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Paolo Iafrate [*]

Article

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Paolo IAFRATE

Adjunct Professor, University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy, Via Cracovia, 90, 00133 Roma RM;
paolo.iafrate@uniroma2.it

Abstract: Religious globalisation is now a structural factor, and with immigrants it will also increase in the future. It is essential to be better prepared for this scenario, and to counter fanaticism through interreligious dialogue. In these reflections I will refer to the reports on multi-religiousness published in the last 5 years by the Dossier Statistico Immigrazione, drawing inspiration from them not only for the statistical aspects. According to the Ecri (European Commission on Racism and Intolerance, established within the Council of Europe) the communities most exposed to hate speech and acts of hatred are the Muslim and Jewish ones.　The dimension of Italian Islam, the second Italian religious reality after Catholicism, is therefore a reality that cannot be ignored and must be the subject of reflection as an integral part of the social fabric.

.Introduction to the concept of 'religious diversity

Although a great deal has been written in Italy on the subject of religions and religiosity, including cults other than the Catholic one, the most valuable contributions have not been effective on the large circuit where, through the new social media, information is mostly conveyed that is not only superficial but often inaccurate and even false [1] . For this reason, several authors have considered the Italian situation to be affected by widespread religious illiteracy and subject to numerous, prejudices: a sort of 'Italian-style religion'[2]. To this was added the recurring sociological prediction that 'God is dead' and it was argued that only a residual space remained for religions in secularised societies [3].

In fact, in addition to the spread of new forms of religiosity, there have been various forms of renewal of the great traditional religions, particularly among Protestants but also among Catholics[4].

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[1] I am very grateful to Franco Pittau, honorary president of the Idos Study and Research Centre, who was prodigal with suggestions and suggested that I take up a subject very dear to him, in great detail.

[2] A. Melloni, *L'illfabetismo religioso in Italia*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2014. Among the vast bibliography I point out a work with a suggestive title: Cf. J. Rüpke, *Tra Giove e Cristo. Trasformazioni religiose nell'Impero romano*, R. Alciati (ed.), Morcelliana, Brescia, 2013.

[3] C.Taylor, *L'età secolare* (trad. it)., Feltrinelli, Milano, 2009.

[4] *H Cox., 1995, Fire from Heaven. The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*, (Addison-Wesley, Reading [Massachusetts]. La traduzione italiani seguì nell'anno successive presso l'edizioni Vallecchi. Cfr. anche Naso P., *Cristianesimo: Pentecostali*, EMI, Bologna, 2013; Naso P., „Il Nuovo Pluralismo Religioso (PNR),　un patrimonio sociale che si disperde a cura di Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS", in *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione* 2020, Edizione Idos, 2020, pp.234-237.

Italy has become a large country of immigration, without, however, being able to live peacefully with immigrants, whose presence, according to demographers, will continue to be indispensable in order to cope with the dwindling population also as a result of the increasing emigration of Italians[5].

Italy has not only become a multinational but also a multi-religious country. According to the latest estimates by CESNUR in Turin (Centro Studi Nuove Religioni), 10% of residents have a faith other than Catholic, including both immigrants and Italian citizens.[6]

Usually, when one speaks of a lack of acceptance of religious pluralism, one thinks of the widespread aversion to Muslims. Islamophobia is a serious problem, but not the only one.[7]

Of course, the strategy of opening oneself to the plurality of faiths is already quite distinct from syncretism, because it succeeds in uniting without confusing and distinguishing without separating. Therefore, the way forward does not consist in detaching oneself from one's own religious roots, which a correctly understood dialogue by no means imposes this renunciation, but rather induces one to establish a respectful dialogue with people who follow other faiths in a perspective of mutual spiritual enrichment and collaboration in social engagement. From a theological point of view, then, it is reassuring to think that other believers are not cut off from salvation either, because God peers into the depths of each person's conscience and is not bound by our schemes.[8]

Historical events starting with the Roman empire were intertwined, towards the middle of the second millennium, with the strengthening of European nations and their detachment from the authorities recognised during the medieval period (the Pope and the emperor).

There was no lack of limits in this process, both at a political level, when attachment to one's own nation turned into nationalism, and also when the power to regulate religious manifestations was exercised in a coercive and oppressive manner, imposing the decisions of public authority on the consciences of individuals. The end of the 'religious war' in 1648 (Peace of Westphalia) highlighted these problems, on which a clear position was only taken after the Second World War.

Without a solid concept of tolerance and dialogue, coexistence in today's society becomes difficult and numerous serious problems ensue. The educational path proposed here, focusing on aspects of our history and the cornerstones of our constitutional order, helps to understand that openness to religious diversity is not a precarious attitude, but a legal intellectual maturation tempered over centuries.

It will be made clear, also with explicit reference to Islam, that the maturing of individual citizens must be accompanied by the perfecting of the legal framework. The Constitution, in fact, offers only 'potential coverage' that needs to be implemented. Various religious communities suffer as a result

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[5] https://www.istat.it/it/files/2017/04/previsioni-demografiche.pdf; M. Ambrosini, P. Naso, C. Paravati, *Il Dio dei migranti: Pluralismo, conflitto, integrazione*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2019.

[6] M. Introvigne e P. Zoccatelli, *Le religioni in Italia*, Elledici, Torino, 2018. Il Cesnur ha pubblicato anche, sempre con la stessa curatela, 2013, la *Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia*, Elledici, Torino. Pertanto, nella presentazione della specificità del caso italiano è opportuno includere anche la dimensione multireligiosa; Pace E. (a cura di), *Le religioni nell'Italia che cambia*, Carocci, Roma, 2013. A. Cossiga, M. Pesce, *Migrazioni, diaspora, complessità,* Eurilink, Roma; IDOS, Pittau F. (ed.),*The new face of Itali. Migration in a chancing country*, TNova Publishers, New York, 2015.

[7] M. Campanini, *Islam e Politica*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1999, pp. 298.

[8] The idea of human dignity undoubtedly owes much to the influence of the Gospel and the Christian faith. However, dignity has not only had a cultural and historical contribution to the development of Christianity, but we could say that dignity is rooted in the theology of creation and incarnation, in such a way that, through this divine action, there is a direct link between the person and God. Cf. Simion Belea, „Demnitatea și drepturile omului în cazul grupurilor expuse riscului de excluziune", *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință,* vol. 9, nr. 1, 2021, pp. 434-452.

of the legislature's inertia in repealing the legislation of the fascist period and replacing it with more suitable provisions. As proposed, without follow-up, by some governments in the past, and as continues to be proposed by numerous jurists, the constitutional orientation should result in a general law on religious freedom. Therefore, much remains to be done, and this contribution also serves as a reminder of the need to protect religious pluralism. A great religion without an understanding with the State.

2.   A multi-religious approach to current reality

In this essay we intend to show that the contrasting relationships that the Christian West has had in the past with Islam are an incentive to reflect that, having overcome a spirit of conquest, the two monotheistic religions discover (as did the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent papal magisterium) shared reasons, despite their enduring differences, to bear witness to the relevance of faith in a way that often tends towards atheism or at least agnosticism, and to allow everyone to freely live out their religious choice without ever losing respect for other faiths. Such an approach is less meaningful for the history of the past, which has unfolded and whose outcomes can only be judged, but it is essential to prepare the history of the future, avoiding lacerating contrasts.

Multireligiousness in Italy has deep roots (see in this regard the presence of the Jewish and Waldensian religions), but there is no doubt that as a result of increasing immigration since the 1970s, this characteristic has become much more pronounced.

In addressing this topic, it is worth remembering that wars of religion have also been part of the history of Christianity, and it should be borne in mind that a certain radicalism still characterises the mentality of some Christian circles, directed in particular against Islam

Religious globalisation is now a structural factor, which with immigrants will also increase in the future. Preparing better for this scenario is crucial, combating fanaticism with inter-religious dialogue to be conducted with clarity, prudence, courtesy and trust, also to make people forget a past in which religions have often been a reason for conflict within different societies.

In these reflections, I will refer to the reports on multireligiousness published in recent years by the Immigration Statistics Dossier edited by the Idos Study and Research Centre [9] , drawing inspiration from them not only with regard to the statistical aspects of the issue [10].

According to the Ecri (European Commission on Racime and Intolerance, established within the framework of the Council of Europe), the communities most exposed to hate speech and acts of hatred are Muslim and Jewish communities[11].

According to a survey conducted by the European Parliament (March 2018), perceived discrimination on religious grounds by Muslims has increased from 12 per cent in 2010 to 25 per cent in 2016, with around a third of them reporting problems in the working environment in 2017[12]

In the UK, according to the State of hate report (February 2019) by the advocacy group Hope not Hate, there is an increase in anti-elitist sentiment which, behind the claim of free speech, hides a prejudiced representation of reality, full of radicalism [13].

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[9] https://www.dossierimmigrazione.it/

[10] https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-italy-italian-translation-/16808b5839

[11]   http://www.unar.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Relazione-al-Parlamento-e-al-   Presidente-del-Consiglio-2018.pdf

[12] J. Schacht, *Introduzione al diritto musulmano*, Torino, Fondazione Agnelli, 1996; D. Santillana, *Istituzioni di diritto musulmano malichita, con riguardo anche al sistema sciafiita*, Istituto per l'Oriente, Roma, 1938.

[13] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-02-12_IT.html

In the aftermath of the so-called 'Arab Spring', the explosion of jihadist terrorism in its bloodiest forms has strongly increased aversion to this religion. Opposition to Islam is also motivated by the fear of this community becoming a majority in the West. According to the estimate of the Immigration Statistics Dossier 2020, they are currently about one third of the 5.3 million foreign residents, a substantial presence but well below the imagined figures.

The European Convention on Human Rights, moreover, has made it clear that permissible restrictions on a religious denomination are only those intended to ensure public order, the protection of public health and morals, as well as the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

In Italy, relations between the State and religious denominations are largely based on bilateral agreements: the Constitution incorporates, in Article 7, the Lateran Pacts for the regulation of relations between the Italian State and the Catholic Church, while Article 8, paragraph 3, provides for regulating relations with non- Catholic denominations through agreements, i.e. pactual agreements to be translated into State laws. In this regard, it should be noted that an understanding with the Muslim community has not been possible so far.

Looking ahead, a satisfactory regulation of the pending issues is required as a goal that has not been achieved so far, and to this end, the passing of a law on religious freedom has been hypothesised, motivated by the conviction that European societies can be enriched by the full acceptance of different religions.

3.   Islam from the 7th to the 13th century

This paragraph and its sub-paragraphs are not intended to summarise the history of Islam, but only to present some insights into the Muslim community, thus giving greater depth to the prospects of interreligious dialogue.

The history of medieval culture and tradition, during the fall of 'Romanitas' until the beginning of the modern age, constitutes a continuous transfer of knowledge from the ancient world that began at the beginning of the dissolution of the imperial institution in the West and the definitive interruption of cultural contacts with the Greek East. Following the closure of the school in Athens in 529, by decree of Emperor Justinian, the last Neo-Platonists (Simplicius, Damascius and their companions) set up a new seat in the Mesopotamian city of Harran, where they continued to use and transcribe the fundamental texts of classical philosophical thought, especially those of Plato and Aristotle. The Arab conquest of Syria and Persia in the 7th century allowed Islam to come into contact with the pagan philosophical heritage.

The expansion of the Arabs from the 7th century onwards produced a break with ancient Roman civilisation: the invasions of the Germanic peoples, despite having overwhelmed the political institutions of the empire, preserved the social, economic and cultural foundations[14] .

The territories conquered by the Arabs underwent a radical transformation in their social, cultural and religious structure. The Mediterranean, no longer unitary, is divided into three areas of civilisation: Islamic in North Africa and the Middle East, Byzantine in Eastern Europe and Romano-Germanic in Western Europe. Particularly in the 7th century, the Arab conquest of Syria and Persia led civilisation to come into contact with the pagan philosophical heritage, as did the continued Islamic expansionism, which was curbed at Poitiers (732 A.D.) by Charles Martel's Franks, particularly in southern Italy.

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[14] A. D'Emilia, ‚Intorno alla moderna attività legislativa di alcuni paesi musulmani nel, campo del diritto privato', *Oriente Moderno,* Anno 33, Nr. 7 (Luglio), 1953, pp. 301-321 (21 Pagine), Editore Istituto Per L'oriente C. A. Nallino; P.Fortunato Cuzzola, *Il diritto islamico,* Roma, Primiceri Editore, 2013, p. 72.

The Eastern Roman (or Byzantine) Empire went through a difficult period between the end of the 7th century and the beginning of the 8th century, following the invasions of the Arabs in southern Italy in the late 9th and early 10th century [15].

In this time interval, the Arab Empire became a complex set of emirates, which, although still formally domains of the Caliphate, represented independent kingdoms ruled by dynasties of emirs often more powerful and influential than the caliphs themselves.

The Caliphate continued its expansion through the conquests of these emirs, whose exploits represented the ultimate 'caliphal' limits in both East and West. Ibrāhīm II's enterprise in Sicily and Calabria represents the Arabs' final attempt to invade Europe, after the sieges of Constantinople and the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula.

In 878 A.D. followed the Arabs' attempt in Sicily to occupy after Syracuse also Calabria, which had been conquered following the revolt between Arabs and Berbers in 901 A.D.

In this context, the emirates of Taranto, Bari and Amantea assume particular importance at the hands of Lodovico II, who descended to the Duchy of Benevento at the head of an army and occupied the Apulian cities within which the Saracens proclaimed an emirate that remains in history as the most lasting Arab government in the Italic peninsula.

3.1. *Influence of Arab culture and religion in Europe*

Islamic influence in medieval Europe was seen in various areas such as art, architecture, medicine, agriculture, music, language and technology. From the 11th to the 13th century, Europe absorbed the knowledge of Islamic culture. The conquest of Syria and Persia proved to be strategic as it allowed the civilisation of Islam to come into direct contact with the pagan philosophical heritage, through a work of translation, extended to books that were not only philosophical, but also scientific, mathematical, astronomical and medical.

From the 14th century onwards, the political unity of Islam fragmented into several regional empires, including the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid Empire and the Mughal Empire. Each of these empires developed its own Islamic tradition, and in the case of the Ottomans, the sultan proclaimed himself caliph, claiming the role of spiritual guide for all Muslims. This period is marked by a growing tension between Sunni and Shia orthodoxy, especially between the Ottomans and the Safavids [16].

This grandiose 'importation' within the borders of the Eastern Empire, fostered by the political consolidation of the Islamic state, reached its climax with the foundation of the 'House of Wisdom' in Baghdad, on the initiative of Caliph al-Mamun [17].

Between the 18th and 20th centuries, characterised by the crisis of modernity and reformist movements, we witness the encounter between the Islamic world and the European colonial powers that leads to profound changes. Some Muslim intellectuals responded with reformism, seeking to reconcile Islamic principles with modernity, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad

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[15] F. Castro, „La codificazione del diritto privato negli stati arabi contemporanei", in *Rivista di diritto civile,* XXXI, 1, 1985, pp. 387-447; L. Millot - F.P. Blanc, *Introduction a l'étude du droit musulman*, Paeis, Sirey, 1987; P. Branca, *I musulmani,* Il Mulino, Bologna, 2000.

[16] M. Badrun, A.Nasution, D.Setiawan, M.Nizhof Lubbi, „The History of Islamic Science and its Characteristics: A Valuable Contribution to the Development of Islam in Modern Times", *Juspi: Jurnal Sejarah Peradaban Islam.* 8(1), 2024, pp.31-37.

[17] M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies,* Third Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.358 -360.

Abduh. Other movements, such as Wahhabism in Arabia, instead emphasise a return to the original sources of Islam, opposing influences outside the tradition [18].

Since the 7th century, the Islamic religion has gone through multiple transformations reflecting both local and global challenges. Despite internal tensions and difficulties in integrating with modernity, Islam remains a fundamental element in the world religious landscape. Today, Islam is a global religion, present on all continents.

Muslims face modern challenges such as globalisation[19], migration and integration into secular societies. Moreover, new Islamic interpretations and movements, both reformist and conservative, are influencing the way Islam is experienced and interpreted in the contemporary context[20].

Arab reasoning and culture, includes the 'science of faith', since the Islamic religion presents itself as accessible wisdom. Theology, called kalàm, is first and foremost an apologetic exposition of revealed truth and the Law contained therein: its main object is the pure understanding of the foundation of divine unity (the first and constitutive principle of the Islamic faith, which in Arabic is called tawhìd). In this context, there are important openings for constructive confrontation with suggestions coming from the other two great monotheistic religions founded on the communication of a written Revelation, Judaism and Christianity, insofar at least as they do not oppose the foundations of Islam, for example in the description of the history of creation or eschatological events. The encounter intensified especially with the Christian religion following the establishment of the Umayyad caliphate and the transfer of the capital to Damascus in Syria.

The confrontation between Christian theologians and the need to avoid heterodox infiltrations in the defence of Revelation fuelled Islam's need to provide a theoretical reinforcement of the justifications of faith, decisively favouring a systematic and argumentative elaboration of the kalàm [21].

3.2. The 'human brotherhood' declaration

On 4 February 2019, Pope Francis signed, with Sheikh Ahmad al- Tayyeb[22] Grand Imam of the al-Azhar Mosque-University (an institution influential both religiously and academically, located in Cairo at the hub of an international educational network) a document on human brotherhood. The text represents a benchmark for world coexistence, which deserves to be examined. The meeting, which presents singular and unique features in the historical heritage of the two religions, is part of a long-standing attempt to consolidate a mutual understanding between people who practise different religions. Interreligious dialogue was born out of the desire to unite the efforts of all for the promotion of the common good, such as world peace and the respect and inviolability of human rights.

The Pontiff emphasised the responsibility before God to break the spiral of hatred, pointing out how concretely this was already possible with the recourse to a single word 'brother'. Both history and geography make it impossible to speak of the Mediterranean without involving the reflection

[18] N. R. Keddie, "Imperialism", *Science and Religion: Two Essays by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, 1883 and 1884*, 2002, pp.5-10.

[19] Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Globalization and its effect on religion", *Jurnalul Libertăţii de Conştiinţă*, Mihnea Costoiu, Liviu-Bogdan Ciucă, Nelu Burcea (eds.), Les Arcs, France, Iarsic, 2014, vol.1, nr.1, pp.532-541.

[20] J. L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp.8-15.

[21] F. Castro, „Voce Diritto musulmano e dei Paesi musulmani", in *Enciclopedia Giuridica*, vol. XI, A. Diurni 2008, (a cura di), Percorsi mondiali di diritto privato e comparato, Giuffrè, Milano, 1989, p.220.

[22]https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/travels/2019/outside/documents/papaf rancesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html

and spirituality proper to the three great Abrahamic religions and, particularly within Christianity, without uniting Rome and Constantinople in the reflection.

This being the case, it is appropriate to elaborate on the term Mediterranean from the Latin "basin of water that lies "between the lands", which includes four straits (Messina, Gibraltar, the Bosporus which marks the Dardanelles strait, the border between the European and Asian continents, and the Suez Canal which unites and divides Africa and Asia). Mediterranean culture is a place where common elements can be found, but at the same time it is also the source of some very strong tensions. There is a Mediterranean identity that is made up of encounters, exchanges, spiritual and material communication, often an identity also derived from the trade of goods, from exchanges. In fact, from Marseilles to Beirut, from Catania to Greece, it is possible to reconstruct and reconnect, so much so that we can rethink Europe as 'mitteleuropa'. The writer-journalist Maurizio Maggiani describes this historical-geographical congruence through poetic moments, capable of illuminating as only poetry can portray, with limpid images and a single line, the complexity of a context; well, he writes:

"There is another thing, which distinguishes and identifies the Mediterranean, something that is found everywhere in the Mediterranean besides anchovies, bread, oil and wine, it is God', the God of the Mediterranean peoples, the God of Abraham and the Jews, Muslims and Christians. Around this sea, the three monotheistic religions have developed'[23]. In the Mediterranean, according to the writer, the three monotheistic religions developed and the principles on which the people of the Mediterranean basin built the civilisation[24] that unites us. He also emphasises how, in a time of religious and human indifference, the example of the Catholic Church and part of the Islamic world is definitely a testimony of courage and hope for the building of a brotherhood among all men and women of good will.

Having said these brief remarks, it is necessary to recall the statistical data in order to have an overview of the presence of the Muslim community in Italy.

4.   A socio-statistical look at the Islamic presence in Italy

Islam is the second religious community represented in migrations after Christians of the various denominations (Orthodox, Catholics, Pentecostals) with a total of 1,764,000 or one third (33.2%) of the foreign citizens present in the country[25], however about 1 in every 20 (4.8%) is atheist or agnostic (254,000).

The majority of immigrants are Christian, about 2,749,000 or 51.9 per cent of the resident foreign population.

The Islamic presence in Italy dates back to the arrival of the Arabs in Sicily in Mazzara in 827 A.D. and lasted from 828 to 1300[26] ; some regions in southern and central Italy were part of the

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[23] G. Tuccio, *Reggio metropolitan city: For Mediterranean friendship*, 2016, p.183.

[24] Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Aspects of Biblical Philosophy on the Development of World Civilizations", *Scientia Moralitas. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 8 (2023), nr.1, pp. 62-79; *Om-Demnitate-Libertate*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Risoprint, 2019, pp. 201-215.

[25] R.Calia, B.Salvarani, *Le religioni degli immigrati e il panorama multireligioso dell'Italia*, 2019, pp. 208-211, a cura di Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS in Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2019, Edizione Idos, Elaborazioni di Fondazione ISMU su dati Istat e Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multietnicità (Orim), al 1° gennaio 2020, https://www.ismu.org/immigrati-e-religioni-in-italia-comunicato-stampa-14-9-2020/; L. Di Sciullo, C. Paravati, 2020, *Il panorama multireligioso dell'Italia   e la sua difficile gestione*, a cura di Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS in Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2020, Edizione Idos, pp.230-233.

[26] M. Amari, *Storia dei musulmani di Sicilia*, vol. III, parte seconda, Firenze: F. Le Monnier, 1872, p.774.

Muslim world, Taranto and Bari were two powerful emirates. Saracen dominions were also important in Brindisi, Sardinia, Corsica, Calabria and Molise.

In Sicily, half the population was Islamised, benefiting from a long period of peace and prosperity following the Muslim conquest. During the Norman period, Arab culture was held in high esteem for its refinement. In modern times, a substantial Muslim presence in Italy began in 1970 when North African immigrants, mainly Arabs and Berbers from Morocco, arrived in the country, followed by Albanians, Egyptians, Tunisians, Senegalese, Somalis, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis from the 1990s onwards. The Muslims currently present in Italy are predominantly Sunnis, but there is also a Shia presence and, especially among those from Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, membership of various Sufi brotherhoods.

In particular, they come from Morocco and Albania (which alone account for 1 million) and from Bangladesh, Egypt, Pakistan, Kosovo, Tunisia and Senegal (with a quota of 100,000 each), with a total of 32% emigrating from countries with a Sunni majority; the regions with the largest presence of Muslims are Emilia Romagna, Trentino Alto Adige and Valle d'Aosta (with an incidence of around 40%). Among the many characteristics of Islam we find the subdivision of countries of origin, which prevents Muslim believers from identifying with a particular community, unlike in Germany with Turkey and in France with Algeria. Added to this is the fact that the entry and settlement of Muslim communities in Italy has taken place more rapidly than in countries where Muslim emigration is older, moreover, at a time when Islam's role in the public sphere is central: A further characteristic trait is the immediate visibility of Islam from the first generation when its organisation is in its primordial phase and misunderstandings and misinterpretations are more frequent. Other difficulties are determined (Orim), as of 1 January 2020,   by the need for greater integration arising from the irregular status of Muslim immigrants due to current legislation, especially the Bossi-Fini Law No. 89 of 30 July 2002. The scarcity of immigrants from former Italian colonies and the absence of even a linguistic or cultural relationship with our country; the leading role played by Italian converts in giving visibility to Italian Islam, making up for the shortcomings of that organised by immigrants[27]

A further problem is the dispersed nature of work and housing that does not allow the formation of interlocutors and structures capable of dialogue with institutions, increasing the role and importance of mosques.

The diverse origins of the faithful, often first-generation immigrants, who know little Italian and do not have a common language in common, has favoured the choice of congregating according to their ethnic-national affiliation with the birth of ethnic prayer rooms, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and so on.

Belonging to a religious denomination automatically determines also being a practising member.

As a result, not all Muslims out of the 1.7 million people observe Islamic prescriptions (prayer, fasting, etc.). Moreover, although observant Muslims make up about 10-20% of the total, "this percentage increases significantly in the month of Ramadan, during which prayer rooms are also frequented by immigrants who do not come to pray during the rest of the year.

The dimension of Italian Islam, the second largest religious reality in Italy after Catholicism, therefore constitutes a reality that cannot be ignored and must be the object of reflection as an integral part of the social fabric. On the other hand, efforts in the direction of greater integration are synonymous with an aware society that is committed to overcoming the obstacles to peaceful coexistence of all social components insofar as "integrating otherness is a phenomenon that belongs

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[27] P. Naso, F. Pittau, *L'appartenenza religiosa degli immigrati*, a cura di Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS in *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione,* edizioni Idos, 2015, p.189.   Per una lettura più approfondita si consulti F. Zannini, 2013, *L'islam in Italia. Mappe, percorsi, processi*, in Religioni, dialogo e integrazione. Vademecum a cura del Dipartimento per le libertà civili e l'immigrazione, Direzione Centrale degli Affari dei Culti- Ministero dell'Interno, COM NUOVI TEMPI – IDOS, op. cit., p. 57.

to social dynamics, activated as critical manifestations of a society that understands itself in its evolutionary dimension[28] ".

4.   Second generations

Although the second generation of young Muslims have been introduced to the values and behaviour of their Italian peers, they have not renounced their family's cultural and religious heritage and find themselves in a conflict between their acceptance of their parents' religious traditions and their desire to fit into the society of which they are part [29].

The greatest difficulty is reconciling membership of Islam and the European dimension, with subsequent difficulties for religion, culture and society.Problems are also represented by the fact that spiritual guides, imams often do not speak Italian and religious literature is not able to guide the new generations, despite the fact that the 'Young Muslims of Italy (GMI)' are trying to build an identity of Islam in which its practice can meet and be compatible with our culture.

The absence of adequate legal protection and policies for the better integration of Muslims exposes them to interference in their religious life by Arab regimes' that, known for a high aversion to the values of democracy and secularism, through financial support to communities through special organisations (the Qatar Charity or Saudi and other Gulf Arab NGOs), 'tend to exercise political and religious control over them directly or indirectly', preventing them from growing in a healthy way and 'developing a European vision of their faith'.

In an interview, Stefano Allievi, emphasised 'it is not that there is money going around, but about the type of Islam propagated. For some young people, adherence to Islam is purely formal, others, seeing their own religion as the object of less respect and less consideration than others (if not, indeed, the object of Islamophobic attitudes) become rigid in their religious convictions and become active members of fundamentalist movements" in the face of what has been defined as the "suffered theft of   their   future"[30]. The risks of ghettoisation and influences from outside, the growth of a feeling of disappointment at the lack of integration, especially in young people, leads to greater exposure to fundamentalist organisations, which attract those who remain outside through the web through the lure of web jihadism. In this regard, there is concern about the risk of the undue confusion of terrorism and fanaticism with moderate Islam, which risks fuelling a climate of mutual tension and mistrust, as well as the growth of acts of discrimination such as verbal and physical attacks against women who wear the veil, against places of worship, private property and Muslim cemeteries that many different organisations and observers in various European countries, including governmental ones, denounce. In fact, the aim is to ensure the peaceful coexistence of all social

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[28]   A. M. Cozzolino, „Islam: non solo ‹‹la religione dei migranti", in *Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo"*, Com Nuovi tempi op. cit., 2014, p. 20; F. Zannini, L'islam in Italia. Mappe, percorsi, processi, in Vademecum a cura del Dipartimento per le libertà civili e l'immigrazione- Direzione Centrale degli Affari dei Culti- Ministero dell'Interno, op. cit., COM NUOVI TEMPI – IDOS, 2013, pp. 63- 64, P. Bonizzoni, A.Ruggieri, „I figli degli immigrati, stranieri al quadrato?", In *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2020*, edizione Idos, pp.206-210.

[29] F. Castro, *Il modello islamico*, Giappichelli, Torino, 2007; A. Cilardo, *Il diritto islamico e il sistema giuridico italiano*, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, Napoli, 2002.

[30] M. El Ayoubi, "Immigrazione musulmana e islamofobia", in *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione,* 2015, Edizioni Idos, p. 195.

Più diffusamente trattate in S. Allievi, "L'islam che cambia e non cambia", in *Un cantiere senza progetto,* L'Italia delle religioni – Rapporto 2012 (a cura di P. Naso e B. Salvarani), pp. 100 ss. a cui si rinvia.

M. El Ayoubi, "La sfida dell'islam italiano", in *Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo" Com Nuovi tempi*, 2015, p. 4.

components in the desire to prevent Muslim believers from being subjected to unjust intolerance arising from being associated with events for which they are not to blame and with which they have nothing to do, and which only risk creating an easy breeding ground for acts of terrorism fostered by a climate of mistrust and marginalisation. Despite the steps towards integration and welcome through the creation of meeting and sharing places in neighbourhoods, and the sharing of sports, cultural and recreational activities, acts of a discriminatory nature have been noted through the enactment of laws exclusively against Muslims (such as the closure of premises for violation of fire prevention regulations applied only to them) or 'ad hoc' regulations such as the frequent request (not recurring in other religious denominations) to worship in Italian, the creation of special registers for imams (not required for ministers of religion of other religions) or the creation of consultation bodies. The importance of fostering a serene climate of encounter is a fundamental requirement because, according to the scholar Allievi, Islamophobic hatred can be no less dangerous and devastating'[31] . One way forward for greater integration may be the encouragement of policies that pay attention to the education of young people in their religious environment, both through the provision of appropriate places of worship and through greater coordination with the activities of imams and the encouragement of mature religious literature. With regard to the first aspect, one cannot fail to note how the age-old problem of mosques stands out as one of the most controversial issues concerning Italian Islam. The absence of real places of worship highlights this aspect. Often mosques are actually structures created with other functions (and not with the intention of hosting cultic functions) such as warehouses, garages, warehouses, flats or basements rented or purchased by local Islamic communities. The Census recorded 769 places of worship, more than half in northern Italy, of which only six were newly built with a dome or minaret in the cities of Segrate, Brescia, Ravenna, Colle di Val d'Elsa, Rome and Catania, with about 200 prayer rooms that refer to the Ucoii and 150 Moroccan ones that have joined the Italian Islamic Confederation (Cii . These places, often referred to as a potential danger because they are considered a possible 'humus' in which latent fundamentalism develops, are, in the opinion of Stefano Allievi, 'among the most controlled places in Italy' where 'most Muslims collaborate in the prevention of security' since imams have no interest in having unstable elements inside their mosques [32].

This figure is different at the European level in 2012, there were almost 200 mosques being built ad hoc in France, over a hundred in Great Britain, almost as many in the Netherlands, about seventy

[31] F. Zannini, *L'islam in Italia. Mappe, percorsi, processi*, in Vademecum a cura del Dipartimento per le libertà civili e l'immigrazione- Direzione Centrale degli Affari dei Culti- Ministero dell'Interno, 2013, p. 64.

V. Chiti, 2014, *Urgente l'Intesa con l'islam*, Dossier Confronti 2015 "Minareti e dialogo", Com Nuovi tempi, p. 14.

 M. Bombardieri, *Moschee d'Italia. Il diritto al culto. Il dibattito sociale e politico*, Feltrinelli 2011. *La moschea: luogo di culto e socializzazione*, in *Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo"*, Com Nuovi tempi, 2014, p.5.

A. Redouane,   "Le uniche armi sono il dialogo e il rispetto", in *Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo"*, Com Nuovi tempi, 2014, pp. 38-39,

https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/commenti-e-idee/2015-11-17/non-confondere-chi-prega-chi-spara-063718.shtml?uuid=AC8YXgbB

[32] S. Allievi, *L'islam che cambia e non cambia*, in *Un cantiere senza progetto, L'Italia delle religioni* – Rapporto (a cura di P. Naso e B. Salvarani), Emi, Città di Castello, 2012, pp. 105-106. 131 Ivi, p. 108. M. Bombardieri, 2014, *La moschea: luogo di culto e socializzazione*, in Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo", p. 5.; S. Allievi, "*Il potere ‹‹seduttivo›› dell'Isis*", intervista a cura di C. Russo in Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo" Com Nuovi tempi, 2014, p. 8.

in Germany, without considering that in countries with fewer Muslims than Italy there were four in Switzerland, five in Austria, seven in Portugal and Sweden, and 14 in Spain. In 2012 there were about 200 construction projects in progress in Germany, about sixty in France, about fifteen in the Netherlands and Greece, only 6 or 7 in Italy. The difficulty in obtaining from the administrations, even in the face of legitimate requests, spaces to be reserved for worship has generated a phenomenon of proliferation of prayer rooms through the creation of cultural clubs that the Committee for Italian Islam had tried to regularise under the law.

Conversely, the call for referendums to open prayer halls or mosques put forward by some political forces forget that the exercise of worship "is a constitutionally guaranteed right, not a kind concession" and that "if majorities arrogate to themselves the right to decide on the rights of minorities" there is a risk of arriving at "the denial of democracy at its roots, using a means, the referendum, that should instead be its fullest expression". On the other hand, an important step was taken with the Grand Mosque in Rome, one of the largest in Europe. In this regard, Imam Muhammad Hassan, highlighted the importance of Rome as the city of dialogue in which St. Peter's and the Great Mosque also stand.

In 2014, at the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the Council of Christian Churches of Parma, which has been organising the Day of Christian-Islamic Dialogue with the Islamic Community for years, urged the municipal administration with an open letter to find a solution for the concession of a space to be reserved for the Centre of Islamic Culture and the construction of a mosque. In relation to the training of imams, interesting proposals were formulated at the international conference 'Imams in Western Europe' in Rome in November 2014 in which the need to support preachers to help them conform the message of the 'khutba' (sermon) to the social context in which they operate [33] emerged. Already in an interview given in 2011, the then newly elected President of the Ucoii, Izzedin Elzir, who was elected on 21 March 2010, stated the need to harmonise the imams' sermons with the language of the host country, pointing out that in the Florence mosque these were first held in Arabic and then translated into Italian. In the same interview, the President of the Ucoii dwelt on the need to "bring imams up to date both on the religious front and on the civil as well as linguistic and legal front" as well as on the need to "get to know Italian culture also from a legal point of view so as to create an understanding with Islamic culture and beyond". In its desire to cooperate with the Ministry of the Interior in the training of imams, the Ucoii founded the Italian Islamic Association of Imams and Religious Guides, with offices in Milan and Rome, with over 100 members, including a communications officer and an interreligious dialogue officer, to signal the will and importance of making the interaction between institutions and the Islamic community more fluid, also in view of the future signing of an agreement with the Italian State [34] . On this point,

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[33] another interesting initiative was promoted in the three-year period 2010-2013 by the Inter-University Cultural Centre for Rights and Religions - International Forum for Democracy and Religions (www.fidr.it), established in 2009 as a collaboration between the departments of law and economics.

[34] The Ucoi (Union of Islamic Communities of Italy) also recently intervened in the 'fatwa' against forced marriages in Islam of 3 June 2021 and reiterated that no type of imposition may be used in marriage and that forced marriage contracts have no validity. This argument is also contained in the opinion of the European Fatwa and Research Council, stated in decision no. 14/4. "This does not detract from the right of parents to express non-binding opinions and advice in the marriage decisions of their sons and daughters, in order to make family relationships more stable and lasting. It is advisable to adhere to religious teachings and not to confuse them with tribal and local customs and traditions of certain populations", UCOII | Union of Islamic Communities of Italy | Fatwa against

AbdAllah Massimo Cozzolino, a member of the Italian Islamic Confederation, declared that he considered 'Islamicity and Italianness as fundamental and indissoluble elements'. This body, which is integrated into the Italian social fabric, aims to 'fully recognise constitutional principles' with the aim of fostering 'the harmonisation and greater integration of the Muslim community in the Italian social context'[35] .

In this context, the valorisation of the new generations of young Muslims in literary production constitutes, therefore, a valuable tool in terms of mediation and intercultural dialogue. In fact, the web also plays a prominent role in the literary production of religious news, due, on the demand side, to the "disappointing static nature of the national media" (printed papers, radio and TV) and, on the supply side, to the "relative cheapness of digital information technologies compared to the traditional one" that "allows the multiplication of small and large publishing initiatives via the web, from news sites to blogs of information professionals", to which is added the effort of many traditional press organs "in moving many of their 'paper' products online, enriching them with content and updating them in real time". Some experiences of Islam on the web are represented by the website of Minareti (www.minareti.it), Islam online (www.islamonline.it) and Yalla Italia (www.yallaitalia.it), a blog of the second generations, children of immigrants from Arab countries[36].

The provision of adequate places of worship, care, training of imams and valid religious literature are all necessary elements for the proper integration of young people.[37] Dialogue with

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forced marriages in Islam | Rome | 22 Shawwal 1442 / 3 June 2021, https://ucoii.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Fatwa- sullilliceita%CC%80-dei-matrimoni-forzati-nellIslam-IT-AR.pdf

[35] S. Allievi, *L'islam che cambia e non cambia*, in Un cantiere senza progetto, L'Italia delle religioni – Rapporto 2012 (a cura di P. Naso e B. Salvarani), p. 103. 135 M. Introvigne, *Un islam diviso e conflittuale*, intervista a cura di C. Russo in Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo" 2014, op. cit., pag. 11. S. Allievi, 2012 *L'islam che cambia e non cambia*, in Un cantiere senza progetto. L'Italia delle religioni – Rapporto (a cura di P. Naso e B. Salvarani), op. cit., p. 107. M. Hassan, 2014, *I violenti non sono l'islam*, in Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo", Com Nuovi tempi, op. cit., p. 36. 38 L. Caffagnini ottobre 2015, *Prove di dialogo cristiano-islamico*, in rivista Presbyteri n. 8, QS Editrice, Trento, 2015, pp. 623-624.The article can also be downloaded from

www.ildialogo.org/cristianoislamico/Dowload_1444682055.htm consulted on 6 August 2021.

M. Bombardieri, 2014, *La moschea: luogo di culto e socializzazione*, in Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo", Com Nuovi tempi, op. cit, p. 6.

A. Nagasawa, 2012 *Islam. Una leadership di secondo generazione per l'Ucoii*, in Un cantiere senza progetto, L'Italia delle religioni – Rapporto (a cura di P. Naso e B. Salvarani), Com Nuovi tempi, op. cit., p. 112, Ibidem, p. 112. 142 Ivi, pp. 113-114.

[36] in Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo" 2014, Com Nuovi tempi, op. cit., pp. 20-21; F. Zannini, 2013, *L'islam in Italia. Mappe, percorsi, processi*, in Vademecum a cura del Dipartimento per le libertà civili e l'immigrazione- Direzione Centrale degli Affari dei Culti- Ministero dell'Interno, op. cit., p. 63; G. Ferrò, *Plurali e digitali*, in Un cantiere senza progetto, L'Italia delle religioni – Rapporto 2012 (a cura di P. Naso e B. Salvarani), op. cit., p. 218. 146 Ivi, pp. 218-219.

[37]As regards the integration of third-country asylum seekers, reference is made to the possibility of "encouraging and supporting the actions of Member States", while excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the respective Member States (Bonetti, 2016). Within the scope of this chapter is Article 80 TFEU, according to which the Union's policies and their implementation are governed by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, including financial responsibility, between Member States (Off. J., 2012). Cf. Simion Belea, "Human Rights without

believers of other religions, first and foremost Christians, plays a fundamental role in fostering the internal maturation of the Italian Islamic community[38] .

Italy is grappling with serious problems of an economic and social nature. Consequently, it is essential to pay greater attention, as we shall see in the next section, to the full implementation of the principle of religious freedom, which now concerns Italian citizens and an even greater number of foreigners, structurally integrated in Italy, and in particular, as we have seen, Muslims.

5.   A legal premise

Freedom of religion and worship is a primary and inviolable right, owned by every individual by nature, and as such recognised in 1948 by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 18) and, subsequently, by numerous supranational declarations, including the EU [39] Charter of Fundamental Rights of 2000 (Art. 10 and 11), incorporated into Union law by virtue of the Lisbon Treaty of 2008 (Art. 6, para. 1)[40].34 A. M. Cozzolino, 2014, "Islam: not just 'the religion of migrants'", in Dossier Confronti "Minarets and Dialogue", op. cit., p. 20. The author defines Islam as "young and complex, but united in its pluralism made up of immigrants and natives, converts and second generations, diplomats and theologians, faithful and self-taught" because "the rediscovery of authentic Islamic brotherhood without being contaminated by the extraneous currents of pan-Arab or Islamist radicalism can be more solid if done with the help of Christian brothers and sisters".

Borders for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Jurisdictional Aspects", *Journal for Ethics in Social Studies,* 5(1), Volume 5, Issue 1, 2021, pp. 21-35.

[38] A.M. Cozzolino, *Islam: non solo ‹‹la religione dei migranti››*, in Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo", op. cit., 2014, p. 20.. L'autore definisce l'Islam come "giovane e complessa, ma unita nel suo pluralismo fatto di immigrati e autoctoni, convertiti e seconde generazioni, diplomatici e teologi, fedeli e autodidatti" in quanto "la riscoperta dell'autentica fratellanza islamica senza venire contaminati dalle correnti estranee del radicalismo panarabo o islamista potrà essere più solido se fatto con l'aiuto dei fratelli e delle sorelle cristiane".

[39]The Charter cannot be regarded as a mere list of moral principles without consequences, since the values it expresses are unanimously shared by the Member States, and their proclamation, 'rationalized' in a solemn and official written document, is a decisive step towards making the citizens of the Union aware of their common identity and their common European destiny. The Charter applies to the European institutions with due respect for the principle of subsidiarity and cannot in any way extend the powers and tasks conferred on them by the Treaties. It is also adopted by EU countries as part of the implementation of EU law]. Cf. Simion Belea, "Dreptul antidiscriminatoriu în contextul internațional si european, măsuri de combatere a discriminării", *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință,* Volumul 11, Nr. 1, 2023,   pp.307-319.

[40] **Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity - Article 22**.

 This Article was based on Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 151(1) and (4) of the EC Treaty, now replaced by Article 167(1) and (4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), concerning culture. Respect for cultural and linguistic diversity is now also enshrined in Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union. The article is inspired by Declaration No 11 annexed to the Final Act of the Treaty of Amsterdam, referring to the status of churches and non-confessional organizations, now taken up in Article 17 of the Treaty on European Union]. Cf. Simion Belea, "Dreptul antidiscriminatoriu în contextul internațional si european, măsuri de combatere a discriminării", *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință,* Volumul 11, Nr. 1, 2023, pp. 307-319..

The guidelines of international law are flanked by the provisions of the Italian legal system and, first and foremost, of the Constitutional Charter itself, which in Article 2 'recognises and guarantees the inviolable rights of man, both as an individual and in the social formations where his personality takes place', including religious groups. Articles 3, 7, 8, 19 and 20, derived from Article 2, reflect this constitutional design.

The European Convention on Human Rights, moreover, has made it clear that permissible restrictions are only those intended to ensure public safety, the protection of public order, health and morals, as well as the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.[41]

In Italy, relations between the State and religious denominations are based on bilateral agreements: the Constitution incorporates, in Article 7, the Lateran Pacts for the regulation of relations between the Italian State and the Catholic Church, while Article 8, paragraph 3, provides for regulating relations with non-Catholic denominations through agreements, i.e. pactual agreements to be translated into State laws.

Religious freedom (the right to embrace or leave a religion, to profess its principles and to manifest its worship) has assumed, even within the Italian Constitution, the rank of a fundamental and inalienable principle, to which all cults are required to conform.

The new religious presences place 'new' demands for recognition on institutions: such as dietary precepts, holidays, religious education in schools, places of worship or ritual burial. These are objectives that are concretely achievable and will serve to counter incidents of conflict and discrimination on religious grounds.

Institutions have increasingly perceived the importance of commitment on this front. Thus, Prefectures have been invited to promote interreligious dialogue tables at the Territorial Councils for Immigration, just as a similar table operates at the national level. In 2012, the Permanent Conference 'Religions, Cultures, Integration' was launched, aimed at giving public evidence to the 'new' multi-religious dimension found in Italy and the consequent need for recognition and dialogue.

Many political scientists and opinion leaders, as well as various representatives of Christianity (starting with Pope Francis), have emphasised that the alleged war of religion is a nonsense and an outright blasphemy because it invokes God in support of the misdeeds committed and encourages the instrumentalisation of situations of social unrest brought about by Isis and other extremist organisations, which are interested in boycotting the prospects of coexistence.

If the terrorism of Muslims is to be equated with heresy with respect to authentic Islam, this disassociation must be emphasised more by Muslim leaders, creating scorched earth around the terrorists, emphasising that the sharî'a interpreted by fundamentalists has little to do with the true meaning of the term, as Islamic law derived from God. This message must be proclaimed more chorally by the leaders of the Muslim community's associations and religious leaders, and in this way will influence not only the immigrant population but also the countries of origin, favouring more open positions and a fuller implementation of the principle of religious freedom.

An arduous history that lasted for centuries and was also marked by 'religious wars', from the very beginning also influenced by political and cultural factors, ended with the affirmation of the secular state, conceived as the most appropriate 'container' to accommodate religious diversity. The model of a secular society should be presented to Muslims and the faithful of other religions not as the equivalent of secularism and explained in its positive dimension of openness to all faiths, in uniformity of rights and duties. In the context of this 'secularism' far from 'secularism' and 'clericalism'), the constitutional principles on religious freedom can be implemented more fully. Such an evolution can be the prerequisite for the recognition of what has been defined as "the equal right to be different" within the Italian context, which can be achieved through a reconsideration of certain cornerstones of Western legal experience, first and foremost the affirmation of the dignity of every

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[41] Simion Belea, "De la libertatea de conștiință la obiecția de conștiință ca drept al omului. aspecte generale", *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință,* vol. 7, Nr, 2, 2019, pp. 79-93.

human being, on which the principle of equality - and especially of 'substantial' equality - and the consequent affirmation of the rights of freedom rest.

Therefore, a satisfactory regulation of the pending issues is required and to this end, the passing of a law on religious freedom has been envisaged, motivated by the conviction that European societies can be enriched by the full acceptance of different religions.

6.   . Conclusions

The teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the pontifical magisterium emphasise that openness to the faithful of other religions on the part of Catholics does not contradict fidelity to the Christian message.

In various texts of the Council, the faithful of non-Christian religions are associated with salvation, albeit in a different way than Christians (Lumen Gentium, no. 16), illuminated by rays of light (Nostra Aetate, no. 2), possessors of elements of grace that touch hearts and germs of the Word (Ad. Gentes, nos. 9 and 11).

According to the so-called inclusivist theology, pivoting on the revelation of Jesus Christ does not prevent one from considering other religions as bearers of values and truths that can be included in the mystery of Christ and his Church, naturally in the context of a dialogue called to expose the common elements of religions but also their specificities[42].

Welcoming the other does not mean renouncing one's own culture and faith, whose religious diversity can indeed stimulate its deepening, but in any case it is necessary to get to know the new faiths, overcoming a widespread religious illiteracy. Peaceful coexistence must be based on respect for the essential values of liberal society, such as equality and the recognition of the fundamental rights of the individual. From what has just been said, it is undeniable that the novelty of the Council lies in a rediscovered relationship with modernity, with its best part, a relationship that had been lost for two centuries. The fundamental point is that the Church is not a fortress closed in on itself, but is in dialogue, in relationship with the world in which it lives, and that it encounters the modern starting with the rediscovery of the tradition of the first centuries.

The Church encounters the positive inheritance of the modern, and enhances it from its most genuine tradition, that tradition of freedom and the division between God and Caesar that is at the very genesis of modernity. In this way it no longer appeared as a party selfishly defending its own privileges, but as a place of defence of the human, a place of mercy in a world torn apart by wars and religious clashes. Vatican II was an event for the Church and the world.

In the Italian context to date, there are numerous initiatives, promoted by both religious and non-religious structures, that aim to initiate dialogue[43].

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[42] J. Ries, 1999, Università Cattolica di Lovanio, _Teologia delle religioni, dialogo interreligioso e missione cristiana_, in _www.meetingrimini.org/detail.asp_.

[43] In his urbi et orbi message of 12 April 2020, the Holy Father emphasises the importance of dialogue and brotherhood to protect the rights of the individual: "this is the time of selfishness, because the challenge we are facing unites us all and makes no difference to the people. Among the many areas of the world affected by the coronavirus, I address a special thought to Europe. After the Second World War, this continent was able to rise again thanks to a concrete spirit of solidarity that enabled it to overcome the rivalries of the past. It is more urgent than ever, especially in today's circumstances, that these rivalries do not revive, but that all recognise themselves as part of one family and support each   other.   Today   the   European   Union, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/urbi/documents/papa- francesco_20200412_urbi-et-orbi-pasqua.html

On a purely theological-confessional level, one may recall, on the one hand, the councils of religions, inter-religious tables and the like set up in various cities, provinces and regions (often spurred on by the local authorities themselves) and, on the other hand, festivals, seminars, cycles of meetings of secular or religious inspiration, aimed at the emergence of a platform of norms and values that are as shared as possible.

The valorisation of the new generations of young Muslims in literary production is an important tool in terms of mediation and intercultural dialogue. In literary production, the web also plays an important role in religious news, due, on the demand side, to the "disappointing static nature of the national media" (printed papers, radio and TV) and, on the supply side, to the "relative cheapness of digital information technologies compared to the traditional one" that "allows the multiplication of small and large publishing initiatives via the web, from news sites to blogs of information professionals", to which is added the effort of many traditional press organs "in moving many of their 'paper' products online, enriching them with content and updating them in real time". Some experiences of Islam on the web are represented by the site of Minareti (www.minareti.it), Islam online (www.islamonline.it) and Yalla Italia (www.yallaitalia.it), a blog of the second generations, children of immigrants from Arab countries[44] faces an epochal challenge, on which not only its future, but that of the entire world will depend. Let us not miss the opportunity to give further proof of solidarity, even by resorting to innovative solutions. The alternative is only the selfishness of special interests and the temptation of a return to the past, with the risk of putting peaceful coexistence and the development of future generations to a severe test.

This is not the time for divisions. May Christ our peace enlighten those who have responsibility in conflicts to have the courage to join the call for a global and immediate ceasefire in all corners of the world. This is not the time to continue manufacturing and trafficking weapons, spending huge sums of money that should be used to heal people and save lives. Instead, let this be the time to finally end the long war that has bloodied our beloved Syria, the conflict in Yemen, and the tensions in Iraq, as well as in Lebanon. Let this be the time for Israelis and Palestinians to resume dialogue, to find a stable and lasting solution that allows both to live in peace. Let there be an end to the suffering of the people living in the eastern regions of Ukraine. Let there be an end to the terrorist attacks perpetrated against so many innocent people in various countries in Africa."

The provision of adequate places of worship, care, training of imams and valid religious literature are all necessary requirements for the proper integration of young people. Dialogue with believers of other religions, first and foremost Christians, plays a fundamental role in fostering the internal maturation of the Italian Islamic community as well.

These innovative paths stimulate confrontation and peaceful coexistence and lead one to experience that practising one's faith does not exclude collaboration with other believers. Christians must therefore learn to go beyond tolerance and consider Islam as a 'religion' that refers to the one God who inspires brotherhood, justice and solidarity[45].

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[44] Dossier Confronti "Minareti e dialogo", 2014, op. cit., Com Nuovi tempi, pp. 20-21; F. Zannini, 2013, *L'islam in Italia. Mappe, percorsi, processi*, in Vademecum a cura del Dipartimento per le libertà civili e l'immigrazione- Direzione Centrale degli Affari dei Culti- Ministero dell'Interno, op. cit., p. 63. G. Ferrò, 2012, *Plurali e digitali*, in Un cantiere senza progetto, L'Italia delle religioni – Rapporto 2012 (a cura di P. Naso e B. Salvarani), op. cit., p. 218. 146 Ivi, pp. 218-219.

[45] And do not dispute with the People of the Book other than in the best way, except those of them who are unjust, and say: 'We believe in that which has been revealed to us and in that which has been revealed to you, and our god and your god are but one God, and to Him we all give ourselves!'" (Qur'an, Sura XXIX, 46), The quotations from the Qur'an are taken from Alessandro Bausani's translation, 1988, BUR.

Religious freedom is the cornerstone of a general vision of freedom, as of the dignity of the human person: and it should be seen today as a precious resource to guarantee and extend the possibilities of peace, dialogue and international cooperation, as well as, in every democratic country, the enrichment and renewal of social life and politics on a spiritual and moral level. (Giorgio Napolitano, University of Roma Tre The Unity of Law Series by the Department of Law *Religious Freedom, Human Rights, Globalisation*, Senate of the Republic - 5 May 2016 Coordinators: Giuliano Amato and Carlo Cardia Preface by Giorgio Napolitano).[46]

A reflection of a historical nature leads to an additional remark. The relations of the past, mostly characterised by confrontation, did not produce lasting effects and instilled animosity between the two areas. The toll of the crusades, between military and civilian victims, was almost 2 million. The religious wars between Protestant Catholics in the 17th century (1618-1648) also caused, among those who fell in battle, conflict-related misery and pestilence the halving of the not very large European population of the time (14 million, according to some scholars)[47]. Regardless of the accuracy of these difficult estimates, it is certain that violence is not a suitable key to forcing freedom of conscience. This applies primarily to Islamic-inspired terrorist groups, as well as to both Islamic and Christian religious and cultural elites. If the path of dialogue is possible in common life, among the people, a life other than opposition must also be found at the top, In Frederick II's Kingdom of Sicily, the Muslims, no longer present as occupiers, were welcomed and appreciated. In more recent times, one cannot forget that the treatment by the Bey of Tunis[48] reserved for the numerous Italian immigrants there was more satisfactory than that practised by the French when they declared Tunisia their protectorate at the end of the 19th century. Even today, there are substantial differences between the Arab states in the practice of Christianity. It has sometimes been written that a radical methodological systematisation of one's religion is detrimental to the faith. But it has also been said that steps on the path of dialogue, such as those known after the Second Vatican Council, were once unimaginable. These reflections encourage the strengthening of this second path, for the undeniable benefits to society.

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[47] F. Pittau, *La tolleranza religiosa dall'impero romano ad oggi*, nn. 1-4 di Affari Sociali Internazionale, Edizioni   Idos, 2018.

[48] F. Pittau, V. Rey, „L'emigrazione italiana in Tunisia", in Ugo Melchionda, Roberto Nigido, Franco Pittau (a cura), *Mediterraneo: geopolitica, migrazioni e sviluppo. Scenari attuali, dati statistici e prospettive*, Numero 3-4, Affari Sociali Internazionali, Edizioni Idos, 2015, pp.1037-1444.

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