

# Editorial

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the Editors-in-Chief

*JoMaCC. Journal of Modern and Contemporary Christianity* intends to propose itself as a space to investigate the phenomena related to Christianity and the Christian Churches of the last three centuries according to the criteria of historical research. In this period of time Christianity and the Churches have been mainly confronted with advanced modernity and with the dynamics of secularisation, at first and mainly in the context of Europe and the Americas. Subsequently, as a result of the progressive globalisation of Christianity and the growing presence of the Churches in Africa, Central Asia and the Far East, new historical phenomena have emerged alongside the confrontation with the modernity. In a process of rethinking about forms of inculturation which had previously been declined, the centrality of European references has been diminished and the search for a growing balance between different ways of living and interpreting the Christian experience increased. Of course, depending on the different confessional traditions, this process has been more or less accomplished.

In order to understand these phenomena and their internal articulations, we believe that the approach of historical research, with its methodologies based mainly on the analysis of documentary sources adequately contextualised, can offer a useful tool for the knowledge of experiences, movements, institutions that have contributed and still contribute, along with other subjects, not only to the history of Christianity, but also to the configuration of human society. Aware

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that the study in a historical key is not the only possible way to address these dynamics, the journal intends to be open to contributions capable of making historical analysis interact with that of other disciplines, such as sociology or anthropology, when they are proposed in such a way as to safeguard the attention to the diachronic dimension.

The journal is the result of collaboration between scholars from different countries. Today more and more, even in the field of studies of the history of Christianity, the sense of belonging to a single and composite international scientific community, whose members interact with each other, contributing to the advancement of historiographic awareness and the development of a rich methodological debate, is evident. We are aware that we are part of a panorama of periodicals, published in various countries and languages, which is already varied and capable of offering numerous contributions to the historical knowledge of Christianity in general. However, the *Journal of Modern and Contemporary Christianity*, conceived from the beginning with a focus on the international perspective, would like to add a further and partly different opportunity to address these phenomena, opening up to academic multidisciplinary and geographical transversality. Precisely as an expression of the international openness and awareness of the different languages that characterise the scientific community of the historians of Christianity, this journal intends to publish each year an issue in English and one in which contributions will be received in French, English, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and German. Six-monthly, the journal will alternate between the publication of monographic issues (including calls for papers) and miscellaneous ones. Articles accepted by the editors of the journal will be subject to double-blind peer review. In the case of articles written by one of the general editors of the journal, the author/editor will be granted suspension from access to information that would allow him/her to identify the reviewers. After each two-year period the list of reviewers used for articles published in the journals in that time frame will be made public.

Finally, a word about the decision to focus on the digital format for this new journal: it is an expression of the desire to offer a tool that is appropriate to the evolution of the times and the expansion of the tools available for research, including the field of history studies. Moreover, in line with the policy adopted by Edizioni Ca' Foscari, the journal will be open access, to allow the maximum dissemination of its contributions within the scientific community and a potentially unlimited public dissemination.

This first issue deals with different aspects of the history of Christianity and the Churches and is composed like a small kaleidoscope that gives a multi-faceted 'harmonious' vision of the complex phenomenon that is contemporary Christianity. This first composite issue offers an overview of several 'hot' topics of contemporary life and Christianity such as migration (Salerno), the role of women (Da Rold) and sexuality (biopolitical issues in Borsatto and abuses in Jadda), but also covers the issue of the relationship between state and church (Vian) and the relationship between church and modernity in a broad sense (Talar).

This first issue of *JoMaCC* has also intentionally given space to fresh research, which has recently been started and is still in progress, alternating it with other studies that can already claim a more consolidated secondary literature and experience.

Giovanni Vian's contribution studies the reactions of the Holy See to the new Penal Code for the Kingdom of Italy (1889) as an opportunity to verify the more general attitude of the papacy towards the Italian State at the beginning of the second decade of Leo XIII's pontificate. The article made use of the funds of the Archive of the Apostolic Penitentiary, which for the second half of the nineteenth century have only recently been partially made available.

In the vast and established field of studies on the modernist crisis, Charles Talar signals a further topic of research, namely the literary treatment of ecclesiastical reform problems around 1900. Apart from Fogazzaro's well-known *Il Santo* there were other 'modernist' novels. Talar presents the case of the philosopher and novelist George Fonsegrive, who gave a literary presentation of French Social Catholicism in the context of the *abbés démocrates* and the Sillon-Movement.

Stefania Borsatto offers an initial reconstruction of Angelo Bagnasco's work as president of the Italian Bishops' Conference for about a decade, trying to grasp the basic line of the prelate, who was archbishop of Genoa for a long time. The article offers a survey of the different ways in which Bagnasco developed relations first with Benedict XVI, who had chosen him to lead the Italian episcopate, putting an end to the long and complex season of the Ruini presidency, and then with Pope Francis, with whom the harmony was undoubtedly less profound, also with respect to the conception of the Church's role in Italy, less marked - in the eyes of the Argentinean-born pontiff - by the centuries-old exceptional condition that Bagnasco, well supported by most of the peninsula's residential bishops, has tried to defend and to renew.

Eva Salerno deals with the institutional elements of the pastoral care of migrants in the Catholic Church. After a brief historiographical overview of the documents concerning migration produced by the Catholic leaders from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day, the article describes the local institutions created for this purpose in Italy and France, with particular reference to the

archdioceses of Milan and Paris. Through the exploration of these two European realities, with a careful approach also to the anthropological perspective, the article explores how the Catholic Church continues to concretely reaffirm its social thinking and its support to the integration policies of the host countries.

Sophia Rita Jadda tackles the sensitive issue of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church, analysing the linguistic rhetoric of the three pontiffs who have been most confronted with the problem, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis. The text shows the conceptualisation of sexual abuse and paedophilia within the Catholic ecclesiastical magisterium, its evolution, and inevitably also its effects on canon law. The papal attitudes investigated show how, over time, the Vatican's position on child sexual abuse has changed, particularly with the shift from defining abuse as a sin to a recognised crime: this awareness of the reality of abuse has transformed the initial attitude of downplaying the problem, opening the church to greater transparency and collaboration with civil authorities.

Cristina Da Rold offers a first survey of the communication methods of important Christian women leaders, operating through social networks. The themes they deal with (empowerment of women's roles through different models of realisation, but also recognition of LGBTQIA+ claims) show how the choices made by these Christian *opinion makers* completely lack references to the historical churches and their official teachings, while there are few references to Holy Scripture to support the proposed fields of commitment. However, the themes proposed by the analysed Christian female religious leaders intersect with those dealt with by the Churches themselves. Although at first glance it seems they anticipate the agenda of the historical Churches, it is also true that those themes also impose themselves on the historical Churches, albeit in their own way, due to the common 'logic' of religious markets. This is the case e.g. with the question of openness/inclusion or at least acceptance of individuals with LGBTQIA+ orientation: see for example the recent *LGBT+ History Month – A Message from the Archbishops*,<sup>1</sup> issued on 1 February 2022 by the archbishops of Canterbury, Justin Welby (senior bishop and principal leader of the Church of England, the symbolic head of the worldwide Anglican Communion) and of York, Stephen Cottrell, primate of England; the issue of LGBTQIA+ orientation was also echoed in the words of Pope Francis during the general audience on 26 January 2022.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/news-and-statements/lgbt-history-month-2022>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2022/documents/20220126-udienza-generale.html>.

More generally, underlining a phenomenon that runs through the recent history of Christianity and the wider contemporary society, the question of the role of women in the historical Churches is also imposing itself on the agendas of each of them with increasing pressure. This phenomenon generates profound transformations that deserve to be analysed. While at different times in the last century more and more Reform Churches have been involving women in all the offices that characterise their organisation - whatever those offices or ministries are determined and called -, in the days when the Journal of Modern and Contemporary Christianity saw this first issue being prepared, a new reform of the Roman Curia has been carried out by Francis, with the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, which has provided, among other things, for the possibility of baptised laypeople, and therefore also women, to head the curial dicasteries, when the episcopal order is not explicitly required.

