

Catholicism and Fascism(s) in Europe 1918-1945: Beyond a Manichean Approach

(International Conference, Rome, Academia Belgica, September 15-17, 2010)

Call for papers

Abstracts of paper proposals will be accepted until May 10, 2010. Abstracts of 300-500 words are to be sent, as an e-mail attachment, to Jan Nelis at jan.nelis@ugent.be and/or jan_nelis@hotmail.com (Word-, rtf- or pdf-format).

They should be accompanied by a title of the contribution as well as a CV which mentions the participant's most relevant publications and his/her institutional affiliation. Accepted languages will be English, French and Italian. Abstracts should clearly indicate the originality of the projected paper presentation, and situate it in the general theme of the colloquium. Proposals concerning Poland, Slovenia and Austria are particularly encouraged.

Abstracts will be evaluated by the scientific board in function of their relevance to the general conference theme and panel structure, as well as of the available places. Notification of acceptance or refusal will be given by June 1, 2010.

Conference proposal

The general theme of the proposed conference is the ideologisation of the relationship between Catholicism and fascism in Europe (1918-1945). The historiography in this particular field of research has often been characterised by rather outspoken and sometimes conflicting ideological currents. In extreme cases, some historians fully deny any possible convergence between catholic religion and fascist ideology, where others sustain that catholics unconditionally supported fascism. The conference intends to make a meaningful contribution to this fundamental methodological and theoretical debate, through the presentation of original research presented by a group of international scholars, each of whom will focus on a European country or region where in the interwar years a fascist movement or regime flourished, and where there was a significant catholic presence in society.

Participants will explore a wide range of relevant contexts and methodologies. More in particular, the following investigative pathways will guide a series of thematic panels:

- 1) the heuristic notion of fascism as a 'political religion'
- 2) the concept of catholic 'politicisation of religion'
- 3) the phenomenon of 'clerical fascism' and its manifestations
- 4) value and usefulness of a comparative approach
- 5) the various forms of reception of German, Italian and Spanish fascism by catholics in foreign contexts
- 6) the prospect of research based on recently discovered and/or released archival materials (cf. the Vatican interwar archives)

- 7) importance of the role of catholic and fascist intellectuals: towards a historiography of fascist and catholic culture?
- 8) the relationship between catholic and fascist 'modernism'

The conference intends to serve a double purpose: on the one hand participants will present research on the general theme of the relationship Catholicism-fascism in Europe (fundamental contribution concerning content); on the other hand the discussion will be moved to a theoretical level (fundamental methodological contribution). In addition, the aim to cover as large as possible a number of countries and regions will make for a highly complete and complex understanding of the general theme. It is hoped that this will contribute to a more refined and nuanced understanding of not only the notions 'catholic Church' and 'catholics', but also of the highly enigmatic phenomenon of 'fascism'. Much in the same way as traditional religion, as a form of 'political religion', the latter denomination could indeed cover very heterogeneous constituents. The final aim is to contribute to the development of an interpretive 'cluster' model that ideally incorporates a series of investigative matrixes, thus acting as a catalyst to future research.

Scientific board

Roger Griffin (Oxford Brookes), Patrick Loobuyck (Antwerpen), Anne Morelli (ULB), Jan Nelis (Gent), Danny Praet (Gent), Jeffrey Tyssens (VUB), Paul Wynants (Namur)

Organizing committee

Patrick Loobuyck (Antwerpen), Anne Morelli (ULB), Jan Nelis (Gent), Danny Praet (Gent), Jeffrey Tyssens (VUB)