

PROPHET OF THE PAST: HISTORY IN THE MAKING OF MAZZINI'S PROMISED LAND

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'The Europe of to-day', wrote Mazzini in his address *To the Italians* (1871) launching *La Roma del Popolo*, seeks 'like the Israelites in the desert, a promised land still unknown.' A recent biographer has applied to Mazzini 'the last words attributed to the medieval pope Gregory VII: *Dilexi justitia, odivi iniquitate, ergo in exilio moro* (I loved justice and hated iniquity, hence I die in exile).' Like a latter day Hildebrand, 'Mazzini was Gregory's equal in loving justice, hating iniquity, and asserting his own righteousness.'¹ An inveterate high priest of republicanism, Mazzini held up as the quick fix for past and present injustices a universalist ideology which owed a lot to the man's interpretation of his country's past.

Two days after Mazzini's death on 10 March 1872, *The Times of London* announced 'the death of a man who in his time has played a most singular part upon the theatre of European politics; one whose name has for years been regarded as a symbol of Revolution, or rather Republicanism; one in whose character there were many fine and noble qualities; but still a man who was feared even more widely than he was loved, and one whose departure from the scene of action, to say the least, will be no unwelcome news to several crowned and discrowned members of the family of European sovereigns. He was the man who ever 'troubled Israel' by his ceaseless efforts...'² The Prophet had failed to reach the 'Promised Land'.³

Prophets interpret what they claim to be God's will. Like a good prophet, with bible in hand, Mazzini claimed the right to advocate his people and the ability to

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- 1 R. Sarti, *Mazzini: A Life for the Religion of Politics* (Praeger – Greenwood, 1997), 217. The study by Gaetano Salvemini, *Mazzini*, trans. I.M. Rawson (Stanford University Press, 1957) remains the classic biography.
 - 2 Cited in Joseph Mazzini, *The Duties of Man and Other Essays* (Everyman, 1907), vii.
 - 3 Mazzini died 'an exile in his own land': Y. Shain, *Frontiers of Loyalty. Political Exiles in the Age of the Nation-State* (University of Michigan Press, 2005), 94.

help them shape a better future. Instead, the present work explores Mazzini's role as a prophet of the past – a romanticized golden age which he identified with the medieval commune, the closest form of republican government to his own blueprint for the 'Promised Land'. Mazzini was able to justify his warlike nationalist call for revolutionary struggle to liberate the motherland by promoting a retrospective form of nationalism. Preaching a republican form of liberty, Mazzini's argument from nature – that a free nation belonged to the natural order of things – was supported by the argument from history – that republican government was achievable because it was in the history books. The argument from nature was easier to make, as nationalists could make use of a fundamental human institution as a metaphor for the national community – namely, the family.

'The Family', wrote Mazzini, 'is the Country of the heart. There is an angel in the Family who, by the mysterious influence of grace, of sweetness, and of love, renders the fulfilment of duties less wearisome, sorrows less bitter. The only pure joys unmixed with sadness which it is given to man to taste upon earth are, thanks to this angel, the joys of the Family.' His programme would recreate on a large scale the human family, the 'brotherhood of men'. Mazzini's 'country of the heart' was the natural microcosm of his republican utopia – the fundamental human collective which is the family. The pages of history breathed life into this idealistic project for humanity. Mazzini's popular revolution was designed for a national community awoken to 'the memory of their former liberty'. Italy's mixed heritage of citizenship – inwardly oligarchic, yet outwardly democratic, promoting the deeds of great men, yet dutifully subjecting the liberties of the individual to the needs of the wider collective – enabled him not only to justify his militant nationalism but also to preach a civic faith of 'sacrifice and devotion'.

In order to achieve this objective, Mazzini frequently adopted the teleological language of the Catholic moralists he fought so ardently. As late as 1871 he stated the unequivocal moral end to Italian history: 'the mission of Rome in the world, and the historical evolution that calls upon her to spread for the third time among the nations a gospel of civilisation, a gospel of that moral unity which has vanished for the present in the slow death-agony of the ancient faith.' For this was Mazzini's chronology: Rome of the Caesars, Rome of the Popes, Rome of the People. In preaching republicanism as the solution to Italy's ills, Mazzini was a son of Genoa, a prophet of a romanticised republican past. The soldier of an ideal republic who planned popular insurrections and led much of his life a fugitive in exile was a dreamer of national liberty, but also a priest of worker solidarity who promoted the religion of self sacrifice. 'In republics', Machiavelli had warned his Prince, 'there is more vitality, greater hatred, and more desire for vengeance, which will never permit them to allow the memory of their

former liberty to rest; so that the safest way is to destroy them or to reside there.⁴

'Memory of Some Warlike Deed'

At a time when fellow nationalists regarded war as their major tool, when the concept of 'a nation in arms' inspired the mobilization of common people in the collective struggle for national liberation⁵, Mazzini himself preached the liberation of Italy through education and insurrection: 'Education must ever be directed to teach by example, word and pen the necessity of insurrection... Insurrection – by means of guerilla bands – is the true method of warfare for all nations desirous of emancipating themselves from a foreign yoke. It forms the military education of the people and consecrates every foot of the native soil by memory of some warlike deed.'⁶

Following the suicide of his fellow conspirator Jacopo Ruffini in a prison cell in 1833, the fugitive Mazzini was informed by his mother, who had just read Cesare Cantu's novel *Margherita Pusterla* that the terrible oppression of medieval Milan would be reenacted against them.⁷ Romantic historians frequently reconstructed medieval events as a political metaphor of the present. In Mazzini's hands, the past was not only a metaphor for the present – it provided a programme of action.

Mazzini's definition of the moral mission awaiting his future Italian republic in promoting a new republican world order was part of his wider republican ideology. It should come as no surprise that the man who proclaimed that 'the republic is the only legitimate and logical form of government' was particularly inspired by his reading of medieval Italian communal history. It was a reading which overlooked the important differences between pre-modern and modern collective identities.⁸ It extolled the republican virtues of the medieval communes but overlooked their animosities, rivalries and conflicts. Notwithstanding the fact that the Italian peninsula was, in Roman times, one province, albeit the seat of a multinational empire and, in the Middle Ages, a battleground for popes, emperors, and princes who perpetuated

4 N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter V; for a recent interpretation of Machiavelli's work see M. Hornqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) •

5 C. Duggan, *Francesco Crispi, 1818-1901: From Nation to Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 5

6 Cited after D. P. Barash and C. P. Webel, *Peace and Conflict Studies* (Sage, 2002), 177. On Mazzini's blueprints for guerrilla warfare, see W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla Warfare* (Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 2004), 140-1.

7 Sarti, 66

8 A. D. Smith, 'The Problem of National Identity: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern?', in A. D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 97-124.

its divisions, in Mazzini's risorgimentalist ideology this was reversed. In his brand of 'retrospective nationalism'⁹, the 'Italian' experience in antiquity and the Middle Ages contained the seeds of the nation's future greatness. For Mazzini, the medieval Italian commune symbolised Italy's moral supremacy as it was responsible for giving the continent its modern notion of liberty. In contrast to European feudalism, the citizens of the Italian polities south of the Alps enjoyed the liberties of the communal age. In short, Mazzini's historical viewpoint was that of his own century.

In his address *To the Italian Working Class* (1860), he appealed to working men to learn, as he had done, 'from the history of our country that the true life of Italy is the life of the people, and that the slow work of the centuries has constantly tended, amid the shock of different races and the superficial transitory changes wrought by usurpations and conquests, to prepare the great democratic National Unity.'¹⁰ For Mazzini and some of his contemporaries who promoted nationalities, 'it did not matter', remarks Eric Hobsbawm, 'that, for the great bulk of Italians, the Risorgimento did not exist so that, as Massimo d'Azeglio admitted in the famous phrase: 'We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians'.¹¹ In spite of Mazzini's social agenda, which made him different from many fellow republicans, the revolution he envisaged 'was to be organized and led by a cadre of young, idealistic patriots recruited from the elite. He saw no active role for Italy's poverty-stricken, illiterate peasantry, which comprised eighty percent of the peninsula's population.'¹²

Mazzini's 'humanity' is a classless whole, a single Being: 'God has placed beside you a Being whose life is continuous, whose faculties are the sum of all the individual faculties that have been exercised for perhaps four hundred centuries.. This Being is Humanity.'¹³ 'Humanity... is a man who is always learning.' The priest of popular democracy upholds the popular will in absolute religious terms: 'humanity is the living word of God'. Mazzini's democracy is rooted in this humanist conception of the world: 'to know the law of God you must interrogate not only your own conscience but the conscience, the general conviction, of Humanity.' 'We believe in Humanity, the sole interpreter of God's law upon earth'.¹⁴

9 Smith, 99

10 Mazzini, *The Duties of Man and Other Essays*, 1

11 E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 44

12 G. A. Brucker, *Living on the Edge in Leonardo's Florence: Selected Essays* (University of California Press, 2005), 56

13 Mazzini, *The Duties of Man*, 36

14 Ibid, 38-40

'The Fossils of the Centuries'

Echoing the opinions of the Enlightenment, Mazzini asserted that kings had fulfilled their role in history; 'monarchy had its day and mission. It came to fight and destroy feudalism, which was a system of territorial dismemberment, that hindered all possibility of unity in countries destined to form nations.' But the feudal class was replaced by the privileged caste of kings. 'Fronted by a principle of privilege based on a mere force and conquest, the king, himself head of the feudal aristocracy, came to wear out and suppress its power, in the name of another principle of privilege, analogous to the first, but founded on divine authority, and consecrated by the then recognised interpreter of a living faith.'¹⁵ This essentially destructive role of kings was called by Mazzini 'the justification of Monarchy in history'. This process had produced in its wake 'a past destroyed for ever, but still restless and agitated over its own ruins, with all the fossils of the centuries of absolutism.'¹⁶

This view of history imputed to Italy a 'creative, dynamic and amalgamating strength', qualities upheld in both the Catholic and secularist streams of thought. As with other nationalists across Europe, 'in all these self-images, countries offered themselves as candidates to be the new voice and guiding light of the future Europe.'¹⁷ Mazzini's united Italy brought together the Communes into 'a fellowship of free and equal men bound together in a brotherly concord of labour towards a single end.'¹⁸

This moral supremacy, the rise of 'the Third Rome'¹⁹ was rooted in the peninsula's glorious Roman past, and consolidated by Rome's pontifical seat in universal Christianity. In a view which was given solid historical form in Burckhardt's work on the Italian Renaissance, Italy was credited with the making of the modern world, through the invention of statecraft, the rise of individualism, the revival of antiquity, and the discovery of the world.²⁰ 'In many of their chief merits' wrote Burckhardt,

15 Mazzini, "To the Italians" (1871), in *The Duties of Man and Other Essays*, 227

16 Kedourie, 93

17 A. Annoni, 'State, nation, Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Yearbook of European Studies*, 3 (Rodopi, 1990), 39-54, at 52.

18 Mazzini, *The Duties of Man*, 56

19 A. J. Gregor, *Phoenix. Fascism in Our Time* (Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 1999), 28-9

20 J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860; trans. S. G. C. Middlemore, 1878)

'the Florentines are the pattern and the earliest type of Italians and modern Europeans generally; they are so also in many of their defects. When Dante compares the city which was always mending its constitution with the sick man who is continually changing his posture to escape from pain, he touches with the comparison a permanent feature of the political life of Florence.'²¹

'Ever Cause it to Forget'

Mazzini's historical reading of urban liberty owed a lot to the work of the French historian Sismondi on the history of the medieval Italian republics.²²

'The knowledge of times past', stated Sismondi, 'is good only as it instructs us to avoid mistakes, to imitate virtues, to improve by experience: but the pre-eminent object of this study, - the science of governing men for their advantage, of developing their individual faculties, intellectual and moral, for their greater happiness, - that political philosophy, began in modern Europe only with the Italian republics of the middle ages, and from them diffused itself over other nations'.²³ Like Sismondi, Mazzini discovered the origins of liberty in the collective freedom of the medieval commune, contrary to unbridled individualism. Mazzini regarded nationalism as 'the creed of materialists who could not see beyond particular interest.' Indeed, twinning rights to duties, and convinced of the moral supremacy of a system of reciprocal obligations among fellow citizens, Mazzini argued in favour of keeping the commune as the building block of the Italian national state, the 'smallest unit of administration'.²⁴ A modern historian of medieval Genoa finds an echo of the city's 'deep medieval roots favoring liberty and republicanism' in the career of its eminent nineteenth century son.²⁵

'He who becomes master of a city accustomed to freedom and does not destroy it, may expect to be destroyed by it', Machiavelli advised his Prince, 'for in rebellion it has always been the watch-word of liberty and its ancient privileges as a rallying point, which neither time nor benefits will ever cause it to forget'²⁶

21 Burckhardt, Part 1, Chapter 6.

22 The Swiss historian Jean Charles Leonard de Sismondi (1773-1842). See his *A History of the Italian Republics. Being a View of the Origin, Progress and Fall of Italian Freedom* (Everyman, 1907)

23 Sismondi, 1.

24 Sarti, 57-58.

25 S. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese, 958-1528* (University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 323

26 N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter V

Influenced by this romantic reading of medieval urban politics, the united peninsula was to be a union of communes, 'governed by the principle of solidarity', each encapsulating in miniature the reciprocal rights and obligations of collective citizenship, reproducing in the microcosm the same moral traits evident in the national state as a whole. As has been remarked in a study on the origins of modern citizenship, 'the massive power of the doctrines of nationalism and national sovereignty almost overwhelmed the medieval traditions of diffused power and manifold loyalties. Almost, but not quite.'²⁷ Italy, home to papacy and empire, reconciled these conflicting traditions. 'Perhaps only in Italy therefore could a foremost theorist and practitioner of the creed of nationalism insist on its compatibility with, more, its indispensability to, a hierarchical pattern of man's duties.'²⁸ As Mazzini put it in *The Duties of Man*, 'country and family are like two circles drawn within a greater circle which contains them both'.

Mazzini could not match the socialist critique of the harsh social and economic realities of modern capitalism, and the vast classes of new poor created in the wake of industrialization. Instead, he proposed a religion of duty and social solidarity which would overcome the unnatural divisions created by the greed of governments, as he wrote in *Duties towards your country* (1854): 'Natural divisions, and the spontaneous innate tendencies of the peoples, will take the place of the arbitrary divisions sanctioned by evil governments. The map of Europe will be re-drawn. The countries of the Peoples, defined by the vote of free men, will arise upon the ruins of the countries of kings and privileged castes, and between these countries harmony and fraternity will exist.'²⁹ For simply, nations were 'tools to improve mankind'.³⁰

'From Time Immemorial'

Mazzini's cosmopolitanism, argues Sarti, did not prevent him from upholding nationalist claims of 'national primacy in the name of some universal good'. Mazzini claimed it was Italy's mission to 'show the way toward a better society'. 'Mazzini was nationalist enough to resent French claims to primacy in revolution. The 'initiative' belonged to Italy, he insisted, because France had exhausted its revolutionary

27 D. Heater, *Citizenship: The Civic Ideal in World History, Politics and Education* (Manchester University Press, Third Edition, 2004), 328

28 Heater, 328-9

29 Cited after E. D. Weitz, *Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton University Press, 2003), 43

30 'Nations and Nationalism', Paul Barry Clark and Joe Foweraker (eds), *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought*, 453

mission in 1789 and Italy was poised to surpass it. To support that claim, he cited the precedents of ancient Rome, Italy's flourishing medieval communes, the splendors of the Renaissance, and the Roman Catholic tradition of universality.³¹ In Italy's political disunity there was reflected the strength of its medieval republican traditions, kept alive by the language of Dante and the Christian creed. 'The Italians', he insisted, 'are a people known from time immemorial by the same name, as the people of Italy.' This historical continuity, based on what Smith would call 'the perennialist perspective' and defines as 'a rather unsophisticated misreading of the history of collective cultural identities', provided a solid foundation for 'a sovereign nation of free and equal beings'.

Rather than a national enemy, for Mazzini, the Church had 'transformed the Rome of the Caesars into the Rome of the Popes', and had fashioned the Christian faith into a 'social religion capable of changing the world.'³² Offering 'a political version of Newton's clockmaker universe', Mazzini's secular nationalism endowed nation-states with the special historical role of fulfilling the 'divine plan'.³³

Spiritual superiority over material corruptibility, was a key to Mazzini's thought.

Mazzini's 'religion of history' carried the revolutionary echoes of medieval mystics like Joachim of Flores.³⁴ Modern scholars like Elie Kedourie have postulated 'a historical route' leading all the way from medieval millennialism to modern secular nationalism. 'Can we seriously trace the origins of German, or indeed any nationalism to the apocalyptic visions of the Franciscan Spirituals, the Brethren of the Free Spirit and the Anabaptists of Munster for the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries?', asks A D Smith.³⁵ Kedourie's answer to that would be, in a nutshell, that 'nationalism is a species of the revolutionary doctrine of progress, which in turn is a modern analogue of medieval Christian millennialism. Nationalism, therefore, like millennialism, seeks to abolish the distinction between the private and the public domain'. Both creeds uphold 'a new morality of absolute purity and brotherhood'; they 'renounce earthly pleasures to achieve through struggle (their) goal of justice on earth', and 'seek a radical break with a corrupt and oppressive past'.³⁶ Nevertheless, as Smith retorts,

31 Sarti, 2

32 Sarti, 59

33 Weitz, 43

34 Sarti, 222, note 66. Citing EN, LXXIX, 90.

35 A. D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (Routledge, 1998), 110

36 Smith, 110

while the medieval movement sought 'to abolish the past, and replace it wholly by the future', the modern movement aimed 'to fashion a future in the image of the past'.³⁷ It was a project which Mazzini made his own: in 1837 he wrote in his diary: "Life is a mission: duty, therefore, its highest law. In the comprehension of that mission, and fulfillment of that duty, lie our means of future progress." As one scholar has noted, Mazzini's understanding of that mission 'was to work for the unification of Italy, and then all Europe, as initial steps in preparing the way for the coming of God's kingdom on earth'.³⁸

Mazzini not only made use of history, he constantly claimed it was on his side. 'Today', he remarked in his address *To the Italians* in 1871, 'the feudal organization has disappeared forever, and with it the function that gave life to the monarchical idea. A new conception, based on the Divine Law of Progress, takes the place of the conception that was based on the doctrines of the Fall and the Atonement, and hence perishes the Papacy, the authority that ordained the monarch for his function.'³⁹

As one scholar put it, for Mazzini 'material and moral truths, and real and ideal worlds, do not constitute separate systems ... but coexist one within the other. They are related as if by synecdoche or metonymy, material truth being only a part or an aspect of moral truth.'⁴⁰ 'The power of the spirit over matter was his trump card.'⁴¹ Across the centuries several among his countrymen had held up that same trump card:

'And if', wrote Machiavelli to his Prince, 'as I said, it was necessary that the people of Israel should be captive so as to make manifest the ability of Moses; that the Persians should be oppressed by the Medes so as to discover the greatness of the soul of Cyrus; and that the Athenians should be dispersed to illustrate the capabilities of Theseus: then at the present time, in order to discover the virtue of an Italian spirit, it was necessary that Italy should be reduced to the extremity she is now in, that she should be more enslaved than the Hebrews, more oppressed than the Persians, more scattered than the Athenians; without head, without order, beaten, despoiled, torn, overrun; and to have endured every kind of desolation.'⁴²

37 Smith, 112

38 P. J. Frederick, *Knights of the Golden Rule: The Intellectual as Christian Social Reformer in the 1890s*, (University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 1-28, citation at 11

39 Mazzini, *To the Italians*, 227

40 C. della Coletta, *Plotting the Past* (Purdue Research Foundation, 1996), 42

41 Sarti, 2

42 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter XXVI

'Where Your Father Sleep'

'What you, the people, have created, beautified, and consecrated with your affections, with your joys, with your sorrows, and with your blood', wrote Mazzini in *The Duties of Man*, 'is the City and the Commune, not the Province or the State. In the City, in the Commune, where your fathers sleep and where your children will live, where you exercise your faculties and your personal rights, you live out your lives as individuals.'⁴³ Mazzini's Italy of communes was in stark contrast to the rival Catholic reading of the peninsula's Church-centred medieval history, which posited the pope as 'the creator of Italian genius' rather than viewing this as flowing naturally from the liberty of republican citizens. 'The Liberty of the Commune and the Unity of the Country – let that, then, be your faith. Do not say Rome and Tuscany, Rome and Lombardy, Rome and Sicily; say Rome and Florence, Rome and Siena, Rome and Leghorn.' Rooted in this historical romanticization of the past, Mazzini's republicanism was 'a purely mythical spectre, but like other myths its power was quite out of relation to its veracity.'⁴⁴

In a century when 'Catholic ideologues for a united Italy' envisioned a reinvigorated papacy at the centre of European civilization and Italian national history', Catholic 'neoguelfs' embraced Joseph de Maistre's defence of the medieval popes as 'custodians of sovereignty' and Manzoni's depiction of the pope as 'object of veneration'. The medieval struggles between Guelfs and Ghibellines were revived in Catholic hopes for papal support for a national war against Austrian domination.

Mazzini's secular republican and democratic reading of history inevitably conflicted with the Catholic apologetic and ultramontanist viewpoint that the medieval pontiffs shielded the liberty of Italian principalities from German imperial attack.⁴⁵ The communal liberties of medieval Italy could hardly be reconciled with Gioberti's nation of Levites: 'the Italians, humanly speaking, are the Levites of Christianity; being specifically chosen by Providence to have among them the Christian Pontificate.'⁴⁶ Across the Atlantic, Catholic propaganda 'captive to the myth of Pius IX' revived

43 Mazzini, *The Duties of Man*, 56

44 D. Mack Smith, *Cavour and Garibaldi 1860. A Study in Political Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 1954), 246 See also Mazzini's own description of his arrest as a young member of the Carbonari: E. Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Blackwell, 1954), 92-3.

45 P. R D'Agostino, *Rome in America: Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 23

46 D'Agostino, 24, citing V. Gioberti, *On the Moral and Civil Primacy of the Italians* (1843)

the ancient conflict and medieval Guelfs were upheld as 'the ardent friends of Italian liberty', and the most uncompromising champions of Italian nationality', while the Ghibellines had 'secretly or openly advocated the cause of the German emperors, and had sought to establish a foreign despotism on the ruins of Italian freedom'.⁴⁷

The Piedmontese prelate, author of *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani* (1843), produced a 'ponderous hymn to Italy's intellectual achievements over the centuries'. Gioberti rejected Mazzini's vision of a unified Italian state, but the two were certainly in agreement on one thing: Italy's past and future greatness.⁴⁸ Mazzini criticized Gioberti's vision of Italy as a 'nation of priests', but in the process promoted the prophets of nationhood. In acknowledging Dante as the 'prophet of a unified Italian state', Mazzini raised the national edifice of a new political religion on the medieval foundations laid by the poet-prophet. As one writer eloquently put it, 'The *Commedia* was for us, as the Bible was for the Jewish wanderers, the symbol of fatherland and nationality during the years of foreign domination'.⁴⁹ The reference to the Jewish diaspora may not be entirely fortuitous; Jewish contemporaries of Mazzini were said to subject their perceived history to similar political use, as 'the ideological centerpiece of a concrete plan to cultivate a cadre of young Jews that in some senses resembled Mazzini's Young Italy movement'.⁵⁰

At the same time, these secular patriots upheld a vision of 'Dante's Italy' which 'glossed over Dante's contradictory rendition of Italy – Italy the unique geographic, linguistic, and cultural entity vs. Italy the integral part of a Roman Empire led by German emperors – and transformed Dante into a champion of Italian unity'.⁵¹ Dante, no doubt, would provide Mazzini with his roll call of 'great men of history'; 'the virtuous geniuses, as the illustrious Italian citizen and prophet, Giuseppe Mazzini, called them', wrote Bakunin in *God and the State*. 'Immediately inspired by God himself and supported upon universal consent expressed by popular suffrage – Dio e

47 D'Agostino, 25 citing *The Catholic Magazine*

48 Duggan, 41

49 Angelo Mazzocco, entry under 'Italy', in R. Lansing (ed), *The Dante Encyclopedia* (Garland, 2000), 531

50 Reference to the activities of Sabato Morais, a Jewish activist from Livorno who befriended Mazzini in London and later settled in America: Arthur Kiron, 'Varieties of Haskalah: Sabato Morais's Program of Sephardi Rabbinic Humanism in Victorian America', in R. Brann and A. Sutcliffe (eds), *Renewing the past, reconfiguring Jewish culture: from al-Andalus to the Haskalah* (University of Pennsylvania, 1999), 121-148, especially 122-4, 128

51 Mazzocco, 531 citing Bernardino Zendrini (1839-1879). S. Battaglia, 'L'idea di Dante nel pensiero di Giuseppe Mazzini', *Filologia e Letteratura*, 12 (1966), 113-124.

Popolo – such as these should be called to the government of human societies.’ For the Russian thinker this was yet another form of the ‘yoke of Church and State’.⁵²

In upholding political liberty as a central tenet of Italian civilization, and the medieval communes as its prominent precursors, Mazzini’s romantic reading of medieval history overlooked the elitist and oligarchic character of later medieval Italian states. The ‘Myth of Rome’ played a central part in the making of this ‘Italian civilization’; it was elaborated into ‘a national mission’. Mazzini’s ‘lay vision’ presented Rome as ‘a leading force in the Italians’ struggle for unity’; a strong Italy ‘might found a united Europe on the premises of Rome’s universal values.’⁵³ The tendency to ‘regard Rome as the antecedent to some sort of Italian mission in the world’ was infused with new vitality by Mazzini’s myth of Rome.⁵⁴ The metaphor of Rome was to give rise to a new world order, and a better place. For this was the essence of Mazzini’s Middle Ages; it was his best piece of evidence backing the case for a republican Utopia or Promised Land. Unfettered by the harsher realities of history, its poetic vision of the past nourished hopes and promises about the future which were equally impossible to realize.

52 M. A. Bakunin, *God and the State* (Dover, 1970; first published 1916), 37-8. Bakunin recalls the following conversation with Mazzini: ‘One day I asked Mazzini what measures would be taken for the emancipation of the people, once his triumphant unitary republic had been definitely established. ‘The first measure’, he answered, ‘will be the foundation of schools for the people.’ ‘And what will the people be taught in these schools?’ ‘The duties of man – sacrifice and devotion’. Bakunin was forced to conclude that ‘Men like Mazzini, in whom doctrine and action form an admirable unity, are very rare exceptions.’ *God and the State*, 38, note

53 S. Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: the aesthetics of power in Mussolini’s Italy* (University of California Press, 1997), 90

54 Falasca-Zamponi, 90-2 In the hands of the later Fascist regime its humanist objective was transformed into ‘an ideology of supremacy’