

their part, most Piedmontese moderates saw the special status of the Church in their state not only as a direct violation of the guarantees of civil equality in the Statuto, but also a threat to the secular authority of the new constitutional regime.

The moderate campaign to remedy this situation took the form of a series of reforms introduced into the Turinese parliament between 1850 and 1855. The first and most important came in 1850 when the D'Azeglio government, with the strong support of Cavour in the Chamber of Deputies, proposed to eliminate separate courts for clergy, abolish the right of criminals to sanctuary in churches, give the state the authority to veto gifts and donations of property to Church bodies, and limit the number of religious holidays. In the following years, the government introduced additional measures to legalize civil marriage and abolish religious orders and monasteries that performed no charitable or educational functions.

These proposals met with the uncompromising opposition of Church authorities, who used their influence in the countryside and at court against the government. Although the Vatican had already accepted in other Catholic countries most of the changes in Church-state relations proposed in the Savoyard kingdom, the Piedmontese Catholic hierarchy refused to concede anything that limited its prerogatives and instead attempted to sabotage the reforms at every turn. Cavour and the moderates did not hesitate to respond in kind against their clerical adversaries. Harsh measures were taken against the excesses of the Catholic press, while intransigent clergy, including Archbishop Franzoni, were arrested, imprisoned, and even banished. To neutralize the power of the Catholic opposition in parliament, Cavour went so far as to manipulate the electoral laws to exclude ecclesiastics voted into the Chamber of Deputies and to invalidate elections where parliament deemed that the clergy had used their spiritual authority to influence their parishioners.

Although these measures enabled Cavour to out-manuever the clerical right in the short run, their long-term effects were less salutary. First of all, the bitter struggles between Church and state that played out in Turin guaranteed the identification of Piedmontese liberalism with anti-clericalism. The two adversaries became locked into intractable positions of principle that precluded compromises and justified extreme measures on both sides. Once Turin became the nucleus of the movement to unify Italy, bad relations worsened as the Savoyard state not only extended its secularizing laws unilaterally to the newly annexed provinces, but also became a mounting threat to the temporal power of the Church.