

CATHOLICISM AND THE ITALIAN FASCIST MYTH OF ROMANITÀ: BETWEEN CONSCIOUSNESS AND CONSENT

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Abstract: Drawing on current scholarly research on “political religions,” as well as on the “politicisation” of religion, this article presents a study of the Jesuitical periodical *La Civiltà Cattolica*, of which it analyses the years 1922-1943. The specific focus is on the Catholic discourse on Roman antiquity: as the fascist regime made ample use of a supposed “spiritual” heritage from antiquity –an idea which was summarised in the notion of *romanità* (“Romanness”)-, the Catholic press reacted by defining its position in this debate, especially with regard to the relationship between pagan and Christian, fascist and Catholic Rome. This study joins the already extensive body of research concerning the fascist myth of *romanità*.

Keywords: Catholicism, Jesuits, Italian fascism, *romanità*, political religion, religious politics, discourse analysis, propaganda.

Since the milestone work of Emilio Gentile¹, Italian fascism has repeatedly been analysed as a form of “political religion,” an approach which takes into account factors which traditionally are not included, or are considered as only minor features. First of all, there is the role of culture, which is seen as not only “determined by” politics, but also as actively determining the latter activity, sometimes even as a form of politics in its own right. In this sense, literature, the visual arts etcetera can be studied as active participants in the creation of fascist reality². The same can also be said for the masses³. Another central feature is the religious, mythical predisposition of early fascist leaders and of their supporters⁴. As a consequence, fascism’s religious core was made up of various myths, “stories” –in the etymological sense of the Greek *muthos*- which

informed about fascism’s origins and nature. Apart from the myth of the nation, the myth of the Great War (which was seen as a purifying experience), and the myth of the *uomo* and *Stato nuovo*, one idea in particular stood out as central to the creation of the new, Italian fascist identity: a spiritual heritage from Roman antiquity, better known as *romanità* (“Romanness”).

When one observes Mussolini’s discourse on antiquity⁵, it seems so that already quite early on, he realised the effectiveness of an identification with the greatness of Roman antiquity. Even if initially opposed to all that invoked the city of Rome, its inhabitants and its history⁶, he quite suddenly changed his mind, baptising his 1922 takeover of power the “March on Rome,” in a clear reference to Julius Caesar’s example. From now on, the myth of *romanità* would penetrate the most diverse levels of the cultural spectrum, such as architecture, sculpture, painting and, last but not least, scholarship of antiquity.

Whereas many of the above aspects have been the object of extensive research⁷, the relationship between *romanità* and traditional Catholic religion has only led to a very limited amount of publications⁸. These mainly focus on the way in which *antichisti* (classicists, historians of antiquity and archaeologists) and literary authors inserted references to Catholicism and Catholic antiquity in their discourse on pagan antiquity, in order to promote the idea of pagan Rome as a *praeparatio* of Christianity, and of Christian Rome in its turn as a forerunner to the ultimate, fascist and Catholic, “Third Rome.”

As this aspect has been exclusively studied from the viewpoint of non-clerical agents, the present paper intends to widen the scope, by considering the way in which an important Catholic periodical, the Jesuitical *La Civiltà Cattolica*, handled issues related to (pagan and Christian) antiquity during the heyday of *romanità*, the *ventennio fascista* (the twenty years during which fascism was in power, from 1922 until 1943). In so doing, it contributes not only to the mentioned study of fascism as a political religion, but also to the degree of ‘politicisation’ of traditional religious discourse⁹.

1. LA CIVILTÀ CATTOLICA AND ANTIQUITY DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE VENTENNIO FASCISTA

After the October 28, 1922 fascist March on Rome, *La Civiltà Cattolica*’s discourse on antiquity does not undergo any substantial changes: in the same way as fascism itself is apparently only considered to be a phenomenon of minor, temporary importance¹⁰, the new regime’s interest in ancient Rome does not seem to be of major concern. Indeed during the twenties the myth of *romanità* does not yet possess the rhetorical strength and omnipresence which will characterise it during the thirties. As a consequence, the Catholic discourse on antiquity can remain relatively unaltered, in some cases even questioning, or contradicting, the increasing fascist appropriation of the ancient past.

Generally speaking, contributions dealing with antiquity (articles and above all book reviews) are characterised by two major tendencies: predominance of themes related to Christianity (and linked to this omission of paganism) and opposition to the idea of pagan Rome as a *praeparatio* of Christian and fascist Rome. In other words, no clear echo is produced of the sort of *romanità* which is at that time being developed by numerous *antichisti* (cf. supra).

Being a confessional publication, *La Civiltà Cattolica* has only one interest when treating with historical subjects, one agenda: stressing the importance of Catholic faith. As a consequence, in a 1923 review of a book on the Roman Empire by Gaetano De Sanctis, who arguably was one of Italy’s most prominent *antichisti*, criticism can be based on the judgement of none other than Dante Alighieri, author of the religiously initiatic poem *Divina Commedia*¹¹. The periodical keeps a constant,

vigilant, focus on religious themes and aspects, as can be seen, among other things, in a 1924 review article of a dictionary of Christian archaeology and liturgy: whereas the overall tone of the review is positive, the author’s depiction of early Christians as “insultors of Rome” is being condemned¹².

Only very hesitatingly, pagan antiquity is being given its “due:” apart from a continuous series of reviews of books concerning Latin poet Vergil (cf. infra), only in 1925 a book on the Roman Forum and Palatine Hill is being considered important “per la Roma classica e per la cristiana insieme”¹³, whereas in the same year imperial Rome can be presented as the “più grande potenza civile del mondo antico”¹⁴. However, the reviewer quickly adds that the mentioned greatness only counts “fino all’avvento del cristianesimo”¹⁵.

In some contributions, pagan antiquity is not only being ignored, but even criticised, or in any case strongly dissociated from its Christian follow-up. Most of these texts are published near the end of the twenties, when, after Mussolini has become a dictator, *romanità* increasingly starts to invade fascist propaganda. Whereas for example in 1926 Vergil can still be presented as the ancient poet who incarnates “un’età che ingenerò i germi della civiltà del mondo, ed ebbe preparato e spianato il campo della pugna e della vittoria ai banditori del Vangelo di Cristo”¹⁶, in subsequent reviews no more references to the poet’s apparent religiosity can be found¹⁷. Furthermore, the notion of *romanità*, by now indissolubly linked to fascism, is only mentioned once, and in a very prudent manner¹⁸.

La Civiltà Cattolica’s preoccupation to distance itself from fascist reception of antiquity reaches a high point at the beginning of the thirties, when two articles are published in which, through the figure of Vergil, the idea of pagan *romanità* as a precursor to Christian Rome is rejected¹⁹. This is done by literally stating, among other things, that “Virgilio [...] non scorse il Messia, non divinò il Salvatore Nazzareno”²⁰. As it has become the privileged domain of fascist propaganda, pagan Rome and its “greatness” are now increasingly ignored by *La Civiltà Cattolica* or, when mentioned, criticised and deprived of their originality.

Such can for example be seen in a review article of Luigia Achillea Stella’s *Italia antica sul*

*mare*²¹: not only does the reviewer refrain from making the obvious reference to Mussolini's 1926 speech entitled *Roma antica sul mare*²², but he also underlines the un-original character of parts of ancient Roman culture, even if it has to be pointed out that they are eventually being presented as the product of Rome's "mirabile potenza assimilatrice e assorbitrice..."²³

The last time an identification between pagan and Roman antiquity is clearly avoided, is in a 1932 book review in which the reviewer asserts that the author "è riuscito a comporre una sintesi chiara delle due civiltà [...] della Roma antica e [...] della Roma cristiana, e la nostra lode sarebbe incondizionata se di quando in quando non v'affiorasse un certo spirito razionalistico [...] Tale giudizio viene imposto da certe frasi ambigue, dalle quali si potrebbe inferire che in modo latente operi, nella esposizione del Cristianesimo, l'idea di uno svolgimento naturale, sia della dottrina con il progressivo assorbimento del romanesimo²⁴ [...], sia nella fondazione e compaginazione della Chiesa..."²⁵

As we will see in the following paragraphs, from now on *La Civiltà Cattolica*'s tone will shift quite radically –apart from a continuous, albeit less vehement, stress on Vergil's, and in general Roman antiquity's, pagan character-, increasingly resembling the ever more present non-clerical, fascist discourse on *romanità*.

2. THE THIRTIES: CHRISTIAN ROMANITÀ

Only after Church and State has reached a political (the Lateran Pact) as well as a civic (the *Concordato*) *entente* in 1929, and after a subsequent conflict with the fascist government on the role of the *Azione Cattolica* has been resolved, some aspects of fascist *romanità* are able to infiltrate the Catholic discourse on antiquity. Mainly there are two tendencies: a recognition of the value of the Roman past to its Christian follow-up -sometimes translating itself into the idea of antiquity as a *praeparatio* of Christianity-, and an increasing presence of contributions dealing with aspects of fascist *romanità*, whose merits are increasingly being lauded.

The first time references to a certain degree of familiarity between pagan and Christian Rome can be found, is in two 1933 book reviews²⁶. Whereas these implicitly suggest rather than affirm the aforementioned thesis, a subsequent

review of a publication on Vergil goes all out in its appreciation of how the book's author presents Vergil as "maestro fra i gentili, apostolo della pace, voce dell'aspettazione universale," and of how he "fa vedere come l'opera di lui sia una buona preparazione umana per la carità divina..."²⁷

In 1934, an even more explicit interpretation of *romanità* can be found when Father Rosa writes about the "idea della romanità, della cultura cioè e della civiltà che Roma ha recato al mondo, specialmente dopo il rinnovamento portatovi dal soffio divino del cristianesimo, che fece di Roma il vero centro della Chiesa e la capitale del mondo: *caput orbis*"²⁸. Not surprisingly, such thoughts are expressed in a review article of publications by the fascist and Catholic *Istituto di Studi Romani*, an institution closely linked to, among others, Jesuit Father Pietro Tacchi Venturi –who mediated during the negotiations leading up to the 1929 agreements, as well as during the *Azione Cattolica* conflict- and fascist politician Giuseppe Bottai²⁹.

As Nazism starts its rise to power, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, and the Catholic Church, feel threatened by this new "religion of the race"³⁰. Consequently, a more elaborate form of Christian *romanità*, or rather *romanesimo*, is being developed, especially by Father Messineo, author of some of the journal's most politically explicit contributions. This is for example the case in *Studi sul germanesimo*, which, even if limited to a review of some major publications concerning the subject, offers a blueprint of later thoughts on the value of Roman and Christian universalism as opposed to German mysticism. In his text Messineo points at, among other things, the "necessità di un ritorno al romanesimo, valore eterno e fondamento indispensabile a ogni verace civiltà, se si vuole salvare l'Occidente dalla crisi morale, religiosa e civile alla quale va incontro, spinto dalle forze di dissolvimento, che lo minacciano di rovina"³¹. In this period however, the idea of a fusion between pagan and Christian Rome will only resurface briefly, namely in Father Rosa's *Gli estremi opposti nella crisi della civiltà*, which opposes Nazism (and Communism) to Roman, Christian universalism, which he sees incarnated in the principles of Roman Law³².

For a more outspoken, albeit hesitant, "baptism" of *romanità* we have to wait until the end of 1937, when an article is dedicated to the commemoration of the death of Roman emperor

Constantine. In this text Father Ferrua, in charge of the majority of the journal's contributions dealing with antiquity, states that by converting to Christianity, "Costantino si mostrò [...] di un'intuizione profonda a comprendere il vero bene dei suoi popoli, e merita plauso e gratitudine per averlo saputo volere con un atto così [...] 'rivoluzionario'"³³. In so doing, he underlines the emperor's Christian sensibility, as well as his Romanness. Moreover, through the depiction of his role as "revolutionary," he links him to Mussolini's fascist revolution, as well as to the *duce's* seemingly benevolent attitude towards Catholicism, as evidenced by the signing of the 1929 agreements.

Not unexpectedly, it is also Ferrua who will comment upon the 1937-1938 archaeological exposition *Mostra augustea della romanità* (cf. infra). A foretaste of his coverage of the event: "Vi è un caso tipo che dimostra, e non si potrebbe più eloquentemente, la forza grande di attrazione della Romanità. È il Cristianesimo. [...] In realtà esso è Augusteo, almeno nel senso che Cristo volle nascere sotto Augusto e nel suo impero"³⁴.

Hereupon an anonymous article published in 1938 repeats the impossibility of an ideological "marriage" between Nazi Germany and fascist Italy³⁵. Indeed, for *La Civiltà Cattolica*, both nations represent highly irreconcilable world views, namely that of the "civiltà romana e cattolica, latina e universale," as opposed to the "nebuloso mito razzista, negatore dei supremi valori spirituali"³⁶.

Near the end of the thirties, fascism, and with it *romanità*, starts to lose its appeal. Whereas in his grandiloquent style Father Ferrua keeps on repeating the idea of a fusion between pagan, Christian and fascist Rome³⁷, Father Brucculeri can now again deny any spiritual affinity between Catholic and pagan antiquity, considering the latter "ripugnante"³⁸. Even if limited to a treatment of ancient totalitarianism, such statements already announce the journal's changing stance during the forties.

3. THE THIRTIES: FASCIST ROMANITÀ

La Civiltà Cattolica does not only develop the idea of a religiously inspired heritage from Roman antiquity, but it also increasingly hints at the value of non-Christian *romanità*, parallel to the *romanità* discourse of *antichisti*, propagandists etcetera. Indeed with tensions

between the Vatican and the regime having largely been resolved, by the beginning of 1933 the periodical is increasingly positive in its appreciation of Mussolini's political use of ancient Rome.

The first time this tendency manifests itself clearly, is in a review of a book suggesting the possibility of a "Mediterranean union." Quite significantly, the reviewer does not make any reference to religion, but focuses on the importance of ancient Rome as a factor of cohesion, since "Roma lasciò orme incancellabili e germi fecondi di una coscienza unitaria in tutti i popoli, in cui portò le sue aquile vittoriose"³⁹. This effort is followed by a review of a book on religion and fatherland, in which the author refers not to Christianity, but to the "*pietas in Deum et in patriam* degli antichi Romani, dei quali egli [the author] giustamente si compiace che tante glorie siano state rinnovellate in questo decennio di nuovo regime"⁴⁰. Consequently, the main quality of a book on Roman historian Livy is the "idea [...] di svelare il sentimento di romanità che [...] informa l'opera di Tito Livio"⁴¹, whereas the highly controversial *Via dell'Impero* is referred to as "nuova e grandiosa"⁴².

In 1936, when fascist Italy has become an "empire," explicit references to the virtuousness of ancient Rome's imperial expansion can be made⁴³. This is given an additional boost by the prospect of 1937-1938, the year of the bimillenary celebration of emperor Augustus: through the organisation of a vast exposition (the mentioned *Mostra augustea della romanità*⁴⁴), as well as through conferences, radio programmes and even stamps, the latter was lavishly commemorated as the emperor of peace, empire, law and order. The regime made ample use of Augustus to increase its popularity, even going so far as to distribute free train tickets to allow people from all over the country to visit the exposition.

La Civiltà Cattolica adds its touch to the omnipresent propaganda of the events surrounding Augustus through the publication of the mentioned article by Father Ferrua⁴⁵. In a contribution unlike any other we've encountered so far, the latter does not refrain from exalting the fascist regime's interest in antiquity, comparing Augustus, "duce del suo popolo"⁴⁶, to Mussolini. In so doing, he produces clear echoes of the sort of propaganda that can by now be found not only in popular press, but

even in scientific, or pseudo-scientific, studies: "... dappertutto vuole avere senso la parola d'ordine del Duce, scolpita sull'architrave dell'ingresso: *italiani, fate che le glorie del passato siano superate da quelle dell'avvenire*, e quell'altra in fronte alla sala dell'Impero: 'Io non vivo del passato; per me il passato non è che una pedana, dalla quale si prende lo slancio verso il più superbo avvenire'. Questo per verità è spirito nuovo"⁴⁷.

Ferrua will continue to make similar efforts, for example in a 1938 contribution on the so-called *Ara Pacis Augustae*, the "altar of peace" Augustus erected in 9 BC⁴⁸. However, as we've stated before, near the end of the thirties the fascist regime starts to lose ground, especially as un-popular racial laws are being declared, and as Italy's fate becomes all the more dependent on Nazi Germany's. In this context, critical opinions can again be voiced⁴⁹, even if in a very prudent manner. As we will illustrate in the following, during the forties, after its temporary flirt with fascist propaganda, *La Civiltà Cattolica* will return to its traditional line of action.

4. THE FORTIES: RETURN TO NORMALITY

At the beginning of the forties, the illustrated process of forced cohabitation between pagan and Christian Roman antiquity can be inverted, as evidenced by the publication of an article entitled *Virtù pagana e virtù cristiana*⁵⁰. Another way in which *La Civiltà Cattolica* deals with the heritage of fascism's exclusivism in matters concerning Roman antiquity, is by appropriating the concept of *romanità* to Church-related subjects with no direct relationship to the fascist regime. This is for example the case in two articles entitled *Alle fonti della 'Romanità' della Compagnia di Gesù (1534-1541)*⁵¹, and in two subsequent pieces on pope Leo the Great's *romanità*⁵². The first of these implicitly criticises the relativity of fascist, and of any non-religious, use of antiquity: "Il fascino della Roma fondata da Romolo poteva essere ed era realmente per i Romani antichi molto attraente. Ma per noi uomini del secolo XX non è che un mito [...] Ora il fondamento vero della perennità di Roma non è la leggenda, ma la storia. E questa storia ci riconduce non a Romolo, ma a Pietro, e attraverso Pietro a Cristo, del quale egli è umile vicario. Soltanto Cristo, che è la verità e la fermezza in persona, può essere la garanzia della stabilità di Roma

eterna, non le opinioni umane che cangiano, o le deboli forze umane che vacillano"⁵³.

As global war becomes inevitable, popular support for the fascist regime quite rapidly goes downhill. The resulting spiritual, existential void is claimed by its traditional occupant: Catholic religion. With the Vatican increasingly distancing itself from fascism, *La Civiltà Cattolica*'s focus now shifts towards a discourse on the Church's value as a universal institution, apart from an increase of the discourse on "Italianness" or *italianità*. As a consequence of this process, references to fascism becomes ever more rare. Instead the periodical conveys a concept of national identity⁵⁴ in which there is not much room for the myth of *romanità*.

As *romanità* had been too intricately linked with the use Mussolini had made of it, in postwar Italy its sphere of action has been mainly restricted to history books and articles such as the present paper. However, now and then it has resurfaced, up until the present day: when Gianni Alemanno ran for mayor of Rome in Spring 2008, he did not refrain from repeatedly referring to ancient Roman greatness. After his election, some of his supporters could even be seen bringing the fascist "Roman" salute in front of Rome's city hall: a reminder of the dangers of the use of myth and identitarian discourses in politics.

NOTES

¹ Gentile, Emilio, "Fascism as Political Religion". *Journal of Contemporary History*, XXV/2-3 (1990), 229-251, and *Il culto del littorio*. Rome and Bari, Laterza, 1993.

² Typical examples of this tendency are Fogu, Claudio, *The Historic Imaginary. Politics of History in Fascist Italy*. Toronto, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press, 2003, and Lazzaro, Claudia and Crum, Roger J. (eds.), *Donatello among the Blackshirts. History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2005.

³ In this context, see Falasca-Zamponi, Simonetta, "The Aesthetics of Politics: Symbol, Power and Narrative in Mussolini's Fascist Italy". *Theory, Culture & Society*, IX-4 (1992), 75-91, and *Fascist Spectacle. The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1997, as well as Gentile, Emilio, "The Theatre of Politics in Fascist Italy", in Berghaus, Günter (ed.), *Fascism and Theatre. Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945*. Providence and Oxford, Berghahn Books, 1996, 72-93, and Maier,

Hans, "Political Religions and Their Images: Soviet communism, Italian Fascism and German National Socialism". *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, VII-3 (2006), 274-278.

⁴ See Adamson, Walter L., "Fascism and Culture: Avant-Gardes and Secular Religion in the Italian Case". *Journal of Contemporary History*, XXIV-3 (1989), 411-435, "Modernism and Fascism: The Politics of Culture in Italy, 1903-1922". *The American Historical Review*, XCV-2 (1990), 359-390, "The Language of Opposition in Early Twentieth-Century Italy: Rhetorical Continuities between Prewar Florentine Avant-gardism and Mussolini's Fascism". *Journal of Modern History*, LXIV-1 (1992), 22-51, and *Avant-Garde Florence. From Modernism to Fascism*. Cambridge (Mass.) and London, Harvard University Press, 1993, Gentile, Emilio, *Mussolini e "La Voce"*. Florence, Sansoni, 1976, and *The Struggle for Modernity. Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism*. Westport, Praeger, 2003, and Mosse, George L., "The Political Culture of Italian Futurism: A General Perspective". *Journal of Contemporary History*, XXV/2-3 (1990), 253-268. See also Griffin, Roger, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

⁵ For an analysis of Mussolini's discourse on *romanità*, see Nelis, Jan, "Constructing fascist identity: Benito Mussolini and the myth of *romanità*". *Classical World*, C-4 (2007), 391-415.

⁶ On this aspect, see Gentile, Emilio, *Fascismo di pietra*. Rome and Bari, Laterza, 2007, 23-32.

⁷ On *romanità* in general, see, among others, Visser, Romke, "Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romanità". *Journal of Contemporary History*, XXVII-1 (1992), 5-22, and Nelis, Jan, "La romanité (*romanità*) fasciste. Bilan des recherches et propositions pour le futur". *Latomus. Revue d'Etudes Latines*, LXVI-4 (2007), 987-1006. On *romanità* in architecture and sculpture, see Gentile, Emilio, *Fascismo di pietra...*, op. cit. On *romanità* in painting, see Malvano Bechelloni, Laura, "Le mythe de la romanité et la politique de l'image dans l'Italie fasciste". *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 78 (2003), 111-120. The most studied aspect however is scholarship on antiquity under fascism. For an overview, see Nelis, Jan, "La romanité (*romanità*) fasciste"... , op. cit., 993-997.

⁸ See Braccesi, Lorenzo, "Costantino e i Patti Lateranensi". *Studi Storici. Rivista Trimestrale dell'Istituto Gramsci*, XXXII-1 (1991), 161-167, and Nelis, Jan, "Un mythe contemporain entre religion et idéologie: la romanité fasciste". *Euphrosyne. Revista de Filologia Clássica*, 35 (2007), 437-450.

⁹ On this aspect, see Moro, Renato, "Religion and Politics in the Time of Secularisation: The Sacralisation of Politics and Politicisation of Religion". *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, VI-1 (2005), 71-86, and "Religione del trascendente e religioni politiche. Il cattolicesimo

italiano di fronte alla sacralizzazione fascista della politica". *Mondo contemporaneo. Rivista di storia*, 1 (2005), 9-67.

¹⁰ Indeed during the first years of fascist rule only a very limited amount of contributions was being dedicated to the subject. See, for example, Anonymous, "La rivoluzione fascista". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, IV (1922), 502-512, and Anonymous, "Fascismo e sindacalismo". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1923), 412-423.

¹¹ Cf. Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Gaetano De Sanctis, *Storia dei Romani, Vol. IV. La fondazione dell'impero*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1923), 252-253: "Questo giudizio del De Sanctis non s'accordi con quello dell'Alighieri, il quale, accennando alle vittorie dell'Africano [Scipio Africanus], canta che 'l'alta provvidenza con Scipio difese a Roma la gloria del mondo' (Pur. XXVII, 61)..."

¹² Anonymous, "Il Dizionario di Archeologia Cristiana e di Liturgia". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1924), 450.

¹³ Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Horace Marucchi, *Le Forum Romain et le Palatin d'après les nouvelles découvertes*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1925), 69.

¹⁴ Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Giuseppe Gatteschi, *Restauri della Roma imperiale*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1925), 70.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Anonymous, "Virgilio nelle versioni italiane più moderne (Albini, Vivona)". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1926), 213.

¹⁷ See, among others, Anonymous, "Recensione a 'P. Ovidio Nasone, *Le Metamorfosi. Luoghi scelti, con introduzione e commento di G. Curotto*. Ediz. *Il riveduta*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, IV (1926), 456, Anonymous, "Recensione a 'E. Ceria, *La prima lettura di Virgilio. Nuovo saggio di cretomazia virgiliana*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1928), 270-271, Anonymous, "Recensione a 'P. Virgilio Marone, *L'Eneide nella versione di Luciano Vischi e Michele Leoni, con note di Rodolfo Fantini*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1928), 550-551, Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Andrea Milazzo, *L'Eneide. Lib. II versione e note*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, IV (1928), 346-347, Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Giovanni Giura, *Virgiliana*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1929), 64-65, Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Gaetano Di Biasio, *Libro IV dell'Eneide. Versione in esametri*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1929), 266-267, Anonymous, "A proposito del Bettinelli e delle sue 'Lettere Virgiliane'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1929), 145-150, Anonymous, "Recensione a 'P. Vergilio Marone, *Eneide. L. I-VI. Versione esametrica di Gaetano Di Biasio*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1929), 56-57, Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Marino Ceccon, *Eneide di Virgilio. Saggio di versione in Verso originale*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1929), 57-58, Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Virgilio, *Eneide (Il racconto di Enea)*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1929), 58, Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Paolo Fabbri, *Virgilio poeta sociale e politico*'". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1929), 544, Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Virgilio, *Il*

secondo libro dell'Eneide con note esegetiche ed estetiche di Francesco Vivona". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1930), 262-263, and Anonymous, "Recensione a 'G. Loreta, *La zoologia in Virgilio*". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1930), 165-166. The only exception to this is Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Gino Funaioli, *Esegesi Virgiliana antica*". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, IV (1930), 353-354, which however does not speak out clearly concerning this aspect.

¹⁸ Cf. Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Paolo Fabbri, *Virgilio poeta sociale e politico*"..., op. cit., 544: "Gli ultimi due capitoli li consacra all'opera maggiore di Virgilio, l'*Eneide* e presentatala nella sua vera luce di 'epopea della romanità'..."

¹⁹ See Anonymous, "Il Messianismo ebraico e la IV Ecloga di Virgilio". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1931), 3-20, and Anonymous, "Il Messianismo ebraico e la IV Ecloga di Virgilio". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1931), 97-106.

²⁰ Anonymous, "Il Messianismo ebraico e la IV Ecloga di Virgilio"..., op. cit., 106.

²¹ Anonymous, "Italia antica sul mare". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1931), 142-150.

²² This speech, presented at Perugia's *Università per Stranieri* on October 5, 1926, was arguably one of the most important blueprints of *romanità* propaganda. It has been re-published in Susmel, Edoardo and Duilio (eds.), *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*. Vol. 22. Florence, La Fenice, 1957, 213-227. For more information on the nature of this text, partly written by *antichista* Ettore Pais, see Visser, Romke, "The Correspondence of Ettore Pais in the 'Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio ordinario' (ACS, Roma)", in Polverini, Leandro (ed.), *Aspetti della storiografia di Ettore Pais*. Naples, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2002, 159-170.

²³ Anonymous, "Italia antica sul mare"..., op. cit., 150.

²⁴ Note that the author uses the neutral *romanesimo* instead of the more ideologically tainted *romanità*.

²⁵ Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Giovanni Vidari, *Le civiltà d'Italia nel loro sviluppo storico. I. Le civiltà organizzatrici*". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1932), 598-599.

²⁶ Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Guido Anichini, *Roma, patria nostra. Itinerario religioso, storico, artistico*". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1933), 177-178, and Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Gaetano Pignataro, *Religione e Patria. Studi recenti*". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1933), 381.

²⁷ Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Aurelio Espinosa Polit, S. J., *Virgilio. El poeta y su Misión Providencial*". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, IV (1933), 522.

²⁸ Rosa, E., "Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1934), 157.

²⁹ On the *Istituto di Studi Romani*, see La Penna, Antonio, "La rivista Roma e l'Istituto di Studi Romani. Sul culto della romanità nel periodo fascista", in Näf, Beat (ed.), *Antike und Altertumswissenschaft in der Zeit von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus*. Mandelbachtal and Cambridge, edition cicero, 2001, 89-110, and Visser,

Romke, "Da Atene a Roma, da Roma a Berlino. L'Istituto di Studi Romani, il culto fascista della romanità e la 'difesa dell'umanesimo' di Giuseppe Bottai (1936-1943)", in Näf, Beat (ed.), *Antike und Altertumswissenschaft*. op. cit., 111-123. A preliminary study of this institute's archives, which we undertook in Spring 2008, showed the close ties between its president, Carlo Galassi Paluzzi, and various religious officials, among which also Father Barbera, a contributor to *La Civiltà Cattolica*. As a letter by Galassi Paluzzi to Barbera illustrates, these contacts were more than mere formalities; indeed they reflect the religious inclination of the *Istituto*'s president, as well as his interpretation of *romanità*: "... mi rivolgo ancora una volta a V.R. domandando di pregare e di far pregare in modo speciale per la nostra Istituzione e per chi, come il sottoscritto, ha il compito non facile di dirigerla. Di tale collaborazione soprannaturale l'Istituto ha bisogno, non solo per quelle sue iniziative che tendono a mettere nella dovuta luce scientifica tante glorie e tante benemerenze della Roma Cristiana; ma ne ha bisogno anche perché abbiano esito felice e completo –sotto ogni aspetto- tutte le altre iniziative, con le quali si vuole raggiungere una visione unitaria organica –e quindi vera- della Romanità e della missione gloriosamente terrena e imperitabilmente celeste che la Provvidenza ha voluto affidare a Roma in ogni secolo dall'antichità ai giorni nostri; e infine perché queste ricerche scientifiche e queste iniziative culturali giovino a far tornare nelle menti e nei cuori la luce delle verità naturali e soprannaturali delle quali Roma è stata e sarà depositaria e maestra." (letter to Father Barbera written on December 10, 1936, to be found in Rome, *Istituto Nazionale di Studi Romani, archivio storico: Affari Generali, busta 220, fascicolo 2*)

³⁰ See, for example, Barbera, M., "Mito razzista anticristiano". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1934), 238-249, López, U., "Difesa della razza ed etica cristiana". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1934), 574-587, and "Difesa della razza ed etica cristiana". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1934), 27-42, and Messineo, A., "La nuova religione della razza". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1934), 225-239.

³¹ Messineo, A., "Studi sul germanesimo". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, IV (1934), 181.

³² Rosa, E., "Gli estremi opposti nella crisi della civiltà". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1936), 97.

³³ Ferrua, A., "Per il centenario della morte di Costantino". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, IV (1937), 387.

³⁴ Ferrua, A., "La mostra Augustea della Romanità". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, IV (1937), 484.

³⁵ Anonymous, "Germanesimo razzista e Romanesimo Cattolico". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1938), 289-292.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 289.

³⁷ See Ferrua, A., "Conferenze Augustee". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1940), 221-225, and "La difesa della Romanità". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1940), 321-330: 328. See also Barbera, M., "Romanità genuina

nell' "Istituto di Studi Romani". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1938), 293-303.

³⁸ Brucculeri, A., "Il concetto cristiano dello Stato". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1938), 24.

³⁹ Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Massimo Salvadori, *L'Unità mediterranea*". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1933), 276-277: 276.

⁴⁰ Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Gaetano Pignataro, *Religione e Patria. Studi recenti*". op. cit.

⁴¹ Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Tito Livio, *Ab Urbe condita. Libro XXII. A cura di A. Cavasin*". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1934), 192.

⁴² Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Horace Marucchi, *Le Forum Romain et le Palatin d'après les dernières découvertes. Troisième édit. Revue, avec Introduction sur les Forums et la Voie de l'Empire par O. Montenovesi* e a 'Ottorino Montenovesi, *I Fori e la Via dell'Impero*". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, I (1934), 410. For the creation of the *Via dell'Impero* (nowadays the *Via dei Fori Imperiali*), parts of the Roman imperial forums were excavated, to be covered again in great haste in order to speed up the construction process, destroying valuable archaeological evidence. For more information, see, among others, Barroero, Liliana, Conti, Alessandro, Racheli, Alberto M. and Serio Mario, *Via dei Fori Imperiali; la zona archeologica di Roma: urbanistica beni artistici e politica culturale*. Venezia, Marsilio, 1983, and Rizzo, Silvana, "La Via dei Fori Imperiali tra il 1870 e il 1945", in Comune di Roma. Assessorato alla cultura (ed.), *La capitale a Roma. Città e arredo urbano 1870-1945*. Roma, Carte Segrete, 1991, 150-151.

⁴³ This was for example the case in a review of a book edited by the mentioned *Istituto di Studi Romani*: Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Istituto di Studi Romani, *Africa Romana. 58 tavole fuori testo*". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1936), 503-504.

⁴⁴ On this exposition, which presented *romanità* as a continuous vital force since the foundation of the city of Rome until its Third, Mussolinian emulation, see Scriba, Friedemann, *Augustus im Schwarzhemd? Die Mostra Augustea della Romanità in Rom 1937/38*. Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1993.

⁴⁵ Ferrua, A., "La mostra Augustea della Romanità". op. cit.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 481.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 487.

⁴⁸ See Ferrua, A., "L'Ara della Pace di Augusto". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, IV (1938), 204-215. The regime reconstructed the *Ara Pacis* at the occasion of the bimillenary celebrations. For more information, see Andersen, Wayne, *The Ara Pacis of Augustus and Mussolini. An Archaeological Mystery*. Geneva and Boston, Fabriart, 2003. On the present fate of the monument, see Rey, Sarah, "Monument impérial, monument à l'impérialisme: L'Ara Pacis Augustae de reconstruction en reconstruction", in Bianco, Alberto and Foro, Philippe (eds.), *Idée impériale et impérialisme dans l'Italie fasciste. Journée d'étude organisée par le groupe E.R.A.S.M.E. le 4 avril 2003*

à Toulouse. Toulouse, Université de Toulouse – Le Mirail, 2005, 115-123.

⁴⁹ This is for example the case in a relatively positive review of a book by Ettore Ciccotti (Anonymous, "Recensione a 'Ettore Ciccotti, *Profilo di Augusto*". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1938), 263): Ciccotti was one of the rare *antichisti* who in 1931, when asked to pledge an oath of allegiance to the regime, initially protested, even if finally taking the oath all the same. He did this in the following manner, in a letter conserved in Rome's *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* (Direzione Generale Istruzione Superiore, Fascicoli Personale Insegnante e Amministrativo, II Versamento – 2° serie, busta 36): "La nuova formula del giuramento – a prescindere dal fatto che in un insegnamento in fondo tecnico non so come possa trovare adatta applicazione- implica, in una dizione indeterminata, non solo l'adesione e la doverosa osservanza di tutte le norme che erano o sieno divenute leggi – a cui non mi rifiuto- ma la preconcepita, anticipata, pregiudiziale adesione a tutto un ignoto, indefinito, illimitato complesso di proposte ed azioni, che, come membro del Senato, io sono chiamato, almeno ne' termini dell'ordine costituzionale esistente, a giudicare con la parola e col voto; a tutti gli eventuali disegni, progetti, iniziative ed impreveduti svolgimenti, che, come membro del Senato, io sono legalmente e doverosamente chiamato a criticare, a respingere, ad emendare e possibilmente abrogare con la parola e col voto." (letter to the Ministry of Education, November 25, 1931) On the oath, or *giuramento*, see Boatti, Giorgio, *Preferirei di no. Le storie dei dodici professori che si opposero a Mussolini*. Turin, Einaudi, 2001. Cf. also a 1939 article on the reconstruction of the Roman Senate by Ferrua, who deplors the destruction of a seventh century church, however not without first having pointed out the merits of the fascist regime (Ferrua, A., "La Curia del senato romano". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1939), 60-70: 62).

⁵⁰ Oddone, A., "Virtù pagana e virtù cristiana". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1943), 335-342.

⁵¹ Leturia, P., "Alle fonti della 'Romanità' della Compagnia di Gesù (1534-1541)". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1941), 81-93, and its follow-up in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II (1941), 179-186.

⁵² Willwoll, G. E., "La missione di Roma negli scritti di Leone Magno". *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1942), 33-39, and its follow-up in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1942), 152-159.

⁵³ Willwoll, G. E., "La missione di Roma negli scritti di Leone Magno"..., op. cit., 35.

⁵⁴ On this process, see our article *Catholicism and the Demise of Fascism, Racism and Colonialism*, to appear in the journal *Italian Studies in Southern Africa*.