

Week 5

- Religion in the 19th century. Secularisation and Revivals
- Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the People of Western Europe 1789 – 1790* (1981) – especially chapter 3.
- Inger Furseth, *A Comparative Study of Social and Religious Movements in Norway, 1780-1905* (2002)
- Mark A. Noll, *America's God. From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (2002) – especially chapters 9, 10 and 11.
- Eds. Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau *African-American Religion. Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*
- David Blackbourn, *Marpingen. Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a Nineteenth-Century German Village* (1993)
- Ruth Harris, *Lourdes; Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (1999)

1. Secularisation and revival in the 19th century

- Is the 19th century primarily an age of secularisation?
- At first sight: liberalism = anticlerical/antireligious; conservatism = religious preservation/restoration
- Yet: religious establishment also act of religious control
- Hence some continuity from absolutism to liberal reform.

Secularisation and Religious Revival II

- Anti-establishment attitudes among the very religious
- Example: Lutheran resistance in Silesia against Prussian Union (Lutheran/Reformed) in 1817
- Emigration to the US to worship freely!
- The country of constitutional separation thus became place of refuge for religiously active people.

2. Religious Revivals

- A) England
- Major example Methodism (Wesley began preaching 1739; movement left CofE after his death in 1791)
- Impressive growth: 1791 – 57,000 members
- 1801 – 92,000
- 1811 – 143,000
- 1850 – 489,000

Revivals: b) Scandinavia

- Lutheran lay evangelist Hans Nilsen Hauge began his ministry in 1796 after a conversion experience:
- ...my mind became so exalted that I was not myself aware of, nor can I express, what took place in my soul. For I was beside myself. As soon as I came to my senses, I was filled with regret that I had not served this loving transcendently good God. Now it seemed to me that nothing in this world was worthy of any regard. That my soul possessed something supernatural, divine, and blessed; that there was a glory that no tongue can utter...

Revival in Scandinavia II

- Repressive response from established Church:
- Hauge spent several periods in prison
- Still travelled more than 10,000 miles in Norway
- Founder of Norwegian pietism
- Some of his followers emigrated to the US and influenced American Lutheranism
- Analogous movements among French Protestants

Revival movements III

- All of these movements emphasised:
 1. the Word
 2. the utter sinfulness of human beings and
 3. the need for conversion in which the person knew their sinfulness and was ‘born again’.
- Social aspects: poor men (sometimes women) read the bible and took on leadership functions.
- Emphasis on emotional dimension of religion

Revival movements IV

- Often group experience ('revival meetings'):
 1. At the beginning: groans from men and women as they realised they were sinners
 2. Atmosphere of tension as they realised they needed God's forgiveness
 3. Relief and whoops of joy and even rolling on the ground as they turned to Christ and felt their sins forgiven

Revival Movements: c) USA

- 18th century: Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield and the Tennant brothers had led a series of revivals (Calvinist inspired)
- 19th c.: new kind of revivals that were much more self-consciously wrought
- These were instrumental in the ‘churching of the US’: cf. J. Butler, *Awash in a sea of faith. Christianizing the American people*, Cambridge 1990

USA II

- Evangelicalism stressed the need for moral choice and the capacity of redeemed individuals to create their own nurturing communities
- Link with democratic ideals!
- Powerful myth about America as a place of effort and accomplishment, virtue and autonomy, national prosperity and progress

USA III

- Specific question of African American Christians
- Late 18th/early 19th c. saw mass conversions of black Americans to Christianity
- Especially to revivalistic, experiential and biblically oriented forms of the religion
- White Evangelicals would use the Bible to justify slavery, blacks found the opposite promise!

USA IV

1. What meaning did Christianity have – if it was a white man's religion – for blacks?
 2. Why did the Christian God permit blacks to suffer so much?
- Ad 1: White ministers preached to slaves on plantations with an emphasis on obedience in this world and salvation in the next. But such control is never total.

USA V

- Underground slave Christianity developed
- Egalitarian texts in the Bible emphasised (Gal. 3,28; Exodus story)
- Lawrence W. Levine, 'Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness: An Exploration in Neglected Sources', in *African-American Religion. Interpretive Essays in Religion and Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997)
- Black Churches as power base for African Americans (until civil rights movement!)

USA VI

- Ad 2 (Why did God permit the oppression?)
- Distinction true-false Christianity influential in Evangelicalism
- Holding a fellow Christian in bondage was a blatant violation of the fundamental spirit of Christianity
- Sense of mission of Blacks in the US: ‘the descendants of Africa should multiply and increase in virtue in America.’ (American Moral reform Society 1837)

d) RC revivals in Europe

- Massive rise of Marian apparitions during the 19th c.
- Also new features: more children and women had these apparitions.
- France was initially the centre:
- 1830–1: Novice nun called Catherine Laboure had apparition in Paris (Rue du Bac)
- 1846 – two young cowherds (14 and 11 yrs old) reporting seeing a vision of Mary in an Alpine village. Mary apparently reported God's anger at the impiety of the region.

Marian apparitions II

- 1858 Bernadette Soubirous, saw a figure in a grotto in Lourdes, a town in the Pyrenees.
- Key elements all there:
 1. humble visionary (female and young);
 2. delivery of a message;
 3. scepticism of parish priest initially;
 4. hostility of civil authorities;
 5. claims of miraculous cures;
 6. finally the deliberate creation of an official cult by the church, and creation of a pilgrimage site

Marian Apparitions III

- Timeline Lourdes:
- 1862 – the pilgrimage received official recognition and a church built above the grotto;
- 1883 – 1901 – magnificent church built there;
- 1891 – local feast (saint's day) on Feb 11 made universal by the pope (though since 1969 its observance has been optional)
- Other officially recognised apparitions: Pontmain in France (1871), Pompeii in Italy (1876) and Knock in Ireland (1879) - many, many others!

Marian Apparitions IV

- Sometimes conflict with local authorities:
- Marpingen 1876 during Prussia's 'Culture War'
- What made these visionaries so attractive?
- Many of them were social outsiders and had experienced hardships
- Psychological explanations for their visions?
- More important: 'ordinary' people could connect with their fates.
- Many of them were women: 'feminisation of religion' during the 19th c.