The religious fact between society and politics in the Italian Modern and Contemporary history textbooks

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Special Issue

Religious culture and education in 20th and 21st century Europe

Maria Giuseppina Meloni and Anna Maria Oliva (eds.)

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Abstract

This contribution analyses the approach of the Italian Modern and Contemporary history textbooks, adopted within university programs, toward the religious fact, considered through its bonds with political, social and cultural phenomena. In this bonds is set up the base for the religious fact's resilience in 'modernity': in the legitimacy that religious fact provides both to the principle of authority and to the resistance to any political and cultural power; in the aggregating or disruptive effect generated by religious identity and allegiance both in global and local politics.

Keywords
Religious fact; History textbooks; Modern history; Contemporary history.

Riassunto

L'intervento analizza l'approccio della manualistica universitaria di argomento storico moderno e contemporaneo al fatto religioso, considerato soprattutto nel suo intreccio con fenomeni di lunga durata, politici, sociali, culturali. Proprio attraverso l'inscindibile legame con tali fenomeni il fatto religioso pone le basi della sua resilienza nella modernità: attraverso cioè la legittimazione che esso conferisce al principio di autorità così come alla resistenza ad ogni potere, politico o culturale, quale fattore di unità o movente al conflitto nella politica, in senso lato, locale e globale.

Parole chiave
Fatto religioso; Manuali di storia; Storia moderna; Storia contemporanea.

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1. Bibliography. - 2. Curriculum vitae

In my contribution I will examine some of the textbooks currently in use within the programs of Modern and Contemporary history in Italian universities, as a limited but representative sample of the relationship between academic research and history teaching between 1998 and 2018. A time frame that registers a renewed interest in a wider and deeper comprehension of the

religious fact – as a tool for building a society that is actually and not only theoretically pluralist –, under the impulse coming both from the radicalization of conflicts with a confessional background, and from current migratory pressures on Western Europe.

It is well known indeed that any history textbook – especially those conceived for and adopted by primary, secondary, or high schools, and by universities as well to some extent – is the outcome of different factors, only partly concerning historical research or methodology. Among them: ministerial guidelines, especially those regarding a shared approach to religious fact, and more generally the inputs provided by general political orientations[1]; the main textbooks publishers' marketing policies; the research background of the authors, of course. As a part of a research in progress, this contribution's aim is to provide a general analysis of the considered textbooks' contents regarding religious fact in history, in order to elaborate some guidelines by which further sources could be analysed and interpreted in the future.

Accordingly to consolidated guidelines[2] in Italian scientific historiography, all the considered textbooks seem to take note of the link between the more or less widespread diffusion of religious doctrines and the ability of these to satisfy individual need for spiritual values, but also to provide or defend collective identities (Casula, 1997, p. 554): as a consequence, the religious fact is above all considered in its mutual refractions with the political and cultural data[3].

In Modern history textbooks such a tendency is marked even by the time frame considered by this academic discipline – opening with the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, the discovery of the Americas (with its strong religious repercussions) and the Protestant Reformation (Bizzocchi, 1998, p. 4) – and is reflected by the evidence given to some thematic lines: from a political point of view, the religious foundation of the contrast between the principle of

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[1] About this matter, the case of France has certainly been the most studied in detail and from many points of view, as documented by the contributions collected in Avon - Saint-Martin - Tolan, 2018.

[2] About Modern age historiography's methodology with respect to religious fact, Giuseppe Galasso (2008, p. 54) has observed that "Accanto ai fattori politici, economici, etc. (…), altri fattori intervennero ugualmente nel determinare il panorama storico da tenere presente nel discutere degli inizi dell'età moderna: fattori che potrebbero essere definiti immateriali per la loro specifica natura, ma che, comunque, nel contesto del quale parliamo, agirono in stretta connessione con tutti gli altri, a cominciare da quelli politici, sicché è in tale connessione che bisogna considerarli. In prima linea tra questi fattori fu certamente quello religioso".

[3] Girolamo Imbruglia (1998, p. 26) has observed that "il nesso strettissimo tra religione, politica ed economia è al cuore di tutte le trasformazioni del Cinquecento europeo".

authority and the right to resist oppression[4]; from a cultural point of view, the equally religious foundation of antagonism between tradition and free thought, which in the considered texts appears to be one of the distinguishing features of 'modernity' as a great 'conceptual container' (Bizzocchi 1998, p. 6).

It is worth pointing out that, at least in Modern history textbooks, the distinction between the Christian religiosity of elites more or less mobilized by ideological afflatus, the religiosity of the popular masses, and the voices of the 'institutions', in the broadest sense (from the Catholic Church to the great reformers), is often made explicit (Musi, 2003, p. 81; Rosa - Verga, 2003, p. 181; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, pp. 91-94): in fact this distinction is barely mentioned in the Contemporary history textbooks and is hardly ever explicit in reference to other faiths, and in particular to Islam.

The main, although certainly not unique, touchstone for evaluating a Modern history textbook's attitude toward the religious fact is the way it deals with events and phenomena included in the long time frame which, from the late 15th century aspirations to the Church's *renovatio* (Peyronel Rambaldi, 1998, p. 49) – passing through the breakdown of the confessional unity in Europe in the mid-sixteenth century and the religious conflicts in Germany, France, Holland and England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries –, ended with the peace of Westphalia in the European Continent and, in Great Britain, with the Glorious revolution.

In the considered textbooks, ritual and cultic contents of the Christian religious fact in the sixteenth and seventeenth century are normally overlooked. Exceptions: the synthetic but effective overview, contained in the volume by Mario Rosa and Marcello Verga, on the correlation between demographic cataclysms and crisis of the fourteenth century, on the one hand, and the sense of prayer and rituals as instruments of protection, on the other[5]; the detailed explanation, in the volume by Renata Ago and Vittorio Vidotto, of the linkages between late medieval financial business and the perception of the "Tesoro della Chiesa" (Treasury of the Church) as the credit acquired by Christ before the Father through crucifixion: a credit transferred to a suffering and sinful mankind by will of Christ himself and administered, as it were, by the Catholic Church through the granting of indulgences[6].

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[4] Peyronel Rambaldi, 1998, pp. 56-57, 60-61, 67 and 75; Musi, 2003, pp. 61-62 and 103-104; Rosa - Verga, 2003, pp. 4 and 17; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, pp. 81-82 and 87, 177; Benigno, 2009, pp. 26-27, 34 and 113-116; Capra, 2016, pp. 47, 55-56 and 121, 270.

[5] Rosa - Verga, 2003, p. 166. On the same issue, see also Peyronel Rambaldi, 1998, p. 51.

[6] Ago - Vidotto, 2005, p. 36; on the same issue, see also Rosa - Verga, 2003, pp. 168-169; Benigno, 2009, pp. 69-70.

Regardless of the ecclesiological and theological contents within the dispute between reformers and the Catholic Church (generally explained in detail), the sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century religious fact – and in particular the impact of the spread of Calvinist creed and even more radical forms of religious non-conformism – is nevertheless considered above all as a factor of mobilization to political participation, acting as a catalyst in contexts of political, indeed, and social conflict, engendered however by circumstances of a different nature: the widespread discontentment resulting from the proletarianization of the peasant masses in Germany at the end of the fifteenth and in early sixteenth centuries; the frictions between the papal Curia's fiscal claims and the ambitions to the centralization of imperial authority, on the one hand, and the aspirations for autonomy and expansion of the German princes, on the other; the resistances to the progress of power's centralization in France and in the Habsburg Netherlands, along with unfavourable economic conjunctures[7].

A special case is the presentation of the Reformation in England, from Henry VIII Tudor's schism up to the Glorious revolution. Here, facts and phenomena's exposition appears deeply influenced by a centuries-old tradition of studies, within which the religious element acquires an autonomous role, but always in the indissoluble link to the main themes of the 'great' government policy and the micro-politics of non-conformists groups, in which religious instances overlap with the social ones, transmitting to the faithful the sense of a personal election that invests the political participation with an ethical, messianic, revolutionary function. The aftermaths of this political and indeed religious struggle in the social setting and political life of the Anglo-Saxon colonies in America are often underlined. It is important to point it out, also because in the considered Modern and Contemporary history textbooks, references to the religious fact in North America and to its overwhelming influence on US politics and society are limited to these and a few other indications[8].

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[7] Benigno, 1998, pp. 278-284; Fasano, 1998, p. 329; Fragnito, 1998, pp. 125-126, 140-141, 145 and 147; Peyronel Rambaldi, 1998, pp. 53, 58, 62-64 and 66-67; Musi, 2003, pp. 68, 82, 90-96, 101, 129-131 and 147; Rosa - Verga, 2003, pp. 171 and 174; Ago - Vidotto, 2005, pp. 42 and 89-90; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, pp. 22, 71-73, 74-76, 83-84 and 180-181; Benigno, 2009, pp. 71-72, 74-79, 111 and 118-119; Capra, 2016, pp. 115, 118-119, 148-149 and 152-153.

[8] Soldani, 1997, p. 59; Abbattista, 1998, pp. 528 and 533; Benigno, 1998, pp. 286, 287, 289-292, 295-297, 299-300 and 302-305; Peyronel Rambaldi, 1998, pp. 68-70; Della Peruta, 2000a, p. 54; Musi, 2003, pp. 103, 223-225, 233 and 381-384; Ago - Vidotto, 2005, pp. 267, 115, 116, 117-118 and 122; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, pp. 84-86, 273-275, 279, 280, 281, 284 and 288; Benigno, 2009, pp. 80-81, 109, 175-176, 178, 179, 180-181, 185-187 and 306; Capra, 2016, pp. 107, 122, 179-180, 183, 185, 187, 239-240 and 329-332; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, p. 35.

Some broad views on the reformed groups in Italy – often elitist circles of intellectuals – seem to confirm the centrality of powers' setting in determining new doctrines' success or failure: in the absence of favourable economic and political conditions, 'heresy' can be easily eradicated, despite the moral strength and depth of the message by reformers such as Gasparo Contarini, Bernardino Ochino, Lelio and Fausto Sozzini, whose influences on Western thought – respect for all faiths, rejection of dogmatism and affirmation of free will – are remarked in several texts[9]. Also highlighted are the political dynamics conditioning the Council of Trent's sessions and also the application of the resulting deliberations[10].

From a cultural point of view, the late XV and XVI century aspiration to both Church and Christian life's renewal through the return to the origins leads to the recourse to philological science, as a tool for a critical approach to sacred texts by humanists such as Erasmus from Rotterdam. His Greek edition of the New Testament is considered by textbooks in the framework of a project of regeneration of Christianity, through a rediscovered – and above all interior – spirituality, experiencing tolerance, respect for diversity, temperance in outward manifestations of the cult, moralization of the priestly life and a 'natural' religiosity, nourished by a 'systematic doubt', which eventually proved to be fatal for the tradition of the *auctoritas*[11].

On the whole, the religious fact's pervasive influence on the mentality and on the representations of reality (Capra, 2016, p. 53) is remarked by grasping its ambivalent outcomes. The religious fact therefore appears to be an unavoidable source of inspiration for the predatory claims of the Christian West toward the rest of the world, as well as for the defence of the 'other' from a cultural and political point of view, for an open minded approach to the 'other' and sometimes even for the assimilation of his customs; to impose the divine origin of sovereignty, as well as to set limits to public authority, or to claim the contractual nature of political power; for increasing female subordination, as well as for the free choice in marriage unions and mutual agreement within relations between spouses; for the passive acceptance of Revelation, as well as for the development of critical conscience and free thought; for the defence of the tradition feeding the mass devotion through the sumptuousness of the cult,

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[9] Fragnito, 1998, p. 134; Peyronel Rambaldi, 1998, pp. 70-74; Musi, 2003, pp. 104-105 and 173; Rosa - Verga, 2003, pp. 176-177; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, pp. 78, 82, 89-91 and 200; Benigno, 2009, pp. 67-68 and 227-228; Capra, 2016, pp. 132 and 135.

[10] Fragnito, 1998, pp. 127 and 129; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, pp. 201-207; Benigno, 2009, pp. 93-97 and 101-102.

[11] Bizzocchi, 1998, pp. 10-12; Peyronel Rambaldi, 1998, pp. 51-52; Musi, 2003, pp. 82 and 89-90; Rosa - Verga, 2003, pp. 167-168; Ago - Vidotto, 2005, pp. 142-143; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, pp. 59 and 62-63; Benigno, 2009, pp. 55-56 and 68; Capra, 2016, pp. 111-112.

as well as for the reconciliation between faith and 'reason' that achieves a more conscious and internalized spirituality. Accordingly, Jansenist movement's contribution to the Enlightenment thought is quiet often remarked, as well as the influence of Muratori's Catholicism on Italian Enlightenment: this secular effort for a renewal from inside – setting religion in synchrony with society and overcoming the confessional fractures – will eventually fill with religious content the anti-curial reforms of the enlightened despots, from the emperor Joseph II to Pietro Leopoldo of Tuscany[12].

But the considered textbooks clarify also the elitist character of these claims, compared to the mass of the faithful's sentimental and heavily exteriorized approach to devotion, as widely spread by the Counter-reformation: the very mass of the faithful that answered with a revolt to the deliberations – inspired by Jansenism – of the synod of Pistoia in 1786, and that greeted with sympathy Pope Pius VI, traveling to Vienna in 1782 in order to halt emperor Joseph II of Habsburg's reformation projects. In this regard, several of the textbooks considered underline the discontent of the French peasant populations engendered by revolutionary de-Christianization and the importance of the Concordat with the Holy See (1801) in enlarging the basis of consensus to the Napoleonic regime. Clear evidence is therefore given to the resilience of the French lower classes' adhesion to Catholicism, even in the most radical phase of the revolutionary process, and in spite of the progressive secularization of the French elites[13].

Given the recognition of the pervasive nature of the religious fact in the Catholic and Protestant West (including North of America) societies, it grows even more evident – in Modern history as well as in Contemporary history textbooks – the lack of interest in the rest of the Christian world and in all polytheistic confessions[14]: rarely remarked are, for instance, the influences on Latin American societies of a unique syncretistic Catholicism – characterized by

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[12] Bizzocchi, 1998, p. 15; Chiosi, 1998, pp. 461, 469 and 479; Fasano, 1998, pp. 316, 317 and 319-321; Fragnito, 1998, p. 139; Imbruglia, 1998, pp. 35-36; Pagano, 1998, pp. 430 and 434-437; Pasta, 1998, pp. 489, 493, 511 and 516-517; Ortu, 1998, p. 391; Della Peruta, 2000a, p. 141; Musi, 2003, pp. 7-8, 15, 20-21, 23-24, 248-249, 272-273, 281-282 and 285; Rosa - Verga, 2003, pp. 23, 42, 183, 185-187 and 189; Ago - Vidotto, 2005, pp. 46-47, 136, 148, 179-180 and 235; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, pp. 50, 51, 52, 54-55, 87-88, 151-152, 154, 224 and 326-327; Benigno, 2009, pp. 50, 144-145 and 224, 232; Capra, 2016, pp. 41-42, 103-105, 232, 274-275, 296, 305, 317, 323, 430 and 433-435.

[13] Bizzocchi, 1998, pp. 17 and 21; Caffiero, 1998, pp. 583-600; Musi, 2003, pp. 90, 426; Rosa - Verga, 2003, pp. 189-190; Ago - Vidotto, 2005, pp. 210-211 and 246; Benigno, 2009, p. 332; Capra, 2016, pp. 325, 343, 353, 362-363, 379 and 384.

[14] Some observations about European contemporary Buddhism are available in Pace, 2009, pp. 340-341.

the resilience of pre-Columbian cults[15] –, or the bond between religion and national or political identity in eastern Europe[16], while the most of references about Judaism are functional to describe mainly the relationship between Jewish communities (sometimes tolerated and sometimes persecuted) and Christian majority[17].

About Muslim world, a quite remarkable role is acknowledged to Ottoman Empire (whose political leadership was also recognized as the supreme authority of the Sunni Muslim religion, Musi, 2003, p. 39) and to its military aggressiveness in setting the path of a European self-consciousness that moves its first steps also through the negative 'us-against-them' dialectics[18]. Such a role appears to be the main motive of some articulated panoramas on the Ottoman government, able to co-opt those Christian elites willing to convert and to obtain consensus among the subjects of other faiths, through a tolerant attitude, a good administration of justice and a well-balanced fiscal regime. Very punctual are also the references to Shia Persia, to the complex religious geography of the tolerant Moghul empire and to the peaceful expansion of Islam in Africa and Asia along the routes of land and sea trade[19]. Usually overshadowed appears nonetheless the permeability of the religious and military frontier between the Christian and the Ottoman Mediterranean in the 16th and 17th centuries, with its huge cultural implications[20]. Furthermore the references to multi-confessional realities such as the Polish-Lithuanian Confederation or the Moghul Empire usually seem to imply religious diversity as the main reason of political weakness[21].

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[15] Quiet unique exception, the interest shown by Mario Rosa and Marcello Verga about this aspect of Catholic evangelization in Latin America "che, da una parte, ebbe la capacità di imporsi alle preesistenti credenze, ma, dall'altra, mantenne al proprio interno valori e culti autoctoni. Si svilupparono in tal modo devozioni e culti molto intensi, ma pieni di significati ambigui", Rosa - Verga, 2003, p. 35. On the same issue, see also Imbruglia, 1998, p. 36.

[16] Casula, 1997, pp. 563-564; Graziosi, 1997, pp. 204-205; Chiosi, 1998, pp. 474-475; Ago - Vidotto, 2005, pp. 157-158; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, p. 43; Capra, 2016, pp. 46, 156, 246 and 306-307.

[17] Rosa - Verga, 2003, p. 182; Capra, 2016, p. 209; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 35-36.

[18] Niccoli, 1998, pp. 107-108; Musi, 2003, pp. 125, 128-129, 156 and 158; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, p. 31; Benigno, 2009, pp. 22-23; Capra, 2016, p. 89.

[19] Casula, 1997, p. 554; Pagano, 1998, p. 435; Musi, 2003, pp. 39 and 177-182; Ago - Vidotto, 2005, pp. 167-168; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, pp. 125-130 and 144-145; Benigno, 2009, p. 90; Capra, 2016, pp. 80-81 and 215-216; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, p. 28.

[20] Knapton, 1998, pp. 162-164; Musi, 2003, pp. 177 and 182; Pace, 2009, p. 340; Capra, 2016, p. 147; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 26-27.

[21] Graziosi, 1997, pp. 207-208; Benigno, 1998, p. 287; Musi, 2003, pp. 127, 129, 224-225 and 359-360; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, pp. 42, 196; Benigno, 2009, pp. 108, 176; Capra, 2016, pp. 145, 155-156 and 241-242.

Considered Contemporary history textbooks also emphasize relationship between religious fact and politics. Despite some significant exceptions, the forms and contents of religious practice are normally marginalized[22], while the references to the Christian faith, and especially to Catholic confession and its institutions, are overwhelmingly predominant (Casula, 1997, p. 549) according to two main thematic lines:

1) The mutual feedback and competition between Christianity and contemporary ideologies. 2) The attitude of the Catholic Church toward international politics – as well as to State regimes and global or local political movements – especially the Italian ones. This attitude is normally considered as the approach adopted by its top institutions, on the one hand, and by the people of the faithful, on the other[23].

About the first thematic line, the recourse to terms normally referring to the religious fact, in order to define the ideological systems of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is quiet common. In the glossary of the collective volume published by Donzelli in 1997, the definition of "secolarizzazione" (secularization) associates religious faiths and political ideologies, marginalized by the disenchantment of modern life. More than that, political ideologies are depicted as "visioni del mondo, quasi delle fedi, che implicavano rigorose scelte di vita e anche rituali forme di appartenenza"[24] (*Storia contemporanea*, p. 651). Quiet remarkable is the frequent use of terms like "guerre di religione" (religious wars), to represent the ideological competition between opposing nationalisms and political views in the two world wars and during the post-war years (1919-1925 and 1945-1948) of the Italian political life: even Catholic Church's anti-communist activity before 1948 political election is portrayed as a "crociata" (crusade)[25].

From the language of historiography to the forms and concepts of politics, the ideologies striving to inspire the masses – from the *Risorgimento* patriotism to the European and American protest movements in the 60s and 70s of the twentieth century – must borrow the fitting words from the language of faith and also propose their own rituals and sacred places for pilgrimages, their own catechism and martyrology: they also must imitate confessional groups in inspiring faith in the historical necessity of the revelation's accomplishment, in presenting self-sacrifice as a path to eternity, and militancy as a source for

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[22] Remarkable exceptions in Casula, 1997, pp. 555-557, 559-561 and 565-568 and Pace, 2009, pp. 324-327, 331-333 and 338.

[23] Della Peruta, 2000b, p. 324; Banti, 2009, pp. 422-423; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, pp. 274-275 and 302; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 558, 559 and 653-656.

[24] About the same issue, see also Lanaro, 1997, p. 613.

[25] Mangiameli, 1997, p. 429; Colarizi, 2010, pp. 39-41; Barbagallo, 2016, pp. 167, 222 and 247.

moral regeneration, as a service requested to 'chosen' individuals in order to achieve a universal ideal of justice[26].

Thus if in the considered Modern history textbooks the Catholic Church's organization and ascendant exercised on the faithful appear as a model for the dynastic autocracies aiming to centralize government, the secular ideologies as described by Contemporary history textbooks seem to reproduce intent and forms of – and also placing itself often in competition with – religious confessions[27].

Concern about this matter is particularly evident in the textbook by Alberto Mario Banti – pointing out the sacralization of Stalin's power through the almost religious cult dedicated to Lenin[28] –, but also in Francesco Barbagallo's observations about political parties' organization between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Barbagallo, 2016, pp. 105, 107, 109). Referring to the relationship between religious faith and national identity, Lucio Caracciolo and Adriano Roccucci underline that the sense of belonging to a national community was

> in grado di mobilitare sentimenti e passioni, di suscitare nella popolazione un senso di appartenenza, un'adesione non imposta o subita, ma partecipe, convinta. La nazione si prestava a sostituire efficacemente il legittimismo dinastico e le dottrine religiose dell'autorità al fine di rispondere all'esigenza del potere politico di trovare nuove forme di sacralizzazione[29].

These secular religions, starting from the positivist 'belief in progress', soon assume the same role already exercised by Christian faith – alongside it, however, but not substituting it – of a collective ideal way to utopia, and of a conceptual tool to justify the repression of non-conformism and the imposition of political domination on the 'other' from a cultural point of view, giving the

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[26] Casula, 1997, p. 548; Graziosi, 1997, pp. 201-202, 211 and 215; Soldani, 1997, p. 60; Caffiero, 1998, p. 586; Della Peruta, 2000a, pp. 143-144, 288-289, 336 and 431; 2000b, p. 126; Rosa - Verga, 2003, pp. 213-214; Banti, 2009, pp. 9, 11-12, 99-100, 114-116 and 347; Pace, 2009, pp. 334 and 342; Colarizi, 2010, p. 89; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, pp. 89-90 and 144-145; Capra, 2016, pp. 409 and 449; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 313, 333-335, 422, 458 and 461. See also Romanelli, 1997, pp. 186-187; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 24 and 32.

[27] Caravale, 1998, pp. 82-83 and 90; Fasano, 1998, pp. 325-327; Fragnito, 1998, p. 134; Niccoli, 1998, p. 122; Verga, 1998, p. 361; Rosa - Verga, 2003, p. 165; Ago - Vidotto, 2005, p. 147; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, pp. 25, 29-30, 60, 122 and 313-314; Benigno, 2009, pp. 6-7, 36-37 and 222; Capra, 2016, pp. 46 and 231-232.

[28] Banti, 2009, pp. 59-63. About Bolshevism as a "versione deformata dell'antica idea messianica radicata nella cultura russa reinterpretata dal partito comunista", see also Banti, 1997, pp. 162 and 164-165; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 393-394.

[29] Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, p. 23; see also Soldani, 1997, p. 59.

white and Western man that new sense of his election to civilization of the planet that unfortunately also survives in current events[30].

About the second thematic line, it is confirmed the ambivalent outcomes resulting from Catholic Church's attitude toward modernity. This attitude's analysis necessarily takes into account the relationship, sometimes dichotomous, between an increasingly central and pre-eminent leading figure, the pope[31] – proclaimed infallible in theological matter since 1870 – and a people of the faithful inevitably conditioned by elitist and mass cultural, social and political phenomena. Among these, particular evidence is granted to Liberalism[32], target of the irrevocable condemnation in the encyclical *Mirari vos* (1832), but soon assumed by wide sectors of the Catholic upper classes in their own political culture, and in particular by those intellectual circles inspired by the Gioberti's *neo-guelfismo*, urging for an alliance between the Church and Liberalism itself[33].

Furthermore, the very refusal of modernity by catholic radicals is also pointed out as an impulse to correct the imbalances of modernity itself – especially those affecting lower classes (up to today's "scelta preferenziale per i poveri" (Casula, 1997, p. 557; Della Peruta, 2000b, p. 32) – and as a conceptual base for that privileged relationship between the Catholic Church and the masses whose importance and resilience are already evident in Modern history textbooks[34]: a wide perspective that allows us to interpret, even in this case, the conceptual journey of Lamennais towards Christian liberalism – or socialism –, as well as the defense of the tradition by de Maistre; the *Syllabus of Errors* as well as the social contents of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*; the conservative corporatism as well as Romolo Murri's Catholic syndicalism; the condemnation of the Modernism movement's critical approach to Bible as well as the deep renewal expressed in the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council; the resilience of a strongly critical attitude towards socialist demands as well as the

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[30] Bodei, 1997, p. 302; Casula, 1997, p. 558; Fumian - Lupo, 1997, pp. 22-23; Imbruglia, 1998, p. 46; Della Peruta, 2000a, pp. 315-319, 322-323, 325-326 and 434; Rosa - Verga, 2003, p. 216; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, pp. 80 and 398; Barbagallo, 2016, pp. 21-23 and 292-293; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 213, 242 and 402.

[31] Della Peruta, 2000b, p. 325; Rosa - Verga, 2003, p. 191; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 36-37 and 214.

[32] A far consequence of the Reformation, according to Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, p. 16, and Capra, 2016, p. 402.

[33] Fumian - Lupo, 1997, pp. 24-25; Romanelli, 1997, p. 185; Soldani, 1997, pp. 58-60; Della Peruta, 2000a, pp. 127, 147-148 and 151-153; Rosa - Verga, 2003, p. 191; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, p. 273; Capra, 2016, p. 446; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 94-95.

[34] Romanelli, 1997, pp. 185-186; Della Peruta, 2000a, pp. 53-54, 267-268, 370, 404-405 and 422-423; Barbagallo, 2016, pp. 68-69 and 80; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 252-253 and 255.

Cattolicesimo del dissenso, merged in the Italian experience of "preti operai" (workmen priests) in 1960s and 1970s and in the Latin American Liberation Theology[35].

In other situations the dialectic between the top and the base of the Catholic world takes on even more complex connotations. That is the case of the Great War – condemned as "inutile strage" (useless slaughter) by the head of a Church whose most eminent ministers blessed their own countries' armies[36] – and the controversial Catholic relationship with the fascist regime: a relationship certainly well expressed by the Lateran Pacts, but also by the stubborn resistance to the assimilation in the cult of the Duce and the Party opposed by those sectors of associated Catholics (mainly the Catholic Action) that will provide a substantial part of the future Italian Republic's political staff, granting Catholicism a significant influence on the Italian institutions and society of the twentieth century[37].

Among the main consequences of this influence considered textbooks mention: traces in the constitutional charter of the basic principles of Christian Personalism; the social influence of Christian associations not directly involved in government or electoral competitions, further increased after the breakdown of Catholics' political unity, with the dissolution of the *Democrazia Cristiana* (Christian Democracy Party) in 1994; a welfare setting – mainly focused on the redistributive and supportive role of the family – which strongly penalizes any individual who is not male and head of the family, in fact. Influence that has nevertheless found a limit in the fairly liquid character of the adhesions of Christians, more believers than faithful, to the directives from above, within an 'international market of faiths' now strongly liberalized and open to a strong competition[38].

Thus we can assume that a long tradition of studies about the history of Christianity has consolidated the due ability to highlight nuances, even within

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[35] Crainz, 1997, pp. 513-516; Fumian - Lupo, 1997, pp. 30-32; Romanelli, 1997, p. 192; Soldani, 1997, pp. 46, 55, 56 and 58-59; Della Peruta, 2000a, pp. 8-9, 106 281-283 and 448-449; 2000b, pp. 68-69 and 325; Rosa - Verga, 2003, p. 215; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, pp. 14-16, 273 and 276; Barbagallo, 2016, pp. 110-111; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 162-166.

[36] Isnenghi, 1997, pp. 325, 334 and 337; Della Peruta, 2000b, pp. 28-29; Banti, 2009, pp. 9 and 13-14.

[37] Crainz, 1997, pp. 501-502; Lupo, 1997, pp. 370, 379 and 381; Della Peruta, 2000b, pp. 56-57, 86-87, 90 and 323; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, pp. 145-147; Barbagallo, 2016, p. 211; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 419-421.

[38] Casula, 1997, pp. 548 and 568; Gribaudi, 1997, p. 582; Soldani, 1997, p. 59; Della Peruta, 2000b, pp. 324-325, 380, 383-384 and 439-440; Banti, 2009, pp. 274, 421 and 424; Pace, 2009, pp. 328 and 335-336; Colarizi, 2010, pp. 120, 154, 182-183 and 222-223; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, p. 284; Barbagallo, 2016, pp. 220-221; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, p. 34.

an exposition of fundamentals that must be general, although not generic: the outcomes of this path will have to be exploited in our interpretation of the history of Islam and other religions, to build a truly pluralist perspective on the social and religious components of our present and future society.

In the considered textbooks, in fact, Muslim religion unquestionably appears to be a strong element of political cohesion well before the twentieth century – starting from the Islamic expansion in West Africa during the early nineteenth century, with the creation of a strong State, the Sokoto Caliphate[39] – and later – often hybridized with or adapted to political ideologies imported from the West (Della Peruta, 2000b, p. 450; Banti, 2009, pp. 119, 280, 287) – a powerful unifying factor of the varied resistance to colonial penetration and to economic and cultural globalization[40].

Islam, like Christianity, also provides languages and ways of expression to basically social and national claims, such as the Palestinian cause[41]. Even Muslim societies appear to be engaged in a problematic dialogue with 'modernity' and with the offspring of a Western-based secularization. But the dynamics of this 'dialogue' and its influences on interior and foreign politics are analyzed in detail almost exclusively in the case of the Ottoman Empire. Here, nineteenth century attempts to reform eventually opened the path to the secular and nationalist leadership of the Young Turks, and to their effort to level on a national basis a traditionally multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society: significantly, the considered textbooks usually charge these nationalist instance with inspiring those who planned the infamous Armenian genocide and the violent (and reciprocal) ethnic cleansing against the Greek-Anatolian communities (1919-1922)[42].

With the fall of the Caliphate of Constantinople and the end of Sunni world's united leadership, the identity problem of Muslims rises to a global importance (Banti, 2009, p. 132), encouraging the popular struggle against the colonial invader in the name of faith – as in the case of Muslim India (Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, p. 576) – , or on the contrary, the friendly economic and political cooperation with Western powers, as in the case of the Sunni monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula.

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[39] Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, p. 77; Capra, 2016, p. 430; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, p. 35.

[40] Bodei, 1997, pp. 303-305; Della Peruta, 2000b, p. 273; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, pp. 399-400; Barbagallo, 2016, p. 322.

[41] Casula, 1997, p. 555; Di Nolfo, 1997, pp. 527-546: 545; Banti, 2009, pp. 139-140 and 290; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, p. 301; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 606-607.

[42] Graziosi, 1997, pp. 204-206, 223 and 225-226; Della Peruta, 2000a, pp. 69 and 355-356; Ago - Vidotto, 2005, pp. 166-167; Banti, 2009, p. 36; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, pp. 58-59 and 125-127; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 179-182.

But the future of the new States – raising from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire and becoming independent from Western political, but not economic, control (Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, pp. 257, 314) – in the considered textbooks appears to be overwhelmingly conditioned by a rigidly dichotomous alternative: that between laical regimes ruled by the military – committed to a forced modernization, sometimes inspired by a vague sort of socialism, but always paternalistic and authoritarian – and fundamentalist regimes, hostages of those religious figures able to build a mass political front by welding discontent for the forced secularization of customs to popular protest against authoritarianism and widespread resentment about their own countries' economic and political dependence form the Western powers[43]. From this very dichotomy the reader gets the impression that there is little space for intermediate solutions, barely mentioned as weak and pursued just by minorities[44].

Furthermore, terms like *ulama*, *imam*, *ayatollah*, Koranic schools etc. are used properly but in many cases without finding adequate and understandable determination[45]: one wonders how could be interpreted, for example, the religious history of the Christian West and understood its reflections on society, culture and politics, without explaining the difference between the regular clergy and the secular clergy[46], the relationship between the charisma of the priest and that of the bishop, the debate about Pope's prerogatives opposite to those of ecumenical council (Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, p. 59). The absence within Islam of hierarchies similar to the Catholic ones and the substantial differences in matter of charisma between an *imam*, an *ulama*, or a *mufti*, on the one hand, and a catholic priest, on the other (Della Peruta, 2000b, p. 325), rather than simplifying, complicates the process of interpreting a reality uniting in different forms a wide base of believers.

About the theological and ecclesiological contents of the Muslim faith, as we have said, very little is explained: one would say that – within textbook expositions increasingly settled on specific issues and problems, rather than on chronological narration – focusing on Islam appears above all an answer to the urgent problems posed by the spread of Islamic fundamentalism (Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, pp. 394-395) (more or less consciously, in some texts, identified as quintessential fundamentalism (Di Nolfo, 1997, p. 545; Banti, 2009,

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[43] Della Peruta, 2000b, pp. 280 and 291; Banti, 2009, pp. 136, 354 and 356-357; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, pp. 400-401; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 609-611.

[44] Banti, 2009, pp. 136-138, 284, 285, 287 and 351-358; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, p. 351; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 247, 611-613 and 731.

[45] Quite significant exception in Banti, 2009, p. 455, and in Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, p. 203.

[46] Rosa - Verga, 2003, pp. 14-15; Ricuperati - Ieva, 2006, p. 19; Benigno, 2009, pp. 27 and 102-103.

p. 144) and by the massive migratory waves of the last decades. But it is precisely for this reason that the composite nature of Muslim world and belief, in past and present, should be underlined – as recently done by Franco Cardini[47] –, also in relation to issues such as sexual non-conformism and the condition of women. It should be also pointed out that the radical and sometimes violent rejection of modernity and secularization marks a historically determined and specific doctrine (and religious movement) within Islam, the Wahhabism, whose current spreading is linked to the centuries-old association of its leaders with a powerful Arab family, the Saud[48].

In fact some considered textbooks underline the political link between Saudi monarchy and Sunni fundamentalist groups, especially in relation with its struggle against Iran and the proxy wars engendered in the Middle East by this local competition – combined with the global one between superpowers –, exploiting the rift between Sunni Islam and Shia Islam[49]. But unfortunately the reformist trends within contemporary Islam still remain in the background in Italian textbooks, despite the significant effort of many Muslim scholars to shape a critical approach to the sacred texts, by verifying doctrinal sources' authenticity – as pointed out in several recent contributions by the scholar in Muslim history and doctrine Michel Cuypiers[50] –, and also following a path not so far from that opened in the West by Erasmus of Rotterdam and later by contemporary Modernism: trends not to be considered more elitist or more isolated than Erasmus's or Muratori's attempts to a self-reformation of Catholicism, normally described in detail by considered textbooks (Della Peruta, 2000a, pp. 282-283; 2000b, pp. 325-326; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 248-249).

Therefore, a long tradition of studies has taught us to consider religious practice as inseparably linked to the cultural and political context, as able to influence the context, and also as determined in its contents by the context itself. The reasons for faith and for practicing it in a certain way often come from outside the faith itself, which consequently can not necessarily be considered a fuel for the so-called 'clash of civilizations', nor on the contrary an instrument to encourage peaceful coexistence. A concept that has been assumed about Christian faith, whose ambivalent attitude – sometimes contrastive,

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[47] Cardini, 1998 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuZe8gwMx7Q> (January 1st 2019).

[48] Della Peruta, 2000b, pp. 185-186; Barbagallo, 2016, pp. 295 and 329; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 34 and 32-733.

[49] Banti, 2009, pp. 132-134; Cammarano - Guazzaloca - Piretti, 2013, pp. 353-354 and 391-392; Barbagallo, 2016, pp. 319, 326 and 327-328; Caracciolo - Roccucci, 2017, pp. 733-735.

[50] <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1339925.html> (January 1st 2019); <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1340634.html> (January 1st 2019).

sometimes supportive, since the sixteenth century up to nowadays – toward the values of modernity is fully recognized by considered textbooks, as it should be regarding to other non-Christian faiths as well.

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