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Clashes, Competition and Common Goals: Italian Secularisms and the Liberal State

Introduction

The cover of the 2019 issue, number 3, of the Italian journal *L'Ateo* ('The Atheist'; since 2020: *Nessun Dogma*, 'No Dogma'), published by the *Unione degli Atei e degli Agnostici Razionalisti* ('Union of Atheists and Rationalist Agnostics' – UAAR)[1] shows a cleric with his mouth greedily open and his overlong tongue sticking out widely. (Figure 1)

Money is raining down from above into his hungry maw.[2] The chubby cleric shakes hands with someone who remains bodiless except for his hand and forearm, dressed in a suit jacket. With this image, the UAAR commemorated the ninetieth anniversary of the Lateran Treaty, a contract signed to resolve the so-called Roman Question and to put relations between church and state on a new footing.[3]

Part of this treaty criticised by *L'Ateo* and many other non-religious players in word and image involved compensating the Holy See for its losses of property and territory during the course of the Italian unification process. In addition, the treaty granted state independence to Vatican City, which opened up new political opportunities for the Holy See, both nationally and internationally. Finally, ca-

1 This chapter is partly based on my book *Die Abschaffung des Todes: Säkularistische Ewigkeiten vom 18. bis ins 21. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2024). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

On the UAAR, see also the conclusion of this chapter.

2 The caricature on the cover of *L'Ateo* is reminiscent of anti-clerical caricatures published in Italy during the culture wars of the nineteenth century. See Manuel Borutta, "Anti-Catholicism and the Culture War in Risorgimento Italy," in *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, edited by Lucy Riall and Silvana Patriarca (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 191–213.

3 On the Lateran Treaty and the role of the Vatican State in twentieth-century international politics, see Maria d'Arienzo, "The Lateran Treaty and the Hermeneutics of the Holy See Neutrality: The Final Defeat of the Papal State and the Roman Question," in *The Vatican and Permanent Neutrality*, edited by Marshall J. Breger and Herbert R. Reginbogen (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022), 39–62. The Italian original of the contract can be consulted under "Patti Lateranensi," Vatican State Archive, accessed 30 April 2023, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/archivio/documents/rc_seg-st_19290211_patti-lateranensi_it.html. For the Lateran Treaty, see also the conclusion of this chapter.

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Figure 1: Maurizio Di Bona, anti-clerical caricature on the front page of *L'Ateo* 3/2019 (124).[4]

tholicism was reaffirmed as the only legitimate state religion, while the church was once again granted special privileges within society. As the cover of *L'Ateo* suggests, the Lateran Treaty, signed in 1929 and revised only in the 1980s, is still a source of criticism for secularists today.[5] Its effects and legacies remain an essen-

4 Reproduction of Di Bona's artwork from this chapter is prohibited.

5 Under the umbrella term 'secularists,' I summarise those freethinking, masonic, atheist, socialist, or anarchist individuals and groups who sought to actively fight religion in its institutions and beliefs, offering non-religious alternatives instead. Secularists, as I understand them, did not merely wish to privatise religious customs and beliefs but aimed to replace and ultimately abolish them. In practice, of course, such distinctions between secular and secularist attitudes are tentative. In their constant interplay with the religious, the secular and the secularist form an interwoven confessional compound with often fluid boundaries. However, in order to structure

tial part of the Italian non-religious mindset. This bundled criticism to be heard in Italy today, and the organisations that voice it, like the treaty of 1929, have a prehistory that goes back to the Italian nineteenth century with its culture wars between church, state and the emerging public sphere. It is this history that I will shed light on in the following.

Given that the centre of the catholic world is situated on the Italian peninsula, confessional and political struggles related to modern Italian nation-building during the second half of the nineteenth century seemed inevitable. Below, I will go beyond the duality of state and church by including larger parts of the Italian confessional field, more specifically, its secularist and jewish segments.[6] Following on from Martin Papenheim's observations, it should be emphasised in advance that the culture wars in Italy and elsewhere were not fought along fixed battle lines. Rather, anti-clericalism, anti-catholicism,[7] anti-materialism and anti-modernism clashed in ever-changing constellations with the church. The corresponding organisations forged at times stable and at others more fragile alliances with the state.[8]

To examine the interplay between state, church and secularists, in the first part of this chapter, I will consider some aspects of state-church relations in nineteenth-century Italy. Emphasis is placed on the liberal state with its secularising political agenda on the one hand and on the Catholic Church's responses to modernity on the other. Referring to these developments, Hubert Wolf has spoken of "the invention of

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the confessional phenomena in the long nineteenth century more carefully, it is essential to work towards a differentiating terminology and to use it whenever the source situation so permits. The term 'secularists' originates from British history and differs in some respects (class, membership, female involvement) from the Italian case. Nonetheless, for lack of better alternatives, I transfer it to the Italian context. For conceptual considerations, see Edward Royle, *Radicals, Secularists, and Republicans: Popular Freethought in Britain, 1866–1915* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 1980). See also José Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," in *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan van Antwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 154–174.

6 On the confessional field (discussed against a German background), see Todd Weir, "Säkularismus (Freireligiöse, Freidenker, Monisten, Ethiker, Humanisten)," in *Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte im deutschsprachigen Raum*, edited by Lucian Hölscher and Volkard Krech, vol. 6.2; *20. Jahrhundert: Religiöse Positionen und soziale Formationen* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016), 189–218. Culture wars in Italy during the nineteenth century are thematised by Christiane Liermann, "Kulturkampf in Italien: Sonderfall unter Sonderfällen," in *Europäische Kulturkämpfe und ihre gegenwärtige Bedeutung*, edited by Ulrich Lappenküper (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2017), 67–95.

7 For differences between anti-clericalism and anti-Catholicism, see Borutta, "Anti-Catholicism and the Culture War," 191–192.

8 See Martin Papenheim, "Roma o morte: Culture Wars in Italy," in *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, edited by Wolfram Kaiser and Christopher Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 208.

modern catholicism".[9] Such insights into the state-church interplay are an essential prerequisite for understanding the role and positioning of secularist groups and secularisms in the young Italian nation-state, along with their conflicts and coalitions.[10] They will be considered more closely in the second part of this chapter. The third part then explores the state and its interactions with secularist ideas and positions. Particular attention is paid to education and cremation, a new mode of treating the dead that was closely tied to secularist concepts and agendas. To account for the diversity of secularisms, in the final part, the jewish minority is addressed.[11] The basic argument I pursue in this chapter is that the state was indeed a confessional player, intertwined in many ways with the Italian confessional field of the time. State policies of secularisation sometimes came very close to the demands of the secularist side, even if the state did not openly advocate its own secularist agenda, as I will show below.

State-Church-Relations in the Second Half of Nineteenth-Century Italy

The power and influence of the Catholic Church in religious and social matters, and the territorial and administrative supremacy of the Pope over large parts of central Italy were realities both the Italian national movement and Italy's non-catholic confessional players had to take into account. After having shown initial support for the national idea, Pius IX refused to back the Risorgimento after 1848/1849.[12] This lack of engagement and the continuing catholic imprint on mentali-

9 Hubert Wolf, *Der Unfehlbare: Pius IX. und die Erfindung des Katholizismus im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2020).

10 On the heterogeneity of secularities, see Marian Burchardt and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Multiple Secularities: Religion and Modernity in the Global Age," *International Sociology* 28, no. 6 (2013): 605–611.

11 On Italian Jewry in the long nineteenth century, see Ester Capuzzo, *Gli ebrei italiani dal Risorgimento alla scelta sionista* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2004) and the following considerations.

12 On papacy and the development of the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century, see Wolf, *Der Unfehlbare*. Regarding the Italian State and catholicism in the years of the Risorgimento, see Francesco Traniello, *Religione cattolica e stato nazionale: Dal Risorgimento al secondo dopoguerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007), 7–220. Catholic reactions to the national cause were, overall, much more nuanced. The vast majority of the citizens in the new state remained attached to catholicism – notwithstanding the anti-clericalism and anti-catholicism of leading figures of the national movement, Mazzini's popular idea of a Third Rome of the people and regardless of anticlerical motives being intrinsic to liberal catholic culture itself. See also Guido Verucci, *L'Italia*

ties, everyday life, social relations, reading cultures and education, together with the absence of a longstanding common Italian historical tradition, rendered the formation of a transregional Italian civil society apart from catholic influence a challenge. Cooperation between the emerging secularist groups with their modest membership in the second half of the century was likewise complicated by this constellation.[13]

A first important step towards broader secularisation was marked by Napoleon's rule over large parts of the peninsula in the early nineteenth century. The Napoleonic Code had removed administrative, economic and infrastructural barriers also in Italy and restructured relations between state and church along the lines of the concordat, established in 1801.[14] Several decades later, the influential Prime Minister of Piedmont-Sardinia, Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, who had a solid calvinist-Genevan background, spoke French as his first language and became the first all-Italian Prime Minister in 1861, continued down this path. Cavour promoted a civil religion and held anti-clerical views that fed into his secular political agenda, which would later shape the entire Italian state.[15] Despite this secular tendency, and despite religious tolerance being declared a constitutional principle that challenged catholic supremacy by including religious minorities in the legal framework, the first paragraph of the *Statuto Albertino*, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia (which turned into the Italian Constitution in 1861 and lasted until 1946) codified catholicism's status as the sole religion of the state.[16]

Rome joined the newly founded Kingdom of Italy only in 1871, after being captured by Italian national troops. This set an end to the Papal States which had existed for more than a millennium, and sealed the temporal rule of the Pope. The territorial struggles of these years resonated strongly in the socio-political sphere, where church and state fought for supremacy. Among the contested positions between the secular and the religious power in the young Italian nation-

laica prima e dopo l'unità, 1848–1876: Anticlericalismo, libero pensiero e ateismo nella società italiana (Rome: Laterza, 1981), 3–13.

13 See on these groups, their formation and policy, Verucci, *L'Italia laica*. The formation of the modern Italian civil society during the nineteenth century is discussed in Steven C. Soper, *Building a Civil Society: Associations, Public Life, and the Origins of Modern Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

14 For the Napoleonic era in Italy, see Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 3–68.

15 On Cavour and his politics, see Anthony Cardoza, "Cavour and Piedmont," in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century, 1796–1900*, edited by John A. Davis (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 108–131.

16 "Statuto Albertino," Portale Storico della Presidenza della Repubblica, accessed 30 April 2023, https://www.quirinale.it/allegati_statici/costituzione/Statutoalbertino.pdf.

state were ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the primate over marriages, the number of religious holidays, state curtailment of ecclesiastical property and the abolition of religious institutions, including religious orders. "In Italy, too, after 1850, liberals pursued an all-encompassing project of secularisation [. . .], radicals and positivists even argued for the disenchantment of society."[17] The basis for this secularising state policy in the young nation-state were the so-called Siccardi laws, which had been passed in Piedmont-Sardinia in 1850.

Relations between the state and the church then hit a new all-time low with the Casati (1859/1861) and Coppino (1877) laws.[18] These two bodies of law secured the state's prerogative in education, including state supervision of schools. In the curricula of public schools and universities, civic education and the natural sciences received a considerable boost, while religious education lost importance from 1870 onwards and was given an optional status.[19] In 1873, all theological faculties were forced to close down. Civil marriage was introduced in 1865, followed by the laicisation of the oath formula in 1876.[20] The state also tried to take over in the area of welfare: in 1890, state social insurance was implemented. With the Sanitary Act of 1888, cremation became legal. This law, pushed forward mainly by the hygienist and freemason Luigi Pagliani[21] under the prime ministership of Francesco Crispi of the Historical Left,[22] fuelled an ongoing culture war over cemeter-

17 Manuel Borutta, *Antikatholizismus: Deutschland und Italien im Zeitalter der europäischen Kulturkämpfe*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 326; 326–351 (on the general secularisation campaign in Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century).

18 Italian research tends to emphasise the religious aspects of the Risorgimento and stresses the Catholic contribution to national unification, while the interpretive framework of the culture wars is of lesser importance. See Liermann, "Kulturkampf in Italien."

19 Even before these innovations in education, enlightened ideas, political reforms and scientific trends were present in Italian culture, not only among the aristocracy, but also advanced by certain catholic rulers within the catholic educational sector. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a more general shift in priorities under secularising auspices took place. See Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 144–152.

20 Alessandro Ferrari, "La politica ecclesiastica dell'Italia post-unitaria: Un modello post-Westphaliano," *Rivista telematica: Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale* 7 (2013): 3, https://d1vbhhqv6ow083.cloudfront.net/contributi/a.ferrari_la_politicam.pdf, accessed 17 December 2023.

21 For Italian hygienists and their biopolitical mission, see Claudio Pogliano, "L'utopia igienista (1870–1920)," in *Storia d'Italia*, *Annali 7: Malattia e Medicina*, edited by Franco Della Peruta (Turin: Einaudi 1984), 589–631. On the hygienic paradigm and movement in transnational dimensions, see Philipp Sarasin and Brian Hanrahan, "The Body as Medium: Nineteenth-Century European Hygiene Discourse," *Grey Room 29/New German Media Theory* (2007): 48–65.

22 For Crispi and the bourgeois, democratically oriented Italian Historical Left, which shaped politics and society from the 1870s to the 1910s with its ideas of secularisation and democratising educational, electoral and fiscal reforms, but also advanced colonial expansion, see Christopher

ies and related worldview debates concerning death and dying.[23] In this war, both the state and those organised in cremation societies, backed by freemasons, freethinkers and socialists, allied against the religious counterpart and its long-established sovereignty over the dead.[24]

The Catholic Church responded to the threat posed to ecclesiastical territory by the Risorgimento and to the secularisation policies of the liberal state, which undermined the prerogatives of the church, with anti-liberal polemics and dogmatic rigidity. Modern catholicism, as it developed in the nineteenth century, centred on the figure of the Pope, who declared himself to be the tradition[25] and who stated his infallibility in matters of faith and morals. This catholicism was "more uniform, more centralised, and more 'Roman' than the eighteenth-century church had been."[26] With the *Syllabus Errorum*, an appendix to the encyclical *Quanta Cura*, published in 1864, a direct attack was launched on secular and non-religious positions. It condemned philosophical concepts such as rationalism, political ideas including liberalism and socialism and religious views and positions, among them pantheism, religious freedom and the prerogative of the state in civil society. In addition, on the basis of the papal bull, *Non Expedit* (1874), political participation in the new state, whether in parties or elections, remained forbidden for catholics until 1919.[27]

Another novelty of that time concerned the increasing importance assigned to the laity. The church turned to them and mobilised them, whether through an expanding market of catholic print media or through their inclusion in the growing sector of newly emerging catholic charities and social organisations. These were coordinated by the *Opera dei Congressi*, an umbrella organisation founded in 1874. It held catholic festivals, initiated pilgrimages, created opportunities for public engagement and bundled criticism against anti-catholic state policies.[28]

Duggan, "Politics in the Era of Depretis and Crispi, 1870–96," in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century, 1796–1900*, edited by John A. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 154–180.

23 Changes in the Italian culture of death and dying during the nineteenth century are taken up by Hannah Malone, "Secularisation, Anticlericalism and Cremation within Italian Cemeteries of the Nineteenth Century," *Modern Italy* 19, no. 4 (2014): 385–403.

24 On this culture war fought over the dead, see Fulvio Conti, Anna Maria Isastia and Fiorenza Tarozzi, *La morte laica: Storia della cremazione in Italia (1880–1920)* (Turin: Scriptorium, 1998).

25 See Wolf, *Der Unfehlbare*, 11.

26 Christopher Clark, "The New Catholicism and the European Culture Wars," in *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth Century Europe*, 11.

27 A concise overview of religious developments in Italy is provided in David Kertzer, "Religion and Society, 1789–1892," in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century, 1796–1900*, edited by John A. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 181–205.

28 On the *Opera dei Congressi*, see John Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy: Religion, Society and Politics since 1861* (London: Routledge, 2014), 6–68.

Ally of the State? Italian Secularisms and Education

Closely intertwined with these conflicts between the secular and the religious powers, Italian secularism, or rather secularisms, began to organise. Unlike catholicism, secularism in Italy remained a position held only by a minority. The heterogeneous Italian secularists were unified primarily by their rejection of the Catholic Church and their shared struggle against the catholic doctrine. They also collectively opposed the church's influence on society and its institutions, namely, schools, universities, career paths, charities and civil status.[29] To offer alternatives, Italian secularists campaigned for scientifically based, rational, materialist, but also humanist or civil-religious positions in politics and culture that went beyond mere anti-catholicism or anti-clericalism.[30]

Secularisms in Italy organised in loose and dynamic groups that overlapped in terms of content and membership. As elsewhere, the proponents of non-religious worldviews in Italy were mostly male.[31] Social and institutional places in which Italian secularisms surfaced included parties like the *Estrema Sinistra Storica*, founded by physician and freemason Agostino Bertani; socialist and anarchist milieus; cremation associations furthered by physician and freemason Gaetano Pini; Mazzini's and Garibaldi's circles[32] and also academia, as the examples of hygienist and anthropologist Paolo Mantegazza and that of physiologist Jacob Moleschott indicate. Both of them held university chairs in Italy and both espoused non-religious views in their scientific and popular writings, and their pub-

29 On secularists' common ground, see Verucci, *L'Italia laica,* 179–356.

30 Todd Weir has distinguished two types of secularism: negative secularism, i.e. being 'against the church and religious beliefs,' and positive secularism, i.e. 'standing up for something and pursuing a distinct secularist agenda.' See Todd Weir, *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Rise of the Fourth Confession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 70; 84.

31 This male-centredness of the non-religious sphere was even more pronounced in catholic Italy than in protestant Britain, where women, at least to some extent, had a voice in secularist associations and – sometimes prominently – spoke up publicly for this worldview. See Laura Schwartz, *Infidel Feminism: Secularism, Religion and Women's Emancipation, England 1830–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

32 On Garibaldi's and Mazzini's anti-clericalism, see Laura Fournier-Finocchiaro, "Garibaldi and Mazzini: Anticlericalism, Laicism, and the Concept of a National Religion," in *Freethinkers in Europe: National and Transnational Secularities, 1789–1920s,* edited by Carolin Kosuch (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2020), 87–108.

lic engagements.[33] Most importantly, non-religious ideas developed in certain media. From the 1860s to the 1880s, Italian secularist discourse was dominated by Luigi Stefanoni's freethinking journal, *Il Libero Pensiero*, by the socialist paper, *La Plebe,* edited by Enrico Bignami, and also by masonic organs such as the *Rivista Massonica* and the *Almanacco del Libero Muratore*. It was precisely these media that fuelled the Italian culture war by taking up crucial subjects that also drove the state's policy of secularisation, namely, civil marriage, the promotion of natural sciences, a campaign for voting rights, for the introduction of cremation as an alternative to earth burial and a broad education initiative in schools and universities. Secularists writing for these periodicals also voiced their opinions on matters of worldview, reflected on secular morality, discussed the emancipation of women and disseminated the theory of evolution. Other focal points involved freedom of thought, a rational worldview based on scientific-materialist principles, the struggle against religious dogma and the spread of a civil religion in Mazzini's sense.[34]

Due to their minority status and their close thematic entanglement, the various secularisms in the Kingdom of Italy also supported each other. On the one hand, this alliance was forged from the outside, since, for example, the widely read *Civiltà Cattolica*, published from 1850 onwards by a group of Neapolitan jesuits and regarded the anti-masonic and anti-liberal mouthpiece of the Pope,[35] created a unified secularist-political enemy image.[36] On the other hand, despite the sometimes overt competition and regardless of attempts to find distinct standpoints, secularists also defended and encouraged each other on a national and transnational level out of a genuine sense of solidarity.[37] Early on, for example,

33 On Mantegazza, see Carolin Kosuch, "Hygiene, Rasse und Zukunftstechnik: Paolo Mantegazzas Beiträge zur Italianità," *QFIAB* 97 (2017): 316–338. See on Moleschott, Costanza D'Elia, "Group Portrait with Freethinker: Jacob Moleschott, Risorgimento Culture, and the Italian Nation-Building Process," in *Freethinkers in Europe,* 109–130. For both scholars, see also the following.

34 For these topics and for an annotated selection of contributions to the *Libero Pensiero*, see Antonio De Lauri, *Scienza, laicità, democrazia: Il libero pensiero; giornale dei razionalisti, 1866–1876* (Milan: Biblion, 2014).

35 On the *Civiltà Cattolica*, see Francisco Dante, *Storia della «Civiltà Cattolica» (1850–1891): Il laboratorio del papa* (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 1990).

36 See, e.g., Anonym., "La guerra contro i morti," *Civiltà Cattolica* (1875): 415–430, an article polemicising against cremation, secularism and liberalism. See also Anonym., "Gli scandagli della scienza nella immensità del creato," *Civiltà Cattolica* (1879): 664–677, which argues for the primacy of creation over science. For an anti-masonic and anti-liberal contribution, see Anonym., "La Massoneria e la Guerra," *Civiltà Cattolica* (1870): 529–539.

37 An example of transnational secularist solidarity is explored by Daniel Laqua, "Freethinkers, Anarchists and Francisco Ferrer: The Making of a Transnational Solidarity Campaign," *European Review of History* (2014): 467–484. On shared secularist projects, see Jeffrey Tyssens and Petri Mir-

freemasons promoted cremation in their writings, while publications by cremationists supported the last wish of Garibaldi, a freemason, for cremation[38] and joined in the polemics against the Roman Curia.[39] *Il Libero Pensiero*, for its part, popularised Mazzini's thought, reviewed socialist publications with sympathy, promoted cremation and sought alliance with religious minorities, especially when useful to its own agenda.[40]

Conflicts in the confessional sphere thus occurred less between the different secularisms or between secularism and religious minorities than with the catholic side. In the course of these disputes both the Catholic Church and the non-religious players solidified their positions, defined their characteristics and fought bitterly over the prerogative over certain concepts and the overall discursive power in society, which both wished to shape according to their goals and convictions. In the Italian culture wars, what qualified as religious or non-religious was ultimately negotiated, and which of the two factions, at what time and in relation to what matter would hold the position of power was sounded out.[41] The state with its policy of secularisation formed the backbone of these conflicts. It acted as a party in the confessional confrontations and teamed up with secularists and religious minorities.

The state's alliance with notorious secularists became particularly visible in the field of education. For this, as already noted briefly in this section, a fitting example is physiologist and leading proponent of scientific materialism, Jacob

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ala, "Transnational Seculars: Belgium as an International Forum for Freethinkers and Freemasons in the Belle Époque," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* (2012): 1353–1372. On competition and cooperation in the secularist field, see Lisa Dittrich, "European Connections, Obstacles and the Search for a New Concept of Religion: The Freethinker Movement as an Example for Transnational Anti-Catholicism in the Second Half of the 19th Century," *Journal of Religious History*, Special Issue, *International Connections: Transnational Approaches to the History of Anti-Catholicism* 39 (2015): 261–279.

38 On freemasonry and cremation in Italy, notably in Rome, see Anna Maria Isastia, "La laicizzazione della morte a Roma: Cremazionisti e massoni tra Ottocento e Novecento," *Dimensione e problemi della ricerca storica* 2 (1998): 55–98.

39 See, e.g., Malachia De Cristoforis, ed., *Atti del quarto congresso della lega delle Società Italiane di Cremazione* (Milan: Tipografia L. Marchi, 1891), 50–57.

40 See Giambattista Demora, "Giuseppe Mazzini e i liberi pensatori d'Italia," *Il Libero pensiero*, 22 March 1866, 180–194; I. Golfarelli, "Sulla cremazione dei cadaveri," *Il Libero pensiero*, 13 July 1871, 20–25; Un Internazionale, "Lo spettro del socialismo," *Il Libero pensiero*, 1 February 1872, 71–102. On secularist solidarity with the forcedly baptised jewish boy Edgardo Mortara and on secularist campaigns directed against the Catholic Church and its policy, see D'Inc., "Un altra infamia," *Il Libero pensiero*, 21 February 1867, 127–128.

41 These negotiation processes unfolded, to varying degrees, throughout Europe in the nineteenth century. For the German Empire, see Rebekka Habermas, ed., *Negotiating the Secular and the Religious in the German Empire: Transnational Approaches* (New York: Berghahn, 2019).

Moleschott, whose famous work *Der Kreislauf des Lebens* ('The Cycle of Life', 1852) was translated into Italian by Cesare Lombroso, one of his students.[42] Moleschott, a Dutchman, had been threatened by the Baden government with expulsion from the University of Heidelberg because of his atheistic convictions, a threat he believed was "incited by clerics."[43] During his Swiss exile, the Italian Commissioner of Education, Francesco de Sanctis, had paid him a visit. De Sanctis then offered Moleschott a chair of physiology at the University of Turin to be set up exclusively for him.[44] Liberal forces in Italy actively recruited renowned secularist scholars or provided chairs for those already in Italy in order to reform the educational landscape, which had been dominated by religious forces prior to the Risorgimento.

Moleschott's work was truly secularist: his *Cycle of Life* told the story of matter defining the physical world in a process of formation and decay. The book's underlying concept rejected any notion of transcendence, dualism, soul, god or the afterlife. Every expression of life, Moleschott argued, would be determined by matter. Central to his thinking was nutrition: if it was sufficient, he considered it an essential element of progress; if it was lacking, it would result in weak brain activity, poverty and consequently prevent the full development of human potential.[45] Moleschott also expressed philosemitic views, took an interest in politics and served as a senator in the Kingdom of Italy, where he campaigned for women's rights, amongst other issues.

Among those who held materialist and evolutionist views in Italy, and who were given chairs in the young Italian nation-state, was also Paolo Mantegazza. He authored a variety of scientific and popular-scientific writings that were translated into several languages during his lifetime and attracted a broader readership. This oeuvre testified to the comprehensive educational mission he pursued.[46] The science fiction book *L'anno 3000: Sogno* ('The Year 3000: A Dream'), published in 1897, served this goal in a particular way. Its plot wrapped in fiction the perspectives of a nineteenth-century scientist, hygienist and secularist, who, as a child of his time,

42 On Moleschott's life and work, see Laura Meneghello, *Jacob Moleschott: A Transnational Biography* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017).

43 Moleschott's original German expression carried a more pejorative anti-clerical tone. He spoke of *Pfaffenseelen*. Jacob Moleschott, *Licht und Leben: Rede beim Antritt des öffentlichen Lehramts zur Erforschung der Natur des Menschen an der Züricher Hochschule* (Frankfurt/Main: Meidinger, 1856), Dedication.

44 See D'Elia, "Group Portrait with Freethinker."

45 For Moleschott's nutritional concepts, see Claus Spenninger, *Stoff für Konflikt: Fortschrittsdenken und Religionskritik im naturwissenschaftlichen Materialismus des 19. Jahrhunderts, 1847–1881* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 77–88.

46 See Kosuch, "Hygiene, Rasse und Zukunftstechnik."

did not shy away from also expressing misogynistic and racial thoughts. In this novel, it is natural scientists who run society.[47] Everyday life is governed by rationalism, scientific innovation, technology and worldview plurality. The Catholic Church has been abolished, while a shared civil morality ensures people's happiness and prosperity. With such publications, anthropologist and physician Mantegazza, who held the first Italian chair of anthropology in Florence, contributed to the spread of secularist ideas. This also counts for almanacs instructing their readers how to live a life according to hygienic principles and novels telling eugenic stories to a wider audience.[48] In general, for Mantegazza, it seemed only a matter of time that problems of his modern secular age, including alcoholism, suicide and a lack of happiness that he diagnosed among his contemporaries, would be overcome. In the present situation, pessimism and nervousness would prevail – "passing states"[49] necessary on the way to progress that could be cured, he argued, by proper education in the schools of the future and by implementing a morality based on true positivism.[50]

A third in this line of Italian scientists pursuing such concepts was research traveller and professor of anatomy Filippo De Filippi, who taught at the university of Turin and authored numerous publications. De Filippi's interests ranged widely from anatomy to zoology to geology. His *L'Uomo e le Scimmie* ('Man and Apes', 1864), a book that popularized Darwin's ideas from the 1860s onwards, met with a lively but also controversial response.[51] De Filippi himself avoided overt secularism and declared Darwinism compatible with christianity: "Will the origin of man be less divine when the biblical turf is turned into the entire organic formation?",[52] he asked rhetorically in this book. Despite such commitments to scientific neutrality, his teachings fell on fertile secularist ground, as evidenced by articles in the Italian freethinker press, which defended De Filippi against jesuit misappropriation and interpreted his findings for their purposes.[53]

Secularist media regularly brought out publications on educational matters. The main interest of masonic releases, for example, concerned the education of women, in order to provide them with tools and skills that would enable them to

47 See Paolo Mantegazza, *L'anno 3000 – sogno* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1897).

48 See, e.g., Paolo Mantegazza, *Igiene della cucina* (Milan: Brigola, 1871) and Paolo Mantegazza, *Un giorno a Madera: Una pagina dell'igiene d'amore* (Milan: Treves, 1874).

49 Paolo Mantegazza, *Il secolo nervosico* (Pordenone: Edizione Studio Tesi, [1887] 1995), 73.

50 See Mantegazza, *Il secolo*, 70–71, 81, 101–102.

51 The reception of darwinism in Italy is studied by Giuliano Pancaldi, *Darwin in Italy: Science across Cultural Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

52 Filippo De Filippi, *L'uomo e le scimmie: Lezione pubblica* (Milan: G. Daelli e comp., 1864), 68.

53 See, e.g., Mauro Macchi, "Non è possibile", *Il Libero Pensiero*, 4 April 1867, 221–222.

become independent of both the Catholic Church and priests. In this way, the bond with the religious opponent, to whom women seemed particularly close, should be loosened.[54] Through scientific training in practical life matters such as nutrition, domestic hygiene, household management and the promotion of civic virtues – in other words, through a secularist civic women's formation – these 'new' women, in the vision of the male secularists who developed this educational programme, were to advance their families. They were also to become better educators for their children, who, through this kind of domestic upbringing, were expected to develop into good citizens and proper human beings. All this the masonic press presented as an urgent task of the modern age.[55]

Education was also a central concern in the Italian freethinker press. Topics taken up included moral and civic education, the removal of priestly influence, monastic ideals and the Catholic Church's so called "antisocial institutions."[56] Instead, a family-based model of procreation was prioritised. The freethinker press, too, put special emphasis on the "rational education of woman,"[57] while dismissing theology as a "product of human imagination."[58] What remained uncontested was the inevitability of the laws of nature and the supremacy of materialism.[59] Jacob Moleschott regularly appeared in this press organ with quotes, references and his own contributions, (Figure 2) as did other contemporary freethinkers such as Büchner, materialists like Vogt and prominent critics of religion of all times.

The editors welcomed the completion of De Boni's, Macchi's and Miron's historical and critical reflections on rationalism taken up in this journal by Moleschott's positivist-scientific and experimental interpretation of this philosophy.

Catholic publications vehemently opposed such secularist theories and concepts which flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century. Again, it was the *Civiltà Cattolica* that set the tone in anti-secularist discourse. The journal thematised and defended the concept of an immortal human soul, of revelation, the existence of god, the resurrection, and the sanctity of the church and its institutions. Subsequent issues commented negatively on positivism, materialism, evolutionism, the secularisation of cemeteries and cremation. Next to media like the *Rivista Antimassonica* and the daily *Osservatore Romano*, which since 1861 made

54 See T. Campanati, "La donna: Causa di barbarie e di civiltà," *Rivista Massonica* (1871), 158–159; O. Faust, "La donna e l'istruzione professionale," *Almanacco del Libero Muratore* (1872), 59–68. These publications carry both anti-clerical and misogynist undertones.

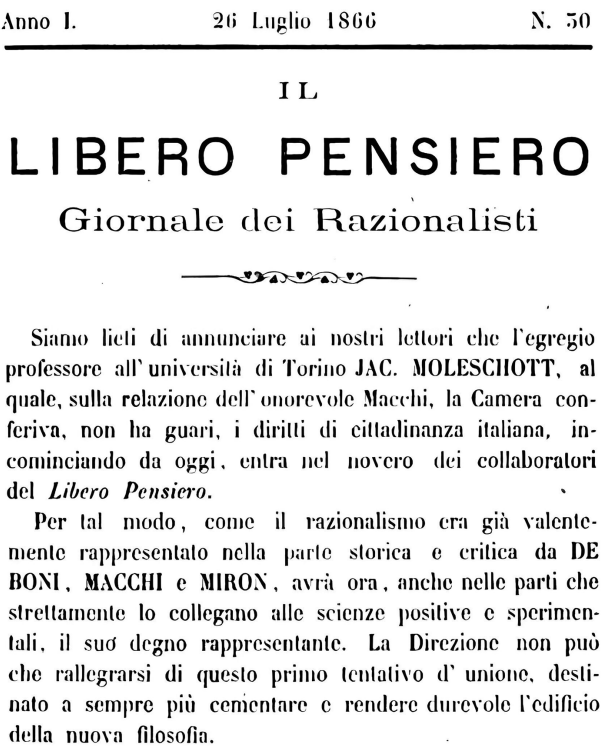
55 See Cesare Prandi, "L'educazione della donna," *Rivista Massonica* (1877): 290–299.

56 Anonym., "L'individuo e la famiglia nel comune," *Il Libero Pensiero*, 20 October 1870, 253.

57 E., "Educazione razionale della donna," *Il Libero Pensiero*, 5 July 1866, 433–437.

58 F. Turotti, "Fiammiferi illuminanti senza fuoco," *Il Libero Pensiero*, 1 November 1873, 374.

59 See Turotti, "Fiammiferi," 372–377.



Anno I. 26 Luglio 1866 N. 30

IL

LIBERO PENSIERO

Giornale dei Razionalisti

Siamo lieti di annunciare ai nostri lettori che l'egregio professore all' università di Torino JAC. MOLESCHOTT, al quale, sulla relazione dell' onorevole Macchi, la Camera conferiva, non ha guari, i diritti di cittadinanza italiana, incominciando da oggi, entra nel novero dei collaboratori del *Libero Pensiero*.

Per tal modo, come il razionalismo era già valentemente rappresentato nella parte storica e critica da DE BONI, MACCHI e MIRON, avrà ora, anche nelle parti che strettamente lo collegano alle scienze positive e sperimentali, il suo degno rappresentante. La Direzione non può che rallegrarsi di questo primo tentativo d' unione, destinato a sempre più cementare e rendere durevole l'edificio della nuova filosofia.

Figure 2: *Il Libero Pensiero*, 26 July 1866, 465. Announcement of Moleschott's renewed collaboration with *Il Libero Pensiero*.

public official positions of the Holy See on contemporary questions,[60] it was above all the *Civiltà Cattolica* polemicising against the "god-like state"[61] liberals would believe in. The journal accused state liberalism of tyrannising society with its rejection of both god and moral law and criticised it for its self-absolutisation in society.[62]

What stands out when reading through these publications is the intimate knowledge the authors possessed of secularist and scientific writings. By receiving and discussing such publications they, too, participated in the scientification of education. Scientific methods and ideas promoted both by the state and its edu-

60 See, e.g., Anonym., "La cremazione e i protestanti," *Osservatore Romano*, 22 April 1885.
61 Anonym., "Rivista della stampa," *Civiltà Cattolica* (1870): 182.
62 See Anonym., "Il due internazionali," *Civiltà Cattolica* (1872): 367–368.

cational policies and by secularists were thus not alien to the catholic discourse. Rather, it was about different interpretations within a modern science-based approach shared by all confessional players.

Cremation: A Secularist Project Supported by the State

Legislation also proved very favourable to secularist positions with regard to cremation. Throughout the later nineteenth century, the cremation of the human body and storage of the ashes in an urn in communal cemeteries were subjects extensively discussed not only in the Kingdom of Italy, but also in the United States and in various European countries such as the German Empire, France or Switzerland.[63] To those in favour of this method, cremation seemed a hygienic, space-saving, modern, civilised and aesthetic way of dealing with the deceased. They also considered cremation a means of breaking catholicism's supremacy over the dead, replacing it with a civic culture of burial and commemoration yet to be established in the new state and its civil society. As a sanitary project, cremation was promoted by Italian physicians and hygienists – some of them freemasons or radical republicans – at scientific congresses and in publications.[64] Considerable support for the new practice also came from masonic and freethinking circles. The *Rivista Massonica*, for example, frequently reported on the progress of the cremation movement and advertised its congresses and organisations. It also reprinted, "with keen pleasure"[65] and with anti-clerical side blows, reports from other newspapers on the "religion of the urns, a religion of sentiments and of love to commemorate the deceased, heartfelt, and without ostentatious or medieval appearances."[66] Wrapped up in its campaign for cremation, *Il Libero Pensiero* expressed similar anti-catholic views.[67]

The hygienist, liberal and secularist advocates of cremation benefitted from earlier attempts to reintroduce the incineration of the dead in modern times dur-

63 For general information on the history and phenomenology of cremation worldwide, see Douglas J. Davies and Lewis H. Mates, ed., *Encyclopedia of Cremation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

64 See Fulvio Conti, "Aspetti culturali e dimensione associativa," in Conti, Isastia and Tarozzi, *La morte laica*, 3–25.

65 Anonym., "La cremazione a Firenze," *Rivista Massonica* (1891), 251.

66 Anonym., "La cremazione," 251.

67 See I. Golfarelli, "Sulla cremazione dei cadaveri," *Il Libero Pensiero*, July 13, 1871, 20–25.

ing the French Revolution.[68] French writings on the subject from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries found an echo among cremationists in Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century.[69] In order to establish a foundation for their preferred method of dealing with the dead body that would be a match for the centuries-old christian tradition of earth burial, modern cremationists invoked Roman and Greek antiquity in particular, and referred to other historical and to contemporary cremation traditions around the world.[70]

In the 1870s, first cremation societies emerged, especially in Northern Italy.[71] They also promoted communal cemeteries and civil burial ceremonies. It was due to their initiative that first crematories were built in Italy. The one inaugurated in 1876 at Milan's Cimitero Maggiore was the first modern crematory in Europe operating on a regular basis. It was supervised by local municipal authorities and the region's sanitary council.[72] Led by Milanese patriot, physician, hygienist, member of the temperance movement, freemason and senator of the Kingdom of Italy Malachia De Cristoforis,[73] Italy's cremation movement met with and benefitted from various legislative initiatives. Republicans like Agostino Bertani, Risorgimento activist, Minister of the Interior and, later, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Italy, Francesco Crispi, physicians, hygienists and politicians such as Carlo Maggiorani or the Mazzinist and promoter of women's emancipation, Salvatore Morelli, ensured that politics took up the subject of cremation and placed it in a "secular tradition."[74]

As mentioned earlier, cremation in newly established Italian communal cemeteries was first regulated by law in 1888. Article 59 of the respective code stated:

> Cremation of corpses must be carried out in crematories approved by the provincial physician. Municipalities shall always provide the space required for the construction of crematories in cemeteries free of charge. Urns containing the residues of the successfully performed cremation may be placed in cemeteries, in chapels or temples of state-recognised organisa-

68 See Marina Sozzi and Charles Porset, *Il sonno e la memoria: Idee della morte e politiche funerarie nella Rivoluzione francese* (Turin: Paravia, 1999).

69 See, e.g., Gaetano Pini, "La cremazione dei cadaveri," *Rivista Massonica* (1876): 6–16.

70 See Vincenzo Grossi, *La cremazione nell'antichità storica e preistorica* (Milan: Carlo Aliprandi, 1899).

71 See Conti, "Aspetti culturali."

72 See Carolin Kosuch, "The Rediscovery of Cremation in Italy and Germany," *The Freethinker*, 15 November 2022, https://freethinker.co.uk/2022/11/the-rediscovery-of-cremation-in-italy-and-germany/, accessed 30 April 2023.

73 On De Cristoforis, see Annalucia Messina, *Malachia De Cristoforis: Un medico democratico nell'Italia liberale* (Milan: F. Angeli, 2003).

74 Fiorenza Tarozzi, "Il rapporto centro/periferia nel dibattito istituzionale," in Conti, Isastia and Tarozzi, *La morte laica*, 134.

> tions or in private columbaria with a permanent destination in such a way as to prevent any desecration.[75]

In 1892, cremation was further detailed by a law the regulatory authorities had worked out and approved. It laid down fees and provisions for transport but also left room for the individual needs of municipalities and cremation societies.[76] Even though the path towards this legalisation meandered between respect for the catholic majority and its beliefs, on the one hand, and the vision of a secular or even secularist and hygienic future on the other, these laws consolidated the supremacy of national, regional and local politics and public health officials over cemeteries, sanitation and funerals.[77] Institutions serving the public, such as the Supreme Sanitary Council, were to be composed of physicians, engineers, natural scientists, chemists, veterinarians, pharmacists and administrative and legal experts appointed by the Minister of the Interior. Religious experts had no say in this governmental-administrative-medical-scientific alliance. Because renowned secularists such as Moleschott opted for this mode of treating his mortal remains, cremation became even further codified in secularist terms. His funeral service was arranged by colleagues and companions in a ceremony free from any religious reference. The ashes were placed in the non-catholic section of the Cimitero Verano in Rome.[78]

When compared to other European countries, the Kingdom of Italy was one of the early adopters of cremation. While France, Sweden, and Switzerland legalised the incineration of the dead around the same time as the Kingdom of Italy, Britain and Prussia did not allow the new method until 1902 and 1911, respectively, although the first cremations in Great Britain were carried out prior to this on the basis of special permissions. The first Austrian crematory operated in 1922. In Greece, cremation has only been legal since 2006.[79] On the catholic side, cremation remained forbidden for catholics until 1965. This prolonged the culture war over the dead well into the second half of the twentieth century. During the long

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75 "Legge 22 Dicembre 1888", Normattiva, accessed 30 April 2023, https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:1888-12-22;5849!vig=1891-11-18.

76 See Tarozzi, "Il rapporto," 147–148, 170.

77 Already during Napoleon's rule over large parts of the Italian peninsula, his *Décret Impérial sur les Sépultures* (1804) had prohibited burials in churches and churchyards and ordered them to take place outside settlements in newly established cemeteries. The legislation of the new Italian State picked up on these developments. For Italian cemeteries in the nineteenth century, see Hannah Malone, *Architecture, Death and Nationhood: The Monumental Cemeteries of Nineteenth-Century Italy* (London: Routledge, 2017), 35–36 (on Napoleon's law).

78 See Meneghello, *Moleschott*, 434.

79 See the chronology in Davies and Mates, ed., *Encyclopedia*, 457–473.

nineteenth century, catholic press organs polemicised fiercely against cremation, which they regarded as a symbol of the despised secular worldview and a sign of the state's unwelcome policy of secularisation. Such campaigns against cremation centred on the so-called "war against the dead"[80] threatening the salvation of the deceased and violating any form of culture. The cremationists, for their part, resorted to scientific materialism: in their view, cremation enabled the rapid reintegration of bodily building blocks into the cycle of life described by Moleschott and others.[81] As this section has illustrated, the state, with its legislation, sided with the secularists. For some Italian politicians, and for many secularists, cremation symbolised modernity. By implementing this practise and the related technology in Italy, they hoped to counteract the prejudice of living in a supposedly backward Southern country compared to the more industrialised European societies.[82] Since cremation was discussed and practised mainly in the North of Italy, this spatial focus further nourished stereotypes established during the Risorgimento of an underdeveloped, reactionary and superstitious South and a progressive, rational and modern North.[83]

Religious Minorities, Secularism and the State: The Jewish Case

It should not come as a surprise that the culture wars between the leading religious and the secular(ist) parties in nineteenth-century Italy also affected the religious minorities on the peninsula. In addition to the small protestant community,[84] this

80 Anonym., "La guerra contro i morti," *Civiltà Cattolica* (1875): 415–430.

81 See, e.g., Guglielmo Funaro, "La cremazione," *Rivista Massonica* (1906): 236–247. See also Silvestro Zinno, *Discorso sulla inumazione, imbalsamazione e cremazione dei cadaveri* (Naples: Tip. Giovanni di Majo, 1873).

82 Such was, for example, the reasoning of Paolo Gorini, who invented one of the first crematories in use inside and outside of Italy. Paolo Gorini, *La conservazione della salma di Giuseppe Mazzini: Notizie fornite* (Genoa: Tipografia del R. Istituto Sordo-muti, 1873).

83 For a short introduction to this, see Marco Meriggi, "Legitimism, Liberalism and Nationalism: The Nature of the Relationship between North and South in Italian Unification," *Modern Italy* 19, no. 1 (2014): 69–79.

84 Before unification, protestantism in Italy consisted mainly of Calvinist-influenced Waldensians who settled in the Alpine valleys of Northern Italy. Protestantism was considered 'foreign' to Italy and was successfully fought by the Catholic Church. Only after the formation of the nation state did Lutherans, Methodists, and others start their missionary work. See Kertzer, "Religion and Society," 201. In 1861, about 32,000 protestants were living in the whole of Italy.

applied especially to the jewish minority. While the *Statuto Albertino* of 1848 in Piedmont-Sardinia and from 1861 in the entire Kingdom of Italy had granted legal and political equality to all citizens regardless of their faith, the Legge Rattazzi of 1857 foresaw special regulations for jews.[85] Catholics and protestants were treated according to general civil law, whereas the jewish community upheld its corporate organisational structure protected by the state. This enabled them, amongst others, to levy taxes.[86] It was members of the *Sinistra Storica*, notably Rattazzi, who had supported the demands of Piedmonts jewry for autonomy in religious matters, after heated political debates in parliament about what should be prioritised: the equality of all citizens or the freedom and self-determination of certain parts of society.[87] Since the liberal state had fully emancipated Italian jewry, facilitated general jewish participation in politics, society and economy, and also granted a certain degree of autonomy, it was held in high esteem by jewish citizens.[88]

By mid-century, about 40,000 jews lived in Italy, most of them in the north and centre of the peninsula.[89] Many had actively supported the Risorgimento since the late 1850s and welcomed the founding of the nation-state; a majority received emancipation positively.[90] In the new state, jews occupied leading academic, political and military positions. More than 100 jewish members of parliament and the senate contributed to the formation and consolidation of the new state until the First World War. In 1912, with Luigi Luzzatti, Italy had a jewish Prime Minister and from 1902 to 1903, the jewish-Italian, Giuseppe Ottolenghi, served as Minister of Defence.[91]

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85 Stefania Dazzetti, "La legge organica per le Università israelitiche piemontesi del 1857: Il dibattito e le scelte del Parlamento subalpino," *Rivista telematica* 1 (January 2023).

86 Judaism in Tuscany, Lombardy, Veneto, and other regions was organised differently, based on voluntary community membership. It was only under the fascist *Legge Falco* of 1930/1931 that legislation concerning Italy's jewish communities was unified. See Tullia Catalan, "Juden und Judentum in Italien von 1848 bis 1918," in *Denn in Italien haben sich die Dinge anders abgespielt: Judentum und Antisemitismus im modernen Italien*, edited by Gudrun Jäger and Liana Novelli-Glaab (Berlin: Trafo, 2007), 83.

87 See Dazzetti, "La legge organica."

88 On the process of jewish emancipation and the history of jewry in nineteenth-century Italy, see Elizabeth Schächter, *The Jews of Italy, 1848–1915: Between Tradition and Transformation* (London/Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010).

89 See Catalan, "Juden und Judentum," 71–86.

90 For a discussion of different approaches towards emancipation, see Andrew M. Canepa, "Emancipation and Jewish Response in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Italy," *European History Quarterly* 16 (1986): 403–439.

91 On Italian jewry and the social acceptance of jews in the liberal Italian State, see Martin Baumeister, "Ebrei fortunati? Juden in Italien zwischen Risorgimento und Faschismus," in *Italien,*

Emancipation and the prospect (and also the necessity) of acculturation confronted Italian jewry with a new situation. Civil equality and citizenship required each jewish individual and the communities in which they lived to redefine what being jewish would mean from now on in a society of equals in which religion had been rendered a more or less private matter. Newly founded jewish media such as the Trieste-based *Corriere Israelitico*, which towards the end of the century adopted more zionist positions, and the Piedmontese *Vessillo Israelitico*, which tended towards reform and acculturation, provided public platforms for the negotiation of such questions.[92] Italian jews also joined masonic lodges. This resulted partly from a civic consciousness but also because anti-semitism held as firm a place in certain catholic media and in parts of catholic culture as anti-masonism did.[93] Given this, secularists' anti-clericalism and anti-catholicism in a way also functioned as a protective shield against such smouldering anti-semitic threats.[94]

A closer look into the Italian jewish press of the second half of the century reveals that jewish media constantly reflected upon topics related to jewish life in its increasing confrontation and intermingling with the christian everyday culture of the majority.[95] These included mixed marriages, dietary regulations, circumcision or the observance of the *shabbat* in a christian society with a different festival order. As part of this thematic choice, jewish press organs also addressed subjects, concepts and values promoted by both the liberal state and secularists. Almost in passing, they were turned into jewish concerns, too. This was true of liberal and secularist notions such as 'progress', especially of the Italian nation and Italian civil society, which the *Corriere Israelitico* urged jewish citizens to foster to the best of their ability as allies of their Italian brethren.[96] The term 'hygiene' likewise received attention in jewish media, a concept that, as discussed earlier, served as a paradigm for both the state's sanitary policy and the secularist cremation campaign. Against this backdrop, the *Vessillo Israelitico* proclaimed a

Blicke: Neue Perspektiven der italienischen Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, edited by Petra Terhoeven (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 43–60.

92 Next to other contributors, rabbis also published in these journals. This way, their interpretation of Jewish law was brought before a wider circle of readers. These rabbis represented different Italian rabbinical schools.

93 See Jose David Lebovitch Dahl, "The Role of the Roman Catholic Church in the Formation of Modern Anti-Semitism: La Civiltà Cattolica, 1850–1879," *Modern Judaism* 23, no. 3 (2003): 180–197.

94 See Catalan, "Juden und Judentum," 82.

95 On jewish identity in the new state, see Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, *Fare gli ebrei italiani: Autorappresentazioni di una minoranza (1861–1918)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011).

96 See Nicola Antippa, "La causa d'Israele propugnata da un cristiano," *Il Corriere Israelitico* (1864): 38.

general jewish hygienic "physical and moral"[97] resilience that had always been the prerequisite for any jewish coexistence with other peoples. Finally, these journals embraced rationalism, civic education, welfare and morality as essential to jewish tradition and life. Some contributions even asserted the compatibility of jewish religion with darwinism.[98] By connecting political-liberal (and certain secularist) themes to a liberal interpretation of judaism, these media sought to ally the jewish minority with the state (and inevitably, to some extent, with the secularists). In this way, the contributors to these journals tried to refrain from getting caught in the pitfalls of a culture war. Instead, they presented judaism as already secular and modern enough to make a significant contribution to the secular national future.

In the decades following unification, cremation in particular was a significant concern not only for these media but also for jewish religious authorities, as rabbinic tractates published on this subject indicate. While the influential Livornese rabbi and kabbalist Elia Benamozegh rejected any potential acceleration of bodily decomposition as contrary to the kabbalistic principle of Gilgul, the cycle of reincarnation, and many non-kabbalistic rabbis were also rather critical or hesitant towards cremation,[99] a minority of rabbis such as Vittorio Castiglioni or Moischè Tedeschi expressed positive opinions about this practice. To them, cremation seemed by no means incompatible with jewish traditions. Judaism, they maintained in their written statements, had always welcomed progress and new developments. In their view, cremation made no exception to this.[100]

In light of this, some jews went even further already in the nineteenth century and decided to have their mortal remains cremated.[101] This decision was a sign of their successful emancipation and acculturation. But unlike secularists with a christian-catholic background, cremation or the acceptance of other secularist concepts in the jewish case did not necessarily indicate a rejection of the jewish faith. Often, it was rather a gesture of appreciation towards the state and its policies that had granted them rights and offered them a hopeful perspective for the future after centuries of anti-jewish legislation. Thus, "forms of secularism

97 Anonym., "A proposito dell'igiene e delle malattie negli ebrei," *Il Vessillo Israelitico* (1891): 329.

98 See Anonym., "La Bibbia e il Darwinismo," *Il Vessillo Israelitico* (1892): 69–70.

99 On rabbinical controversies in nineteenth-century Italy, see Carolin Kosuch, "Zwischen Gesetz und Technik: Die Feuerbestattungsfrage des 19. Jahrhunderts als Prisma italienisch-jüdischer Selbstverortung," in *Technologien des Glaubens: Schubkräfte zwischen technologischen Entwicklungen und religiösen Diskursen*, edited by Klaus Tanner et al., *Acta Historica Leopoldina* 71 (2017): 155–171.

100 See Kosuch, "Zwischen Gesetz und Technik," 166.

101 For a statistical overview, see Conti, "Aspetti culturali," 93 (between 1876–1910, 1,298 catholics, 83 jews and 76 protestants chose to be cremated in Italy).

and Jewishness could go hand in hand for Italian Jews."[102] Still, the cremations of prominent jewish Italians, such as the long-time chief rabbi of Trieste, later of Rome, Castiglioni,[103] or the former Roman mayor, Ernesto Nathan, were always a sensation.

Having developed against a christian background in the second half of the nineteenth century, secularism hence also resonated, was accepted and continued to be furthered by the jewish minority, without, however, necessarily reflecting non-religious attitudes.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, the liberal Italian state of the nineteenth century, with its policy of secularisation, intertwined profoundly with the confessional field. Competition and a long-lasting culture war arose primarily with catholicism and its institutions. They had dominated society and politics of the Italian peninsula before the Risorgimento and continued to play an important role in people's lives. The other confessional players – representatives of secularism and religious minorities, especially the jewish one, which has been discussed in more detail in this chapter – leaned towards the liberal state but also towards each other. Some liberal jews supported certain practices promoted by secularists, such as cremation, while secularist media reported with sympathy about religious minorities. However, this strategic alliance could not hide from the fact that the anti-clerical and anti-religious rhetoric employed by secularist media sometimes also targeted certain rabbis or the prophets of the torah.[104] As argued in this chapter, jewish approval of secularist ideas or practices indicated no general jewish tendency towards secularist positions. Most Italian jewry (like jews elsewhere in Europe in the course of emancipation and acculturation) led outwardly proactive and engaged lives supportive of the state and its society to which they belonged. Their judaism turned inwards and had its place in families, also in social relations or in certain areas of culture. It did not disappear, it changed.[105]

102 Luisa Levi D'Ancona Modena, "Prospero Moisè Loria: A Case Study of Jewish Secularism in Liberal Italy," *Jewish History* 31 (2018): 265. Loria is an example of Jewish secularist engagement and philanthropy without abandoning judaism.

103 See David Gianfranco Di Segni, "I rabbini di Roma nell'Ottocento e agli inizi del Novecento," in *Ebrei a Roma tra Risorgimento ed emancipazione (1814–1914)*, edited by Claudio Procaccia (Rome: Gangemi, 2014), 155–159.

104 See Gino Lafesti, "I profeti," *Il Libero Pensiero*, 1 February 1866, 68–70.

105 See Capuzzo, *Gli ebrei*, 82.

Despite the codification of catholicism as the state religion in the *Statuto Albertino* and without propagating a secularist worldview of its own but, rather, a strict separation of church and state as the stick and the continued existence of a "purified, [. . .] more free"[106] church in the new nation state as the carrot, the state's secularisation policy still met central secularist demands and positions. Among them, as has been shown, were the replacement of religious by a civic, science-based education, the provision of legal means to freely choose cremation, or the goal to establish a society based on shared values like civic morality, hygiene and the family conceived as the nucleus of the national community.

Compared to citizens who belonged to a religious community, the status of atheists or those who did not wish to be part of any denomination was rather precarious. In the nineteenth and also the twentieth centuries, these individuals were discriminated against. In the case of imprisonment, for example, they had to attend catholic religious services, which were thought to benefit their moral re-education. Under the fascist regime, catholicism was deemed the morally ordering backbone of the country. This disqualified those who did not belong to any denomination as morally suspect insurgents.[107] To follow on from the observations in the introduction to this chapter and to consider from a *longue durée* perspective the complex relationships analysed above: from 1929, with the Lateran Treaty, marriages once again fell under the prerogative of the church, religious instruction was reintroduced in schools and blasphemy once again became a punishable offence.[108] The republican constitution of 1947, then, provided for religious freedom and free exercise of religion within the legal framework. Since 1979, this encompasses the right to be agnostic or atheist and not to belong to any denomination (Article 19). Meanwhile, the practical implications for the non-religious side were and are a matter of negotiation in a culture that is still predominantly catholic.[109] Agreements have been reached bilaterally, in accordance with the constitution (Article 8), between the state and religious actors in the confessional field,[110] not with the non-religious

106 Camillo Conte di Cavour, "Count Cavour's Speech on the Roman Question," *New York Times*, 21 April 1861, 3.

107 See "Ateismo e legislazione italiana," UAAR, https://www.uaar.it/laicita/ateismo-legislazione-italiana/, accessed 30 April 2023.

108 The Lateran Treaty did not lead to a complete reconfessionalisation. It made major concessions to the Catholic Church but continued to secure the prerogative of the state.

109 See Alessandro Ferrari and Silvio Ferrari, "Religion and the Secular State: The Italian Case," in *Religion and the Secular State: National Reports*, edited by Javier Martínez-Torrón et al. (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 2015), 435.

110 See Ferrari and Ferrari, "Religion and the Secular State," 437–438. Based on such agreements, religious or charitable institutions can receive tax money ('otto per mille', 0.8 per cent of the payroll tax).

that are to date denied the status of a confession in Italy.[111] The growing non-religious side is currently campaigning against this.[112]

With the UAAR, founded in 1991 and member of the European Humanist Federation, an association was created that actively stands up for the rights of atheists and agnostics in Italy and defends atheist and non-religious ideas. On several occasions, this organisation has launched initiatives to reach an agreement with the state necessary to provide the non-religious side with rights and guarantees for financing non-religious schooling or social and charitable work. Their organ, *L'Ateo*/*Nessun Dogma*, as illustrated in the introduction, continues along the path taken by nineteenth-century secularists with their claims for laicism and the fight against catholic prerogatives. Everything considered, Italian secularists' battle for a "civic dimension of political decisions"[113] and the "secularity of institutions"[114] continues well into the twenty-first century.

111 See on these agreements Ferrari and Ferrari, "Religion and the Secular State," 437–438. The treatment of the non-religious camp is currently pending before the European Court of Justice. It was filed by the UAAR.

112 While in 2007, 13 percent of all Italians identified as non-believers, the percentage was 22.6 percent in 2017. See Tina Magazzini, "Country Report: Italy," http://grease.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/11/Italy-Report.pdf, 7, accessed 30 April 2023. However, these figures do not reflect the organisational level of non-belief, which is lower.

113 Stefano Incani, "L'Unione degli Atei e degli Agnostici Razionalisti compie trent'anni," *L'Ateo* 5, no. 114 (2017): 6.

114 Incani, "L'Unione," 6.