

As a result, after 1870 what had begun as an antagonism between Piedmontese moderates and clerics became a national problem of enormous importance: the hostility of the Catholic Church and its faithfulness to the Italian national state.

The efforts of Cavour and the moderates in Turin to secularize the Piedmontese state also shaped in fundamental respects the structure of political alignments and the institutional division of powers between throne and parliament in the 1850s. To begin with, they helped to overcome the sharp polarization of left and right in the years 1848-49, paving the way for the *connubio* or marriage between the center-left and center-right that assured Cavour of the parliamentary majorities for reform at home and a national policy abroad. At the same time, religious controversies provided the setting in which the ambiguous relationship between the monarchy and parliament in the Statuto came to be defined in ways that curbed the independence of the king and ensured the primacy of the Chamber of Deputies. Much as in religious matters, these political compromises hammered out in Turin during the 1850s were then extended to the rest of the country and became the defining features of the new Italian state after 1861.

Cavour had an equally profound impact on economic and financial policies. Here he attempted to achieve three interrelated objectives: improve state budgetary balances, raise the standard of living of the population, and increase private profits. As minister of trade, Cavour implemented a policy of free trade to favor Piedmont's entrance into European markets, stimulate export of her "natural" products, and lower the cost of imported machinery and manufactured goods. Accordingly, he arranged new commercial agreements with a dozen countries in western and central Europe during his first two years in office. These agreements opened the way for Cavour to cut duties on a wide range of agricultural and manufactured products in the summer of 1851 that effectively transformed Piedmont from protectionism to free trade. Although customs revenues fell, they were more than offset by the growth in trade and a general improvement in the Piedmontese economy. A rise in international agricultural prices sparked farm exports, while the greater availability of imported machinery favored mechanization of the textile industry. Significantly, the success of Cavour's policies in the 1850s established a precedent that was then extended from Turin to the new Italian nation in 1861.

Upon taking charge of the ministry of finance, Cavour also turned his attention to the problem of the state's budgetary deficits, which had surpassed its revenues in 1850 due to wartime expenditures and repa-