Rome more authority over the various national hierarchies, and the centralized hierarchy in Rome could more effectively assert its autonomy vis-à-vis states. Ultramontanism also employed modern means of communication and organization, as we shall see below.

One great accomplishment of ultramontanism was the harnessing of mass religiosity on behalf of the Church's political interests. An important example of the way in which the Church's exercise of political power drew upon and transformed religious practice can be seen in the evolution of pilgrimages (Schieder 1979 [1974]).<sup>10</sup> Prior to the onset of liberal reform, pilgrimages did not play a major role in the political strategy of the Catholic Church. Pilgrimages were predominantly local and focused on local manifestations of religious magic. In organizational terms, they were typically presided over by local Catholic lay brotherhoods. Pilgrimages changed in the early nineteenth century, however. They became translocal in character, as pilgrims traveled long distances for several days at a time. Pilgrimage organization acquired a new form, with responsibility taken away from local lay associations and assumed by the Church itself. Even within the Church organization there were changes, as diocesan authorities took on greater responsibilities. Massive publicity campaigns and planning characterized the organizing efforts.

One should not exaggerate the distinction between traditional and modern pilgrimages; nevertheless, one can still see the truth in the description of the new German pilgrimages as 'pilgrimages from above.' It is certainly significant that pilgrimages occurred where state and religious authorities were most at odds, rather than simply wherever Catholics were numerous. The three most important pilgrimages—to Trier, Kevelaer, and the septennial display at Aachen—took place in the Rhineland, a confessionally mixed area ruled by a Protestant monarch, rather than in more strongly Catholic areas with Catholic territorial rulers, such as Bavaria or Austria. Few Catholics outside of the Rhineland made the pilgrimages: 78 percent of the pilgrims to the

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Anderson (1995) criticizes Schieder for relying too heavily on a causal model in which all things happened at the behest of the clergy, but it remains clear that the outcome benefited Catholic clergy in their complex relationship with the state.

Holy Coat at Trier lived in the diocese of Trier, and most of the rest came from elsewhere in the Rhineland. Five hundred thousand pilgrims saw the relic at Trier during seven weeks in the fall of 1844, making this pilgrimage the largest of all similar church-organized displays of the first half of the nineteenth century in Germany (calculated from Schieder 1979 [1974], 68).

A countermovement against the new ultramontane conservatism, the so-called German-Catholic Church, developed within Catholicism, forging links with leading liberals. An excommunicated priest, Johannes Ronge, denounced the exhibition of the Holy Coat at Trier in a letter to the local bishop in October of 1844. Ronge called for the formation of a new and independent church, free of papal control. Ronge and his fellow German-Catholics applied rationalist and Enlightenment principles to oppose celibacy, Latin mass, auricular confession, and other elements of traditional Catholicism. German patriotism provided a constant subtheme of German-Catholic organizing, as the German-Catholic movement advocated a subordination of the new German-Catholic Church to a unified and liberal German state. The movement conformed with other liberal religious movements in Europe in terms of lay congregational control and strong ties to liberal leaders.

Unfortunately for German liberals, the German-Catholic movement did not incorporate powerful clerics. We have seen that the founder was a former priest at odds with Rome and the ultramontanism of the upper German hierarchy. Other leaders and the leaders of many German-Catholic congregations were lay local elites. The predominance of lay leaders can be seen in the Leipzig council that was called by the new congregations to develop a common constitution for the movement: "The deputies were largely members of the professional class, middle-class tradespeople, and representatives of the Roman Catholic priesthood who had renounced their vows" (Holden 1954, 140). Along with its middle-class leadership, the movement sought to develop more participatory and democratic governance of religious institutions. The deputies agreed without debate on a presbyterian organizational form and congregational rule; future meetings were planned to consist of congregational representatives of whom no more than one-third could be priests.

The German-Catholic movement achieved the greatest of its meager results "[i]n regions where Catholics constituted the minority in a mixed population or where the Roman Catholic Church failed to receive the support of the secular authorities" (Holden 1954, 383). Although most of the early congregations were from Saxony, eventually more than half of the congregations were located in Prussia. The Breslau congregation in Prussia was always the largest: some 1,000 people signed a membership declaration during the congregation's founding in January and February of 1845, and over 8,000 belonged by 1847. Breslau offered favorable circumstances as Prussia's second largest city and as the center of Silesian learning, industry, and government. In addition, the hostility of the Prussian government to Roman

Catholicism undermined the official church hierarchy, giving a dissenting movement a greater chance to break away. Silesia was also an ethnically and denominationally mixed province, both of which characteristics were favorable to a dissenting movement. By contrast, there were still only seven German-Catholic congregations in Catholic Baden by 1847, even though the movement enjoyed the sympathy of many Badenese liberals who sought to use the movement as a opportunity to reopen political questions.

It is indicative of the character of the German liberal movement that the modestly sized religious opposition groups during the 1840s helped the liberal movement acquire broader support than it had previously enjoyed. Liberal Arnold Ruge "welcomed the dissenting movements...as a means by which one of the major deficiencies of German liberalism, the lack of communication between its leadership and the masses, could be remedied." Similarly, Gustav von Struve wrote that "German-Catholicism had managed to accomplish more in a matter of months than political liberalism had accomplished since the Wars of Liberation." Gervinus admired the "almost instinctive cooperation of the great masses' which German-Catholicism had earned" (Holden 1954, 178-80). The liberal movement in the 1840s, writes Leonard Krieger, "underwent an expansion to include for the first time organizations with intellectual leadership, a mass base, and a more than local scope. From around 1844 both the German-Catholic sects and the free church movement of the Protestant Friends of Light began to find adherents numbering in the thousands among the burgher and more particularly petty burgher groups and to develop a consciousness of the liberal political implications in their clerical dissent" (1972 [1957]). The 70,000 members of the German-Catholic Church constituted perhaps the third largest single organization in the liberal movement overall.<sup>11</sup>

Yet the institutions of religious opposition were exceptionally weak organizations. Taking age as one proxy for organizational strength, the two dissent movements in Germany were each less than ten years old when the Revolution of 1848 occurred. Taking size as a proxy for strength, religious dissent encompassed tiny fractions of the population: the just 95,000 participants in Protestant dissent and German-Catholicism in all of Germany hardly compares to the populations of the states where these religious groups were most active—15.5 million people in Prussia and 1.8 million people in Saxony (population data from Flora 1983, 34). As for material resources, neither movement controlled property that was fully separate from the established Protestant church. Most congregations of the Friends of Light ceased their meetings when they

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<sup>11</sup> Two other sets of organizations (both of a quasipolitical recreational and cultural nature) within the broad liberal movement were larger: membership in athletic societies is estimated at around 85,000, and membership of the choral societies is estimated to have been at least 100,000 (Langewiesche 1988a, 37). A third set of organizations, student unions, also formed a training ground for future liberal and national leaders.

were banned in 1845, and only a few movement radicals then separated from the church to form free religious communities; German-Catholics left their parent church, but then they depended on the established Protestant churches for places to worship. In sum, the movements of religious dissent in the 1840s offered German liberals remarkably little.

The churches remained dominant even as they adopted new tactics. Almost all of the 6,000 Protestant clergy in Prussia accepted the conservative direction, while perhaps a few dozen Protestant clerics took part in the free church movement linked to liberals.<sup>12</sup> The Protestant Right, “(r)eligiously determined by the circle of Pomeranian pietists,” and the Catholic collective movement each demonstrated their ability to attract a mass following in 1848 (Stadelman 1975 [1948], 97). Conservative Protestant clerics addressed the public directly. Pastors preached against revolution in local pulpits, organized local conservative societies, and helped support three inexpensive conservative journals aimed at a mass public. Conservative clerical organizing was rewarded with a set of “grass roots advocates more numerous and more zealous than those serving the other parties” (Shanahan 1954, 202). The ultramontanist movement within the Catholic Church created the largest mass movement in the German states before the Revolution of 1848. To take one measure, the organized display of sacred relics attracted more visitors than any other public event of the period. Whereas just 25,000 people attended the most important gathering of the liberal movement (the Hambacher Fest of 1832), we have seen that fully 500,000 people made the pilgrimage to Trier. By 1848 the liberals had 95,000 religiously mobilized sympathizers at most; and these were located almost exclusively in a few urban areas where liberals were already strong.

The legacy of liberal failures to capture the established Protestant church was an enduring limit to the liberal ability to draw upon Protestantism. Liberals could draw on Protestantism as a cultural resource and claim to speak on behalf of Protestant values, but the vast preponderance of clergy did not reciprocate. Instead, the vast resources of the established church were turned against the liberal movement, both within the church and in politics *per se*. The transition to a constitutional system that most German liberals hoped for in 1848 did not take place; and, while the durability of the authoritarian regime had many causes, the overwhelmingly negative response of clergy to the possibility of liberal reform certainly contributed to this outcome.

Liberal failures to develop organizational links with the Catholic Church contributed to the sustained Catholic hostility to liberal reform. On the one side, the few German-Catholics who were linked to the liberal movement paled in comparison to the vast majority of loyal Catholics, while on

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<sup>12</sup> An exact figure does not appear in the literature; the estimate provided is based on Bigler (1972, 187–230) and Holden (1954). The figure for the total Protestant clergy is supplied by Bigler (1972, x).

the other, Catholic leaders—not without reason—saw the encouragement and support that liberals offered to the break-away faction of German-Catholics as a direct attack on the Church. In response to such attacks, the Catholic Church encouraged mass religious revival, and secular political organizers helped to construct a party of religious defense, the Center Party. There was modest Catholic support for liberal candidates and positions in the elections of the 1860s; this cannot be ignored. But such support declined to nearly negligible levels in the 1870s and was replaced with solid Catholic support for Center Party candidates. In the 1870s and thereafter the deepening of the opposition between liberals and Catholics contributed to the durability of the authoritarian regime and the continuing inability of liberals to win constitutional concessions.

Liberals not only failed to develop ties with Catholic clergy, they also aligned themselves with a new, state-led attack on the privileges of the Catholic Church, the *Kulturkampf*. The Prussian- and Protestant-dominated government in the newly unified German Empire after 1870 sought to destroy the largely Catholic Center Party and to eliminate any perceived institutional support for disloyalty to the new Germany such as that offered by the Church; for their part, liberals continued to view the Catholic Church as a dangerously reactionary force. The *Kulturkampf* was “in many ways the most significant expression of liberalism’s alliance with the Bismarckian state” (Sheehan 1978, 135). The government offered support to Catholic teachers in state schools who rejected Pius IX’s 1870 dogma of papal infallibility; it abolished the Catholic department in the Prussian Ministry of Religion in July of 1871 and dissolved the Jesuit order in June of 1872. The Falk Laws of 1873 placed the Church under close state control and imposed government supervision over Catholic education, including education for the priesthood. In 1875 the government blocked the publication of a papal encyclical and passed laws to punish clergy who refused to abide by the earlier legislation; many bishops and priests went into exile rather than submit to the new order.

Modest victories over the Catholic Church in the realm of institutional secularization paled in comparison to the political failure. The *Kulturkampf* had effects that were the reverse of what liberals preferred, for it increased their dependence on the authoritarian government and “helped to consolidate political Catholicism” (Blackbourn 1987, 160). The *Kulturkampf* accelerated a preexisting trend of differentiation within the Catholic communities, namely, the differentiation of two roles: the political representation of the Catholic community in national politics and the exercise of clerical authority over religious matters (Anderson 1995). Even as Center Party candidates received the implicit and explicit aid of the church, the party made political calculations without direction from clergy. This, too, could be termed secularization, for the church lost direct control of its representation in national politics to the hands of professional, nonclerical party leaders. Yet it was not the form of secularization that liberals or, for that matter, Bismarck had intended.



The *Kulturkampf* was an equally great failure in encouraging liberal or Enlightenment forms of religiosity among the Catholic population. It is not coincidental that the attack on Catholicism was matched by a growth in Marian visions. Foremost among all of the many factors at work encouraging the Marian visions and the outburst of new forms of popular religiosity, especially in their timing and their ability to capture the imagination on a mass scale, was the assertion of anticlerical liberalism and the growth of state power (Blackbourn 1994 [1993]). The anti-Catholic policies—fully supported by most liberals—engendered a backlash that came in the form of quasipolitical, popular religious movements, such as the pilgrimages to Marpingen. In religion, as in politics, a powerful effect of the *Kulturkampf* was to encourage religious revival on a mass scale. Any account of German political development must therefore recognize that the nineteenth century simultaneously saw the creation of secular institutions of political mobilization, vibrant religious revival partially under clerical control, and the emergence of a religious political party increasingly autonomous from the Catholic Church. Such an apparently contradictory pattern makes sense only in light of liberal support for various measures of secularization and the strongly negative reaction of the clergy.

### Liberal Supremacy in Switzerland

Switzerland's liberals enjoyed a nearly unbroken string of successes in the nineteenth century, both with respect to the electoral strength of liberal parties and with respect to the type of political regime. Liberals began to gain control of governments in the largest cantons of Switzerland in 1829–31 and extended this predominance to the federal level in 1848. The Radical party, Switzerland's mainstream liberal party, received more votes than any other party in every legislative election from 1848 to 1917. This level of popular support, combined with a majority representation electoral system, gave the Radicals an outright majority of the seats in the national legislature in 17 of the 23 elections between 1848 and 1914 (and never less than 42 percent of the seats) (Gruner 1978, vol. 3, 398, 470–79). In Switzerland's collegial executive, the seven-member Federal Council, all seven seats went to liberals in councils formed between 1848 and 1891; six liberals and just one conservative sat on the council from 1891 to 1914.<sup>13</sup> As for

<sup>13</sup> Party representation in the Federal Council was as follows:

1848–91	7 Liberal	
1891	6 Liberal, 1 Conservative	
1919	5 Liberal, 2 Conservative	
1929	4 Liberal, 2 Conservative, 1 Peasant	
1943	3 Liberal, 2 Conservative, 1 Peasant, 1 Socialist	
1953	4 Liberal, 2 Conservative, 1 Peasant	
1954	3 Liberal, 3 Conservative, 1 Peasant	
1959	2 Liberal, 2 Conservative, 1 Peasant, 2 Socialist	(Conrad 1970, 68).

the regime, many of the individual cantons adopted liberal constitutions around 1830, and a liberal constitution for the entire federation took effect in 1848. A series of constitutional reforms in the 1870s served to broaden the framework of 1848, expanding rights of participation and strengthening various institutions of direct democracy. Helpful for understanding this pattern is a consideration of the institutions of state and church prior to the onset of liberal reform and an examination of the clerical responses to liberal reforms.

The potential for strong Catholic opposition to liberalism and equally strong anti-Catholicism among liberals lay in the uneven secularization of Swiss religious and political institutions; this potential played out in the course of Swiss political development. When a church was not tied to political institutions that would be affected by liberal reform, as was the case for most of Switzerland's Protestant churches in the 1840s, then the clergy stood to gain, or lose little, from any reform of the political regime. (Protestant clergy exercised little extrareligious institutional authority, so liberal reform did not challenge their position.) Yet the liberal movement was predominantly Protestant and strongly anti-Catholic also, because of the interaction between the church-state institutional nexus and liberal reform. When a church exercised broad institutional authority through institutions that would be affected by liberal reform, as was the case for the Catholic Church in several Swiss cantons, then members of the clergy stood to lose a great deal. As a result, Catholic clergy actively opposed liberal reform.

Before 1848 Switzerland lacked most central institutions typical of the leading territorial states: its central administration had few powers, while the individual cantons were each virtually sovereign. In the absence of an effective central government, Protestant churches were tied to local institutions of political power in each canton. Religious movements in the Protestant world that were antiliberal in orientation elsewhere, such as Pietism in Germany, did not find support in a central state church in Switzerland. Pietist reaction to liberal advances did occur, but it was severely limited by the lack of powerful institutional support. In the predominantly Catholic cantons, the Catholic Church was similarly linked to the cantonal regimes. The Church sought to protect its interests in Switzerland mainly through the support of Catholic rulers outside of Switzerland, notably in Austria and France. Thus, neither Protestant nor Catholic churches could rely upon Swiss political institutions that were consistently antiliberal.

Switzerland's political structure lacked a territorially aggrandizing center, a large taxation bureaucracy, and a permanent military apparatus of its own. The formation of the Swiss Confederation resulted from a bottom-up process ratified and tolerated by neighboring European powers rather than a monarch's top-down military conquest. Twenty-two cantons and a weak

confederal government composed the Swiss Confederation in 1815.<sup>14</sup> The individual cantons exercised authority in all matters save foreign policy, one of the few matters assigned by the Congress of Vienna to the confederal government. Switzerland even lacked a permanent capital; the capital rotated among three important cantons—Bern, Zurich, and Luzern—every two years. The head of the government in the director-canton automatically served as president of the Confederation.

Contrary to the stereotypical notion that Switzerland was composed of very old democratic communities, most Swiss cantons were governed by urban oligarchies. Only a closed caste of urban oligarchs possessed the right to participate in most cantonal governments, a system that placed every other member of society in a subject status. A Small Council acted as the executive of a larger Great Council; offices in the Small Council were typically lifetime appointments, with vacancies filled according to the wishes of the remaining members.<sup>15</sup> Typically, a capital town provided two-thirds of the representatives to the Great Council, and the countryside the remaining one-third. In Bern, for example, the representatives of the countryside in the Great Council numbered 99 out of 299 (even these figures overstate rural representation, for rural representatives rarely took part in the debates). In the more important Small Council, rural members occupied just 2 out of 27 seats. Yet the population in the countryside outnumbered that of the sovereign towns by more than ten to one. The city of Bern—with a population of about 10,000—ruled over a cantonal population in excess of 400,000. Three other Protestant cities—Zurich, Basel, and Schaffhausen—totaled more than 30,000 residents and ruled over more than 200,000 people. Four Catholic cities—Luzern, Zug, Freiburg, and Solothurn—with together about 15,000 residents, ruled over 190,000 people.

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<sup>14</sup> The Congress of Vienna of 1814–15 returned Switzerland to the confederal system of the *ancien régime* (abandoning the relatively centralized constitutional framework that had been adopted under Napoleon's direction). The 22 cantons comprising Switzerland included two pairs of 'half-cantons,' Obwalden and Nidwalden, and Appenzell Außerrhoden and Appenzell Innerrhoden. Each half-canton received half the number of seats of a full canton in the senate. Basel was split into the half-cantons Basel-City and Basel-Country in 1833.

<sup>15</sup> The Restoration political systems in Swiss cantons with cities took two characteristic forms: patrician and guild. The end result was essentially the same, however: "It hardly matters whether this administrative class was recruited on grounds of birth, as at Berne, Lucerne, Solothurn, and Fribourg, whether it was composed of the leaders of certain privileged guilds as at Zurich and Basle.... In practice, the administrative class was everywhere drawn from the wealthiest members of the population and they invariably recruited themselves, by co-opting further members. The diversity of forms only served to mask identically similar results" (Martin 1971, 128–29). It is still possible to argue for differences: According to Dändliker, strong guilds in Zurich, Basel, and Schaffhausen slowed the concentration of political power in the hands of just a few individuals, while the aristocratic seizure of power was more thoroughgoing in Bern, Fribourg, Solothurn, and Luzern (1899, 169–70).

The form of cantonal regime that comes closer to the leading image of Swiss democracy was the so-called assembly system—which involved a yearly open-air assembly open to all adult men in the canton—but only 7 percent of the total population of the confederation lived under such a cantonal regime. Assemblies met once a year to debate and decide upon policies, offices, taxes, spending, and intercantonal politics. This regime was present in a few small cantons with predominantly rural residential patterns and Catholic populations: the two pairs of half-cantons in Unterwalden and Appenzell, along with Uri, Schwyz, and Glarus, making a combined population of just 157,000 residents in 1837 (*Comité pour une Nouvelle Histoire de la Suisse* 1983, vol. 2, 186). These cantons did not sharply distinguish between town and country in terms of political rights. Although Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden formed the historic core of Switzerland—dating back to their joint declaration of sovereignty against the Hapsburgs in 1291—in their political structure they were more the exception than the rule in a confederation the strongest members of which were dominated by urban oligarchies.

Churches were enmeshed with every canton's political structure. Established in each locality, they were essentially 'canton churches.' In the cantons that became Protestant, the early Protestant reformers had sought protection under political structures. In Zurich, the former parish priest Huldrych Zwingli led the reformation in a direction quite congenial to the secular authorities:

For some time the Great Council had, without challenging the spiritual authority of Pope and bishop, been concerning themselves with the administration of church properties and the competence and morals of the clergy and had gradually been taking over control of monasteries, prebends, and church courts and assuming the right to appoint the preachers in churches like the *Großmünster*. Zwingli not only welcomed this as a means of freeing the clergy from worldly concern and enabling them to concentrate upon their religious functions but wished to have the council assume ultimate authority for changes in church dogma and ritual as well (Craig 1988, 14).

Zwingli's ideas and practices spread rapidly through the more urbanized areas of Switzerland and were mirrored in Calvinist Geneva as well. The religious division was laid down when the Forest Cantons, along with Zug, Luzern, and Fribourg, remained Catholic. Zwingli himself died at Kappel in 1531, in a war that failed to convert the Catholic cantons.

Religious wars among the cantons solidified the integration of political and religious authority in each locality. The First War of Villmergen (1655–56) ended in victory for the Catholic cantons and preserved the sovereign rights of cantons—including the right of a canton to enforce conformity to the religion it chose for its subject territories, several of which were urban areas subject to Catholic cantonal administration. The Second War of Villmergen (1712) overturned this result: subject areas of the Catholic cantons were granted religious liberty to change their confession, and several such territories passed over to the control of the Protestant cantons.

One key result of these wars was that cantonal organization came to reflect confessional differences more closely; a second key result was that Switzerland remained divided along confessional lines with no clear central authority.

The churches and the modern Swiss state had virtually no connection. Federal institutions emerged only in the nineteenth century, well after religious institutions had formed their tight connections to cantonal governments. France's invasion in 1798 and Napoleon's imposition of a confederal political structure in 1803 established the first modern national institutions that did not provide for the creation of confederal religious institutions but, instead, were based on respect for existing religious differences. Nor was the second major step in the formation of the modern Swiss state designed to build religious institutions along with the new political institutions. The federalist forces that defeated separatist cantons in the brief civil war of 1847 aimed primarily to curtail Catholic resistance to national integration. In the constitution-writing of 1848, federalists curtailed the institutional authority of the Catholic Church and established a few secular institutions but did not impose Protestant churches on the Catholic territories. The Swiss state was thus formed without a parallel set of national religious institutions.

In the 1840s Switzerland was characterized by Protestant churches that were largely under the control of liberal cantons and a Catholic Church in other cantons that resisted integration with a strengthened national state. A military victory by the Protestant liberal cantons in a brief civil war in 1847 sealed liberal dominance over the Catholic resistance. Liberals wrote a new national constitution for Switzerland. Later, in the 1870s, the liberal coalition was deepened by the introduction of institutions of direct democracy, again, by a predominantly Protestant coalition. In both cases the liberal coalition spanned urban-rural and linguistic divides.

Protestants closed ranks behind the liberals, especially the Radical wing of the movement. The Radical Party was a broad coalition that brought together radicals of various stripes from Geneva, Vaud, and German Switzerland: "Radicalism drew its strength from the fact that it was a party without class or regional connotations. It represented big industry, commerce and agriculture all at once" (Martin 1971, 240). Confessional polarization between Protestants and Catholics disadvantaged conservative Protestants, who defended Protestant tradition against liberals seeking reform in all areas, including religion. Protestants in general, including those who had supported conservatives, united behind the liberals' attacks on the Catholic Church. Religious issues worked to the advantage of liberals once politics on the intercantonal national level became salient.

Confessionally heterogeneous cantons served as flash-points for liberal organizing, since the confrontations between cantonal administration and Catholic Church were most direct. For example, the Radical Party came to power in Aargau and dissolved the monasteries within its borders in 1841, despite armed Catholic resistance (Steinberg 1976, 31). The conservative

government in Zurich opposed the Aargau Radicals' closing of Roman Catholic cloisters. Thus, a conservative Protestant government in Zurich had come to the defense of the Catholic Church in another canton. This issue dominated the election campaign of May 1842 which brought liberals back into the Council in numbers equal to those of the conservatives. The Catholic question persisted, this time as the conservative and Catholic government in Luzern handed over its institutions of higher education to the Jesuits. In Switzerland, as elsewhere in Europe, liberals considered the Jesuit order anathema—the apotheosis of Catholic obscurantism, intrigue, and subversion. Thus, while the conservative Protestant regime in Zurich defended Catholic actions in Luzern, Zurich liberals campaigned against the readmission of Jesuits into public life. In the spring of 1845 the Great Council responded to local popular sentiment against the conservative defense of Catholicism and replaced the Government Council with liberals. The elections of May 1846 confirmed the importance of liberal anti-Catholicism for Protestants: 158 liberals and just 34 conservatives were returned (Craig 1988, 61).

The polarization between Protestant-liberal and Catholic cantons intensified in the 1840s. Volunteer groups from Protestant cantons attacked von Ebersol's Luzern in 1841; Catholic cantons formed a secret pact of mutual defense, the *Sonderbund*, which was illegal under the terms of the confederal constitution; radical liberals took control of the government in several Protestant cantons, giving radicals an absolute majority in the confederal Diet in the spring of 1847. In October the Diet voted to dissolve the *Sonderbund* by force, and the federal forces attacked while the *Sonderbund* cantons were still organizing their military defense. By the end of November—and before neighboring Catholic monarchs could intervene against the federal government—federal forces entered Luzern and compelled the surrender of the Catholic cantons.<sup>16</sup>

Liberals took command of the new Switzerland. The new federal constitution of 1848 elevated the nation over the separate cantons and restricted cantonal sovereignty by means of a strengthened federal authority. The federal government for the first time included a mechanism for representing individual citizens in national government. The National Council (*Nationalrat*) offered one representative for every 20,000 Swiss citizens. In a blow to the Catholic Church, the constitution outlawed the Jesuit Order.

Catholic clergy within Switzerland responded to liberal attacks differently from their counterparts in Germany, in part because close ties between the clergy and the government in the most important Catholic canton, Luzern, prevented clergy from sponsoring new, partisan organizing efforts and discouraged their active cultivation of antiliberal forms of mass religiosity. The constitution maintained the territorial integrity of all of the cantons and did not otherwise

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<sup>16</sup> This paragraph is based on Steinberg (1976, 31–33).

impose Protestantism on the Catholic cantons. Deference to the separate rights of the cantons was institutionalized in the Council of States (*Ständerat*), which included two representatives for each canton (with one for each half-canton). As in the United States' system, the concurrence of the Council of States and the National Council was required for the passage of legislation.

The main issue in Swiss politics immediately after 1848, the building of a railway system, did not disturb the predominance of liberals or the regional strength of the Catholic Church. By 1852 the federal Assembly decided to hand over the construction of the railway system to private enterprise, at least partly because the costs of building the network exceeded the resources available to the federal government. Planning of the rail lines ignited political conflict among the various cantons, not based on religion or language but over the regional advantages to be gained from rail construction. "What all these disputes ultimately boiled down to was the rivalry between two towns, Berne and Zurich, and between the radical views on one hand and the moderate views on the other" (Martin 1971, 234). These battles abated in the early 1860s as the system neared completion.

The radical wing of the liberal movement came to dominate the liberal movement and the political system as a whole in the 1860s and 1870s. Although the Constitution of 1848 had envisioned adult male suffrage, the practice of the next 20 years often disenfranchised many potential voters, especially workers who changed their residence (Gruner 1978, vol. 1a, 94–155). The radicals sought to use the issue of anticlericalism to divide forces opposed to its democratic reforms. In 1866 an alliance of French-speakers and Catholics defeated a referendum on a constitutional reform that would have permitted residents from other cantons to vote in cantonal and communal affairs. The assembly rejected radical plans to transform the half-cantons into full cantons, introduce the popular veto and referendum, directly elect the Federal Council, set term limits on Federal Councillors, and unify business and penal codes (Martin 1971, 234). By 1869 there had been several democratic revisions of the cantonal constitution of Zurich (initiative, referendum, and the popular election of the government and State councillors), which were soon followed by similar reforms in Thurgau, Bern, Solothurn, Luzern, and Aargau. A second attempt at a national constitutional revision (unifying the law and the army) failed in 1872, again as a result of the alliance between French-speakers and Catholics. A third and final attempt to introduce democratic reforms in the constitution succeeded in 1874, by modifying the centralizing measures and strengthening the anticlerical aspects of the revision. As a result, the reform plan passed with only the Catholics opposed. The Radical party thus split the alliance of French-speakers and Catholics that had stalled reform efforts in 1866 and 1872 (Martin 1971, 236–7).

The issue that held together the radical coalition in 1874 was the struggle to curtail the institutional authority of the Catholic Church. In fact, each of the three attempts to modify the constitution followed moves by the Catholic Church. The Syllabus of Errors in 1864 provoked

great response in Protestant Switzerland, including the first reform attempt. The claim of papal infallibility in 1870, too, caused a strong response, including the second reform attempt. The most direct provocations came in 1873 when the Pope appointed a bishop in Basel and a vicar in Geneva, finally driving a wedge between francophone and Catholic resistance to Swiss centralization and provoking the successful formation of a broadly anticlerical coalition.

### Conclusion

Liberal institutions can be seen as the product of struggles among elites seeking to establish and defend the autonomy of institutions at the intersection of churches and states. In this perspective, the religious dimension of liberal reform provided an important set of motivations both for liberals themselves and for other sets of elites with the power to shape political outcomes. As we have seen, the motivations of key actors were not identical across varied national settings but instead varied according to pre-reform institutional arrangements. In particular, church-state relations prior to the onset of various liberal reforms conditioned the responses of clergy to emerging liberal parties. When a church's institutional authority was compromised under the old regime, as it was in Belgium, the clergy supported liberal reform. When a church's institutional authority and the state's institutional authority reinforced each other, as they did in France, the clergy opposed liberal reform. When a church was subordinated to the old regime, as was the case in most German states, clergy could be directed to oppose liberal reform. When, as in Switzerland, a church was tied neither to a monarch nor to a rural elite, the clergy offered little resistance to liberal reform. In sum, the eventual dominance of liberals or conservatives within a particular group of clergy depended upon the institutional setting of the clerical role, and especially upon the position of clerical authority within the overall structure of political authority.

The reasons behind the development of liberal institutions are of interest for scholars seeking to understand the imperfect connections between democracy and liberalism. Guillermo O'Donnell argues that informal institutions such as particularism and clientelism are compatible with democratic electoralism where liberal and republican institutions have not developed (1996, 13). Larry Diamond notes that the number of democracies in the world has been increasing but freedom has suffered recent setbacks: "Despite the steady growth in the number of formal electoral democracies in the world, the number of free states has stagnated in the first half of this decade. More generally, gains in freedom have been offset by losses" (1997, 25). According to Russell Bova, the Enlightenment's ideas of individualism and natural rights are the cultural prerequisites for a modern liberal regime: "Perhaps democracy leads to liberty, only in the specific cultural context of the West" (1997, 115). In this paper's analysis of four countries we have seen



that while Enlightenment ideas were critical, they also required the support of specific institutional configurations in order for them to become rooted in a political regime.

Liberal regimes emerged under two conditions in the four countries examined here. First, an early transition to a successful liberal regime was possible when liberals forged a coalition with the clergy and their followers, as occurred in Belgium and Switzerland. In these two countries liberalization led to democratization after a long interval. Belgium made the transition to a liberal regime in 1830 and became a democracy in 1893 or 1919. Switzerland made the transition to liberalism in 1848 and became a democracy in the 1870s.<sup>17</sup> In both cases religious institutions shaped the outcomes; we have seen that the development of liberal and democratic institutions in Belgium was due to the political engagement of the Catholic Church, and in Switzerland the repeated construction of Protestant coalitions brought about the same result.

The second condition under which a liberal regime developed was when the clergy opposed liberals but were themselves opposed by the provincial middle class and peasantry organized in autonomous institutions, as happened in France. Strong clerical opposition at the elite level helped to stall the liberalization of 1830, and this was sufficient to weaken liberal forces while mass organization remained rudimentary. Yet the new organizations of social groups outside of the main urban areas provided critical organizational resources and key votes to the liberal movement in the 1870s, and a liberal and democratic regime developed.<sup>18</sup> A compelling view of this condition can be seen from the perspective of the Church as an actor: the French Church cast its institutional authority behind nondemocratic political allies, and by choosing not to participate in the organization of a mass political party it left the terrain open for the building of a strong Republican and Radical party (Kalyvas 1996).

Although these conditions are not generalizable in every detail, there may be some intriguing parallels with the conditions under which liberal institutions develop and survive in the contemporary world. As in the more recent transitions, the intermediate organizations created by elite conflicts in particular institutional settings are critical to our understanding of transitions, for only within the 'free zones' of institutional autonomy were resistance and counterorganization possible (Bermeo 1992). To push the parallels further, the sequence of a broad-suffrage

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<sup>17</sup> Dix (1994) and Przeworski and Limongi (1997, 173) date democracy in Belgium from 1919; Vanhanen (1984, 64) states that Belgium crossed the threshold of democracy in the decade of the 1890s. Dix (1994, 97) dates democracy in Switzerland from 1878; Przeworski and Limongi (1997, 173) date it from 1875; Vanhanen (1984, 148) states that Switzerland crossed the threshold of democracy in the decade of the 1880s; Therborn (1977) and Stephens (1989) date democracy in Switzerland from around 1880.

<sup>18</sup> Dix (1994, 97) and Przeworski and Limongi (1997, 173) date democracy in France from 1875; Stephens (1989) terms 1875–84 a period of consolidation; Vanhanen (1984, 144) states that France crossed the threshold of democracy in the decade of the 1870s; Therborn (1977) dates democracy in France from 1884.

electoral regime developing into a fully liberal democracy was the pattern in France after 1870 and is the pattern that is to be hoped for in many recent post-transitional settings. Thus, an important question for future research is this: Under what conditions do post-transitional electoral democracies develop liberal institutions? Based on the analysis of the cases in this paper, whoever seeks to understand distinct types of post-transitional political development can look not only to different patterns of economic change and political cultures but also to competing sources of authority and intermediate organizations. It was not individuals acting alone who constructed and defended limits on modern states and their leaders in the cases examined here, for such attempts were also made where liberal institutions failed to develop. Intermediate associations and institutions with alternative sources of authority provided the organizational and collective-action resources that appear to be necessary both for the one-time push in constructing liberal institutions and for the continuous monitoring that is required to constrain the power of modern national states.

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