

Nicholas Doublet

Cardinal Pietro Gasparri and Italian Fascism

A Historiographical Reading

Abstract

By the time of his death, Pietro Gasparri's place in history was assured. Already during his lifetime, in fact, and in the period immediately following his death, one sees the development of a certain tendency among historians that has, in diverse ways, conditioned all subsequent interpretation of his person and actions. The fact that his crowning achievement, the Lateran Treaty and concordat, marked what the Fascist regime considered one of its own greatest triumphs, which it sought to exploit on both the national and international scene, coupled with the censorship in effect at the time, assured a particularly ideological – which is to say, a strongly apologetic – reading of this figure. The present study considers the manner in which the understanding of this relationship has been treated over the decades from the period following Gasparri's death to the works published following the opening of the Vatican Archives relating to the pontificates of Benedict XV and Pius XI, for whom he served as secretary of State.

Furthermore, the nationalistic perspectives of the time, bolstered by the philo-fascist attitudes of the greater part of Italian Catholicism, meant Gasparri was largely associated with a specific context, namely Italy, and a single issue, the Lateran Pacts. However, over the subsequent decades, other facets of Gasparri's work and the complexity of relations between the Holy See and Italy have gradually come to light. The aim of this study is to pull together an overview of the ways in which different historians, studying the Holy See's relations with the Italian Fascist regime, have approached the person and actions of Pietro Gasparri and his emergence as a key figure in the successive pontificates of Benedict XV and Pius XI.

1 Historiography during the Fascist Era (1922–1943)

Already by the end of the Fascist regime, a particular picture of Gasparri had become established. Indeed, an aura of myth surrounded him even before his death. In an age

marked by sharp contrasts and high passions, Gasparri was inevitably caught up in a debate tainted by overtly ideological concerns. The treatment of him up to Vatican II continued to be strongly apologetic and predominantly laudatory. Still during his lifetime, the priest Ernesto Vercesi (author of a number of books on contemporary ecclesiastical history) dubbed him the Consalvi of his age.¹ It is a sobriquet to which later authors have returned but never truly developed, with the exception of the French historian Fabrice Bouthillon who seeks to emphasize the importance of Pius XI's theological vision in determining his attitude to the totalitarian regimes of his age.² Even if of an apologetic nature, the volume by this same author about the relations between the Holy See and the Italian state during the war is not to be overlooked.³

Giuseppe Forchielli's "Il cardinale Pietro Gasparri" and his "solemn commemoration" of the cardinal in a Fascist newspaper published in Macerata⁴ adopt the same, apologetic tone, as does A. Mittiga's "Il cardinale giurista Pietro Gasparri".⁵ Meanwhile, the article "Pietro Gasparri intimo" by the Italian, Catholic and philo-fascist journalist, writer and politician Filippo Crispolti (1857–1942), true to its title, presents a more intimate picture of the cardinal.⁶

In 1938, only four years after his death, the "Vita del Cardinale Gasparri. Segretario di Stato e Povero Prete"⁷ was published by Gasparri's first and principal biographer, the Italian diplomat Francesco Maria Taliani (1887–1968). Written like a novel, it lacks academic rigor – citing no sources – yet it is here that, in heavily apologetic terms, Taliani created the myth of a philo-fascist Gasparri that would continue to nourish interest in the cardinal.

The picture of Gasparri as a faithful servant of his pontiffs also remained a constant in more strictly historiographical writings, which proceeded on the same apologetic note. In what can be read as no less than a brief, but intense panegyric, Gaetano De Felice praised the man who, as the "incomparato collaboratore [di Pio XI] nell'epica

1 Ernesto Vercesi, *Tre Segretari di Stato. Consalvi, Rampolla, Gasparri*, Venezia 1932.

2 Fabrice Bouthillon, *La naissance de la Mardité. Une théologie politique à l'âge totalitaire: Pie XI (1922–1939)*, Strasbourg 2001.

3 Ernesto Vercesi, *Il Vaticano, l'Italia e la Guerra*, Milano 1925.

4 Giuseppe Forchielli, *Il cardinale Pietro Gasparri*, Macerata 1934.

5 A. Mittiga, *Il cardinale giurista Pietro Gasparri*, in: *I Rostri* 5,9–12 (1934), pp. 665–674.

6 Filippo Crispolti, *Pietro Gasparri intimo*, in: *La Stampa*, 23 November 1934, no. 278, p. 5.

7 Francesco M. Taliani, *Vita del Cardinale Gasparri. Segretario di Stato e Povero Prete*, Milano 1938.

gesta della Conciliazione”, stands as one of the Vatican’s great secretaries of State, and to whom credit for the reconciliation must be given:

“Spettava a Mussolini, libero dalle difficoltà del parlamentarismo, la missione storica di passare definitivamente il Rubicone. Ad indurvelo, troncando gli indugi, oltre alla sapienza del nuovo Papa, alla competenza appassionata di Francesco Pacelli, negoziatore esperto, potè l’amore e la ferrea volontà di Pietro Gasparri, il quale, solo tra i contraenti, lavorava al trionfo d’una tesi che era sua, e della quale nessuno poteva contendergli la gloriosa paternità”.⁸

The continual deterioration in this relationship ensured that Gasparri remained of great interest to authors like C. A. Biggini (1902–1945, an Italian Fascist politician who served as Minister of Education before and after the proclamation of the Italian Social Republic), who sought to harness the Lateran Pacts – which according to a certain historiographical narrative stood as one of Mussolini’s crowning achievements – for the benefit of Fascist propaganda. During the War, Biggini published a number of texts about the *conciliazione*, in which, taking a utilitarian stance, he attempted to show that such a resolution was only possible with the advent of the Fascist revolution, itself the product of the resolute will of the *Duce*.⁹ Behind the insistent praise for Gasparri’s patriotism, however, a note of criticism regards anti-fascist voices and Pius XI’s clear change in attitude towards the regime is clearly discernable.

As such, even in this early period, we find Gasparri’s achievements placed in judgement, so to speak. Yet the process lacks any critical meaning, for the conclusions reached are already determined at the outset, whether it be by providential design on the part of an ecclesiastic author, or a case of propagandistic political repurposing in the interests of the regime. In either case, the authors remain in laudatory mood, and no criticism of Gasparri’s actions is ever given voice. The heavy censorship in place at the time must not be forgotten,¹⁰ even though it remains difficult to determine what influence it exerted on most of these works.

The treatment of Gasparri in the historiography of the Fascist period is also redolent of the era’s nationalistic outlook. Firstly, interest in Gasparri remained largely limited

8 Gaetano De Felice, *Il cardinale Pietro Gasparri*, Milano [after 1930], p. 34.

9 Carlo Alberto Biggini, *Storia inedita della Conciliazione*, Milano 1942, p. 7.

10 On the censorship of literary works during the Fascist regime, cf. Maurizio Cesari, *La censura nel periodo fascista*, Napoli 1978; Guido Bonsaver, *Censorship and literature in Fascist Italy*, Toronto-Buffalo-London 2007.

to Italian authors. Secondly, it centered on a single issue, the resolution of the Roman Question, and even when this did not preclude the treatment of wider themes, these would only be considered insofar as they related to the development of what the authors considered Gasparri's crowning achievement (a conviction shared by Gasparri himself). Similarly, even though authors writing in the decade or so following his death touch upon a number of important themes that would form a constant in the subsequent historiography, their interest remains largely limited to his political and diplomatic achievements as Secretary of State, that is, to the relationship between the Church and the Italian State.

2 Historiography in the Period Following World War II (1943/1945–1965)

The fall of the Fascist regime brought about a process marked by both continuity and change in the historiographical treatment of Gasparri. With the shift in the Italian political landscape in the aftermath of World War II – most notably the rise of the Christian Democrats – Italian historiography entered a period which the Italian historian and leading exponent of the Italian Catholic democratic movement Pietro Scoppola (1926–2007) has defined as “*storia giustiziera*”.¹¹ Inevitably, the pontificate of Pius XI became an issue of heated controversy, as Catholic, liberal and communist historians sought to impose their particular reading of what form the Church-State relationship should take. With Benedict XV largely overlooked,¹² the treatment of Pius XI was limited to the more political aspects of his pontificate, particularly the relationship between the Church and Fascism, and associated with a particular event, the *Patti Lateranensi*. With the appraisal of Gasparri tending to fall under the umbrella of a wider consideration of Pius XI and his papacy, there is continuity with the historiography of the preceding era, in the sense that the Pacts remain the predominant theme. However, there is also change, as the apologetics shift from a Fascist bias to an attempt by Catholic authors, within this context of “*history as tribunal*”, to defend the Church against secularist attacks and accusations. As shown by both the review of Pietro Scoppola's Italian historiography in this period, the

11 Pietro Scoppola, *La Storiografia Italiana sul Pontificato di Pio XI*, in: Achille Ratti. *Pape Pie XI. Actes du colloque organisé par l'EFR, Rome 15–18 mars 1989*, Rome 1996 (Collection de l'École française de Rome 223), Rome 1996, pp. 181–182.

12 A notable exception is the conference held at Spoleto in 1962. Given its success, it seemed that the rediscovery of Benedict XV by historians was assured; however, it was to remain an isolated voice, and the legacy of Benedict's pontificate quickly receded back into relative obscurity. Cf. Giuseppe Rossini (Ed.), *Benedetto XV, i Cattolici e la Prima Guerra Mondiale. Atti del Convegno di Studio tenuto a Spoleto nei giorni 7–8–9 settembre 1962*, Roma 1963.

treatment of Pius XI, and thus by extension of his collaborator, Gasparri, continues to be dominated largely by nationalistic concerns.

In this highly polemical context, as a swell of criticism for the concordat concluded with the fascist regime continued to rise, and with the Church of Pius XII toiling to maintain its privileged position in a rapidly changing Italian society, the figure of Gasparri offered an opportunity to voice praise for what many still considered to be the success of the reconciliation. It is in this light that the commemorative celebration organized by the Pontifical Lateran University to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Gasparri's death must be read. The quality of the contributions in the volume "Il Cardinale Gasparri"¹³ varies greatly. Yet, they are generally consistent with this concept of the historiographic tribunal, with Catholic authors and politicians, still tied to a conservative mentality, attempting to defend the concordat despite it becoming increasingly clear to all sides that a reform of the agreement could no longer be put off. In praising Gasparri, these authors were exalting an alliance in which, by that point, the cracks were already evident. The picture they were painting was idealistic, romantic even, but ultimately impossible to sustain. A good example is the section by Pietro Pirri (1881–1969), a Jesuit historian who specialized in the history of the *Risorgimento* and who, himself, had had the opportunity to work with Gasparri.¹⁴ Pirri returns to the biographical genre established by Taliani, although this time with access to the Vatican Secret Archives. Pirri's contribution can be commended on various points; for instance, it seeks to place Gasparri in his social context, shed light on his origins and clarify the mentality prevalent in his compatriots, which combined a vivid religious piety and a certain patriotism, two forces that loomed large throughout the cardinal's life. Perhaps the greatest criticism of Pirri's section is the way it slides inevitably towards the hagiographical in its effort to paint Gasparri as a model student, priest, professor, writer, pastor, jurist and diplomat.

Thus up to Vatican II, Gasparri's image remained largely tied to a consideration of the *Patti Lateranensi* and thus to the Italian context. This has proven a limitation which even later historians have found difficult to overcome. Given that, here, we are concerned specifically with his role as Secretary of State. Studies that focus on his contribution to the codification of Canon Law largely fall beyond our scope. However, this does not mean that attention to the cardinal's juristic activities has produced nothing of relevance. On the contrary, interest in Gasparri has also been spearheaded by jurists such as Arturo Carlo Jemolo who – interested in the history of the Church-State relationship in the

13 Leone Fiorelli (Ed.), *Il Cardinale Pietro Gasparri*, Roma 1960.

14 Cf. Pietro Pirri, *Per una storia del Card. Pietro Gasparri*, in: *ibid.*, *Il Cardinale Pietro Gasparri*, Roma 1960, pp. 31–62.

context of Italy – could hardly neglect the contribution of Gasparri. Jemolo, and others like him, thus inaugurated something of a trend, whereby authors who – either because of their interest in the history of ecclesiastical law (canon and civil) as pertains to the Church-State relationship (such as Francesco Margiotta Broglio and Carlo Fantappiè) or because they themselves, as politicians, played an active part in defining this relationship, (Giovanni Spadolini, for instance) – find themselves returning time and again to the figure of Gasparri.

3 A Historiography in Diversification (1965–2003/2006)

Even though the relationship between the Church and Fascism continued to dominate interest in Gasparri in the period between Vatican II and the early years of the twenty-first century, approaches to this relationship began to diversify, both thematically and qualitatively. As the literature became more critical, its scope also widened to include new questions, such as the Holy See's contribution to the development of political Catholicism in the first three decades of the twentieth century. As they turned their attention to how the Catholic Church, from its leaders to the Catholic masses, searched for a response to the crisis of the liberal State – a crisis which reached its climax in the trenches of the conflict that casts a shadow over the whole early part of the century, the First World War – historians began to approach Gasparri from new perspectives. In effect, the Church's reaction to the crisis was a project of re-Christianisation, a goal that would be pursued through such means as active Catholic participation in politics – for instance in the form of the *Partito Popolare Italiano* – Catholic Action, the concordat and missionary and humanitarian activity. The historiography of the later twentieth century remained largely driven by specific interests, in the first place the pursuit of the reform of the Italian concordat, a movement also influenced by the renewed ecclesiology of Vatican II and its understanding of the Church-State relationship, though there were also ideological demands. This often drove interest in the delicate questions pertaining to the pontificate of Pius XII, which in turn steered researchers to a consideration of the preceding pontificates. Contemporary concerns also continued to shape the historiography: from the war crisis there emerged a preoccupation with totalitarianism, in particular the Holy See's relationship with communist regimes. The greater availability of archival material also contributed to the diversification of research into the pontificates of Benedict XV and Pius XI and, consequently, of studies of Gasparri as well.

In 1966, Francesco Margiotta Broglio, a disciple of Jemolo, published “Italia e Santa Sede dalla Grande Guerra alla Conciliazione. Aspetti politici e giuridici”, in which he attempted an historical-critical study of the resolution of the Roman Question based on

the available archival material. Margiotta Broglio places the Roman Question in its wider historical context, tracing its roots to the crisis created by World War I. By studying the genesis of the solution finally achieved, Margiotta Broglio hopes to facilitate a more successful interpretation of the clauses of the accord.¹⁵ He sets out a clearly anti-fascist interpretation, highlighting that Fascism itself, as an ideology, contributed nothing new to the solution. In 1971, Margiotta Broglio became professor at the University of Florence and, between 1983 and 1987, he took part in a governmental commission for the revision of the concordat.

The work by the liberal politician, journalist and historian Giovanni Spadolini (1925–1994) “Il cardinale Gasparri e la Questione Romana. Con brani delle Memorie inedite” (1972), undoubtedly represents a milestone in the study of Gasparri, if for no other reason than the fact that Spadolini managed to publish an albeit partial collection of the cardinal’s memoirs, an achievement that had long been promised but had never materialized. Interest in these memoirs constitutes a major theme in itself, as is evidenced by the pointed criticisms that came to be directed at Spadolini’s volume. As Spadolini remarks emphatically in the introduction, the ever imminent but never realized publication of the memoirs came to constitute a kind of ‘mystery’ in the eyes of scholars.¹⁶ As a self-professed secularist, in the liberal tradition, Spadolini’s interest in the resolution of the Roman Question in general, and specifically, here, in the preparation of the Lateran treaties as traced via the contribution of one of the main protagonists, Gasparri, assumes a particular significance when we consider the role that Spadolini himself was to play when that same concordat came to be revised by the governments in which he participated. As Margiotta Broglio notes, as president of the assembly at Palazzo Madama between the mid-seventies and the end of the eighties, Spadolini was to have a great influence on the profound transformation of the ecclesiastical legislation inherited by the Republic from Fascism, a transformation – influenced by the changed ecclesiology of Vatican II, the crisis of the introduction of divorce and the subsequent referendum, and the concor-

15 Francesco Margiotta Broglio, *Italia e Santa Sede dalla Grande Guerra alla Conciliazione. Aspetti politici e giuridici*, Bari 1966, p. 181.

16 Cf. Giovanni Spadolini, *Il cardinale Gasparri e la Questione Romana. Con brani delle Memorie inedite*, Firenze 1972, p. V. Spadolini had already published the first part of these memoirs, those relating to the pontificates of Pius X and Benedict XV, including the full index. Cf. Id., *Il Cardinale Gasparri e la Questione Romana (con brani delle Memorie inedite)*, in: *Nuova Antologia* 513 (1971), fasc. 2050, pp. 159–209.

dat of 1984 – whose logical consequence was a process of profound secularization and, in Spadolini's words, a "Tevere più largo".¹⁷

The partial publication of these memoirs raises a number of questions. In his introduction, Spadolini clarified which copy of the memoirs had been made available to him, opening up the debate over whether different versions of the memoirs existed. In the text made available to Spadolini, there is a significant gap, namely the part concerning the Lateran Treaty from Gasparri's first private meeting with Mussolini, via the laborious negotiations, to the Italian royal family's visit to Pius XI following the ratification.¹⁸ For Spadolini this sheds light on the 'why' of Gasparri's departure from the Secretariat of State, a theme later greatly debated in its own right. The implication, he hints provocatively, is that the parts concerning the Lateran Treaty were deemed too important to be left in circulation. Unsurprisingly, the publication of the memoirs, even decades after the events described, did not pass without controversy. Following the publication, for instance, an article featured in "L'Osservatore Romano" was at pains to point out that the memoirs were the property of the Holy See, which reserved the right of deciding if and when they were to be published.¹⁹ In any case, Spadolini provides a useful commentary to the memoirs, even if the text used is highly problematic from a historical-critical point of view.²⁰

With Spadolini's secular mentality we reach a clear shift from praise to criticism, one motivated by what the author considers an anachronistic agreement in urgent need of reform. Such criticism also mirrors the changed reality brought about by the ecclesiology of Vatican II and its understanding of the Church's place in society. Indeed, during the council the instrument of the concordat had come under heavy criticism from the council

17 Cf. Giovanni Spadolini, *La Questione Romana. Dal cardinale Gasparri alla revisione del Concordato*, Firenze 1997, p. VIII (Introduzione di Francesco Margiotta Broglio).

18 Cf. Spadolini, *Il cardinale Gasparri* (see note 16), pp.V–IX. The missing parts could be reconstructed in reference to the index of these memoirs conserved in the archives of the *Ministero della Cultura Popolare*. It is evident that the third part of the copy handed to Spadolini substantially differs from this other index.

19 Cf. Spadolini, *La Questione Romana* (see note 17), p. XVI (Introduzione di Francesco Margiotta Broglio). According to Margiotta Broglio, the presence of multiple texts appears to have arisen not because of the existence of different versions, but from two different editions of the same work, these being the fruit of collaborations between Gasparri and Don Giuseppe De Luca, and between Gasparri and Giuseppe Dalle Torre. Both collaborations will be discussed further on in the present work.

20 Cf. Angelo Martini, *Le memorie del card. Gasparri e la loro presentazione*, in: *La Civiltà Cattolica* 124 (1973), quad. 2941, pp. 259–267.

fathers, leading to the suspension of its use by Paul VI, and the conception of new forms of agreement with other states. The issue for Spadolini was that the concordat between the Holy See and Italy was a product of the Fascist era that the Italian Republic still had not done away with, and – as such – a burden that could no longer be endured.

The debate over the memoirs has continued. Giuseppe Dalla Torre, for instance, sought to shed further light on their conception and formation in his “La vicenda poco nota delle Memorie del Cardinale Gasparri” (2007).²¹ This short volume essentially reproduces the author’s contribution to a round table conference on Gasparri held in 1973 at the University of Macerata. Dalla Torre’s reflections, echoing Alessandrini’s,²² clearly betray the Holy See’s dissatisfaction with Spadolini’s publication of the memoirs, asserting “quei ricordi appartenevano non al cardinale, alla sua vita privata, ma alla Santa Sede, alla storia di una fase di grande importanza nella vita della chiesa. Spettava dunque alla Santa Sede pronunciarsi sull’opportunità della pubblicazione e scegliere il tempo più opportuno”.²³ Dalla Torre’s polemic – clearly directed at Spadolini – may be intended as a defence against what some deemed the hijacking of the memoirs for contemporary political ends.

Returning to the biographical genre, in his entry on Gasparri in the “Dictionnaire d’Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques”, Belgian historian Roger Aubert (1914–2009) delivers a critical exposition in six sections that, in addition to covering the basic facts, also offers an interpretation that teases out a number of interesting considerations that prove fundamental to understanding the motives behind Gasparri’s approach to a number of specific issues.²⁴ Of particular interest is the final section that offers not only an evaluation of what Gasparri achieved, but also an interesting reflection on his personality. Aubert, while certainly not ignoring the cardinal’s merits – hardworking and practical; possessed of exceptional memory, clarity and the ability to cut through to the essentials; a jovial personality with a humorous bent; orthodox in doctrine, and yet liberal concerning the relations between Church and State – nonetheless passes quite a severe

21 The author being the nephew of Giuseppe Dalla Torre (senior) who, being close to Gasparri, was asked by the attorney Ercole Graziadei to intercede with him on behalf of the American firm Boni & Liverlight, which was interested in publishing a biography of the cardinal.

22 Cf. Federico Alessandrini, *Scritti del Card. Gasparri*, in: *L’Osservatore Romano*, 6 dicembre 1972, p. 3.

23 Giuseppe Dalla Torre, *La vicenda poco nota delle Memorie del Cardinale Gasparri*, Roma 2007, p. 54.

24 Cf. Roger Aubert, *Gasparri, Pietro*, in: *Dictionnaire d’Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques*, vol. 6, Paris 1981, pp. 1365–1375.

judgement on him: with respect to neither canon law nor to his work as Secretary of State, according to Aubert, without diminishing the active and fruitful role he played, can Gasparri be compared to a man like Consalvi. Rather, Aubert asserts that he was a man who displayed: “Beaucoup d’habileté et de souplesse, certes, mais rien de génial ni de profondément innovateur,”²⁵ whose character was deemed by historian Vittorio Frosini “– et ses Mémoires le confirment – ‘tipicamente segretariale piuttosto che pontificale’”.²⁶

Even the British historian John Pollard strays little from strictly Italian concerns in his publication, “The Vatican and Italian Fascism 1929–1932, A study in conflict”, a work whose originality lies in shifting attention from the circumstances that preceded the reconciliation to its aftermath.²⁷ Reflecting on the relationship between the Holy See and the Italian Fascist regime in the phase immediately following the signing of the Lateran Treaty – a phase which he rightly describes as a deep crisis in this barely consummated ‘marriage of convenience’ – Pollard is relatively harsh in his judgement of the protagonists on both sides, including Gasparri.

Pollard implies that Gasparri was not as fully compatible with Pius XI’s authoritative approach as most historians had previously assumed. He interprets his removal in terms of expedience, a new line of thinking that was to be followed in more depth by others. For Pius XI, Gasparri had been a useful instrument of continuity with the previous pontificate, but with the signing of the Lateran Pacts, this instrument had fulfilled its purpose, for the goal had been reached. It follows, then, that the primary reason for his removal was that “as far as Pius XI was concerned, with the realization of the ‘Conciliazione’, Gasparri too had served his turn”²⁸.

The study of Gasparri has continued to progress in the wake of new research into the pontiffs and the pontificates he served as Secretary of State. In 1985, access was granted to the archives of the pontificates of Pius X and Benedict XV, leading to research in a number of new areas. Another work by Pollard, “The Unknown Pope. Benedict XV (1914–1922) and the Pursuit of Peace”, published in 1999, is equally interesting for the light it inevitably sheds on the figure of Benedict’s closest collaborator.²⁹ What the author

25 Ibid., p. 1373.

26 Ibid., pp. 1373–1374, quoting Vittorio Frosini in: *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento* 60 (1973), p. 122.

27 John F. Pollard, *The Vatican and Italian Fascism 1929–1932. A study in conflict*, Cambridge 1985.

28 Ibid., p. 177.

29 John F. Pollard, *The Unknown Pope. Benedict XV (1914–1922) and the Pursuit of Peace*, London-New York 1999.

says of Benedict generally applies to Gasparri, too, as the two pupils of Rampolla worked together in unison of thought and action.³⁰ In the same year a biographical article by Carlo Fantappiè, professor of Canon Law at the University of Roma Tre, and Romeo Astorri, professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences at the Università Cattolica of Milan, was published in the “Dizionario biografico degli Italiani”.³¹

As greater care has been given to understanding the key events of this period within their proper context – depicted within the wider spectrum of events – the ecclesiological dimension has also been given greater weight, allowing a deeper interpretation of the political and diplomatic decisions that were taken. Such is the case of the work of Fabrice Bouthillon, “La naissance de la Mardité”,³² which opens up a theological interpretation of the Holy See’s political relationship with the emerging totalitarian regimes. Increased interest in the pontificates of Benedict XV and Pius XI, albeit certainly not free from ideological concerns, brings closer attention to the person and actions of Gasparri. This research is often conditioned by a ‘judgmental’ interest, which strays beyond the historical into the polemical, as a certain trend in the historiography seeks to accuse the Church of complicity with the totalitarian regimes of the period. Research on Gasparri, tied as it is to these pontificates, is caught up in the polemic. It is in such an atmosphere that historians demanded the opening of the archives relating to the pontificates of Pius XI and Pius XII.

4 Historiography following the Opening of the Vatican Archives Relating to the Pontificate of Pius XI (2003)

In February 2003, access was granted to part of the Vatican Secret Archives pertaining to the pontificate of Pius XI – specifically the material relating to archive units Germany and Bavaria regarding the nunciatures in Berlin and Munich –, the archives of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, and the archive materials at the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith relating to totalitarian ideologies and regimes. The rest of the archives relative to the pontificate of Pius XI were only made available in

30 Ibid., p. 144. Pollard reminds us that their relationship goes as far back as 1901, to their work together in the Secretariat of State where Gasparri worked as the secretary for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, and Giacomo Della Chiesa as the Sostituto (ibid., pp. 17, 25, 27).

31 Romeo Astorri/Carlo Fantappiè, Gasparri Pietro, in: DBI 52, Roma 1999, pp. 503–507.

32 Bouthillon, *La naissance de la Mardité* (see note 2).

September 2006.³³ It remains to be verified whether the expectations and the euphoria that naturally accompanies the granting of new access to such archives have translated into the development of new themes and the deeper exploration of established lines of research. We will be considering the fruit of certain collaborations and research projects that have examined the new sources available, considering the progress this research has made, and the limitations that still exist.

In his noteworthy biography “*Pio XI, Il papa dei Patti Lateranensi e dell’opposizione ai totalitarismi*”, the contemporary historian and established papal biographer, Yves Chiron, provides an overview of this complex pontificate. It is a picture, however, that is not limited to the figure of Pius XI himself, insofar as he “non è un autocrate solitario che dirige la Chiesa da solo.” Rather, it “vuole mostrare la galassia che circonda Pio XI”.³⁴ Gasparri continues to be first among these collaborators, who – like Pacelli later – were not “meri esecutori della sua politica, ma agenti efficace, intermediari, uomini che lavorino seguendo le linee fissate da lui”.³⁵

The Gasparri revealed by Chiron was a man who had original ideas, but who was ready to submit them to the pope’s leadership, carrying forward the pope’s vision while providing advice and support. Through his study of the archival material, Chiron confirms what had already been said of Gasparri. He shows that a defiant Achille Ratti went ahead with the conformation of Gasparri as Secretary of State, despite the opposition exhibited during the conclave by the intransigent faction led by De Lai, for he recognized in Gasparri a way of showing his determination to continue the politics of pacification among nations that had been championed by his predecessor Benedict XV and by Gasparri himself.

After describing Gasparri’s principle achievements during the pontificate of Pius XI, Chiron also considers the troubled issue of his resignation from the position of Secretary of State, and his replacement by Eugenio Pacelli, an act that – together with the death that same month of Merry del Val – represented, according to Chiron, a turning point in Pius XI’s pontificate, which was characterized by the renewal of the Curia. A deep crisis in the Church’s relationship with the fascist state was to follow, culminating in the encyclical “*Non abbiamo bisogno*” of June 26, 1931, in which Pius XI condemned

33 Cf Roberto Regoli, *Dal mito all’Archivio: il pontificato di Pio XI. Il dibattito tra gli studiosi dopo l’apertura degli Archivi Vaticani (2003–2009)*, in: *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 49 (2011), pp. 155–188.

34 Yves Chiron, *Pio XI. Il Papa dei Patti Lateranensi e dell’opposizione ai totalitarismi*, San Paolo (trad. italiana), 2006, p. 7.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

the “statolatria pagana” encouraged by certain elements of the fascist regime. However, Pius XI did not desire a complete break in the diplomatic relations the two parties had established. The crisis became so deep that Gasparri’s help was sought, giving rise to the insinuation that “il cardinale Pacelli avrebbe lasciato la Segreteria di Stato e che Gasparri sarebbe tornato al suo posto”.³⁶

Returning more specifically to the study of Gasparri’s actions and personality, Carlo Fantappiè, in “Chiesa Romana e Modernità Giuridica”,³⁷ pushes deeper into an avenue of enquiry he had begun to explore in previous publications. This work constitutes a landmark in the study of Gasparri as ‘codificatore’ – the author, as Gasparri himself proudly claimed – of the Pio-Benedictine Code. The strength of Fantappiè’s research lies not only in the academic rigor of his work and the detailed accompanying notes but also, and most importantly, in the opening up of a new, untrodden pathway to a deeper understanding of the influences that informed Gasparri’s mindset as a jurist.

As such, even though the author’s purpose in studying Gasparri’s life and work in such depth ultimately serves a broader understanding of the historical circumstances of the Code, this does not prevent him from providing what can be correctly described as one of the outstanding biographical treatments of Gasparri, one that follows him from his early training at the *Seminario Romano dell’Appolinare* to the process of codification itself and the promulgation of the Code once Gasparri had re-entered the Secretariat of State as its head. The chapter “Due disegni in parallelo: Pio X e Gasparri”, which brings out the clear divergences between the theological-political vision, or better the *Weltanschauung* of the philo-Augustinian Pius X and Cardinals Merry del Val and De Lai on the one hand, and that of the neo-scholastic Gasparri on the other, offers a definition of their different conception of the Church-State relationship:³⁸

“Nel primo caso (Pio X) è presupposta una concezione spirituale della Chiesa e la dimensione teologica-politica viene qualificata finalisticamente dal rapporto *Ecclesia / Regnum Dei*, nel secondo caso si insiste di più sulla dimensione istituzionale e societaria della Chiesa (con un influsso maggiore delle dottrine giusnaturaliste e giuspubbliciste) e la dimensione teologico-politica è qualificata giuridicamente dal rapporto tra *Ecclesia / Respublica*”.³⁹

36 Ibid., p. 291.

37 Carlo Fantappiè, *Chiesa Romana e Modernità Giuridica. L’edificazione del sistema canonistico (1563–1903)*, 2 voll., Milano 2008.

38 Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 923–981.

39 Ibid., p. 964.

This provides a key to understanding not only the tense relationship between the two groups, but also the change of direction in the political choices of the Holy See under the successive pontificates, with Gasparri at the helm. The author's interest in studying Gasparri's education and academic and diplomatic activity is motivated by the fact that he sees the cardinal as somehow emblematic of the so-called *grande Curia*, which is to say the Curia as remodeled by Leo XIII as he attempted to re-launch the papacy on the world stage and bring it out of the isolation in which it had found itself following the events of 1870. However, as Jemolo points out, this attempt at reforming the Curia was only superficially successful, and its outlook remained decidedly localized.⁴⁰

Fantappiè's volume is helpful in understanding the context in which Gasparri grew, studied and worked, with the attendant impact of the continuity and change he witnessed in both the Church and society, the diverse forces at play in shaping his *forma mentis*, his cultural and intellectual baggage as it were. All of this is invaluable if we wish to understand his role, and his decisions, in the positions he was to occupy as "codifier"⁴¹ and as Secretary of State. Fantappiè's study is, therefore, an invaluable contribution to the re-construction of Gasparri.

Although the research has mostly remained limited to considerations of the external decisions of the Holy See, that is to the public sphere, we do find occasional glimpses of the internal workings of the Curia.⁴² Delving into just these sorts of internal proceedings, Giovanni Coco's essay, "L'Anno Terribile' del Cardinale Pacelli e il più segreto tra i concistori di Pio XI",⁴³ provides an interpretative key to the whole pontificate of Pius XI in general, and more importantly to Gasparri's resignation as Secretary of State in particular. Given that access to the archival material relating to the pontificate of Pius XI is now possible, Coco has been able to make extensive use of the available material to shed further

40 Fantappiè, *Chiesa Romana* (see note 27), vol. 1, p. 337. Cf. Arturo C. Jemolo, *Il cardinal Gasparri e la questione romana*, in: *Nuova Antologia* 516 (1972), fasc. 514, pp. 479–480.

41 Fantappiè, *Chiesa Romana* (see note 37), vol. 2, pp. 342–345.

42 Cf. Roberto Regoli, *Il ruolo della Sacra Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari durante il pontificato di Pio XI*, in: Cosimo Semeraro (Ed.), *La Sollecitudine Ecclesiale di Pio XI. Alla luce delle nuove fonti archivistiche. Atti del convegno Internazionale di Studio, Città del Vaticano, 26–28 febbraio 2009, Città del Vaticano 2010*, pp. 191–192; cf. also Roberto Regoli, *Congrégation pour les Affaires ecclésiastiques extraordinaires*, in: Christophe Dickès (Ed.), *Dictionnaire du Vatican et du Saint-Siège*, Paris 2013, pp. 309–312. Cf. Nicholas J. Doublet, *The Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs during the pontificate of Benedict XV (1914–1922)*, Doctoral dissertation presented at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, 2016 (unpublished).

43 Giovanni Coco, *L'Anno Terribile" del Cardinale Pacelli e il più segreto tra i concistori di Pio XI*, in: *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 47 (2009), pp. 143–276.

light on positions and interpretations at which other authors had alluded but which could not previously be supported by evidence from the archives. Albeit Gasparri is neither the subject nor protagonist of Coco's article, in introducing his topic the author inevitably hints as to the reason Pius XI changed his Secretary of State less than a year from the signing of the *Patti Lateranensi*, associating it with: "uno dei caratteri salienti del suo pontificato, ovvero un'azione di governo forte e talvolta autoritaria, che non temeva muoversi anche in aperta opposizione al pensiero di alcuni autorevoli porporati".⁴⁴

By also shedding light on the relationship between Pius XI and Gasparri, Coco highlights the difference in their characters. In effect, quoting Confalonieri (1893–1986), the personal Secretary to Pius XI, the author insists that, being somewhat skeptical of the diligence of others, and trusting more in his own personal ability to ensure work was done well, Pius XI wanted not so much partners with whom to collaborate as agents who would carry out his wishes. Most authors have insisted that Gasparri proved a faithful collaborator to Pius XI, a point that Coco does not deny, for indeed "per nove anni era stato [Gasparri] il principale sostegno della sua azione diplomatica e pastorale".⁴⁵ However, given the crisis between the regime and the Holy See that immediately followed the signing of the pacts and the swell of opposition within the Curia to the reconciliation (the main reason for the cardinals' dissent over the *Patti Lateranensi* was the way they had been kept largely in the dark over the negotiations),⁴⁶ as the distance between Gasparri and the pope became progressively more apparent, it became evident that the cardinal's 'era' had come to an end; indeed it is said that Gasparri – who in "uno sfogo personale, avrebbe affermato di ritenere 'onorario il titolo di Segretario di Stato, perchè il papa così

44 Ibid., p. 154; cf. Jean-Dominique Durand, *Lo stile di governo di Pio XI*, in: Cosimo Semeraro (Ed.), *La Sollecitudine Ecclesiale di Pio XI. Alle luce delle nuove fonti archivistiche. Atti del convegno Internazionale di Studio, Città del Vaticano, 26–28 febbraio 2009, Città del Vaticano 2010*, p. 59. The French historian Jean-Dominique Durand notes that, in regard to Pius XI "si è parlato di autoritarismo, di carattere imperioso, di stile brusco. L'analisi dei documenti di diversa provenienza invita a introdurre delle sfumature. Emerge piuttosto l'idea di un capo, un vero capo che nutriva con i suoi collaboratori un rapporto di fiducia esigente, che non seguiva sempre i consigli, perché se poteva esitare, in genere aveva la sicurezza delle convinzioni. Dai collaboratori, prendeva e rifiutava, ma soprattutto aspettava l'informazione sicura, voleva sapere ... In realtà privilegiava il risultato, e forse più che autoritario era un decisionista."

45 Coco, *L'Anno Terribile* (see note 43), p. 172.

46 Ibid., pp. 159–170.

vuole”,⁴⁷ alluding to the latter’s authoritative traits – once described Pius XI as “freddo come il marmo”.⁴⁸

According to Coco, the reason for Gasparri’s removal boils down to a difference in personality, as well as in action, between him and the pope. Gasparri was no mere agent of the pope’s will, and defended his freedom of action:

“esigente ed imperioso, papa Ratti pretendeva dai suoi collaboratori fedeltà assoluta e una perfetta esecuzione *ad litteram* dei suoi ordini; Gasparri, al contrario, tendeva a delegare ai suoi collaboratori una buona parte del lavoro di sua pertinenza, lasciando a sé solo la revisione delle pratiche di maggiore importanza e, pur mantenendosi ligio alle direttive del pontefice, egli tendeva a prendere l’iniziativa, seguendo un’abitudine consolidata in passato dallo stretto rapporto di familiarità con papa Benedetto XV”.⁴⁹

Furthermore, with his “quasi ‘machiavellico’” command of the diplomatic arts, Gasparri “giustificava il suo operato pragmatico e talvolta spregiudicato con gli strumenti di un razioncinio ispirato al casuismo tecnicista”, an approach that earned him “un aura poco ‘edificante’” of which the pope did not approve at all.⁵⁰ Gasparri reached the point of confessing that he no longer shared the Pope’s interpretation of the concordat, and as such felt constrained to present his resignation from the post he would otherwise “non avrebbe lasciato neppur con la morte, come ha dichiarato più volte ai suoi parenti e confidenti, il suo posto cui teneva come alla sua vita medesima”.⁵¹ The author also shows how it was Gasparri himself who suggested a face-saving way to effect his substitution as the head of the Secretariat of State, proposing his nomination to the cardinalatial commission for the Code for the Eastern Churches.

The benefits of allowing the sources to ‘speak’ is demonstrated once again by Giovanni Coco in his introduction to the “I Fogli di udienza’ del Cardinale Eugenio Pacelli”,

47 Ibid., p. 155; here Coco quotes *Informativa del 30 Dicembre 1929*, in: ACS, MI, DGPS, DPP, 564, fasc. “Gasparri Pietro, cardinale”.

48 Coco, *L’Anno Terribile* (see note 43), p. 158, quoting Cesare M. De Vecchi di Val Cisono, *Il quadrumviro scomodo, Il vero Mussolini nelle memorie del più monarchico dei fascisti*, Milano 1983, p. 144.

49 Coco, *L’Anno Terribile* (see note 43), p. 172.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., p. 180, quoting *Informativa del 30 Dicembre 1929*, in: ACS, MI, DGPS, DPP, 564, fasc. “Gasparri Pietro, cardinale” (words that Gasparri said to Card. Granito di Belmonte).

in which he gives one of the most revealing pictures of Gasparri yet offered by any historian.⁵²

Gasparri emerges as the ‘pacifator’, but Coco shows precisely how this role actually accelerated his removal, the true reason being, “perchè non va più d’accordo con il papa relativamente all’applicazione del concordato con il governo italiano”.⁵³ Gasparri’s independent-mindedness clashed with Pius XI’s authoritarian views, and the continued crisis of the summer of 1929 proved an opportune circumstance whereby – given his advanced age and precarious health, not to mention the fact that the Roman Question had now been resolved – the able diplomat Gasparri could orchestrate his own exit, fulfilling the pope’s wishes but leaving with his reputation intact.

The ongoing interest in the more established subject of the relationship between the Holy See and Fascism is also revealed by Giovanni Sale in his “La Chiesa di Mussolini – I rapporti tra fascismo e religione”. The Gasparri that emerges in Sale’s text, is one who – unsurprisingly – is the product of both the contemporary ecclesiastical culture and its ecclesiology, and in truth, how could it be otherwise? A personality can never be understood outside his or her timeframe, and where others have insisted on the break inaugurated by Benedict XV and Gasparri with the anti-modernism of Pius X and Merry del Val, Sale provides a more nuanced approach. The roots of an intransigent ecclesiology remain. Notwithstanding certain openings in Gasparri’s attitude, fed by his realist mentality, there remains an incapability to fully accept the demands of modernity, in particular the value of democracy.⁵⁴

The Church allowed Fascism to invest itself as the defender of the religious interests of the nation, maintaining an attitude of prudent impartiality between the fascist party and the *Partito Popolare Italiano*. As Sale shows, the Holy See’s response to Fascism was also conditioned by realism in relation to the limits of its own forces. Gasparri, in this regard, emerges as the man of prudence.⁵⁵

52 Giovanni Coco, Eugenio Pacelli: cardinale e Segretario di Stato (1929–1930), in: Sergio Pagano/Giovanni Coco/Marcel Chappin, I “fogli di udienza” del cardinale Eugenio Pacelli Segretario di Stato, vol. 1: 1930, Città del Vaticano 2010 (Collectanea Archivi Vaticani 72), pp. 39–143, a p. 55.

53 Ibid., p. 74.

54 Giovanni Sale, La Chiesa di Mussolini. I rapporti tra fascismo e religione, Milano 2011, p. 71.

55 Giovanni Sale, Le prime elezioni fasciste dell’aprile 1924. La presa del potere di Mussolini vista attraverso i documenti dell’Archivio Segreto Vaticano, in: 30 Giorni 12 (2006) (URL: http://www.30giorni.it/articoli_id_11922_11.htm; 19. 7. 2019).

Alberto Guasco's "Cattolici e fascisti: La Santa Sede e la politica italiana all'alba del Regime (1919–1925)",⁵⁶ takes full advantage of the opening of the Vatican Archives relating to Pius XI to offer a historiographical overview that chronologically documents the relationship between the Holy See and the Italian state in the first part of the 1920's, the Holy See's diffidence towards the *camicie nere*, the reaction to the *Marcia su Roma*, and the acceptance of the first government led by Mussolini and the abandonment of the *Partito Popolare* to a fate that had already been sealed, and the election of 1924, through to the assassination of the socialist Matteotti, which so dramatically brought this first period to a close.

Guasco shows how, in the politically charged atmosphere of post-war Europe, the Holy See – preoccupied by the rise of an ever-bolder left – sought a political alternative, which the *Partito Popolare* of Don Luigi Sturzo eventually failed to provide.⁵⁷ The author amply demonstrates, that the Holy See maintained an ambiguous and uncertain response to the Fascist regime, what he describes as a relationship that "assomma una *pars destruens*, una *pars construens* e una delta di differenza insopprimibile, che consente gli avvicinamenti ma rifiuta le confusioni, soprattutto le confusioni sul piano dei principi"⁵⁸. In contrast to the early historiography discussed above, which sought to depict Gasparri as a philo-fascist, Guasco effectively presents Gasparri as a statesman who adopts a methodology of prudence throughout, and acts in accordance with the demands of a *Realpolitik* that admittedly seeks a working relationship with the regime, but always maintains a certain skepticism and diffidence towards it. The ample documentation published, demonstrates Pius XI and Gasparri's preoccupation with making the violence inflicted by the fascists on their opponents known beyond Italy. Considering the wealth of documentation now available, including 150 documents which he publishes for the first time, Guasco not only sets later developments in the relationship between the Fascist government and the Holy See in context, such as the *Conciliazione* of 1929 and the tensions that followed, but also enriches the debate on the relationship between the Church and the totalitarian regimes in particular, and Christianity and political violence in general.⁵⁹

56 Alberto Guasco, *Cattolici e fascisti. La Santa Sede e la politica italiana all'alba del Regime (1919–1925)*, Bologna 2013.

57 Roy Domenico, Review of Alberto Guasco, *Cattolici e fascisti: La Santa Sede e la politica italiana all'alba del Regime (1919–1925)*, in: *The Catholic Historical Review* 100 (2014), pp. 626–627.

58 Guasco, *Cattolici e fascisti* (see note 56), p. 46.

59 Laura Pettinaroli, Review of Alberto Guasco, *Cattolici e fascisti: La Santa Sede e la politica italiana all'alba del Regime (1919–1925)*, in: *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 3 (2016), pp. 470–472.

In “L’interesse superiore. Il Vaticano e l’Italia di Mussolini”, Lucia Ceci also profits from the accessibility of the Vatican Archives regarding the pontificate of Pius XI, to trace – in vivid, flowing prose – the relationship between the Holy See and the Italian Church and the Fascist regime. Starting with Mussolini’s anticlericalism in his socialist phase, before delving into his cunning pursuit of a possible alliance with Don Sturzo’s *Partito Popolare*, the author shows that having been rebuffed by the latter, Mussolini set out to convince the Church that Fascism could deliver a far better outcome for the church than even Sturzo’s party was ever willing to commit to. The author continues to trace the extent to which the Holy See, especially through Gasparri, was ready to give Mussolini the benefit of the doubt, in order to achieve the higher good represented by the *Conciliazione*. Only after the *Patti Lateranensi* had been sealed did Pius XI clearly express his suspicions of the regime in his 1931 encyclical “Non abbiamo bisogno”. However, the author shows that such resistance was cut short both by the Italian clergy and even members of the Curia who, in their patriotism, continued to acquiesce to the policies of the regime.

As for Gasparri, Ceci depicts him in all his readiness to afford the Fascist government his benevolence, which extended to a positive evaluation of Mussolini himself, whom Gasparri is said to have described as “un uomo di primo ordine”,⁶⁰ and even to have absolved of responsibility for the violence effected against Catholic organizations, attributing this, instead, to “malviventi sotto l’etichetta di fascisti”.⁶¹ As such the author places herself squarely in the tradition which has sought to present Gasparri as largely well-disposed towards the regime, to the point of even setting himself in opposition to Pius XI in the turbulent events following the *Patti*. However, such a simplification of Gasparri, together with the other common depiction espoused by the author – which casts him as an exponent of the ‘liberal’ faction in the college who stood in opposition to the supposed integralist mentality of Merry del Val and De Lai – risks an excessive simplification of the man and the actions in question.

Access to the archives has proved greatly beneficial to the study of Gasparri. Great steps have been made in our understanding of the wider context in which Gasparri was shaped and in which he worked. It has also allowed a better understanding of the less visible world behind the activities of the Holy See, the diplomatic work that provides the framework for the public pronouncements of the Church.

These studies mark progress towards a more nuanced picture of Gasparri. While fully considering his merits, he is no longer simply portrayed as the faithful executor

60 Lucia Ceci, *L’interesse superiore. Il Vaticano e l’Italia di Mussolini*, Roma-Bari 2013, p. 82.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

of the demands of the pontiffs under whom he served. Moreover, even if he still does not attract the same level of interest among historians as his successor, Eugenio Pacelli, studies dealing with the latter figure have actually helped bring to light the differences in character between Pius XI and Gasparri. Significant progress has also been made in better understanding Gasparri's attitude towards the Fascist regime. One hopes this will prove to be corrective of the mythologization of Gasparri that took root in the Fascist era and has largely continued to this day.

There has also been progress towards a more insightful understanding of the political and diplomatic actions of the Church in this period, a shift made possible by the explicit efforts of a number of authors to position these actions within the wider picture of the Church's ecclesial activities, which they were ultimately intended to advance. Historians continue to move forward in exploring new themes, though more established areas of interest are certainly not neglected. Naturally, interest in the Church-State relationship continues to dominate the study of Gasparri – after all, he was Secretary of State – and the appeal of the Holy See's relationship with Fascism remains undiminished. This line of research does not always avoid polemics, even if there has been a marked development towards a more critical hermeneutic of these events, one that is based on a larger spectrum of available sources.

5 Conclusion

Gasparri is clearly represented as a key driving force in the political and diplomatic activities of the Holy See during this period. Faced with totalitarianism and its consolidation of a conception of man and society that was incompatible with the Christian understanding, the Church struggled to find a *modus vivendi*, as the incompatibility between these opposing worldviews became apparent. In this context, Gasparri served two pontiffs with characteristic realism and sharpness of mind, steering the Church through troubled waters as it sought to respond to new challenges and a changing world. By working chronologically through this review of the literature, we have been able to illustrate the emergence of certain trends in the treatment of this subject. What unites the various authors we have considered, is their attempt to understand the relationship between Church and State through its protagonists, whether this entails an interest in Gasparri specifically or, as is more common, in the popes he served. For most of these authors, this amounts to an attempt at defining the relationship, or rather, the constant struggle between Church and State that Emilio Gentile defined as the struggle between the primacy of Christ and the primacy of Caesar, through a study of the upper echelons on both sides.

It is to the resolution of this struggle, to guaranteeing the place of the Catholic Church in a secular society undergoing a crisis born of unbridled liberalism, of safeguarding and propagating what he considered to be the inalienable rights of this Church, that Pietro Gasparri dedicated his life. Gasparri has been lauded as the “uomo della conciliazione”, and rightly so, not simply because he could justly regard the Lateran Pacts as the crowning moment of his long career, but also because this pursuit of mediation – for finding a *modus vivendi* that might prove compatible with the changing political landscape in order to guarantee the re-Christianization of society – in a certain sense was the force that drove his own life and work. It is in this light that the instrument of the concordat was re-defined, as Gasparri ably guided Vatican diplomacy, not only using the politics of neutrality that the church maintained during the First World War, but also through an ability to exploit the prestige the Church derived from political choices that, at first glance, appeared a failure, but that allowed the Holy See to rise from the war morally reinforced in the eyes of the world. Gasparri’s fine legal mind guided his attempts to realize the vision of the pontiffs he served, and effect the re-Christianization of society by guaranteeing the Church’s position in the legal systems of the countries with which he negotiated. The concordat thus signified an attempt to re-Christianize society through its laws.

Stepping into the second period in our survey, we find Italy struggling to move beyond Fascism, with the Italian concordat continuing to stimulate interest in Gasparri. In a sense, it is ironic that the motivating factor for this interest continues to be the very cause cited by a number of recent historians as triggering Gasparri’s departure from the role of Secretary of State, namely the diversity in views between him and Pius XI over the nature of this concordat. Access to the archives has led authors like Coco to the understanding that, for Gasparri, the concordat occupied a secondary place in the Lateran Treaty, and that he perhaps believed the concordat to be “più pericoloso e meno opportuno” and as such “avrebbe potuto essere sostituito persino da una legislazione ad hoc con la Santa Sede”.⁶² With the explicitly anti-fascist Jemolo providing the genesis, the move from ideological interpretations of the *Patti Lateranensi* and as such of Gasparri had been set in motion.

Nor was Gasparri immune to the shift in ecclesiology engendered later by the Second Vatican Council. The change in the consideration of the Church-State relationship proposed by the Council marked a turning point which Spadolini explained in these words: “C’è un articolo della costituzione *Gaudium et Spes* che aiuta più di ogni altro i plenipotenziari della Santa Sede: quello che invita testualmente la Chiesa a non riporre

62 Coco, L’“Anno Terribile” (see note 43), p. 173.

più le speranze ‘nei privilegi ad essa offerti dall’autorità civile’, anzi a ‘rinunciare all’esercizio di certi diritti legittimamente acquisiti, ove constatasse che il loro uso potesse far dubitare della sua testimonianza ...’⁶³

The instrument of the concordat was much criticized during the council. This assured an interest in Gasparri on the part of authors such as Spadolini, since now his work and vision had to be reconciled with a secularized society. For a society burdened with the memory of Fascism, certain articles of the concordat were insufferable. The revision of the concordat allowed interest in Gasparri to liberate itself from the apologetics that had long weighed it down. The authors’ concern with an intolerable fascism also led Spadolini to publish a selection of Gasparri’s memoirs. Their publication opened up a whole new polemic that was largely motivated by the fears of the Vatican, and indicated that certain wounds were far from healed. Debate over these memoirs continues, marked by a certain apologetic disposition among authors such as Corsetti and Dalla Torre. In the “Memorie”, the tensions within the Curia during Gasparri’s time emerge, as we are offered an insight into the Church’s struggle to move beyond the lacerations of the anti-modernist crisis. This in turn provided the opportunity for researchers to extend their interests in new directions and beyond the Italian context.

Interest in other aspects of Gasparri’s work has also become more diverse in the last two decades. The greater availability of archival material following the opening of the Vatican Archives relating to Benedict XV, and more recently those relating to Pius XI, provided the opportunity for historians to focus on other aspects of Vatican diplomacy in this period. Interest in Gasparri remains linked to considerations of the two pontiffs he served. The Italian context still occupies a privileged position, as historians continue to study the Vatican’s relationship with the emerging totalitarian regimes in this period. In studying the rise of fascism, authors such as Sale have also delved into Gasparri’s role in the formation of the *Partito Popolare Italiano* and the diverse political positions assumed by Benedict XV and Pius XI. As authors analyze the politics of neutrality maintained by the Holy See during the war, and the subsequent development of a politics of concordats and the first steps towards the resolution of the Roman Question, Gasparri and Benedict XV’s close relationship – their shared vision – becomes evident. The publication of important sources relating to this period, such as the “Diario” of Carlo Monti by Scottà, as well as the studies of writers such as Pollard, have proven of great value in highlighting important aspects of the political vision and practices of Benedict XV and Gasparri. The cardinal appears as the bridge, the agent of continuity, between Benedict XV and Pius XI, which

63 Spadolini, *La Questione Romana* (see note 17), p. 285.

as historians continue to show, was the latter pontiff's intention in confirming him in his post.

It is largely within these terms that historians have studied the legacy of Gasparri. The question of Church-State relations have not only provided the thematic framework for such appraisals, but have also determined how approaches to such studies have developed over time. Gasparri's place in history was already assured during his lifetime, given both the roles he occupied, and his achievements in them. The historiography has certainly not shied away from providing a number of definitions of the man and his actions, definitions that have been conditioned by two factors: the image of Gasparri has continued to be influenced by the ideological concerns of the authors who study him. This process was set in motion back in the fascist period, as we have seen, as authors sought to emphasize his supposedly pro-fascist attitude and to instrumentalize his legacy for propagandistic purposes. Nor could the image of Gasparri escape from these polemical orbits in the following decades, a situation created by the second factor at play: Gasparri operated in the shadow of the pontiffs he served and in that of the Secretary of State who succeeded him. Considerations of the inter-war period are still dominated by the pontificate of Pius XII and the polemical atmosphere that continues to surround it. The relationship between the Church and the emerging totalitarian regimes, Fascism especially, continues to elicit great interest among historians, and approaches to such delicate issues from the relatively recent past continue to struggle to free themselves from certain ideological concerns. A thirst for the polemical remains a constant danger in the study of this period and considerations of Gasparri are certainly not free from such pitfalls.

Notwithstanding the fact that the historiography has made great strides in its attempt to mature beyond hagiography, the danger of an apologetic approach is still present. Certain steps have been taken in recent years to de-construct the myth of Gasparri the philo-fascist and offer a more nuanced reading of his relationship with the regime. Progress has also been made in exploring other aspects of his sphere of action, yet these remain fragmentary in nature. As such, a biography that truly does justice to this cardinal's service to the Church remains to be written.