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STOPPANI AND «IL ROSMINI». THE ROSMINIAN INFLUENCE ON THE THINKING OF THE NATURALIST PRIEST ANTONIO STOPPANI AND HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONCILIARIST CAUSE

Antonio Stoppani (1824-1891) was one of the most important exponents of ‘conciliatorism’. The aim of my paper, based on the works of Stoppani and on his partially unpublished correspondence with priests and intellectuals of the time, is to focus on the Rosminian theoretical premises that allowed a devoutly Catholic man of science to reconcile his religious vocation with an equally fervent scientific passion and that led him to be the main reference point of the Rosminian opposition to the intransigent front dominating the Italian Church in the late 1880s.

I. THE STUDY OF NATURE AS AN EDUCATIVE ELEMENT

The Rosminian school of thought dominates the entire cultural involvement of Antonio Stoppani, the priest and Lombard naturalist who made important contributions to science and, more broadly, the development of Italian culture in the second half of the nineteenth century. Primarily active in the fields of geology and palaeontology, he published works such as *Studii geologici e paleontologici della Lombardia (Geological and Paleontological Studies of Lombardy)* and the *Paleontologie Lombarde (Lombard Paleontology)*, in which he accurately documented the palaeofauna of Lombard rocks by linking them to specific terrains, and the *Corso di geologia (Course of Geology)*, the first authentic Italian manual focusing on the discipline. He was a geology professor in Milan and Florence, and became the director of the Civic museum of natural history in the former city in 1882. He was also involved in the project to create a geological map of the Kingdom



of Italy and the search for mineral deposits.¹

If we analyse Stoppani's commitment, it is possible to see that the main purpose driving his cultural work and scientific practice was the desire to reconcile the requirements of faith and Catholicism with those of free, rigorous and up-to-date naturalistic research, thereby laying claim to an adequate framework for Christian science. It is thus easy to comprehend the tremendous importance he attributed to scientific popularisation, a field in which he published his most successful book, *Il Bel Paese (The Beautiful Country)* (1876). This was a direct consequence of the complex role he attributed to science: on the one hand, an essential instrument for the economic and physical development of the country, on the other hand an essential mean for individual intellectual and moral education, imparting knowledge of the world and God:

Natural history occupies one of the top places in the order of the sciences, not only for the pleasure that we find in it, or the practical help that we can benefit from, but for far greater advantages such as our intellectual, moral and religious enhancement. Why would God have created such a universe? Why would He have filled time and space with such delights? Why would He have created such a marvellously sketched-out body and endowed us with senses so exquisite and multifaceted, and put us in such intimate relations with the entire universe [...]? What would be the purpose of all this, if everything were not organized by God in order to fulfil man's supreme aim: the happiness that is only felt by elevating oneself towards Him?²

Stoppani therefore believed that science had a social, national and spiritual role, and needed to be propagated at all levels.

In a speech entitled *Lo studio della natura come elemento educativo (The Study of Nature as an Educative Element)* delivered in Florence in 1878, Stoppani referred to «the feeling of Nature, or rather the feeling of God in Nature» which «makes God himself [...] visible, tangible, detectable

¹ Cfr. E. ZANONI, *Scienza, patria, religione. Antonio Stoppani e la cultura italiana dell'Ottocento*, FrancoAngeli, Milan 2014; G. L. DACCÒ (ed.), *Antonio Stoppani tra scienza e letteratura. Atti del convegno nazionale di studi*, Lecco 29-30 novembre 1991, in «Materiali. Monografie periodiche dei Musei Civici di Lecco», I, 1991, pp. 107-130; *Il pensiero religioso e civile di Antonio Stoppani. Atti del Convegno nazionale di studi organizzato dall'Associazione Giuseppe Bovara di Lecco*, in «Archivi di Lecco», I-II, 1978; R. TOMASELLI, *Stoppani*, La Scuola, Brescia 1948; A.M. CORNELIO, *Vita di Antonio Stoppani: onoranze alla sua memoria*, Unione Tipografico-Editrice, Turin 1898.

² A. STOPPANI, *Il Bel Paese. Conversazioni sulle bellezze naturali, la geologia e la geografia fisica d'Italia*, Agnelli, Milan 1878², p. 511. All the quotations from Stoppani's works and correspondence have been translated by the author. The book highlights Stoppani's accomplishments as a science populariser and contributed to the process of the Italian Risorgimento spreading knowledge of the Italian peninsula - in terms of its physical, geographical and geological aspects - throughout the new Italian State. Cfr. P. REDONDI (ed.), *Un best-seller per l'Italia unita. "Il bel Paese" di Antonio Stoppani con documenti annessi*, Guerini e Associati, Milan 2012; L. CLERICI, "Introduzione" in A. STOPPANI, *Il Bel Paese*, Aragno, Milan 2009, pp. XI-LXIII.

to all the senses».³ During some conferences held five years earlier at the Salone of the Public Gardens in Milan, later published in *Acqua ed aria* (*Water and Air*) (1882), he had already described geology as a «new Revelation», able to provide us with an image of the deity that could guide human behaviour.⁴ Nature appears in his mind as «God's mirror, where by contemplating His image, [...] we can know Him, and conform to Him as a perfect model».⁵

On different occasions the naturalist priest demonstrates in-depth knowledge of Rosmini's *Teosofia*, published in 1859 under the supervision of Francesco Paoli, one of Stoppani's close friends. In the fourth volume, Paoli inserted the unpublished fragment entitled *Del divino nella natura*, in which Rosmini highlighted that «the entire universe talks to us about God».

From this – he continues – we can proceed with our thought from the effect to the major cause, namely the creator, and discover His sublime attributes. After we are acquainted with this major cause, which is God, we refer to the universe as a divine endeavour, because it was planned by God, and created through planning.⁶

This thesis is fully accepted by Stoppani, who points out the importance of contemplating and studying nature in order to become more familiar with God and his imprinted design.

Stoppani found exact confirmation of the value of studying nature in order to become familiar with God in the works of Rosmini (above all *Teodicea*), a «colossus challenged in vain even by those who would be more interested in supporting him, erected against the invasive power of modern materialism».⁷ According to the Lombard priest, «natural science is the best at developing the concept of God in man, particularly at being able to make His qualities and Providence known, of which the universe is the most obvious and perceivable expression».⁸ In his words we can find the main concepts of the *physico-theology* which had its main theorists in some philosophers and theologians of the second half of the 1600s and represented an important incentive for the development of the experimental natural science stating the idea that the existence of God is demonstrated not only by the Revelation, but also by arguments deriving from reason and

³ A. STOPPANI, *Lo studio della natura come elemento educativo* in «Gli studi in Italia», I, 1878, pp. 752-792, p. 791.

⁴ ID., *Acqua ed aria*, Hoepli, Milan 1882, p. xviii. Cfr. E. ZANONI, Prefazione in A. STOPPANI, *Acqua ed aria*, Lampi di Stampa, Milan 2010.

⁵ ID., *Lo studio della natura come elemento educativo*, cit., pp. 777-778.

⁶ A. ROSMINI, *Del divino nella natura*, P.P. OTTONELLO (ed.), Città Nuova Editrice, Rome 1991, p. 22.

⁷ STOPPANI, *Acqua ed aria*, cit., p. 69.

⁸ ID., *Il dogma e le scienze positive*, Dumolard, Milan 1886², pp. 123-125.

the senses.⁹ As Stoppani stressed, indeed, it is not just the act of contemplating nature in its essence, but of actively examining it and revealing its infinite hidden harmonies: «[...] it is this influence, not only of Nature per se, but of the *study of Nature* that I want you to focus on for your education, holding it up as [...] a great intellectual and moral way of improvement».¹⁰ According to Stoppani, the simple admiration of nature is not sufficient to comprehend God and the design that he wanted to ingrain in it. Besides an «irresistible» and «spontaneous feeling» provoked by witnessing perceivable phenomena, there is another feeling which can only be triggered by deliberation, observation and accurate study of the same phenomena.¹¹ After all, the teaching of the natural and physical sciences was the main part of the *Ratio Studiorum* proposed by Rosmini in his pedagogical renewal project.¹²

It was above all the theoretical premises derived from Rosmini that allowed a naturalist who had profoundly Catholic convictions and who was fully devoted to the Church, the pope and dogma to reconcile his own religious vocation with such fervid scientific passion during a period dominated by a highly intransigent outlook. These premises provide the basis for his conciliatorism, allowing him to harmonise scientific results with pages from Genesis and, more widely, to promote reconciliation between the Church and the liberal State, the Church and modern society.

Stoppani himself clearly states his debt towards Rosminian philosophy. In an article entitled *Antonio Rosmini e la Fortnightly Review*, published in «Rassegna nazionale» in 1885, he praises the Rosminian system, «so severely logical and exact, but at the same time so plain, clear and transparent, even in its greatest depths; [...] in which, during the coldness of rationality, the warmth of affection never completely vanishes, and every now and then bursts into a vivid fire [...]».¹³ Moreover, he stresses that Rosminianism provided him with the principle reconciling faith and reason, the foundation of his cultural involvement:

[...] a philosophy, which draws on the energy that affects everything, and the new light with which it shines, and receives its individual imprint from the happy union of science with faith in the mind and heart of a great genius; [...] a philosophy, which is the only one that could harvest and fertilise such a vast but morally thorny and sterile field as the positive sciences [...].¹⁴

⁹ Cfr. A. CLERICUZIO, *La macchina del mondo*, Carocci, Roma 2005, pp. 204-205.

¹⁰ STOPPANI, *Lo studio della natura come elemento educativo*, cit., pp. 756-757.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² F. DE GIORGI, *Rosmini e il suo tempo. L'educazione dell'uomo moderno tra riforma della filosofia e rinnovamento della Chiesa (1797-1833)*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2003, pp. 296-298.

¹³ A. STOPPANI, *Rosmini e la Fortnightly Review* in «Rassegna nazionale», XXII, 1885, 7 (1 aprile), pp. 329-352, p. 334.

¹⁴ *Ivi*, p. 335.

Even though he never met Rosmini in person, Stoppani was exposed to widespread Rosminian ideals in the early years of his education at Lombard seminaries in the 1830s and 40s.¹⁵ His first documented contact with the community of the Rosminian Institute of charity in Stresa was for spiritual exercises in the late 1850s. In a letter to the Rosminian Giuseppe Calza, Stoppani hinted that he would join the Institute if he was not appointed as custodian at the Ambrosian library, a position that was pending.¹⁶

II. STOPPANI, THE CONCILIARIST CAUSE AND THE FOUNDATION OF «IL ROSMINI»

Starting in the 1840s, as an answer to the spread of liberal and democratic ideals, the Catholic world had witnessed the definition of a division between intransigents and conciliarists. The first ones, who were fully adverse to the liberal political and constitutional systems, supported a strengthening of the Church's authority and a greater centralisation in its government. The seconds formed the articulate field of the liberal Catholics and stated the need for a reconciliation between religion and Church on one side and the whole modern society on the other.¹⁷

From the early 1860s onwards, Stoppani participated regularly in the conciliarist cause to defend Rosminian thinking, since he was convinced that it was

the duty of all Italians, the duty of every single Catholic, the duty of every single man to redeem himself from oblivion, and pull out the great figure of Rosmini from under the feet of his enemies and defamers, so as to place it on the throne that it deserves, in front of the whole world.¹⁸

He then started publishing articles on the relationship between science and faith and, more broadly, the modern world and the Catholic Church. These themes were revisited in his works in the 1880s, *Il dogma e le scienze positive (Dogma and Positive Sciences)* (1884, 1886) and *Gl'intransigenti alla stregua dei fatti vecchi, nuovi e nuovissimi (Intransigents in the light of old, new and newest facts)* (1886). The latter focused on the relationship between the Italian State and the Catholic Church, and was denounced to the Holy Office. He therefore openly stated his views to carry out a broader Rosminian-based project intended to highlight a system of Christian philosophy that was compatible with modern society and culture.

Due to frequent attacks against Rosmini and his supporters, Stoppani decided to establish

¹⁵ ZANONI, *Scienza, patria, religione*, cit., pp. 22-25.

¹⁶ Stoppani to Giuseppe. Calza, Milan, March 27 1858, Historical Archive of the Institute of Charity of Stresa (ASIC), A. G. 139, 2-5.

¹⁷ G. VERUCCI, *La Chiesa cattolica in Italia dall'Unità ad oggi 1861-1998*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1999, pp. 6-7. Cfr. F. TRANIELLO, *Cattolicesimo e società moderna*, in *Storia delle idee politiche economiche e sociali*, V. *L'età della Rivoluzione industriale*, Utet, Turin 1972, pp. 551-652, pp. 552-553.

¹⁸ STOPPANI, *Rosmini e la Fortnightly Review*, cit., p. 348.

a new Rosminian journal in Milan, convinced that «a periodical [...] could become one of the most energetic means of action».¹⁹ He had been complaining for some time that the intransigent party had deprived Rosminians of all ways of advancing their ideas.²⁰ Faced with the ever growing difficulties of the «Sapienza» of Turin and with vain attempts to convince the editor of «Rassegna Nazionale» to «defend Rosmini at all costs [...] and fight the intransigents for as long as it would take»²¹ making «the Rassegna *partially* the Rosminian power»,²² Stoppani expressed to some friends such as Francesco Paoli and Ariodante Le Brun, his belief that «it was time to unveil the periodical *Il Rosmini*».²³ This would have been a «scientific and literary periodical aimed at developing a Catholic encyclopaedia, based on A. Rosmini's philosophy».²⁴ In 1886 he started looking for collaborators for the new periodical: Angelo Todeschini became its editor and Angelo Maria Cornelio – his nephew – its secretary. During this phase, Stoppani started to solicit articles from his Rosminian friends; articles «if possible lively and stinging», since he had no intention of becoming «the man of gags, fears, cowardice and betrayals».²⁵

The aim of the periodical was that of «serving the truth» and «giving the public only useful and good ideas», in the belief «that it was never as necessary as it now is to bring light amongst the darkness».²⁶

The object of our studies – explained Stoppani – will thus be [...] the entire truth in every single branch of human knowledge, or, to put it in a Rosminian way, the *wholeness of the unity*; our intended aim is harmony between reason and faith, between science and religion, between Church and civilisation.²⁷

The periodical opposed both «rationalists» who «put aside divine authority [...] and only

¹⁹ Stoppani to Geremia Bonomelli, Taceno, August 7 1884, in G. ASTORI (ed.), *Corrispondenza di Mons. Geremia Bonomelli e don Antonio Stoppani*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1959, pp. 94-95.

²⁰ ZANONI, *Scienza, patria, religione*, cit., p. 215.

²¹ Stoppani to Francesco Paoli, Milan, May 24 1886, ASIC, A.G. 139, 73-74.

²² Stoppani to Ariodante Le Brun, Milan, January 19 1885, Da Passano Archive, La Spezia, 7.

²³ Stoppani to Francesco Paoli, Milan, May 24 1886, ASIC, A.G. 139, 73-74.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ Stoppani to Francesco Paoli, Canton Ticino, July 16 1886, ASIC, A.G. 139, 74-75.

²⁶ A. STOPPANI, *Ragioni del periodico*, in «Rosmini», I, 1887, 1, pp. 1-51; citations refer to A. STOPPANI, *L'Exameron. Nuovo saggio di una esegesi della storia della creazione secondo la ragione e la fede*, II, Unione Tipografica Editrice, Turin 1894, pp. 402-427. See ZANONI, *Scienza, patria, religione*, cit., p. 217.

²⁷ CORNELIO, *Vita di Antonio Stoppani*, cit., pp. 238-240.

listen to reason» and «Catholics» who «walk in the opposite direction» and «stopped at the beginning of the path which all the others had furiously walked along, ready to return to the worst things offered by the past rather than stepping towards the good things the present had to give».²⁸ The main polemical target of the periodical – and indeed Stoppani’s entire cultural involvement – is the latter group of intransigents, a party «consisting mainly [...] of people, who have a mission to preach and defend the faith»:

Criers of the Gospel, they misrepresent its spirit, they are not aware of its most fundamental principles. They pass off their opinions as dogma, their frauds as truth. Determined to behold traditions, even if it means going against the most evident facts delivered by science, reinforcing the rights of faith against the rights of reason, they force reason to revolt against faith. These are the relentless persecutors of every intelligence that rises just above common levels, especially if that intelligence is a believer and does not want to be enslaved by a party.²⁹

He saw these people’s arrogance as even more detrimental because they were «more daring than rationalists, because they want to impose their own willpower on the Church itself, and more fatalist because they present themselves as its emissaries, speaking in its name».³⁰ Even though he never uses this term, Stoppani regards them as fanatics, incapable of recognising the stances of their adversaries:

In their language there are no more ontologists, ideologists, rationalists, sensationalists, academics or peripatetics, no more Platonists or Aristotelians: instead only Catholics on one side, namely them; and on the other side Arians, Pelagians, Patarini, Lutherans, Jansenists, Old Catholics, pagans and atheists. The whole litany, which is still very far from being complete, can be summarised and recapped in the epithet: *Rosminians*.³¹

By contrast, the editors of «Il Rosmini» were convinced that in spite of the rapid spread of rationalism and materialism, and the detachment between the Church and the laity, it was necessary to divulge a «good Philosophy» whose revival in modern times could be attributed to Vincenzo Gioberti and, especially, Antonio Rosmini. The latter’s philosophical system was a «new system», that

would knock down the last obstacle preventing the reconciliation between the truly Platonic and the truly Aristotelian, Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, comprehending everything that was old and new in the system of truth, to which a great new part is added.³²

²⁸ STOPPANI, *Ragioni del periodico*, cit., p. 406.

²⁹ Ivi, pp. 402-403.

³⁰ Ivi, p. 409.

³¹ Ivi, p. 420.

³² *Ibidem*.

In this respect, Stoppani underlined the fact that the dualism between the two major systems of classical antiquity inevitably reappeared in the Christian way of thinking, which was supported by Greek philosophical sources for speculative comprehension of its dogma. It was thus evident that there were two major leanings in Christian philosophy: the Platonic strand embodied by Saint Augustine and the Aristotelian strand represented by Saint Thomas Aquinas. Although not strongly antagonistic, followers of the two leanings often insisted on the undeniable differences over the centuries until they became real disagreements, leading to the formation of two opposing schools of Catholic philosophers. Stoppani is unique in identifying these schools with two precise attitudes towards modernity: on one hand, Aristotelian traditionalism, which, in its degenerate form, was dogmatised by the Church, becoming conservative and strongly obscurantist, an enemy of all innovation, scientific progress and all the changes brought by science which could question Catholic dogma and authority; on the other hand, a tendency to advance, a desire to be open to the changes brought on by the transformations in society, supported by the conciliarists. Stoppani attributes Rosmini with the extraordinary merit of overcoming the dualism between Platonic and Aristotelian inspiration in Catholic culture, and thereby building the foundation to overcome that «spirit of small-minded dogmatism» which dominated the Church, making it incapable of exercising its purpose of salvation in the world.³³

This initiative was also intended as a way to react to the imposition of the philosophical uniformity in the name of Thomism, which the Holy See started in 1879 with the publication of the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. In the long introductory article in the periodical, Stoppani tried to trace his interpretation of the Rosminian school of thought and his opinions on modernity back to a general interpretative framework of Christian philosophy, joining the debate triggered by the publication of the pontifical document.³⁴ The latter, which seemed to ratify the victory of Thomism by making it the official philosophy of Catholic schools, was instead interpreted by Rosminians as the expression of the papal will to guarantee a solid philosophical and theological basic education to clerics, and therefore not as the imposition of a rigid neo-Thomistic orientation on all Catholic philosophical thought.³⁵ Even though they knew about the benefits that could derive from teaching and popularising the philosophy of Aquinas, the editors of the new periodical stated their desire to publicise Rosminian thinking as a way of contributing to the spread of truth in modern society.³⁶

³³ D. SACCHI, *Antonio Stoppani di fronte a Rosmini e al rosminianesimo*, in DACCÒ, *Antonio Stoppani tra scienza e letteratura*, cit., pp. 119-123.

³⁴ Ivi, p. 114.

³⁵ Ivi, p. 118. Cfr. A. ZAMBARBIERI (ed.), *I cattolici e lo Stato liberale nell'età di Leone XIII*, Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, Venice 2008; *La filosofia cristiana tra Ottocento e Novecento e il magistero di Leone XIII. Atti del convegno di Perugia, 29 maggio-1 giugno 2003*, Curia Arcivescovile, Perugia 2004; L. MALUSA, *L'ultima fase della questione rosminiana e il decreto "Post obitum"*, Libreria Editoriale Sodalitas, Stresa 1989.

³⁶ Cfr. STOPPANI, *Ragioni del periodico*, cit.

The agenda of the periodical could thus be summed up by Rosmini's name; it was supposed to be «calm and peaceful, not intending to subvert or intrude into matters that belonged to the legitimate civil or religious authority», totally opposed to the aggressive and disrespectful stance of many Catholic publications. This tolerant and communicative manner was the inevitable result of Rosminian inspiration:

Rosmini's character as a philosopher is his way of making reason talk by itself, not through others; it is his way of providing an independent philosophy as the truth, Catholic without being servile or fanatic; old and new, Platonic and Aristotelian, Augustinian and Thomistic, Italian and global, which condemns all false opinions after close examination [...] and that revives all true verdicts, which were forgotten or misunderstood.³⁷

The main aim of the periodical was therefore to defend Rosmini, his philosophy and his work; in compliance with Stoppani's objectives, every issue published testimonies – mainly papal documents – to support him, his works and the Institute of charity founded by him. These testimonies were interpreted by the Holy Office as a polemical response to the condemnation of the forty Rosminian propositions in 1888.³⁸

III. CONDEMNATION AND REACTION

The journal immediately attracted the attention of the Holy See, even more so after the publication of the decree *Post obitum*, which condemned forty Rosminian propositions, on 7 March 1888. Compliance with the decree was fast and widespread; the only exception was the least moderate Rosminian branch of the clergy. Indeed, a report from Mons. Vincenzo Sallua de' Predicatori, Archbishop of Chalcedon and General of the Holy Office, states:

The results of this publication have generally been good and comforting [...]. Except that some Rosminian fanatics have doubted the importance of the condemnation decree [...]. They have made essentially Sophist and Jansenist observations and which do not show the internal and external deference due to the decisions of the Holy See. [...] Except that we have received some daring – not to put it worse – anonymous pamphlets criticising the condemnation decree of the forty propositions on which it was said *uniantur positioni*.³⁹

³⁷ Ivi, pp. 422-423.

³⁸ *Articoli di giornale e opuscoli circa il Decreto di condanna delle XL Proposizioni, "Relazione di quanto è venuto ed intervenuto in Sant'Uffizio dopo la condanna di XL proposizioni rosminiane (7 marzo 1888 - 7 marzo 1889)",* Archive of the Roman Inquisition, Vatican City (AIR), Volumi della Stanza Storica, St. St. L. 1a, Questione Rosminiana, f. II, p. 26.

³⁹ Ivi, p. 4.

Amongst Stoppani's papers in Stresa there are many letters sent to Stoppani's nephew, Angelo Maria Cornelio, by different Rosminians, including Father Sebastiano Casara and Vincenzo De Vit, about the composition of an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Ragioni della condanna fatta dal S. Uffizio delle così dette XL proposizioni di Antonio Rosmini, esposte dal teologo F.C.D. (Reasons of the Condemnation by the Holy Office of the so called XL propositions of Antonio Rosmini, presented by the theologian F.C.D.)*, published in 1889 and mainly intended for the clergy.⁴⁰ After revising the pamphlet, Father Sebastiano Casara sent it to Cornelio for distribution – also in France and England – with the following advice: «firstly, it's a big secret; secondly, do not sell the pamphlet; thirdly, do not let it be published inside newspapers [...]; fourthly, give it away to Cardinals, Bishops, Abbots, and well-known and erudite people». ⁴¹ Even though the letters concerning this matter are all addressed to Cornelio, it is clear that Stoppani was involved in the initiative, which received positive feedback from his close friend Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, Bishop of Piacenza.⁴²

The publication of the decree had a dramatic effect on Stoppani, even leading him to desire, albeit only briefly, to distance himself from the Church. In a letter of 27 March 1888, Stoppani wrote to Geremia Bonomelli, Bishop of Cremona: «If it is a matter of placing oneself in the hands of faith, after overcoming the terrible temptation to break away (for me it lasted 24 hours), it is better to find solitude, and refrain from talking and discussing something that conscience and logic always qualify in a certain way». ⁴³ In addition to the publication of the periodical, he decided to launch another initiative to promote and defend the Rosminian school of thought, namely fundraising to build a monument to Rosmini in Milan, which was unveiled in 1896 in front of the old building of the Civic museum of natural history.⁴⁴

Given the numerous attempts to stop the publication of «Il Rosmini», Stoppani gave his

⁴⁰ ASIC, A.G. 139, 793-794, 725-726, 729-730, 735-736, 733-734, 737-738, 739-740, 741-743, 744-745, 746-747, 813-814, 816, 817-818, 819, 820, 840, 841-842.

⁴¹ Sebastiano Casara to Angelo Maria Cornelio, July 25 1888, ASIC, 731-732.

⁴² ZANONI, *Scienza, patria, religione*, cit., chapter 4. Bishop of Piacenza from 1876 to his death in 1905, Scalabrini was a moderate conservative particularly devoted to humbles, children and sick persons. He was open to the cause of the Italian State and in numerous occasions he tried to advise and defend Stoppani in his commitment to the conciliarist cause. Cfr. M. SANFILIPPO, *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 91, 2018; M. FRANCESCONI, *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini vescovo di Piacenza e degli emigrati*, Città Nuova Editrice, Rome 1985.

⁴³ Stoppani to Geremia Bonomelli, Pescarenico, March 27 1888, in ASTORI, *Corrispondenza di Mons. Geremia Bonomelli...*, cit., pp. 131-133. Bishop of Cremona from 1871, prelate of liberal ideals later suspected of modernism, Bonomelli was particularly close to Stoppani and defended the naturalist priest during his conflicts with the ecclesiastical authorities. Cfr. G. ROSOLI (ed.), *Geremia Bonomelli e il suo tempo. Atti del convegno*, Fondazione civiltà bresciana, Brescia 1999.

⁴⁴ A. M. CORNELIO, *Antonio Rosmini e il suo monumento in Milano*, Stamperia dell'Unione tip. Editrice, Turin 1896, pp. 183-190.

nephew Cornelio precise orders to draft «a sort of protest programme», which was published in the first issue of 1889.⁴⁵ It pointed out the «painful ordeals» and «agonising surprises» that the periodical and its collaborators had been forced to endure the year before because of the desire of Rosmini's enemies, «blinded by hatred, or the yearning to stand out», to «end our life». The editorial staff claimed the right to «adorn themselves with the name of a great Saint glorified by Four Popes, to talk about him, to publicise his sublime works, and to defend him against atrocious calumny».⁴⁶

Despite being under great pressure, Stoppani continued publishing the periodical until it was condemned by the Congregation of the Index in May 1889.⁴⁷ Some collaborators suggested publishing again under a new name,⁴⁸ but Stoppani expressed his firm opposition to the idea:

*As for changing the name, never, ever. If we want to start again, we should return under the same banner, which is the name that it bears. We could do it perfectly lawfully, because it would be absurd if the Index, which was able to ban the published issues, could also ban future ones. [...] Think about it then; if the periodical must continue, we should not commit the cowardly act, nor the affront against the great and saintly man of renouncing his name, because it would seem to me like renouncing the name of Christ himself.*⁴⁹

In the end, they decided to slightly change the title without renouncing the thinker that had inspired it. «Il Nuovo Rosmini» was first published in 1889, but by March 1890 a decree had already been issued condemning the new periodical for similar reasons to the ones that had prohibited the «Rosmini».⁵⁰

Although Stoppani had decided not to collaborate with the magazine since he was busy drafting one of his most fundamental works – *L'Exameron: nuovo saggio di una esegesi della storia della creazione secondo la ragione e la fede* (*The Exameron: A New Essay on the Exegesis of the History of Creation according to Reason and Faith*) 1893-94 – and was opposed to the anonymity required by

⁴⁵ A. M. Cornelio to Cesare Maggioni, Milan, December 22 1888, ASIC, A.G. 139, 367.

⁴⁶ *Ai nostri lettori* in «Il Rosmini. Enciclopedia di scienze e lettere», III, 1889, 1, pp. 1-4, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Archivio Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei (ACDF), Vatican City, Index Protocolli 1889-1891, 56-57.

⁴⁸ Vincenzo De Vit to Angelo Maria Cornelio, Rome, June 18 1889, ASIC, A.G. 139, 825-826; Carlo Tessaroli to Angelo Maria Cornelio, Cremona, June 27 1889, ASIC, A.G. 139, 1070-1071; Giuseppe Petri to Angelo Maria Cornelio, Lucca, July 2 1889, ASIC, A.G. 139, 1006-1007; Vincenzo De Vit to Angelo Maria Cornelio, Rome, July 11 1889, ASIC, A.G. 139, 827.

⁴⁹ Stoppani to Angelo Maria Cornelio, Rabbi, July 10 1889 in CORNELIO, *Vita di Antonio Stoppani*, cit., pp. 336-337.

⁵⁰ ACDF, Index Protocolli 1889-1891, 56-57; AIR, Decreta S. O. 1889, n. 45 Feria IV 26 februarii 1890.

«Il Nuovo Rosmini»,⁵¹ he seems to have been the main reference point of the Rosminian opposition to the intransigent front dominating the Italian Church in the late 1880s. In particular, he was considered one of the «most manifest Rosminians amongst the notable scholar and regular priests of the Lombard clergy».⁵² Furthermore, his house became one of the favourite meeting places of the «Society of liberal priests in Milan», with regard to which the Holy Office started an investigation in February 1890. His house was believed to be one of the «places for small preparatory meetings and where the party leaders gave interviews», with Stoppani himself recognised as one of the leaders, as well as the «haunt of His Exc. Monsig. Bonomelli».⁵³ Together with Scablbrini and Guindani, Bishops of Piacenza and Bergamo respectively, Bonomelli seemed to be involved in what a report sent to the Holy Office called a «coven of liberal and Rosminian priests»,⁵⁴ a society united «by common views, by self-absorbed docility in following the way of the most influential and by their solidarity, with which they sustain and support each other».⁵⁵ A lot of those identified as «leaders» of this society were Stoppani's friends or close correspondents. The Society of liberal priests had a political programme that aimed to help its members fill vacant benefices and positions in the Archbishopric of Milan, as well as educating young clergymen on liberalism and silencing all dissenting voices.⁵⁶

Therefore, despite significant ongoing attention from the Holy Office, Stoppani continued his fight defending the Rosminian school of thought and a Christian philosophy that could address the contemporary situation right up until the last years of his life, which was ended by a heart attack in January 1891.

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⁵¹ CORNELIO, *Vita di Antonio Stoppani*, cit., p. 339.

⁵² AIR, St. St. L. 1c, *Questione Rosminiana, Reazioni al Post Obitem*, f. *I quattro seminari dell'Arcidiocesi di Milano e il Rosminianesimo*.

⁵³ Agostino Riboldi (Bishop of Pavia) to Ernesto Fontana, March 15 1890 in AIR, St. St. L. 1c, *Questione Rosminiana, Reazioni al Post Obitem*, f. *Rosmini e Fontana, Sulla società di preti liberali in Milano*.

⁵⁴ AIR, St. St. L. 1c, *Questione Rosminiana, Reazioni al Post Obitem*, f. *Rosmini e Fontana, Sulla società di preti liberali in Milano*. Bishop of Bergamo from 1880, Gaetano Camillo Guindani was close to Geremia Bonomelli and a witness of the conflict between the Church and the new Italian State. Cfr. E. CAMOZZI - R. MORELLI - G. ZANCHI (eds.), *Gaetano Camillo Guindani Vescovo di Bergamo e la questione della Mensa Vescovile (1868-1891)*, Glossa, Bergamo 2006.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ Agostino Riboldi to Ernesto Fontana, March 15 1890, cit.