Religion and nation in Europe in the 19th century: some comparative notes[1]

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THE COLLAPSE of religion along the secularization process was one of the conditions for the success of nationalism since the end of the Eighteenth Century in Europe. This is, at least, the opinion of Hans-Ulrich Wehler (2003), a German historian, in his new book on nationalism. From his perspective, the criticism of religion during the century of the lights, the dissociation between the Church and the State as manifested in the civil constitution of the clergy during the French Revolution, and the loss of a religious guidance by large strata of the population have created a "void" in which the nationalism could be inserted and in which it has taken the place of religion as a system of faith and guidance (ibidem).

Such replacement has been possible due to the fact that religion and nationalism were going to share some common traits and functions: They would provide myths of origin, saints and martyrs, holy objects, places and ceremonies, a sense of the sacrifice and functions of legitimization and mobilization. The Jacobinical period in France and the anti-Napoleonic wars were, from this point of view, the first manifestations of what the French historian Mona Ozouf (1976) has named as "transference of sacrality" from the strict religious domain to the nation. That is how the sans-culottes used to talk about their "sainte pique", celebrated the Revolution before the "altars of the fatherland" and left to fight in holy wars.[2]

From a historical perspective, however, this approach raises some criticisms. The concept of a void, a vacuum, metaphorically underlines the depth of an executed change, but does not reveal the complexity of the historical constellations and evolutions that are characterized by superpositions of trends, the relations between them, their partial fusion or repulsion. The "similarity of the non-contemporary" – this formula of the philosopher Ernst Bloch (1935) that emphasizes the coexistence of different systems of faith and explanation of the world within a given society, systems which possess, moreover, a different longevity and temporality – seems more adequate to characterize and interpret complex historical situations and moments of historical change. The recent debate on nationalism will be also in disagreement with that statement. This discussion tends

to replace a fixed image of nationalism, based on a primordial concept of nation that finds in it its political expression, a dynamical conception of a system of discourse that feeds from different sources: images of society, of the genders, of the ethnical conditions, of the past, etc., of which religion is only a portion.[3]

The change that occurred in the studies on nationalism along the eighties caused, instead, a reflection about the stand of the religious individual in face of other cultural references in the nationalist ideology. After all, the studies on the history of religions, along the last two decades, provided a more finely-shaded image of their evolutions. Instead of emphasizing the criticism of religion as manifested during the century of the lights and the Nineteenth Century, the investigations insist on the different forms of subsistence, that is, of the rebirth of the "religious" in the European societies.

1. As a matter of fact, such religiosity is not necessarily expressed in the picture of the established creeds – although those are still important -, but in different forms. Even the French republicans did not escape from their attraction, even when, as anticlericals, they got together during the Second Empire in occultist sessions to make tables move! (Nord, 1995, p.216ss). At the end of the Nineteenth Century and the beginning of the Twentieth, the theologian Friedrich Wilhelm Graf (2004) even detected the existence of different religious markets in which the established creeds had to compete with other systems of faith and explanation of the world (cf. Lehmann & Krumeich, 2000). In this perspective, there is still less sense in detecting a "void" created by secularization; rather, it is necessary to inquire to what kind of religiosity the nationalism of the Nineteenth Century could be incorporated. The historiography of nationalism has not answered this question completely yet, although it has emphasized the connection that exists between nationalism and religious systems.

2. Elias Canetti (1992), originary from the national and ethnical "melting pot" of the Balkans and critical observer of the mass movements of the Twentieth Century, insists in that the nations can be regarded as religions, and it is mainly during the wars that the national and religious feelings get mixed. Norbert Elias (1989), historian of the European civilization, points out that nation and nationalism are important systems of belief, and eventually regards nationalism as the most important faith of the Twentieth Century. Georg Mosse (1976) was the one that emphasized, in his book on the nationalization of masses, the fact that nationalism is not only a political and social movement, but also utilizes a religious language and religious symbols. In his view, nationalism-socialism is the expression of that osmosis between nation and religion within the German political culture (cf. Echternkamp & Müller, 2002). However, as early as at the origin of the scientific investigation on nationalism, Carlton J. Hayes (1926) found out that the nationalism is a religion, since it possesses rituals and martyrs and develops a particular national mythology. Finally, the North-American

historian Eugen Weber (1986) observed that a historian can be regarded as the priest of the nation, for helping to provide the nationalism with a historical legitimation.

As a matter of fact, the historiographic debate is not associated to knowing if the primacy should be assigned to the religion or the nation. The most innovative texts seek to bring to light, especially, the processes of nationalization of the religion and of "religionization" of the nation (Walkenhorst, 1996, p.503-29). Thus, they insist on the value of different approaches. In a study of the discourses, they can inquire, based on a categorization made by O'Brien (1988), if the nation is regarded, in its positionings, as elected, sacred or divine. In the latter case, the nation will be placed among the deities and exempt of any possible mundane contestation. It is also important to observe in detail if the nation is associated to the concept of sacrifice, and how such sacrifice is legitimated.

In their turn, the works that focus on the nation's symbolism inquire to what extent this symbolism was borrowed from the existing religions and creeds, or was developed in a confrontation with them.[4] The actors of this process also play a primordial role. The priests and their influence, the intellectuals and their audience, the political men and their strategies are the most important relations intervening at the moments of contact between religion and nation.

Many analyses, as different as they may be, emphasize the magnitude of the contacts between nationalism and religion and insist on their fusion and osmosis. However, a factor of difference is easily cancelled in these statements, that is, the fact that religion, in its self-definition as well as in its message, tends towards the after-world, and, for this precise reason, is less subjected to the confirmation of reality. Or, in other words: the value of the moral and ethical message of religion does not depend, unless in an extremely partial way, on the earthly success of this religion. This is a fundamental difference with regard to nationalism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Its promises of success, survival or well being should be kept, and, if they aren't, the religious legitimation does not help to ensure the survival of the nation's representatives.

The Emperor Wilhelm II could invoke the divine right as the source of his dynasty and his government, in face of the German defeats: however, during World War I, its legitimacy is inexorably disintegrated. This difference also invites the historian not to privilege the discursive representations of nationalism, but to observe, in detail, the amplitude of its concrete achievements and the connection between the promises that were made and the results that were obtained (cf. Haupt & Langewiesche, 2001, 2004).

The following notes focus on a particular stage of the relation between nation and religion, that is, on the second half of the Nineteenth and the first decade of the Twentieth Century. In some European countries, that stage was characterized by processes of nation building. This expression values an important function of nationalism, namely its effect of integration and modernization

of the societies. It can be usefully differentiated from the formation of States-nation as described, for instance, by Theodor Schieder, and from the working up of a nationalistic ideology as the utmost value of a system of faith, although nation building cannot be considered without its connections with the other components of nationalism. It was Karl W. Deutsch (1953) that valued the importance of the systems of communication and interdependence of the different portions of a society that are established on the course of the nation building process. Eugen Weber (1976) provided, on what concerns to France, an empirical analysis of this process, studying, among other aspects, the establishment of the market, of the schools, of the military service. Siegfried Weichlein (2006), in his turn, focused on the analysis of the German Empire's unification by observing the ways of communication between its several regions.

The national States, however, did not act only as factors of communication, but tried also to impose themselves as organizing principles of the societies, as sources of legitimacy and as references of civic morality. In this work of penetration, the national States had to face oppositions, among which the strongest and most active were those by the Catholic Church. It opposed to the State's intervention in the systems of education and in the internal operation of the Churches, as well as in the public organization of the consolidating ceremonies, the mythical heroes, the integrating ideologies.

The debates regarding the place of the Churches in the national societies were always accompanied by a conflict on the issue of who was going to retain the monopoly of interpretation of the past and the present in those societies. Philip Schlesinger (1987) highlighted the importance of those conflicts by stating that "the national cultures are not simple repositories of shared symbols to which the entire population stands in identical relation. Rather, they are to be approached as sites of contestation in which competition over definitions take place." Friedrich Wilhelm Graf (Graf, 2004, p.305) was even more categorical by certifying: "The inventors of the nation need linguistic symbols in order to produce a strong and emotionally cohesive community." (cf. Durkheim, 1897-1898, p.20)

Those fights between, at least, two systems of symbols, two logics of integration and two organizations of the collective and official memory have opposed, in many European States, the State and the Catholic Church, from Portugal to Italy, from France to the Czech portion of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. In these confrontations, the fights of power for the effective and / or symbolic supremacy occurred in the different States in similar or different forms. The following remarks will focus on those similarities and differences, based on the examples of France, of Italy, of the Czech portion of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and of Germany, along the decades that precede World War I. By means of this rather arbitrary choice, we expect to detect a variety of different situations that explain not only the conflicts between creeds, but also the conflicts between the newly created national States and the Catholic Church, as well as the place of a national movement in face of the Catholic Church.

In France, Italy and Czechoslovakia, the State or a laic stream stood, on the course of the Nineteenth Century, against the Catholic Church.[5] This opposition was older in France - due to the fact that, during the French Revolution, the revolutionary State forced the clergy to make a civic oath, causing a schism within the Church between the priests that made the oath and those that refused to make it. The opposition between the two loyalties – on one hand, the revolutionary fidelity, on the other hand, the Catholic and counter-revolutionary devotion – was in the origin of the civil war unleashed in Vendee (Martin, 1996). If, under Napoleon, such opposition was attenuated particularly due to an agreement with the Holy See, it exploded again when, under the Restoration, the Monarchy leaned on the Church. But it was under the Third Republic that the conflict between the Church and the State found its most important expression.

The acts of supporting the Republic and standing for the political and social progress were equivalent to anticlericalism; the acts of defending the Monarchy and opposing to the Republican and, a fortiori, socialist movement were the same as defending the Christian faith and the Catholic Church. Following Gambetta's word of command: "The clericalism, here's the enemy!", the victorious Republicans made laws to be voted restricting the Institutional power of the Catholic Church (McManners, 1972, p.2327-58; Mollenhauer, 2004, p.202-30). With the establishment of the laic, free and mandatory school by means of the educational legislation, a privileged field of activity of the Catholic Church was reduced. In 1880, the hospitals, previously managed by the Church, were laicized; in 1884, divorce was legalized, and, in 1889, a law decreed that the priests should obligatorily render military service, like any other citizen. The practical application of the law of 1905 on the separation between Church and State caused a sometimes violent confrontation between the churchgoers and the police force.[6] The confrontation between the "two Frances" reached its summit and deeply marked the public and intellectual life.

In Italy, differently from France, an agreement between the Holy See and the national movement seemed to be possible within the period that preceded the revolution of 1848. However, due to the fact that the Pope stood at the counter-revolutionary forces' side, the Church took quarters in its hostility toward the national unity, and the priests that participated in the national unification had to face problems with the ecclesiastic hierarchy (Papenheim, 2003, p.202-36). This hostility was expressed at both sides after the national unity. The State responded to the questioning of the government and the State by confiscating the Church's properties, imposing the military service on the seminarians and priests, and refusing to acknowledge the religious marriage-ceremony unless accompanied by the civil marriage. The State exercised in a Draconian fashion its right to inspect and consent the ordination of the archbishops, in such a way that, in 1864, half of the dioceses possessed no archbishops. The Pope's position hardened when, in 1864, he condemned in

his "Syllabus" the "eighty mistakes", and, in 1870, the Pope's infallibility was affirmed when he speaks ex-cathedra.

The issue of the pontifical State's survival was the major obstacle between the two actors. The representatives of the Risorgimento proclaimed the march over Rome and elevated Rome to a symbol of the recovered national unity. After the Rome of the Caesars and the Rome of the Popes, the Rome of the people should be constructed against the Pope. With those discourses, they provoked and intensified the suspicion of the Pope, who feared that this expansionist rhetoric would lead to the abolition of the pontifical State. That occurred in September 20, 1870 (Verocci, 1997, p.89ss).[7] The subsequent decades are characterized by a strongly anticlerical behavior by the Left-wing, but under the pressure also of the Right-wing, which sought to develop its own symbolic policy against the papacy, which was pathetically regarded as a "prisoner inside the Vatican".

In the Czech portions of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, only on the second half of the Nineteenth Century a conflict between the Catholic Church and the laic movement occurred. The Catholic Church was divided into a Bohemian and a Moravian Church, which were dedicated to the cult of their regional saints: Saint Wenceslas in Bohemia, Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius in Moravia (Hroch, 2005, p.55). But it was with the revolution of 1848 that the Czech started to refer, more and more, to Jan Hus, the heretic that was burned during the Council of Konstanz. Hus was regarded as an important character within a European general movement towards progress and an individual religion that was based on ethics. In the historians' writings, the drama plays and sermons, Hus was interpreted as a factor of sacralization of the nation that, with its sacrifice, had permitted the rebirth of the Czech nation. The more the political and Catholic negative reaction against this interpretation attacked Hus' erroneous doctrines, the more his image gained popularity and admiration. Within a period in which the Catholic Church was losing importance, a national and laic interpretation of Jan Hus became relevant and entered in conflict with the Catholic Church (Schulze-Wessel, 2004, p.135-50).

The German situation was fundamentally different from that of the other countries that were mentioned so far, for the German empire had been the stage not of an opposition between the laic State and the Catholicism, but of a struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism; the Hebrew community did not have the same numeric weight. Such confrontation had the objective to achieve the cultural hegemony in Germany and the monopoly of the interpretation of the national history. The identification of the German nation with the history of Protestantism, which had already begun before 1871, was reinforced with the victory of Prussia against Austria in 1866, and with the outcome of the Franco-German war. The Protestantism could claim to the Emperor's faith, which had been defined as Protestant. He stood against the Catholic faith, whose loyalty to the Pope was construed as antinational, and whose connivance with the enemies

– often Catholic – of the Protestant Prussia was suspected. During the period of the Kulturkampf – literally, of the cultural struggle- after 1871, the difference between the Protestant Empire and the Catholic Church exploded.[8]

In December, the clergy was forbidden to criticize the Empire and its constitution ex-cathedra. One year later, Prussia decided to exclude from the School inspection all the Catholics. In the same year, the Jesuits' houses were closed and their foreign members were expelled from Germany. From that time on, the Catholic priests had to be German citizens and should have studied in the State schools of Theology. The State reserved the right to appoint the archbishops, and threatened with financial penalties those who preferred to leave their positions vacant. In this confrontation, the Catholics were perceived as the internal enemies, and it was even affirmed that there was a new confession of faith in the public and private life: struggles occurred between students of different creeds, the inter-creed marriages became more difficult, and consumers chose stores that were managed by merchants of their own creed.[9]

The State aggression to the rights and customs of the Catholic Church resulted in a strong resistance by the Catholics, who refused to comply with the laws, organized movements of protest, and refused to participate in the holidays of national celebration - such as the Sedan Tag, the day that commemorated the decisive battle of the Franco-German war. In the organization of the "political circles", as defined by Rainer M. Lepsius, the Catholic environment would eventually organize the majority of the Catholic voters, regardless of their social origin (Laube, 2001, p.293-332). In the German Empire, the Catholicism found itself in a difficult situation, for it should try to find its place in a national culture, in a national history and in a gallery of national heroes defined by the Protestants. Considering that, for a long time, the Catholicism had defended a Germany that lived under the domination of (Catholic) Austria, it found itself in an uneasy position in face of the victory of (Protestant) Prussia. Moreover, its social-professional composition was damaging to it, for the Protestantism was supported by the great majority of the members of the enlightened bourgeoisie, whose importance was smaller within the Catholic sphere. Because the members of that bourgeoisie had an outstanding position within the German national movement, the Catholics had a limited space to make their voices heard.

Those confrontations, whose general picture we can only outline here, can be analyzed in different ways. An interesting interpretation would be to inquire about the span of the State action and about the effects, on the societies, of the legislation, whose arsenal was similar between the several countries. It would be possible, this way, to write a chapter of a history of the State building, and to establish the extent to which the modern national State was able to confront the institutional and mobilizing force of Catholicism. Seemingly, the importance and effectiveness of the State's action should not be overestimated. The limits of the State's intervention were emphasized even in the German Empire, in which a solid State organization is recognized: "The modest reach of the nineteenth-

century state, whose budgets were about 2 per cent of what they are today, meant that the laws were patchily and poorly enforced." (Burleigh, 2005, p.331).
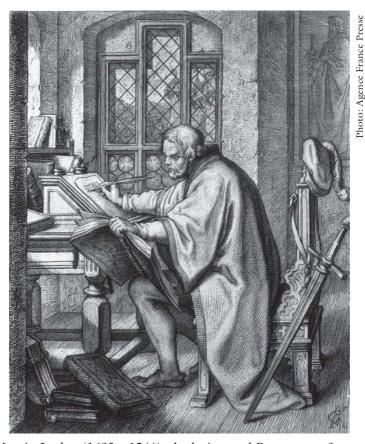
However, these confrontations should be construed within the picture of the relation between religion and nation, for the protagonists were not only trying to nationalize the religion – the German Empire is a remarkable example -, but also to imprint a religious character on the nation. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf (2004) discerned two cases in this context: first, the religious constructions of the nation, which seek to exceed the picture of the existing creeds in order to detect, in a distant, sometimes mythical past, the foundation of the nation. They are not, any longer, interested in the contribution of the myths of origin or the national histories for the construction of the nation; instead, they postulate a sterner and immutable base. That is where the references to the race, the land and to the shed blood in a "völkisch" interpretation of nation would find their place.

A second trend would constitute the nation as a community of believers, by using Christian symbols to ascribe it a sacred nature, resorting to the religious liturgy to celebrate it, and developing a history of the national redemption (ibidem, p.302ss). In the study of the historic examples, it makes not much sense to discern the countries in which, mainly, the nation was ascribed a sacred nature, from the other ones, in which a nationalization of what is sacred is being witnessed. The two processes are complementary, in spite of their divergence from a systematic perspective. The first one refers to a re-interpretation of the national figures and the establishment of a civil religion, as developed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (2005) in his "Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne" ("Considerations on the government of Poland"); the second one is characterized by a national application of the biblical figures, of the saints or of the characters of the Churches' history.

In the chapter of the nationalization of religion, we should consider, in Germany, the cult of Martin Luther (Schweiger, 1982). The reformer was regarded and celebrated as a national hero, for having defended Germany against the Pope and the Catholicism. In this perspective, the Reformation was celebrated as pre-history of the German national unity. During the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of his birth, in November 10, 1883, forty thousand speeches were allegedly made in Germany about the Reformer's merits; a Luther Foundation was created to sponsor the higher education of the pastors' and teachers' children, and a multitude of monuments was built and inaugurated in Luther's honor. The reference to Luther and to a Protestant national tradition also helped to differentiate, in history and in the present time, in accordance with a Manichaean construction, those who favored the uprising of the nation and those who opposed to it. The Middle Ages were regarded, from this point of view, as gloomy and ineffective, and the Catholic Church as ultramontane and vassal to Rome. The European countries that were regarded as enemies of the new German nation, such as France, in their majority Catholic, were perceived as "rotten" due to the ultramontanism that prevailed there. With

many initiatives and resources, the Protestantism succeeded, under the Empire, to promote a "religionization" of the nation and a nationalization of the religion.

The German Catholics responded with the same enthusiasm and with similar arguments. Even in 1848, Ignaz von Döllinger contended that the "only true national Church is... the Catholic Church" (apud Kuhlemann, 2004, p.41). In a historical retrospective, Protestantism has been construed as a movement of secession, destroying the national unity, proclaiming mistaken theological concepts, and being managed by profoundly mundane individuals, whose spiritual center was the belly! Against Luther, the Catholics mobilized, especially after 1848, Boniface, the "apostle of the Germans", to emphasize that the German nation had been associated, by the time of its birth, to the introduction of Christianity. Boniface, whose name derives from the Latin bonum facio, was celebrated as the one who, during the AD Eighth Century, was assigned by the Pope Gregory II with the mission of Christianizing the German provinces. In this missionary action, he was murdered – as the legend has it – by pagans from Northern Germany. The missionary and civilizing action and the martyrdom were, in Boniface's Catholic perspective, a good example of the efficacy and longevity of the Catholic struggle for the unity of Germany. A Boniface Association was created in 1849 to support the Catholics that lived in

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546), theologian and Protestant reformer.

diaspora in Germany, and even in 1855 the 1,100th anniversary of Boniface's death was celebrated. In 1867, the German archbishops held a meeting next to Boniface's tomb. Kuhlemann verified that this cult of the missionary has certainly contributed to increase the national awareness of the German Catholics.

In the Czech national movement, Hus was regarded, after 1848, as the leader of a national movement of protest – the Hussites. He was reverenced for his actions, but also as a national martyr, who, with his sacrifice, had contributed to release the Czech nation. As accurately detected by Martin Schulze-Wessel (2004), the reference to Jesus is obvious. This cult was supported by 250 important intellectuals who, in 1868, left in a peregrination to Constance, where Hus had been burned at the stake as a heretic. This "religionization" of the nation has found a great resonance on the bourgeois and intellectual strata, which, in spite of being Catholic, aimed at the creation of a laic State. An outstanding confrontation occurred between Catholicism, which strongly marked its distance from the heretic doctrines of Hus, and a laicized and nationalized Hus, when the Hus National Association decided to have a monument erected in his honor in Prague, at the Altstädter Ring, right on the spot where a statue of Mary had been placed after the Thirty Years' War. Following passionate and lengthy debates, a commitment was achieved: the decision was made of placing Hus' monument by the side of Mary's statue.

In France, a similar effort in order to nationalize a character of the ecclesiastic history occurred when the Republicans tried to nationalize the cult to Joan of Arc, which had a great importance within the Catholic Church. As demonstrated by Krumeich (1989), Joan of Arc had achieved a great popularity among the Catholic believers and in the popular culture (cf. Winock, 1997, p.4427-73). To the "maid of Orleans", who, thanks to divine inspiration, had saved the king, the Republicans opposed a Joan of Arc that had been betrayed by the king, by the noblemen and by the Catholic Church, and who had to die in order to save France. The Republicans placed among the adversaries of Joan of Arc all those that they combated during the Third Republic. However, this Republican adaptation of Joan of Arc obtained no popular repercussion whatsoever. Instead, the Republicans were more successful in ascribing a sacred nature to the national heroes by transferring them to the Church of Saint Genevieve. Such decision, made during the Revolution of 1789, was abolished during the Second Empire, but renewed under the Third Republic. The entombment of the national heroes inside an ancient church raised a strong reaction by the Catholics, who regarded it as a profanation and a sacrilege. However, in 1855, Victor Hugo - the national poet – was transferred to the Pantheon (Ben Amos, 2002).

Also the Italian laic State, under the pressure of a laic Left-wing, searched for a symbolism of its own, and hostile to the Catholic Church. In the need of creating the Italians after having created Italy as a National State, the different Right-wing governments tried to find, by means of a

policy of memory and celebration, a stronger stand of legitimacy in the Italian population. Such effort put them in conflict with the Catholic Church, which refused to collaborate with the Italian national State, which the Church accused of having deprived it of the Pontifical State and ecclesiastic properties (Tobia, 1991). As a matter of fact, the successive governments went into war against an excessively visible presence of the Catholic iconography, destroying, in Rome, effigies and statuettes of saints – just like the French Third Republic had done by opposing the Republican Marianne to Mary. At the same time, they tried to develop a civic cult to replace, or, at least, to compete with the Catholic influence. The cult to the Constitution, as the one existing in Piedmont, had not resulted particularly mobilizing. Instead, the celebration of Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel II as heroes of the national liberation had a greater popular repercussion. Like in other European countries, the statues that had been erected in their honor and the celebrations manifested the concern with a laic cultural reference (Brice, 1998). The building of a monument in honor of Giordano Bruno, the anticlerical thinker, at the Campo dei Fiori, in Rome, was construed by the Catholic Church as an act of defiance, such

The French heroine Joan of Arc (1412 – 1431)

as the commemoration, in 1895, of September the 2nd as the festivity of the taking of Rome. That celebration was differently interpreted by the different political streams. The Right-wing regarded it as the conclusion of the process of anticlerical nation building, and the beginning of a reconciliation with the Catholic Church; the Left-wing placed it in a process of construction of a new and secular Italy.

In a comparative perspective, it is surprising to see how the policies of memories and symbols are similar in the four societies we are discussing here. They were based on characters of the past, both to celebrate the longevity of the national unity that had been created by the Christianization of the country – such as Saint Wenceslas, in Czechoslovakia; Boniface, in Germany; Joan of Arc or Saint Louis, in France – and to commemorate a rupture of the Catholic unity in the past as the beginning of an evolution that led to the national State of the present: Jan Hus, Martin Luther, Giordano Bruno, and a Republican Joan of Arc could serve as example. In this opposition, the characters of the ecclesiastic history were nationalized and inserted into a historical construction, into an "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992). The nation and the nation-State to which it referred should obtain historical legitimacy and be placed, beyond the quotidian actions, within a religious sphere. The nation itself was made sacred with those discourses and lost the character of a contingent and historical construction. The nation was not defined in a pluralist, open way, but as a closed, unique and holistic entity. The sacralization of the nation contributed to give it that mandatory, exclusive aspect.
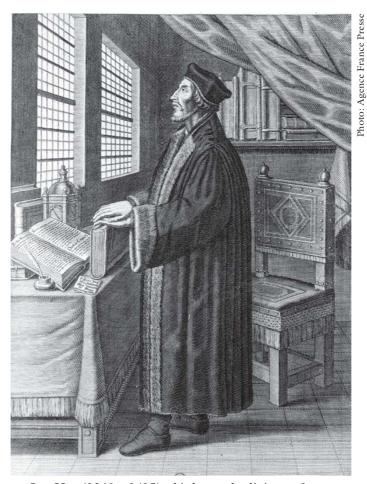
Such confrontation between two different versions of the national history resulted in conflicts between historians and publicists, but also in different symbolizations. The erection of statues, the choice of names of streets and national holidays originated stern oppositions between the Catholic Church and the laic national State. This opposition was particularly strong in France and Italy, but also in the Czech region of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. The anticlericalism seemed to have been stronger in France, where it was associated to an extensive range of liberal, Republican and Socialist positions. It was more controversial in Italy, and became a battle-horse in the Czech national movement against the government of that time. In Germany, instead, the anticlericalism did not have the same weight as in the other three countries, in spite of having been developed with the social-democratic movement. The fight between the two creeds for the cultural hegemony and the power of symbolic imposition in the Empire was predominant, and influenced the symbolic struggles and the chosen forms of manifestation. If, in the other European countries, the laic State should fight against a massive presence of the Catholic Church, against which it should establish its legitimacy, its national narratives and symbolisms – such as in Italy or Czechoslovakia -, or preserve them – such as in France -, in Germany the situation was different. The Catholic Church should be inscribed into a national tradition that was defined by the majority of the population and by the German

Empire as Protestant, and should influence the discourses that constructed the German nation by excluding the Catholics as loyal to a foreign power and hostile to a Protestant version of the German past.

It would be tempting to measure the impact of those symbolic struggles on the public opinion and the population. However, the studies of reception are comprised in the most difficult exercises of historical style, due to the scarce sources and the big methodological problems. A promising approach to deal with this problem was chosen by Oliver Janz (2002, p.61-75), who investigated the religious references that were used, during World War I, by the authors of publications that were often private, or semipublic, in memory of the Italian officers and soldiers killed on the battlefield. Janz gathered a group of 2,300 writings, of which 95% made reference to the nation, without, however, expressing anticlerical feelings. In his analysis, those writings do not show the success of an anticlerical campaign, but the symbiosis between a national interpretation of the war and death as described in a religious language. The dead are regarded as martyrs of a so-called "holy" war, and the texts express a cult of the patriotic sacrifice that would result – with an unmistakable reference to the religious conception – in the rebirth of a new Italy. The national and religious semantics is narrowly connected in those texts, which can, therefore, demonstrate that an anticlerical version of the nation seems to have had few effects; in its turn, the connection between the religious references, the invocation of the nation and the individual fate is present in the texts of celebration.

In order to measure the importance of this process of nationalization of religion and "religionization" of the nation, we can also wonder about the consequences of those discourses during the years preceding World War I. In Italy, the Right-wing had tried to attain to a commitment with the Catholic Church and avoid manifestations and publications that could be regarded as anticlerical. As a matter of fact, the attitude of the Catholic Church was changing as well. With the encyclical Rerum Novarum, the Pope signalized a relative openness toward the modern world, and allowed the national Churches to set out for a policy of commitment with the laic National States (Burleigh, 2005, p.365ss). This did not produce deep effects in France, where the Catholics had eventually adopted the national symbols such as the tricolor flag and the commemoration of July 14, but where the separation between the Church and the State of 1905 unleashed new conflicts and increased the rupture between the laic Republicans and the Catholic believers. It was only World War I that allowed the Catholic Church to participate in the defense of the national unity and the "sacred" cause of the nation, without, however, eliminating the fundamental differences between the "two Frances" (Mollenhauer, 2004, p.228ss).

On what concerns to Germany, it was mainly Kuhlemann (2004, p.46ss) who took interest in the effects of a sacralization of the nation. He emphasizes the importance of the Protestant pastors that, due to the universal character of faith, are opposed to an exclusive definition of nation. They agree with the liberal

Jan Hus (1369 – 1415), thinker and religious reformer.

and bourgeois Catholics in requesting a separation between Church and State, and collaborate on the communitarian sphere as well as in charity associations or Christian organizations. In their turn, the Catholic and Protestant Conservatives can also experience the defense of the dynasty and of the established order in face of the ascending social-democracy. They agree in the defense of family, religion and State, for fear of a State without God. In a certain way, they were the precursors of the Christian Democracy as it will emerge in Germany after 1945. Certainly, the war itself reconciled the ruptures in Germany and contributed to unite the German Catholics to the German nation more than occurred with their French coreligionists.

The most important and politically most dangerous approximation between Catholics and Protestants in Germany, and between laics and Catholics in Czechoslovakia, happened on another base. When the conflict in Prague on the placement of the statues of Mary and Hus was settled with a commitment, the discourses that were delivered then did not make reference to the enmities of the previous day, but tried to construct a unity between laics and Protestants, insisting on nationalist and anti-Semitic themes. It was with the exclusion of the

national and religious minorities that the peace between those two opposite forces was achieved (Schulze-Wessel, 2004, p.143). In Germany as well, a systematic study has revealed that it was mainly after 1918 that the difference between a Catholic and Protestant definition of the nation tended to disappear, to give place to a definition that goes back to the origins of the German nation and emphasizes the bond of blood and race between its members (Steinmetz, 2001, p.217ss). The semantic evolution is, therefore, behind time on what concerns to the evolution of the German nationalism, which, even along the 1890s, had set forth toward an exclusive nationalism, founded on the ethnic origin (ibidem). When the main reference was not the creed any longer, but the ethnic origin, the Catholics could easily become members of the German nation and enjoy their rights. However, this "völkish" definition of the German nation excluded not only the Polish, who lived as the most abounding Catholic minority in Germany, but the Jews as well. A nationalism that was founded on the ethnic origin and formulated in an exclusive fashion was equally hostile to the creation of a republic such as the Weimar one, and opposed to it. This kind of nationalism offered the weapons and pointed the enemies for the National Socialism.

Notes

1   This article is based on the results of two conferences that Dieter Langewiesche (Tübingen) and I organized and published: Nation und Religion in der deutschen Geschichte (Frankfurt; New York, 2001); Nation und Religion in Europa. Mehrkonfessionelle Gesellschaften im 19. und 10 Jahrhundert (Frankfurt; New York, 2004). The results were presented and discussed in a seminar held at the School of Doctorate of San Marino. I thank the investigators for their comments and reviews.

2   Cf., recently, Martin (1996).

3   Cf., for instance, the application of a Constructivist analysis to an empirical study (Müller, 2002). For a picture of the investigation's evolution, see Eley & Suny (1996, p.3-37).

4   See, for example, the special issue of Temps Modernes, v.550, Mai 1992: «Symbolique et identité nationale dans l'Europe contemporaine».

5   For the general evolution, see Rémond (1998) and Burleigh (2005).

6   See the booklet by Mayeur (1966).

7   For this argumentation, see Janz (2004, p.231-52).

8   For the history of the Kulturkampf within an international context, see Burleigh (2005, p.311ss).

9   The article by Kuhlemann (2004, p.27-63) is fundamental.

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ABSTRACT – This essay aims to analyze the relation between nation and religion from the second half of the 19th century to the first decade of the 20th century, during the process of Nation building that could be observed in several European nations. We propose a comparative analysis of the following cases: France, Italy, the Czech part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Germany. Considering the recent researches on the affirmation of nationalism in that period, we respond to the simplistic statement that the success of nationalism depended on the ruin of religion after the end of the 18th century.

KEYWORDS – Religion, Nationalism, Comparative history, Nation Building.

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