



The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy

By *Emilio Gentile*

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Fascism was the first and prime instance of a modern political religion. Rereading signs, symbols, cults, and myths, Italy's leading scholar of Fascism offers a new history of Italian nationalism as a civic religion, albeit in its extreme form, and of Italian Fascism as a vital catalyst for contemporary mass politics. Emilio Gentile decodes Italy culturally, going beyond political and social dimensions that explain Italy's Fascist past in terms of class, or the cynicism of its leaders, or modernizing and expansionist ambitions.

By looking back at the Risorgimento's civic and moral renewal of the Italians as a free people educated in the faith and worship of a "national religion," at the jarring countereffects of the secularized nation-state not trusting mass political mobilization, and at Fascism's retrieval of history from Rome, the French Revolution, and Romanticism, Gentile reconstructs the cultural configurations of a sacred politics. He shows how Mussolini used the concept of propaganda as a project in civic pedagogy, and how the Fascists thus cultivated a new consciousness that filled the void left by the decline of traditional religion. Fascism mobilized the masses through spectacle and public ceremony in an effort to conquer and shape the mentality and customs of a still emerging nation.

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Editorial Review

Review

[This book] has precipitated both new research into, and vigorous theoretical debate about the myths, rituals, symbols, monuments and other spectacles of Fascist Italy...[Gentile's] account is undoubtedly the best brief introduction to the Italian Fascists' use of public spectacle, ranging from annual commemorations of the March on Rome and other key events in the Fascist calendar to the construction of monumental architecture. (Tobias Abse *South European Society & Politics*)

Emilio Gentile is one of Italy's most prolific and influential students of Italian fascism, and it is good to have this thoroughly researched work, published in Italian in 1993, available in a worthy English translation...Gentile has made a major contribution not only to Italian history but to our ongoing effort to grasp the contours of the modern political experiment. (David D. Roberts *American Historical Review*)

The author's central purpose in [this] book is to ask whether Italian fascism truly was a religion. Its fusion of politics and art, commitment of self to a higher purpose outside the self and appropriation of a people's existing myths makes the answer a resounding yes...[Gentile] tells his story of Italian fascism's myths, rituals and monuments well in this book. (Colin Walters *Washington Times*)

Gentile's superb study, originally published in Italy in 1993, is the fruition of articles he has previously written on fascists Italy's institutionalization of a new civic religion, the first since the French Revolution. Under fascism the political arena became permeated with myths, rites, and symbols of a secular religion, imbued with fundamental values, and intended to mold the moral consciousness and meaning of existence for all Italians. Gentile traces the foundations of this civic religion...[T]his fine English translation of Gentile's innovative and well-illustrated work is an invaluable addition to the literature on the sacralization of politics. (*Choice*)

Emilio Gentile is one of the most important and innovative historians working on Fascism anywhere today...Harvard University Press have now translated one of his most interesting and potentially controversial books, originally entitled *Il culto del littorio* (The Cult of the Lictor, 1993), and it is full of challenging insights into the strange hybrid creature that was Italian Fascism. It is sure to take its deserved place as a major reinterpretation of the Fascist phenomenon...Gentile's book is...full of exciting detail, insight and clarity of direction...This is an important work, and its translation into English should be greatly welcomed. (Robert Gordon *Patterns of Prejudice [UK]*)

Review

Gentile's mastery of Italian history and of the literature on fascism is dazzling. *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* is beautifully written and has extraordinary breadth, outstanding range, conceptual unity, and an uncanny ability to cite just the right bit of evidence at each step of the way. I would not be a bit surprised if it became a classic work. (Walter L. Adamson, author of *Avant-Garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism*)

Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brian Lowe:

Nowadays reading books be than want or need but also become a life style. This reading addiction give you lot of advantages. The benefits you got of course the knowledge the particular information inside the book this improve your knowledge and information. The knowledge you get based on what kind of publication you read, if you want get more knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want sense happy read one together with theme for entertaining for example comic or novel. Typically the The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy is kind of guide which is giving the reader unstable experience.

Joseph Nixon:

Information is provisions for individuals to get better life, information presently can get by anyone with everywhere. The information can be a information or any news even an issue. What people must be consider any time those information which is from the former life are difficult to be find than now's taking seriously which one would work to believe or which one typically the resource are convinced. If you get the unstable resource then you understand it as your main information you will have huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen within you if you take The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy as the daily resource information.

Shirley Martins:

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Michael Anderson:

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