

Catholic Anti-Modernism And the Modernity of Fascism

Integralist Catholicism, Nationalism, and Anti-semitism in *Fede e Ragione* (1919-1929)

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In December 1925 a small Catholic review based in Fiesole, named *Fede e Ragione* after the principles of neo-Thomism, did not hesitate to remind Mussolini of the superiority of the Church over the state –² ‘superiorità della Chiesa sopra dello Stato’- as well as the duties of the latter toward Catholicism: ‘doveri dello Stato verso della Chiesa’.¹ Successors of the “Party of Pius X” and representatives of the most intransigent trend within the Church, integralist Catholics of *Fede e Ragione* firmly opposed every aspect of modernity including the separation between the public sphere and religion, secularism, and the interference of the modern state.² A confessional review founded in Florence in 1919, *Fede e Ragione* demonstrates that the Catholic endorsement of Mussolini’s regime turned out to be a convoluted, slow, and incomplete process. In the checkered history that led to the Lateran Pacts, much has been said in the scholarship about, on the one hand, the Holy See and the ecclesiastical hierarchy’s positions, and, on the other hand, the opposition coming from Christian democrat tendencies.³ The reservations expressed by the right-wing of Italian Catholicism have been instead overlooked by the historiography. To some extent, this lack of study could be related to the complex and not immediately decipherable relations of integralist Catholics to Fascism, as their positions were ambivalent and fluctuated: neither an open opposition nor an enthusiastic support for the regime. Much of this ambiguity has to do with integralist Catholics’ inflexible anti-modernist and theocentric views as they increasingly faced the secular modernity of the Fascist regime.

This case contributes to a more nuanced investigation of the diversity of Catholic culture under Fascism encouraged by a recent scholarship that, in the wake of Renato Moro, further explores the variegated manifestations of Catholic nationalism and the impact of nationalization and mass politics upon Italian Catholicism.⁴ Although a

¹ I cattolici di Fede e Ragione, ‘Dopo l’attentato del 4 novembre - Lettera aperta all’on. Mussolini’, *Fede e Ragione*, November 15, 1925.

² G. Miccoli, *Fra mito della cristianità e secolarizzazione*, Marietti, Genova, 1985; D. Menozzi, *La Chiesa cattolica e la secolarizzazione*, Einaudi, Torino, 1993; G. Vian, *Il modernismo. La Chiesa cattolica in conflitto con la modernità*, Roma, Carocci, 2012.

³ R. Webster, *The Cross and the Fasces, Christian Democracy and Fascism in Italy*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1960; P. Scoppola & F. Traniello, *I cattolici tra fascismo e democrazia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1975.

⁴ R. Moro, ‘Nazione, cattolicesimo e regime fascista’, in: *Rivista di storia del cristianesimo*, I, (2004), pp. 129-147; G. Cavagnigni, ‘Nazione e provvidenza. Padre Reginaldo Giuliani tra Fiume ed Etiopia (1919-

specific case study that still lacks an in-depth scholarly investigation,⁵ this example formed part of a broader tendency that demonstrates that the merging between Fascism and right-wing Catholicism was nothing but inevitable and predictable. Rather than an ideological symbiosis, the support of integralist Catholics for Mussolini's regime resulted in large part from an opportunistic convergence that focused mainly on the most reactionary features of Fascism while downplaying its anti-clerical fringes. In accordance with its agrarian, *sanfedista*, and traditionalist positions, *Fede e Ragione* saw in Mussolini's regime an opportunity to curb modern forces in Italy and to crush 'common enemies' of both Fascism and the Catholic Church: socialists, Christian democrats, free-masons, Protestants, and Jews.⁶ As the Fascist regime moved closer to a resolution on the Roman question, *Fede e Ragione* embraced clerical Fascism as an instrumental means of re-catholicizing Italy.⁷

A Legacy of Integralist Catholicism and Anti-Modernist Activism

Founded in Florence in December 1919, and transferred to Fiesole in March 1922, *Fede e Ragione* was launched as a theological and cultural bi-weekly, a 'rivista cattolica di cultura e di critica'. Beyond this generic subtitle, the review aimed at implementing a precise anti-modernist platform. The review relied on the zeal of its readers to propagate integralist views and presented itself as a 'centro di raccolta di quanti cattolici, preti e laici, intendono di unirsi a noi per opporre una azione franca e coraggiosa alla invadenza dei principi nefasti del liberalismo, del naturalismo del laicismo, che minacciano di travolgere ogni nostra attività'.⁸ *Fede e Ragione's* editors defined their Catholicism as integral, an activism entirely devoted to upholding the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church not only in religious matters but also in the secular realm:

Noi siamo, in primo luogo, puramente ed integralmente cattolici in questo senso che noi riconosciamo il pieno diritto della dottrina, della disciplina e delle direttive della Chiesa non solo sull'individuo e nelle questioni strettamente religiose, ma sulla società ancora, ed al riguardo pure di qualunque questione mista, o sia tale che anche indirettamente tocchi la Fede e la morale.

In seguito di che, è chiaro, noi lotteremo per il principio di autorità, della tradizione e dell'ordine religioso-sociale nel senso cattolico di queste parole e nelle sue deduzioni logiche sotto la guida suprema della Sede Apostolica [...]. Saremo, per conseguenza, avversari dichiarati ed irreconciliabili, tanto sul terreno religioso, quanto sul terreno politico-sociale, di ogni forma di liberalismo, come quello che nega di riconoscere i sovrani diritti di Dio, del Cristo e della Chiesa sulla vita degli individui e della società, da una parte, e, dall'altra, si rifiuta di rigettare il principio rivoluzionario e massonico del diritto pubblico dell'ateismo.⁹

36)', in: *Passato e Presente. Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 81, (2010), pp. 43-67; A. Guasco, *Cattolici e fascisti. La Santa Sede e la politica italiana all'alba del regime (1919-1925)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2013; Lucia Ceci, *L'interesse superiore. Il Vaticano e l'Italia di Mussolini*, Roma, Laterza, 2013.

⁵ G. Vannoni, 'Integralismo cattolico e fascismo: *Fede e Ragione*', in F. Margiotta Broglio (ed.), *La Chiesa del Concordato. Anatomia di una diocesi: Firenze, 1919-1939*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1977 pp. 441-478: a study however partially based on an apologetic essay published by the son of *Fede e Ragione's* lawyer: A. M. Fortuna, 'Vita e opere di Don Paolo de Töth', *Adveniat Regnum, rivista di studi cattolici*, III, 4-5 (1965-1966), pp. 87-93.

⁶ D. Kertzer, *The Pope and Mussolini. The Secret History of Pius XI and the Rise of Fascism in Europe*, Random House, New York, 2014.

⁷ On this concept: J. Pollard, 'Clerical Fascism: Context, Overview and Conclusion', in: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, XVII, 2 (2007), pp. 433-446.

⁸ 'Il nostro periodico', *Fede e Ragione*, December 1-15, 1919, 1, p. 17. From 1921, the publication became weekly.

⁹ *Ivi*, p. 4.

Fede e Ragione embraced anti-modernism in every sense of the term, as uttered in the encyclical letters *Quanta cura* (with its *Syllabus Errorum*) of 1864 and *Pascendi* of 1907: not only the opposition to secular modernity as intended by Pius IX, but also the repression of modernism within the Church as conducted under Pius X. Thus, *Fede e Ragione* saw the modern world in apocalyptic terms as a cosmic struggle of the Church against all the forces of the anti-Church ('anti-Chiesa'), comprehensively defined as 'l'insieme dei suoi avversari sia *esterni*, vale a dire quelli che si dichiarano lealmente e francamente *anticattolici* e *antireligiosi*, e sia *interni*, ovvero i falsi amici della Chiesa e della religione'.¹⁰ This fight implied for the integralists to curb all the opponents of the Church, enemies from without (socialists, atheists, free-masons, Jews) and from within (modernists, Christian democrats, and liberal Catholics). To this end, the editors of *Fede e Ragione* drew upon a military terminology that called readers to become soldiers of God and considered themselves new crusaders in 'una lotta nella quale tutto indistintamente siamo chiamati ad essere soldati contro i nemici di Dio e della società'.¹¹ In the Italian context, these integralist positions implied a fierce advocacy in defense of the rights of the Pope in the 'Roman Question', extensively understood as both a religious and a political issue. The review campaigned for the reinstatement of the pontiff's temporal power: 'Egli deve anche esteriormente apparire, quale è, il re, il principe della umanità cristiana'.¹² Therefore, all Catholic tendencies that were willing to compromise with the Italian state and its liberal political system were deprecated as traitors to the cause of the Holy See.

The trajectories of *Fede e Ragione's* editors provide a deeper understanding of the radical anti-modernism of this review. The two founders and main contributors of the review were Don Paolo De Töth (1881-1965) and Count Filippo Sassoli de Bianchi (1871-1938). The latter was *Fede e Ragione's* main financier thanks to the revenues of his family's distillery. Originally from Bologna, Sassoli de Bianchi was a prominent figure of the *Movimento cattolico* and Catholic lay organizations, such as the student organization *FUCI* and the political movement *Unione popolare*. Related to Cardinal Ranuzzi de Bianchi, and member of the Dominican Third-Order, he presided over the 7th social week of Italian Catholics in 1912 (Venice) and again in 1927 over the 9th National Eucharistic Congress.¹³ Before *Fede e Ragione*, Sassoli de Bianchi had already voiced his integralist views in *L'Unità cattolica*, the Florence intransigent daily owned by the Holy See, notorious for its vehemently anti-modernist campaigns under the direction of Paolo De Töth in 1908-1909 with the support of Pius X.¹⁴ Descendant of a Hungarian noble family settled in Friuli, De Töth was ordained priest in Spoleto in 1906 within the order of the Discalced Carmelites. He quickly left religious life and devoted himself to Catholic journalism. In 1907, he founded in Siena *Le armonie della fede*, an anti-modernist theological review, later moved to Fiesole. There, De Töth found the unconditional support of bishop Giovanni Fossà who incardinated him to the diocese of Fiesole in 1909 and allowed him to teach in the diocesan seminary. After the war, Msgr Fossà continued supporting De Töth's integralist activism and defended *Fede e Ragione* against the ecclesiastic hierarchy. *Fede e Ragione* was also protected by Cardinal Tommaso Pio Boggiani, archbishop of Genoa in 1919-1921. A friend of Sassoli de Bianchi, Cardinal Boggiani pressured the bishop of Aquapendente (where the publishers

¹⁰ *Ivi*, pp. 5-6.

¹¹ Spectator, 'W. Wilson, la massoneria e la Lega delle Nazioni', *Fede e Ragione*, December 1-15, 1919.

¹² 'Il nostro periodico', cit., p. 7.

¹³ See his biography by S. Tramontin, in F. Traniello & G. Campanini (ed.), *Dizionario storico del movimento cattolico in Italia, 1860-1980, III, Le figure rappresentative*, Torino, Marietti, 1984, pp. 778-779; also the biography by P. De Töth: *F. Sassoli de Bianchi: gran signore e perfetto cristiano, filosofo, sociologo, modello di cattolica attività*, Florence, 1958.

¹⁴ M. Tagliaferri, *L'Unità cattolica, studio di una mentalità*, Roma, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1993.

Lemurio printed *Fede e Ragione*) to grant his *imprimatur* to the integralist review at the beginning of 1921.¹⁵ After February 1922 and until 1929, *Fede e Ragione* received the *imprimatur* of the diocese of Fiesole.

The anti-modernist vehemence of *Fede e Ragione* was also influenced by Umberto Benigni's close collaboration with Sassoli de Bianchi and De Töth. Himself a journalist in the early stages of his career, Msgr Benigni (1862-1934) was a key figure of the anti-modernist campaign under Pius X as the creator in 1909 of the infamous transnational secret network *Sodalitium Pianum*, also called *Sapinière*.¹⁶ This espionage organization aimed to denounce suspects of modernism within the Church. Benigni and the *Sodalitium Pianum* fell in disgrace in 1914 with the pontificate of Benedict XV, although the organization was officially disbanded only in 1921. Deprived of pontifical support and after the revolutionary changes of the World War, Benigni reoriented his activism in a more political rightward direction. *Fede e Ragione* was one among the multifold counter-revolutionary activities of Benigni during that period; the local Tuscan review benefited from his transnational connections. From Rome, Benigni directed an office that was dedicated to the international correspondence of *Fede e Ragione*. He also provided the Fiesole editors with his own bulletins and frequently wrote antisemitic articles published in *Fede e Ragione* under the pen name of H. Brand.¹⁷

Most of *Fede e Ragione*'s editors were local Catholic activists, such as Piero Bargellini, Tito Casini, Nicola Lisi, lawyers Antonio Renier and Aldo Fortuna, Roberto Mäder, Guido Mattiussi, and Arturo Colletti. Some of them demonstrated broader connections with the Catholic cultural scene in Florence during the Fascist era.¹⁸ Future Christian democrat mayor of Florence in 1965-1966, the young Bargellini (1897-1980) also collaborated at the same time with Mino Maccari's *Il Selvaggio*, a mouthpiece of the Tuscan *Strapaese*, a provincial, rural, and anti-bourgeois trend. Bargellini also became closer to Giovanni Papini, author of the popular *Storia di Cristo* in 1921. Albeit critical of *Fede e Ragione*'s polemical tone (calling Bargellini's friends 'i suoi itterici amici fiesolani'), Papini himself was among the subscribers of the review.¹⁹

Fede e Ragione had a rather tiny audience and was read mainly by priests and zealous lay Catholics. The number of subscribers never went beyond 2,000. The potential number of readers however could have been slightly higher as subscriptions were frequently collective. Additionally, *Fede e Ragione* was conceived as a tool for preaching: each reader received multiple copies to disseminate for propaganda purposes. Although the review was mainly read locally (Florence, Pisa, and Grosseto), the complaints of various bishops against *Fede e Ragione*'s intrusions into their

¹⁵ Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Fondo Benigni (FB), b. 3, letter from Cardinal Boggiani to Msgr Guarnieri, February 20, 1921.

¹⁶ L. Bedeschi, *La Curia romana durante la crisi modernista, episodi e metodi di governo*, Parma, Guanda, 1968; E. Poulat, *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral. Un réseau international antimoderniste: la Sapinière (1909-1912)*, Paris, Casterman, 1969; G. Verucci, *L'eresia del Novecento. La Chiesa e la repressione del modernismo in Italia*, Torino, Einaudi, 2010.

¹⁷ E. Poulat, *Catholicisme, démocratie et socialisme. Le mouvement catholique et Mgr. Benigni de la naissance du socialisme à la victoire du fascisme*, Casterman, Paris 1977; M. Pichetto, *Alle radici dell'odio. Preziosi e Benigni antisemiti*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 1983; on Benigni's network, I refer to my dissertation, forthcoming publication: *Catholiques et antisémites: Le réseau transnational de Mgr Benigni (1918-1934)*, Paris, CNRS, 2018.

¹⁸ L. Mangoni, *L'interventismo nella cultura*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1974; W. Adamson, 'The Culture of Italian Fascism and the Fascist Crisis of Modernity. The Case of *Il Selvaggio*', in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, XXX, 4 (1995), pp. 555-575; On Papini: R. Bonavita, *Spettri dell'altro. Letteratura e razzismo nell'Italia contemporanea*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2009.

¹⁹ M. C. Tarsi (ed.), *Carteggio Giovanni Papini - Piero Bargellini, 1923-1956*, Roma, Edizione di storia e letteratura, 2006: Letter of Papini to Bargellini, September 23, 1927, pp. 16-18.

dioceses demonstrate a larger, national diffusion: in Latium, and to a greater extent in the North-East of Italy, especially in Veneto. Indeed, De Töth regularly traveled to Vicenza and Treviso where a group of dedicated aristocrats and clerics supported his integralist cause. Furthermore, *Fede e Ragione* had a broader impact within Italian Catholicism as its savage attacks against modernism, Christian democracy, and the Jesuits, fostered a wider range of replies, especially in *Civiltà Cattolica*. The director Father Enrico Rosa pointed out numerous times the disrespectful and offensive assaults from the Fiesole group, for instance against Father Giovanni Semeria.²⁰ In his letters to Papini, Bargellini proudly defended *Fede e Ragione*'s scandalous tone ('noi di Fiesole siamo scandalosi; lo dicono tutti') as justified by a systematic tracking and uncovering of every alteration to the Catholic tradition: 'E qui faccio la difesa degli itterici di Fiesole, i quali sono in quello stato di cattiva salute perché sono in uno stato di continua indignazione per gli sciagurati e vergognosi metodi di lotta che si hanno nel campo cattolico'.²¹ Still in 1929, the review denounced the infiltration of modernist ideas within the Church and Catholics who did not sufficiently fight modernism:

Accennavamo nell'ultimo numero dell'anno testè passato alla illusione di coloro i quali non vogliono credere alla esistenza del modernismo e si scandalizzano se ne sentono parlare, anzi solo nominare. Ma bisogna pure avere il coraggio di guardare in faccia la realtà. E la realtà è che nel campo cattolico ci si trova, oggi, davanti ad uno sbandamento pauroso di principii e di idee: nel luogo delle ferme convinzioni domina il sentimentalismo; la vita cristiana si va naturalizzando un giorno più dell'altro, mentre la resistenza all'errore e al lassismo dei costumi va indebolendosi sempre di più.²²

Among the naturalist tendencies of Italian Catholic culture, Piero Bargellini decried the revival of Catholic theatre after the war and denounced the trend of 'spiritual theatre' on behalf the rigorous principles of French moralist Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet. In *Fede e Ragione*, he vilipended the play *Paolo di Tarso* by Guido Manacorda who in turn replied to Bargellini in the Florence daily *La Nazione*. The bitter fight between both catholic writers lasted throughout 1927, provoking Papini's disapproval while Bargellini also cast scorn on the *Compagnia di San Paolo*, a community created in Milan in 1921, which promoted Catholic cultural action including theatre.²³

Catholic Interventism in the Aftermath of WWI and the Emergence of Fascism

Founded in the immediate aftermath of the Great War, *Fede e Ragione* interpreted the devastating world conflict as a divine punishment against modern society's rejection of God. Thus, the review argued that re-catholicizing Italian culture and politics and the restoration of the Holy See supremacy were the only legitimate solutions to the postwar unrest. Not surprisingly, *Fede e Ragione* applauded Pius XI's first encyclical letter *Ubi Arcano* (1922), which shared the same diagnosis of the war and promoted the dogma of the Social Reign of Christ the King.²⁴ However, this aspiration to a Christian reconquest over modern society was conceived only in

²⁰ For instance in *Civiltà Cattolica*: 'I fanciulli alla Comunione', July 2, 1927, and 'La recente calunnia di *Fede e Ragione* contro la *Civiltà Cattolica*', September 15, 1928.

²¹ *Carteggio Papini-Bargellini*, cit., letter of Bargellini to Papini, September 24, 1927, pp. 21-26.

²² First page without title, *Fede e Ragione*, January 6, 1929.

²³ P. Bargellini, 'Teatro spirituale' and 'Teatro cristiano', *Fede e Ragione*, August 21, and October 15, 1927; G. Manacorda, 'Aspra polemica nel campo cattolico', *La Nazione*, September, 11-12, 1927. Bargellini edited the same year a translation of Bossuet's *Trattato della concupiscenza*, published by Libreria Editrice Fiorentina in a collection directed by Papini. See *Carteggio Papini-Bargellini*, cit., Papini's letter to Bargellini, September 11, 1927, pp. 11-12.

²⁴ D. Menozzi, *Sacro Cuore. Un culto tra devozione interiore e restaurazione cristiana della società*, Roma, Viella, 2001; L. Pettinaroli (ed.), *Le gouvernement pontifical sous Pie XI. Pratiques romaines et gestion de l'universel*, Rome, Ecole française de Rome, 2013.

reactionary terms by integralist Catholics. Every adaptation or compromise with modern principles that found their legitimacy outside the Church tradition were reprobated as pure error, opportunism, and even threat to the truth of the faith. Thus, *Fede e Ragione* fustigated under the term ‘aconfessionalism’ various forms of Catholic action, especially Christian unionism, even when authorized by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In the troubled postwar context in Italy, the Integralists of Fiesole automatically discredited any form of social Catholicism and Christian democracy in a reductive view: ‘Bisogna combattere il semi-socialismo e modernismo sociale, professati, purtroppo!, da un numero non indifferente di cattolici ignoranti, ciechi e ostinati’.²⁵ Advocating for the creation of a genuine party of God (‘partito di Dio’), *Fede e Ragione* constantly targeted the *Partito Popolare Italiano* (PPI), the first democratic Catholic party in Italy founded in 1919.

Fede e Ragione distrusted the first *sansepolcrista* Fascism because of the anticlerical and revolutionary orientations of its foundation in March 1919. The initial Fascist intransigence on the Roman Question inevitably contrasted with the same type of intransigence on the Catholic side as *Fede e Ragione* asserted, still in June 1922, that Rome should not be the capital of the Italian state.²⁶ Additionally, Fascism, because of its neo-pagan nationalism and sacralization of politics, was looked upon with suspicion by integralist Catholics who instantaneously perceived in it a potential contender of Catholic hegemony in Italy. Despite their own nationalistic tendencies, the editors made clear that nationalism was acceptable only as a form of patriotism that respected religion: ‘contro quel nazionalismo pagano, cui oggi il concetto di patria è ridotto, e che fa ottimo riscontro al sindacalismo areligioso [...], noi difenderemo il vero concetto e amore di patria’.²⁷ Denouncing in May 1921 a ‘divinizzazione dell’ideale patriottico’, *Fede e Ragione* emphasized the Masonic affiliation of some Fascists and the entanglements of Fascism and the ‘Sect’, even alleging to collusions with the ‘alta banca giudaica’.²⁸ Yet, after this article in May 1921, the review increasingly stressed the benefits of Mussolini’s movement instead of its pitfalls, notably its anti-democratic impulses. In June 1922, *Fede e Ragione* deplored the acute political violence throughout the country and called for religious unity under the guidance of the Church: ‘Abbasso i partiti! Solo dopo verrà la restaurazione religioso-sociale’.²⁹ However, despite the claim of being above partisan politics, *Fede e Ragione* demonstrated signs of sympathy for Fascism, especially after the conservative reorientation of the movement with the creation of the Fascist National Party (PNF) in November 1921 and Mussolini’s strategic moves to convince monarchist, clerical, and economic elites of the respectability of his party. Horrified by the social unrest after the *Biennio Rosso*, *Fede e Ragione* keenly perceived all the advantages of the ‘preventive counter-revolution’ of Fascism.³⁰ In the midst of violent outbreaks of rural squadristism in May-June 1922, *Fede e Ragione* published an article that defended the property rights of agrarian owners and presented peasants’ condition as a sign of Christian humility.³¹ Later, at the beginning of 1923, *Fede e Ragione* praised the social reactionary positions of local Fascists such as Paolo Orano – once a socialist and then revolutionary syndicalist like Mussolini – and reprinted his article published in the

²⁵ ‘Il nostro periodico’, cit., p. 13.

²⁶ Dudler, ‘Studio storico-critico su Roma Capitale d’Italia. Roma non è la capitale storica d’Italia’, *Fede e Ragione*, June 18, 1922.

²⁷ ‘Il nostro periodico’, cit., pp. 16-17.

²⁸ Spectator, ‘Il fascismo. Avviso ai cattolici italiani’, *Fede e Ragione*, May 1, 1921.

²⁹ ‘Azione di difesa sociale. Per la religione, per la patria, per la famiglia. Abbasso tutti i partiti!’, *Fede e Ragione*, June 25, 1922.

³⁰ A. Tasca, *La Naissance du fascisme. L’Italie de 1918 à 1922*, Paris, Gallimard, 1938.

³¹ Marchese Achille Sassoli Tomba, ‘La questione sociale nelle campagne’, *Fede e Ragione*, from May 7 to June 11, 1922.

Florence daily *Il Nuovo Giornale*; according to *Fede e Ragione*, the Fascist conservative stance epitomized by Orano complied with the social teaching of the Church:

Una società di Dio e di Gesù ha per spina dorsale la rassegnazione e l'umiltà, il dovere alla sofferenza. Un proletariato emancipato per la sua forza, per il proprio arbitrio esclude Gesù e Dio. Compie il peccato di orgoglio. Non c'è posto per lui in paradiso. Se è fatto obbligo al ricco di dare ai poveri, è fatto obbligo al povero di far valore morale della sua inferiorità economica.³²

From Catholic Nationalism to Clerical Fascism

After the March on Rome, *Fede e Ragione's* judgment on Fascism fluctuated according to two different parameters in Mussolini's policies: the repression of 'enemies' and the relations between the Church and the Fascist state. *Fede e Ragione* increasingly praised the Fascist regime as the antipode of liberal democracy as well as a bulwark against socialism. The harsh conflict between Fascism and the growing opposition of the PPI - especially among the followers of Don Luigi Sturzo - significantly contributed to *Fede e Ragione's* endorsement of Mussolini's regime. Because the integralist review stigmatized Sturzo and the PPI as a dangerous modernist party for Italian Catholics, it also depicted, by contrast, a valorizing image of Fascism as the real defender of both Catholic and Italian interests. While Pius XI called Italian Catholics to restrain from being involved in political divisions, *Fede e Ragione* instrumentalized such pontifical statements to discredit only the political opposition of the PPI and Christian democracy more broadly.³³ Following the abduction of Socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti, the Aventine Secession at the end of June 1924 fostered even more integralist animosity toward the PPI. For instance, *Fede e Ragione* pointed out the *Popolari* participation alongside the 'male branche massonico-ebraico-democratico-socialistiche della taverna aventinese'; in this article, Tito Casini asserted that Italian Catholics should defend only and exclusively the liberty of the Church, and not the "libertà moderna", caccolo schifoso della rivoluzione francese'.³⁴ In the same issue, another article blamed the 'malafede' of the PPI opposition to Mussolini, notably deputy Rodinò who called on Catholics to defend Italian democratic institutions faced with the threat of Fascist dictatorship: 'I cattolici non hanno che vedere col liberalismo, col democratismo e col modernismo seguito dal PPI'.³⁵ *Fede e Ragione* even suggested a restriction to the freedom of the press in order to muzzle the opposition: 'Quanto a libertà di stampa, ce n'è anche troppa'. The article concluded by openly praising Mussolini whose conduct of Italian politics had uplifted 'il prestigio morale della nazione'.

The Matteotti crisis confirmed *Fede e Ragione's* support for Mussolini's dictatorship, but the review dated its loyalty back to the vote of the new electoral law (legge Acerbo) in July 1923,³⁶ a date that coincided with the official Vatican disapproval of the PPI anti-Fascist opposition as the Holy See pressured Don Sturzo to withdraw from political activities.³⁷ During the same period, the Fascist regime also prohibited Masonic affiliations for PNF members in February 1923. The anti-Masonic repression worsened in January 1925 with the suppression of opposition parties and

³² 'Attraverso la Stampa, in Italia, il 4° anniversario del partito PI', *Fede e Ragione*, February 4, 1923.

³³ See against Filippo Meda: Catholicus, 'Azione cattolica e partiti politici', *Fede e Ragione*, August 2, 1925.

³⁴ T. Casini, 'Su l'Aventino (Ahi fiera compagnia!) A proposito dell'appello al paese delle opposizioni', *Fede e Ragione*, November 23, 1924.

³⁵ Politicus, 'La settimana politica', *Fede e Ragione*, November 23, 1924.

³⁶ I cattolici di *Fede e Ragione*, 'Sulla soglia dell'anno VII. Lettera aperta all'on. Mussolini', *Fede e Ragione*, November 11, 1928.

³⁷ F. Malgeri, 'La crisi del Partito Popolare di fronte all'avvento del fascismo', in: G. Galeazzi (ed.), *I Cattolici italiani tra identità e crisi*, Milano, Massimo, pp. 96-110.

organizations and then in November 1925 with the closure of all Masonic lodges. Between both dates, *Fede e Ragione* reminded its readers that fighting the ‘Sect’ was the duty of every ‘good catholic’: ‘il dovere, che esso deve compire per la difesa della verità contro la Setta e tutti i suoi fiancheggiatori, sotto qualunque forma si mascherino.’³⁸ Among the ‘accomplices’ of Freemasonry, *Fede e Ragione* identified every catholic movement allegedly modernist and agent of the ‘internazionale bianca’, including Marc Sangnier, the *Zentrumspartei*, Sturzo, and the American Knights of Columbus. Thus, the repression against Freemasonry and the implementation of the Fascist dictatorship in 1925 were decisive steps that explained the increasing adherence of *Fede e Ragione* to Fascism. Yet, the review warned Fascist leaders that such anti-liberal policies should be always decided in accordance with Church authorities.

Such a position characterized *Fede e Ragione*’s relation to Fascism until 1929: an approval of Mussolini’s dictatorship but with a constant reminder of the Church’s rights and the precedence of the Holy See. On the one hand, the integralist review praised the religious policy of the new regime, especially the reintegration of Catholicism into Italian public life and education such as the obligation to place a crucifix in every classroom according to a decree of April 1923.³⁹ On the other hand, even though *Fede e Ragione* approved of the reform of Giovanni Gentile that made religious education compulsory in primary schools, Sassoli de Bianchi criticized the philosophical views of Mussolini’s Minister of Education as they subjected religion under the all-encompassing authority of the state.⁴⁰ *Fede e Ragione* was however confident that the Fascist regime, much more than the previous liberal governments, would be willing and able to solve the ‘Roman Question’. Members of the editorial board became increasingly seduced by clerical Fascism such as Sassoli de Bianchi, since 1924 a member of the *Centro Nazionale*, a Catholic movement advocating for a closer ideological collaboration between Catholicism and Fascism.⁴¹ In an assessment of the regime’s achievements published in November 1925, De Töth congratulated Mussolini for his reappraisal of social and religious traditional order but also pointed out the inherent modern tendencies of ‘nazionalismo pagano’ within Fascism that could dangerously pave the way for a totalitarian ‘statolatria’ and a cult of the ‘dio-Stato’.⁴² For the editors of *Fede e Ragione*, Mussolini’s regime could persist only as a Christian state: ‘Eccellenza, lo Stato fascista [...] non fallirà all sua méta ad una condizione soltanto: di essere cristiano’.⁴³

Catholic Antisemitism and the Rejection of Modern Culture

Many features of anti-modernism in *Fede e Ragione* were closely articulated with an antisemitic discourse that identified Jews as the epitome of the anti-Church modernity, especially in the Italian context of Church-state conflict. Since they had been liberated from the yoke of the Catholic Church and emancipated thanks to Italian unification, Italian Jews crystallized in *Fede e Ragione* the Catholic resentment against modernity, secularism, and liberalism. The Catholic review directly targeted foremost

³⁸ Drives-Berger, ‘Inchieste massoniche. A proposito del concatenamento delle Sette Internazionali’, *Fede e Ragione*, November 23, 1924.

³⁹ F. Sassoli, ‘Il Governo, i cattolici e l’insegnamento religioso nelle scuole’, *Fede e Ragione*, February 19, 1923.

⁴⁰ F. Sassoli, ‘La Chiesa e la politica ed i cattolici e la politica, secondo la dottrina di antichi e recenti documenti pontificali’, *Fede e Ragione*, September 21, 1924.

⁴¹ M. Baragli, ‘Il Centro nazionale italiano e la Santa Sede. Profili e progetti del clerico-fascismo in Italia, 1922-1929’, in: *Italia contemporanea*, 263 (2011), pp. 239-254.

⁴² P. De Töth, ‘Chiesa e Stato’, *Fede e Ragione*, November 8, 1925.

⁴³ I cattolici di Fede e Ragione, ‘Dopo l’attentato del 4 novembre. Lettera aperta all’on. Mussolini’, *Fede e Ragione*, November 15, 1925.

representatives of Italian Jewish culture such as Rabbi Dante Lattes and the *Federazione sionistica italiana*. *Fede e Ragione* did so in accusing Lattes of implementing in Italy the alleged Jewish plot for world domination exposed in the notorious and fictitious *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁴⁴ *Fede e Ragione* had previously mentioned substantial parts of the *Protocols* already in May 1920, an early occurrence for the Italian context.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Benigni and De Töth were among the first Italian translators of the *Protocols* as they published entirely the antisemitic forgery in *Fede e Ragione* from March to December 1921.⁴⁶ The print run of the *Protocols* – 10,000 copies in March 1921 that ran out of print by June – was a significant breakthrough for a minor publication accustomed to a more modest diffusion.

The antisemitism of *Fede e Ragione*, and more broadly of integralist Catholics, relied on an apparent paradox: while antisemitism was a central polemical tool in their denunciation of modernity, integralist Catholics voiced a modern and secular version of antisemitism that went beyond the traditional repertoire of Christian anti-Jewish stereotypes. The Catholic review purposely appropriated modern motives of antisemitism that shaped a derogatory and racial definition of Jews. *Fede e Ragione* was nonetheless critical towards Nazism and ultra-nationalism because of the anti-Christian nature of their antisemitism. Thus, *Fede e Ragione* promoted a Latin version of antisemitism that claimed to dissociate itself from any pseudo-scientific racism. For instance in 1928, *Fede e Ragione* fulminated against the neo-pagan views of Julius Evola. Signed under the pseudonym of Minimus, the article was written by Piero Bargellini who saw in Evola's book *Imperialismo pagano* a manifestation of 'lo spirito di Satana'.⁴⁷

Fede e Ragione drew on a variety of topics to identify Jews with modern culture. Among them, the Catholic review recurrently criticized the film industry as a sector entirely controlled by Jews and symptomatic of a Jewish modern mentality: 'Che l'industria cinematografica sia totalmente nelle mani degli Ebrei, oramai nessuno più ne dubita'.⁴⁸ Stigmatizing this alleged Jewish world domination of the film industry – 'gli Ebrei, padroni assoluti dell'industria cinematografica di tutto il mondo' – the editors were even more outraged by the trend of biblical movies produced by Hollywood, such as *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1925) and *The King of Kings* (1927). Regarding this latter movie, *Fede e Ragione* considered it a perversion of the New Testament that aimed to present episodes of the Passion from a Jewish point of view by placing the responsibility of Christ's death only on the Romans; henceforth the Jewish schemes in Hollywood were 'mossi anche da un segreto senso di rivincita, ossia di fare ingoiare ai goyim un Cristo di loro manifattura'. Looking at biblical film as a dangerous modern vector of religious error, integralist Catholics were especially concerned by the popular success of this new mass media, even in the countryside of Tuscany:

Folle, come mai era avvenuto, dalla mattina alla sera, si videro riversarsi nei teatri e cinematografi per assistere alla riproduzione della vita, passione e morte del Signore: i templi, nei quali la Chiesa pregava, con le pie donne, accanto alla Croce di Gesù, erano vuoti: i cinematografi, invece, erano gremiti; e la cosa durò, in tal guisa, per oltre un paio di settimane, tanto da far pensare ad un vero fenomeno di suggestione collettiva.

⁴⁴ FeR, 'I Documenti della conquista ebraica del mondo', *Fede e Ragione*, June 26, 1921.

⁴⁵ FER, 'Sinedrio e Triangolo, o sia la grande congiura ebraica massonica internazionale', *Fede e Ragione*, May 1920. See C. De Michelis, *Il manoscritto inesistente. I Protocolli dei savi di Sion, un apocrifo del XX secolo*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1998.

⁴⁶ FeR, 'I documenti della conquista ebraica del mondo', *Fede e Ragione*, March 27 to December 25, 1921.

⁴⁷ Minimus, 'Risposta a Satana', *Fede e Ragione*, from April 15 to August 26, 1928. See Bargellini's letter to Papini, August 2, 1928, *Carteggio*, cit., p. 42.

⁴⁸ Fidelis, 'Il Re dei Re (storia di una profanazione cinematografica)', *Fede e Ragione*, March 17, 1929.

Agli attenti osservatori apparve subito la mano secreta, che guidava il movimento; ma come far entrare nella testa di tanta gente che *Il Re dei Re* non era che un'impresa giudaica, creata apposta per allontanare il pecorume dei *goiym* dalla vera meditazione della croce di Gesù e sfruttarne le tasche, con il pretesto di una rappresentazione sacra e religiosa?

I giorni sacrosanti e tremendi della Passione non devono venire profanati da divertimenti, che non fanno che ripetere il ludibrio e lo scherno, di cui i Giudei rabbiosi copersero il Salvatore.⁴⁹

Thus, in the mindset of integralist Catholics, film was considered only a malignant distraction from religion and not a potential propaganda tool. Unlike Mussolini's regime, which massively invested in this new popular media, *Fede e Ragione* urged good Catholics to boycott movie theaters:

Noi non crediamo affatto necessario il cinematografo per l'educazione cattolica. I beni, che si prospettano dall'uso del cinematografo, non compensano i pericoli e gli inconvenienti, che esso presenta. [...] L'unico mezzo per neutralizzare i danni del cinematografo è l'opporvisi, il boicottaggio; il far conoscere come il cinematografo è l'industria massima, in mano del giudeo, per la corruzione della cristianità.⁵⁰

Far from being a peripheral topic, this denunciation of the film industry is of specific interest regarding integralist Catholics' relation to Fascist modernity. Indeed *Fede e Ragione* explicitly deplored the lack of Fascist censorship against the so-called Jewish film industry, and against mass culture more broadly.

Modern and anti-Modern Fascism on the Path to the Conciliation

Within the frame of an increasing consensus for Mussolini's regime on the eve of the Lateran agreements, *Fede e Ragione* frequently urged the regime to take an even more anti-modernist and reactionary turn. For instance, the integralists advocated for rural policies and the creation of agrarian schools that could train 'buoni contadini'. Following a debate launched by *Il Selvaggio*, *Fede e Ragione* argued with paternalistic tones that:

Se il contadino sapesse quanto è nobile il suo mestiere e conoscesse meglio le meraviglie e i tesori della terra, ch'egli macchinalmente lavora con l'occhio soltanto al profitto personale (la mentalità del contadino assai raramente vede più in là della propria persona), che ne può ricavare. [...] I diletti, che la campagna produce e dei quali la vita semplice e libera dei campi è sorgente, non hanno confronto con i piaceri falsi delle città, fatti di miasma, materiati di immondezza e di disonestà.⁵¹

In doing so, *Fede e Ragione* vilified urban life and the growth of modern cities as places of corrupted customs and de-catholicization. The Catholic review deplored that such immoral features of modernity were increasingly contaminating the countryside through the importation of movie theatres, ballrooms, and female fashion:

O che ci vorrebbe tanto a rimandare a casa tutte quelle maestrine, che vanno a portare per le nostre campagne il malo esempio della moda schifosa, lasciva e libertina moderna? E forse che sarebbe impossibile a un Podestà di buon senso di impedire, nel proprio paese, l'impianto di un cinematografo immorale o l'apertura di una sala da ballo? Ma forse la cosa è divenuta difficile od impossibile perchè adesso anche le sale da ballo sono messe all'ombra del tricolore e del Littorio.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ Fidelis, 'Il Re dei Re... continuazione', *Fede e Ragione*, March 24, 1924.

⁵¹ 'In tema di urbanesimo e d'altre cose', *Fede e Ragione*, January 13, 1929.

⁵² *Ibidem*.

Thus *Fede e Ragione* blamed the low ranks of Fascist authorities for being too permissive with modern customs and even for participating in this modern life style that integralists condemned as immoral and corruptive. The review called for a more severe Fascist censorship on the popular press that had to take example from the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* of the Holy Office.⁵³ Conversely, with its demographic policy, the regime met the expectations of integralist Catholics who promoted the model of a Christian family:

Il problema demografico è sempre all'ordine del giorno. Se n'è occupato, emanando nuove disposizioni in favore delle famiglie numerose, ancora l'ultimo Consiglio dei Ministri della passata settimana, e codesta preoccupazione è segno della sensibilità morale degli uomini, che hanno in mano, oggi, le sorti del popolo italiano, sopra tutto dell'on. Mussolini, a cui si deve il merito primo e principale della campagna contro il malthusianismo e ogni altra pratica diretta a diminuire le nascite. [...] Il problema demografico non può risolversi che tornando, puramente, semplicemente, totalitariamente, alla concezione cristiana della vita, la quale il materialismo ha distrutto nella coscienza degli individui.⁵⁴

But while this article congratulated Mussolini, it also blamed Fascist journals like *Il Popolo di Roma* and *Il Corriere Padano* for publishing tabloid-like news and licentious stories that implied sex, adultery, and prostitution: 'Lupanare e famiglia sono termini antitetici, contrarii come il si e il no, oriente ed occidente'.

With the signature of the Lateran Pacts on February 11, 1929, *Fede e Ragione* highly praised the Fascist regime for becoming a model for all Christian Europe and for working for a true 'resurrection' (*risurrezione*) of Italy.⁵⁵ The Conciliation fostered a significant inflexion of tone in *Fede e Ragione* as the review for the first time enthusiastically embraced the rhetoric of the Fascist regime that elevated Mussolini to the status of providential man:

Uomo nuovo, chiamato e sollevato dal Signore per la salvezza d'Italia nel momento forse più scuro della sua storia, Mussolini, intravedendo nel suo profondo la causa dei mali, che opprimevano la patria nostra, si sforzò subito di richiamarla alle sue origini. [...] di qui il suo studio per moralizzare la vita pubblica [...]. E l'Italia, scossa dalla voce dell'Uomo, che la chiamava si rialzò ed obbedì.⁵⁶

On Sunday March 24, *Fede e Ragione* urged its readers to support the regime by voting yes at the plebiscite to 'elect' deputies that would ratify the Lateran agreements, a position shared by most Catholic journals in Italy:

Il plebiscito dei cattolici italiani non potrà mancare, non mancherà all'Uomo, che il papa ha salutato l'Uomo della Provvidenza: mancare a questo plebiscito sarebbe una ingratitudine e una colpa, della quale i cattolici, che saranno sempre i primi fra i migliori cittadini, non si macchieranno. Votare per il Regime significa, infatti, oggi, votare per un'Italia sempre più cristiana, sempre più cattolica.⁵⁷

Fede e Ragione presented Sassoli de Bianchi as an exemplary Catholic who, in his quality of *podestà* of Scarperia (province of Florence), encouraged his Catholic fellows to support the regime's electoral list in order to ratify the agreement between the

⁵³ 'L'indice dei libri proibiti', *Fede e Ragione*, December 15-22, 1929.

⁵⁴ Spectator, 'Note politiche. I postulati per la soluzione del problema demografico', *Fede e Ragione*, January 26, 1929.

⁵⁵ 'La soluzione della questione romana e la fine del dissidio tra Chiesa e Stato in Italia', *Fede e Ragione*, February 10-17, 1929.

⁵⁶ Ibidem.

⁵⁷ Announcement in first page, *Fede e Ragione*, March 24, 1929.

Church and the Italian state: 'questo felicissimo evento, che per me è stato sempre il sogno ed il desiderio più vivo di tutta la mia vita, oggi, grazie a dio, è un fatto compiuto'.⁵⁸

However, as tensions about the practical implementation of the agreements quickly emerged, integralist Catholics expressed a certain disenchantment. *Fede e Ragione* deplored Mussolini's discourse at the Chamber of Deputies on May 13, which reasserted Gentile's views that the Fascist state was inherently 'ethical'.⁵⁹ *Fede e Ragione* did not hesitate to stress the 'error' of Mussolini when he quoted in his speech Paolo Orano's thesis arguing that Christianity became universal and Catholic only and exclusively in Rome: 'Avendo l'on. Mussolini ripetuto - e pur troppo aggravandolo - l'errore dell'on. Orano [...] il farfallone dell'On. Orano che il cristianesimo, solo in grazia di Roma, divenne cattolico'.⁶⁰ More generally, *Fede e Ragione* abhorred any form of neo-pagan folklore in Fascist propaganda and the political instrumentalization of the myth of the *romanità* that did not rely substantially on Christianity. In April 1929, Piero Bargellini warned that the *Natale di Roma*, a Fascist festivity that celebrated the birth of Rome, should have a clear Christian purpose. Bargellini dissociated the first birth of Rome, pagan and violent, from the second one, Christian and spiritual:

Poichè un misto di profano e divino non è mai giustificabile, bisogna pensare bene oggi a quale Natale si voglia alludere. Si vuole ricordare il primo, il natale della morte, o il secondo, quello della vita? Si vuole Roma eterna e si vuole Roma transitoria? [...] Per noi, e non son cose nuove, il primo Natale di Roma è un fatto provvidenziale, che ha la sua conferma, la sua illustrazione, e la sua esaltazione soltanto nella seconda nascita.⁶¹

Bargellini made clear that true Catholics should resist the neo-pagan trends of Fascism, 'miscugli di sacro e di profano, ibridismi di pagano e di cristiano per ambizione retorica o per accondiscendenza mondana.' A similar tension between integralist Catholicism and secular nationalism appeared in articles dealing with modern Italian history and in particular relating to the anticlerical tendencies of the *Risorgimento*. Reprising the private life of Giuseppe Mazzini, the Catholic editors argued that the recent alliance between the Holy See and the Fascist regime legitimized a critical revision of Italian nationalism:

Oggi che l'Italia ha ripreso il posto che la volontà di Dio le assegnava in perpetuo il posto che le compete, di nazione cattolica prescelta; [...] oggi che lo Stato Italiano si è riconciliato con Dio, col Papa e con la Chiesa, non sarà lecito a noi dissentire, e profondamente, da Giuseppe Mazzini? [...] Noi facciamo opera di chiarezza e di onestà. Gli uomini più eminenti e rappresentativi del Fascismo hanno detto e ripetuto più volte che pur troppo nel passato per molti l'idea patriottica si nutrì d'odio contro la Chiesa Cattolica ed il Romano Pontificato; ma che ora non ha d'essere più così.⁶²

The Lateran agreements occupied most of the foreground of *Fede e Ragione* throughout 1929. While celebrating the Conciliation as a decisive step toward the recatholicization of Italy, the review also expressed concerns about the respect of the Church's spiritual and temporal rights facing the increasing totalitarian ambitions of Fascism. This discontent was actually shared by integralist voices within the Holy See, such as

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

⁵⁹ Spectator, 'Note politiche. Il discorso dell'on. Mussolini sugli accordi lateranensi', *Fede e Ragione*, May 19, 1929.

⁶⁰ G. d'Arcole, 'Cattolico e Italianità', *Fede e Ragione*, May 19, 1929.

⁶¹ P. Bargellini, 'Natale di Roma', *Fede e Ragione*, April 14, 1929.

⁶² 'I diritti della verità e della storia', *Fede e Ragione*, December 31, 1929.

Cardinals Merry del Val and Boggiani who remained skeptical toward the concessions granted during the Lateran negotiations.⁶³ In its very last issue on December 31, 1929, *Fede e Ragione* complained against the Fascist journals that tried to discredit the Concordat as a 'clericalizzazione dell'Italia'.⁶⁴

Epilogue: the Silencing of Integralist Catholics after the Lateran Agreements

Among the hypothesis discussed in the scholarship to explain the interruption of *Fede e Ragione*, some have argued that the review was considered anti-Fascist and as such was suppressed by the regime.⁶⁵ Yet, archival evidence shows that even though Fascist officials were aware that *Fede e Ragione's* considerations on Fascism were in part motivated by opportunism, they did not see it as an anti-Fascist threat. In February 1926, the Fascist police opened an investigation on De Töth after which the Prefect of Florence concluded: 'De Toth dimostra tendenze favorevoli al regime segnatamente dopo provvidenze Governo Nazionale a vantaggio del clero ma generalmente ritiene agisca ipocritamente e per opportunità'.⁶⁶ Instead of Fascist pressure, new materials recently opened in the Vatican archives show evidence that the cessation of the review was the consequence of disciplinary measures taken by the Holy See. This abrupt end was the result of a long conflict, since 1921, between the integralists of Fiesole, always supported by their bishop, and the Holy See. In 1925, De Töth's anti-modernist zeal in Veneto had been already denounced by the bishop of Treviso, Msgr Longhin, and by the Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal La Fontaine, both requesting the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri, to remove *Fede e Ragione*.⁶⁷ In December 1929, Gasparri sent a final warning to Sassoli de Bianchi after *Fede e Ragione* calumniated the *Volontaires du Pape*, a French organization of lay Catholics founded by Christian democrat Francisque Gay. Once again, *Fede e Ragione* attacked organizations of the Catholic action that were fully approved by the Pope.⁶⁸ The last issue of *Fede e Ragione* appeared on December 31, 1929, celebrating Pius XI and without any anticipation of the cessation of the review.

All evidence leads to the conclusion that *Fede e Ragione* was dismissed by the Holy See because of its radical anti-modernism that fostered public scandal, indiscipline, and division among Catholics, a situation that the Vatican wanted to avoid in a context of tensions with the Fascist regime. *Fede e Ragione* likely appeared to be an embarrassing black sheep while, facing Fascist totalitarian ambitions, the Holy See called instead for unity and discipline in the ranks of Italian Catholics. Undoubtedly, the integralist positions had been looked on with suspicion by both the regime and the Holy See as a form of divisive sectarianism that could compromise the alliance between the Church and Fascism. This case was part of a broader context in which the pressure of ideological alignment after the Conciliation significantly reduced the diversity of the Italian Catholic press; various publications ceased such as, *L'Unità cattolica* (Florence), *Corriere d'Italia* (Rome), and *Il Momento* (Torino).⁶⁹

⁶³ J. Pollard, *The Vatican and Italian Fascism, 1929-1932. A Study in Conflict*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 50.

⁶⁴ FeR, 'L'enciclica del santo padre Pio XI in commemorazione e per la chiusura del Suo anno giubilare', *Fede e Ragione*, December 31, 1929.

⁶⁵ For instance considering that the review was disbanded in 1929 'per il suo orientamento antifascista' according to M. Bettini Prosperi, 'Le carte di Umberto Benigni', in: *Clio*, 2 (1992), pp. 289-300.

⁶⁶ Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Ministero Interno, DAGR, PS, A1, 1926, b. 8, letter from Regard, Florence Prefect, to Moncada, Chief of Police, February 11, 1926.

⁶⁷ A secret investigation on De Töth was ordered by Msgr Longhin in 1925: see Archivio della Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari (AES), Italia, 631 A. PO, fasc. 65.

⁶⁸ AES, Italia, 608 PO, fasc. 44, letter from Gasparri to Sassoli, December 4, 1929.

⁶⁹ F. Malgeri, 'La Stampa quotidiana e periodica e l'editoria', in F. Traniello & G. Campanini *Dizionario storico*, cit., II. *I protagonisti*, pp. 289-290; D. Menozzi (ed.), 'Stampa cattolica e regime fascista', *Storia e problemi contemporanei*, XXXIII, 16 (2003).

Despite its rather small diffusion, *Fede e Ragione* was a formative experience for a younger generation of Catholic activists like Piero Bargellini, Tito Casini, and Nicola Lisi. A few months before the interruption of *Fede e Ragione*, these writers founded a new local cultural review, *Il Frontespizio*, with the collaboration of Papini, Domenico Giuliotti, and even Guido Manacorda. *Il Frontespizio* continued promoting the traditionalist and rural legacy of *Fede e Ragione*, albeit with a more straightforward enthusiasm for Fascism.⁷⁰ As for De Töth, he withdrew from political and journalistic activism and settled as a priest in a small parish of Fiesole; he still despised modernity, its ‘divertimenti profani’ and even the radio ‘causa solo di distrazioni e di vane curiosità’, as he put it in 1942 in the midst of the second cataclysm of the century.⁷¹

Keywords

Fascism, Catholicism, Modernism, Nationalism, Antisemitism

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⁷⁰ F. Dei, ‘Dopo la selva. Fascismo e antisemitismo nella cultura cattolica del *Frontespizio* (Firenze, 1929-1940)’, in: *Annali di Storia di Firenze*, VIII (2013), pp. 327-359.

⁷¹ Archivio Vescovile di Fiesole, Visite pastorali, b. 69, fasc. 18, memorandum by De Töth, February 15, 1942.

RIASSUNTO

L'antimodernismo cattolico e la modernità del fascismo

Cattolici integrali, nazionalismo e antisemitismo in *Fede e Ragione* (1919-1929)

Mentre la storiografia si è spesso concentrata sulle relazioni tra gerarchie fasciste e cattoliche nel processo di avvicinamento che porta agli accordi Lateranensi, questo articolo propone invece di soffermarsi più attentamente sul rapporto ambivalente dei cattolici integrali con il fascismo, dimostrando che l'adesione di questa corrente più intransigente della cultura cattolica italiana con il fascismo fu in realtà tortuoso ed incompiuto. Tramite l'esempio della rivista cattolica *Fede e Ragione*, fondata a Firenze nel 1919 e poi trasferita a Fiesole, questo saggio individua i motivi di consenso al regime fascista ma anche i fattori di tensione con la modernità fascista. Legata all'eredità antimodernista del 'partito di Pio X' e alla sua impostazione ecclesiocentrica, *Fede e Ragione* si pose come voce critica del fascismo sansepolcrista anticlericale in un primo tempo, e delle aspirazioni totalitarie e di religione politica del regime fascista in un secondo tempo. Tuttavia, le politiche più antimoderne del regime di Mussolini in campo sociale, religioso e demografico, sedussero sempre di più gli integrali. Il fascismo diventò per i cattolici di *Fede e Ragione* un baluardo contro 'nemici' comuni ed un opportuno strumento di repressione contro socialisti, popolari, liberali, massoni, protestanti ed ebrei. Portavoce di un antisemitismo cattolico integrale spiccato e segnato dalla collaborazione di Msgr Benigni, *Fede e Ragione* polemizzò contro la cosiddetta modernità 'ebraica', in particolare nei costumi e media moderni come il cinema, e sollecitò le autorità fasciste per una più severa censura. Nonostante la sua adesione alla conciliazione tra Chiesa e Stato italiano, la pubblicazione della rivista smise nel dicembre 1929, dopo pressioni dalla Santa Sede su una voce troppo rumorosa del settarismo cattolico.