The clericalisation of protestant funeral ceremonies in 19th century Germany: from silent burials to mourning acts,

Abstract:

Most scholars of German history regard the 19th century as the starting point of secularization and anticlericalism. Nevertheless, church statistics show an increasing number of Protestant funerals which run counter the secular trend of this period. The paper reveals some of the reasons for this development and analyses especially the reform efforts of the Protestant Churches. The church authorities started surveys in which the pastors had to answer for the organization of the burials in their parishes. Later the Churches pursued a politics of concessions, restrictions and incentives. Firstly the pastors were urged to be more tolerant towards the burial of persons who had been dissidents during their lifetimes. The refusal of a clerical funeral had become ineffective as a punishment and was now to be granted to everybody. Secondly, the churches forbade the speeches of laymen at confessional cemeteries, which had become very popular in this time. Thirdly, the churches implemented new emotional ceremonies in their funeral rituals like intercessions and the benediction of the dead body. Precisely because these measurements were highly disputable, they shed new light on the contemporaneous attitudes towards death and mourning and therefore challenge our view on the secularisation processes in 19th century Germany.

Keywords: *Funerals, Protestantism, clericalisation, church politics, Germany, 19th century.*