

Данте Алигьери и эпоха Рисорджименто: религиозный аспект исторической связи

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Религиозные воззрения занимали особое место в революционно-демократической теории известного политического и общественного деятеля Джузеппе Мадзини — одного из главных идеологов Рисорджименто. La Giovine Italia («Молодая Италия»), организация, созданная Мадзини, имела в качестве лозунга слова «Dio e Libertà!» — «Господь и Свобода!». С целью доказать важность изучения в настоящей статье именно религиозного аспекта концепции единства Италии автором был совершен краткий экскурс в историю и этимологию слова, послужившего названием описываемой эпохи, что позволило сделать следующий вывод: *Risorgimento* есть синоним *Rinascimento*, некая аллюзия на Воскресение Иисуса Христа. Кроме того, сильное влияние на формирование национальной мысли о свободном и едином государстве оказала историческая личность знаменитого итальянского поэта XIII века, Данте Алигьери: сложился так называемый культ Данте. На материалах его философских трактатов — «Пир» и «О монархии» — анализируются дантовские взгляды на идею объединения Италии. Сделан вывод о том, что подобные концепции — как Мадзини, так и Алигьери — должны рассматриваться в утопическом контексте.

Ключевые слова: Рисорджименто, объединение, Джузеппе Мадзини, религия, La Giovine Italia, Данте Алигьери, «Пир», «О монархии», утопия, Римская империя.

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Dante Alighieri and Risorgimento: Religious Aspect of Historical Connection

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Religious viewpoints occupied a special place in the revolutionary-democratic theory

of Giuseppe Mazzini, a well-known political and social activist considered to be among the chief ideologues of Risorgimento. *La Giovine Italia* («*Young Italy*»), the organization established by Mazzini, had as its slogan «Dio e Libertà!» — «*God and Liberty!*». To demonstrate how important it is to study the religious aspect of the Italian unification concept in this article, the author made a brief excursion into the history and etymology of the word that named the era in question, with the following corollary: *Risorgimento* is synonymous with *Rinascimento*, it is a vague allusion to Jesus Christ's Resurrection. Additionally, the historical personage of 13th-century Italian poet Dante Alighieri had a profound influence on the formation of national thought about a free and unified state: Dante's so-called cult has been evolved. His philosophical treatises «The Convivio» and «De Monarchia» are used when analyzing Dante's views on the idea of Italy's unification. Such concepts — both Mazzini's and Alighieri's — are concluded to be seen in a utopian context.

Keywords: Risorgimento, unification, Giuseppe Mazzini, religion, *La Giovine Italia*, Dante Alighieri, «The Convivio», «De Monarchia», utopia, Roman Empire.

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«Dio e Libertà!» («*God and Liberty!*») — was the slogan of *La Giovine Italia* (*Young Italy*), a revolutionary organisation established by the prominent Risorgimento activist Giuseppe Mazzini in 1831, and which sought to make Italy an independent republic [12]. There is an overlay of mysticism in these words.

«*God has given you life; thus, God has given you the law. God is the only Lawgiver of mankind. His law is the only one you have to keep*»¹ [15, p. 19] — indicates Mazzini. Not a devout Catholic — as he was fiercely critical of the Pope's authority institute, and even in 1849 he wrote a scathing article titled «Sull'Enciclica di Papa Pio IX» («*On Pope Pius IX's Encyclical*»)² — he nevertheless considered himself a good Christian, condemning atheistic and rationalist viewpoints.

Now let's try to decipher the term *Risorgimento*.

Risorgimento is almost synonymous with *Rinascimento*. «Rebirth». «Resurrection». A kind of allusion to Jesus Christ's Resurrection.

Again a religious etymology. However, this word's first mention as a historical period appears in the Jesuit scholar Saverio Bettinelli's «Risorgimento d'Italia» («*Resurrection of Italy*») [14], published in 1775. «How can one speak about the existence of Italian literature when Italy itself does not really exist?» — Bettinelli wondered, and in a way he was right. What was this country on the European map until the latter half of XIX century? A dozen of independent states.

Risorgimento began to acquire its familiar meaning — «unification» — firstly, thanks to the poet and playwright Vittorio Alfieri, for whom it was essentially an ethico-political and national

¹ In the original: «*Dio v'ha dato la vita; Dio v'ha dunque data la legge; Dio è l'unico Legislatore della razza umana. La sua legge è l'unica alla quale voi dobbiate ubbidire*».

² An encyclical is the main papal document on certain major socio-political, religious and moral issues, addressed to the faithful, bishops or archbishops of a particular country, and second in importance after the apostolic Constitution.

prophecy. Italy, «*defenceless, separated, oppressed, unfree, powerless*», would rebel and become «*virtuous, majestic, free and united*»³, he asserted in his satirical pamphlets, «*Il Misogallo*» («*The French Hater*») [13].

Similarly, the Catholic philosopher and theologian, social and ecclesiastical activist Antonio Rosmini-Serbati, who wrote that Italy should be «*united in weapon, in language, in sanctuary, in memory, in blood and in heart*» [Cited from: 16], followed Alfieri in giving new socio-cultural meaning to the word Risorgimento.

Five hundred years ago, Dante Alighieri — who became an important historical figure, strongly influencing the national conception of the country's unification — was also thinking about the unity of Italy.

By looking at the political maps below, we can trace how Italy's territorial organization changed from Dante's time to the Risorgimento period. What is important is the fact that — once again! — that both in the 13th and 19th centuries there was not a single State, but several kingdoms, duchies and republics (in the Middle Ages). Hence, the thoughts engrossing the scholars do not differ from each other.



Fig. 1. The political map of Italy in the 13th to 14th centuries: the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance

³ In the original: «...*inerme, divisa, avvilita, non libera, impotente... <...> virtuosa, magnanima, libera e una*».



Fig. 2. The political map of Italy before the Risorgimento

Alighieri, in his treatise «The Convivio», a discourse on philosophy, aesthetics and literature, notes: «...strife and wars arise between states... to eliminate these wars and their causes it is necessary that the whole earth and all that is given to the mankind should be a Monarchy, in other words a single state, and have one sovereign who, possessing everything and not being able to desire more, would keep the individual states within their dominions, so that peace would reign among them...» [2].

Dante’s idea of Italian unification was shared by Giuseppe Mazzini, mentioned at the outset of this article. It is also significant that Mazzini dedicated his first literary essay to the latter, titled «Dell’amor patrio di Dante» — «On Dante’s love of the Fatherland». But the thoughts of Alighieri — albeit a fervent patriot — are nevertheless utopian: the country’s unification he observed in all mankind’s unity, as he wrote about in the same «The Convivio» (Treatise IV, Chapter III): «For perfecting the human race’s universal union there must be, as it were, a single helmsman, who,

taking into account the different conditions in the world, would possess a universal and indisputable right to command that union's members in order to distribute the various and necessary burdens» [2]; the «helmsman» is certainly the emperor, the ancient Caesars' successor, a young man, but the most knowledgeable and wise one — such an attitude was formed in the Roman Empire under the influence of Socrates' and Plato's meritocratic ideas [5]. So we see that not the materialistic aspect of unification is important for Dante, but, as we would say, «philosophical» one. He does not think about social and economic problems of the Italian state which could be solved by uniting, instead he outlines in his treatises the following thought: for all mankind's welfare (understood by him again from *philosophical* positions) there should exist monarchy. Yet this was considered archaic even in the Middle Ages — it is logical that due to unification, the gap between poor parts of Italy and rich trading city-states like the Genoese and Venetian republics could easily be narrowed. The utopian nature of Dante (13th century representative)'s ideas was stressed by A.L. Dobrohotov in his introductory article to the treatise «De Monarchia» [1, p. 17].

However, V.V. Belyaev has a completely opposite viewpoint [3]: he interprets the Dantean concept of the country's unity as the idea of Roman people's (because at that time there was no such term as «Italian people») supremacy over the others, quoting Russian-Bulgarian historian P.M. Bitsilli: «*Dante's monarchy is an ancient empire, its essence consists in the domination of one nationality and one culture over all the rest»* [4, p. 365]. This statement, as formulated by the scholar, may be considered slightly nationalistic; A.V. Sopov has defined «Dante's monarchy» clearly as «*world in form only, but national, Italian, in essence»* [11].

Both Dante's and Mazzini's discourses are centered on the religious aspect; what they have in common is their rejection of papal authority. For Alighieri, the Roman Empire — since its foundation (when it was polytheistic) — was supposed to be heading the world, whilst «*God always wants the best»* [1, p. 49]. This is why he unleashes his wrath on the Catholic priests [7]. The prelates, «zealots of the Christian faith», owe untold riches, but have forgotten that this wealth is used not to meet their personal needs, but to help the lower social strata. The church, then, is plunged into the abyss of sin and crime. In addition, Dante proves the imperial authority's independence from the church this way: the Roman Empire, and with it the imperial power, existed before the Christian Church was established, so the emperor power is from God, not from the Pope. No wonder that the treatise «De Monarchia» was condemned by the papal curia at an autodafest, and banned in the 16th century by entering it in the «index». It was not until the 19th century that the ban was lifted.

As for Mazzini, we have previously stated that he did not favour papal authority. While initially supporting Pius IX and even calling on him in an open letter to lead the movement for Italy's unification, in the end the former Carbonari⁴ published «Sull'Enciclica di Papa Pio IX».

Mazzini did not regard Italian society as particularly God-fearing, arguing: an ideal republic could be built on a «*religious idea»* rather than on the «*adoration of material interests»* on which the government of then Italy was based, in his view [Cited from: 6]. «*And religious thought sleeps, waiting to be developed, in our people: whoever manages to awaken it will do more for the nation*

⁴ The Carbonari were a secret society in Italy which aimed to fight absolutism, unify the country and introduce the Constitution. The name is related to the fact that the society had a ritual of burning charcoal, among other rites, to symbolize the members' spiritual purification.

*than the twenty political sects»*⁵ [15]. As the former Carbonari thought, two main branches of Christianity in European countries — Catholicism and Protestantism — as they existed at that time, would only destine the people to misery and further enslavement. It is only a kind of religion, leading to prevalence of individualism [9].

Dreaming of an ideal world, an ideal Italian republic where no one would want for anything and everyone would be equal — i.e. a socialist republic (understood, however, by some as a «the people’s violent union» [8]), Mazzini created a revolutionary-democratic conception in which the majority of the motives are mystical and religious, thus revealing its disconnection from reality [10]. We shall give just one example: betting on the grassroots, — the main force in the struggle for Italy’s unification — Mazzini at the same time ignored the peasantry’s (the bulk of the population) interests, not willing to lose supporters among the liberal nobility and the bourgeoisie. It is therefore also worth noting that this theory is utopian in nature.

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⁵ In the original: «*È il pensiero religioso dorme, aspettando sviluppo, nel nostro popolo: chi saprà suscitarlo, avrà fatto più per la Nazione che non con venti sette politiche*».

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