

Religious differentiation and new religions in Italy

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Socio-religious differentiation*

Compared to a past when Italy was characterized by the strong and prevalent presence of the Catholic Church which influenced practically every area of community life (steering preference in favour of certain political parties and orienting social and ethical choices), the present situation appears less homogeneous, more subject to variation at both national and local levels¹. So much so, that dedicated centres have been set up to study and observe developing phenomena as well as the dynamics relative to legislation. So, OLIR, *Osservatorio delle Libertà ed Istituzioni Religiose* [Observatory of Religious Freedom and Institutions (www.olir.it)], is collecting data regarding the law and religions in collaboration with the *Ufficio Studi e Rapporti Istituzionali* [The Institutional Studies and Relations Office] – an Agency for religious denominational affairs and institutional relations of the Prime Minister’s Office. In Milan, the *Centro Ambrosiano di Dialogo con le Religioni* [The Ambrosian Centre for Dialogue with Religions (www.cadr.it)] provides a wealth of documentation regarding the agreements stipulated between the Italian State and the religious denominations, as per Article 8 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic.

According to art. 47 of Law n. 222 of the 20th. May 1985, the following religious organisations may receive eight per thousand of Private Income Tax returns: The Roman Catholic Church, the Waldensian Church, the Italian Union of 7th-Day Adventist Churches, the Assemblies of God in Italy, the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy, the Christian Evangelical

Baptist Union of Italy (UCEBI), the Holy Orthodox Archdiocese of Italy and Exarchate of Southern Europe, the Apostolic Church in Italy, the Italian Hindu Union, the Italian Buddhist Union (UBI). Furthermore, Italian taxpayers may deduct, for fiscal purposes, sums of up to 1,032.91 Euro in favour of the above-mentioned congregations (as well as of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints).

Law n. 400 of the 23rd. August 1988, in accordance with Article 2, pars. i) and l), assigned to the Cabinet of Ministers the task of deliberating on matters concerning relations between the State and the Catholic Church as well as issues indicated in the afore-mentioned Article 8 of the Italian Constitution: "All religious denominations enjoy equal freedom before the law. Religious denominations other than Roman Catholicism have the right to organize according to their own statutes, as long as they do not enter into conflict with the Italian legal system. Their relations with the State are regulated by law according to agreements stipulated with their respective representatives".

The Home Office is charged, according to decree n. 300 of the 30th. July 1999, article 14, among other things with "the safeguard of civil rights, including those of religious denominations".

Furthermore, a General Secretariat is called upon – according to par. 10 of art. 12 of Decree n. 303 of the 30th. July 1999 – to "assist the Prime Minister in the performance of his/her institutional duties regarding relations with the religious denominations, subject to the powers of the Home Office as per art. 14 par. 2 let. *d* of law n. 300/1999".

Over the years, various committees have been set up to handle questions regarding both the Concordat (relations between the Italian State and the Roman Catholic Church, following the Concordat of 1929 and the Agreement of 1984), and

agreements with other denominations, according to constitutional principles and the laws accruing to freedom of conscience, religion and belief.

The Italian State is, besides, granted the faculty to distinguish between "authentic" and "non-authentic" religion, and recognize the rights thus ensuing. From this stems a further fundamental socio-political issue, that relating to religious freedom², as well as to freedom to change religions and the legal recognition of marriages, including mixed unions between subjects belonging to different religious affiliations.

In other words, it is a question of equality among citizens whatever their religion or non-religion may be. The year 1984 saw the beginning of a series of agreements with other religions; on the 13th. September 1991 a government bill regarding religious freedom, approved by the Cabinet led by the then Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, and later endorsed by the Commission for Constitutional Affairs never became law. The aim was to surpass the legislation regarding "recognized cults" that went back to fascist times, and the fragmentary nature of government regulations on religious affairs, in order to favour an impartial, equidistant, pluralist position on the part of the State and openness towards cultures, religions, traditions and innovation.

But perhaps the most complex question that remains to be addressed to date is the relationship between culture and religion, as well as that between politics and religion. If a religious practice is recognized, so should its associated cultural features: for example the veil worn by Islamic women, the exhibition of the Christian cross in public places, the inclusion or not of religion or religions as subjects in school curricula³, religion-related dietary customs, the areas reserved to the different denominations in cemeteries, the more or less patent public display of symbols of faith and so on.

New Italian reality*

Over the last few decades there has been a manifest increase, in Italy, in the number of those belonging to the Orthodox faith, in particular citizens from Romania and Bulgaria, who will probably be joined by others of the Catholic religion because Croatia has joined the European Union as its twenty-eighth member. In any case, the average figure of 2.6% for religions other than Roman Catholicism, recorded in a survey dating 1995⁴, is likely to increase.

Meanwhile, in 2007, Franco Garelli⁵ calculated the numbers of non-Catholics in Italy at around 5%, highlighting, in particular, the contribution made to this increase by the Muslims and Orthodox Christians who have come to live in Italy over the past few years. As Garelli himself points out, Islam and the Orthodox Church (or rather the Orthodox Churches on the whole, regardless of nationality) are competing, as far as numbers are concerned, for second place in Italy after the Roman Catholic Church.

The percentage of the non- religious seems to be increasing, although by only a bare 0,3 compared to 1995, rising from 8.8% to 9.1%. To these we may add the minority of those who believe without belonging to a church and those who belong without believing.

If Muslims and Orthodox Christians represent the most recent addition to the contemporary Italian religious scenario, one should not fail to mention the increase of other denominations and practices some of which present in the country for some time now, while others have taken root more recently.

However, the greatest recent novelty for Italy is the massive presence of Orthodox Christians, above all Romanians (841.000, though some believe the figure to be 968.576 or even 1.110.000), Ukrainians (168.000), Moldavians (122.000), Macedonians (49.000) and Albanians (42.000) and an almost analogous number for

Bulgarians (51.000). The *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2012* (Roma: Idos, 2012) [The Statistical Dossier on Immigration] informs us that, in 2011, roughly 5,011,233 foreigners resided in Italy, of whom 2,702,000 Christians (1,482,648 Orthodox Christians, 960,359 Catholics, 222,960 Protestants, 36,107 other Christian denominations) while the Muslims totalled 1,650,902, the Hindus 131,254, the Buddhists 97,362, the Jews about 7,300, the members of other oriental religions 69,215, those practicing other traditional religions 50,498. The non-religious (atheists, agnostics, the indifferent) totalled 215,135, while 87,567 claimed being of another persuasion.

In percentages, the greatest increase has occurred among the Christians in the broad sense, with numbers rising from 44.6% in 1991 to 49.8% in 2009 (one should emphasize the noteworthy increment to 28.9% of the Orthodox Christians) while all the other religions maintained, on the whole, at the same level as in the past.

Proof of the increase in Italy of Orthodox Christians is the fact that, in 2011, there were as many as 35 Orthodox churches in Rome alone. In Italy there are 355 Orthodox parishes, 166 of which refer to the Romanian Patriarch, a further 84 to the Patriarch of Constantinople and 44 to that of Moscow⁶. This is a rather recent development.

On the other hand, the numbers of those who practice the Islamic religion seem to have stood still or, maybe, increased a little, along with religions other than Christian. The considerable presence of members of the Islamic faith amounts to a total of over one and a half million. This brings one to surmise that, in the near future, issues regarding relations between religion and politics, religion and the Italian State will see the Islamic religion and the Orthodox Churches in the forefront and lead to juridical

discussions, linked also to differences between subjects coming from EU member States and citizens of other nations.

As such statistics are not easy to draw up due to the fact that religious affiliation is not usually included in the data found in official archives, documents and sources in this country, we must, therefore, recur to the figures provided by immigrants' mother countries to esteem their distribution in the country they have chosen to reside in; in other words, we attribute to immigrants the same percentiles as those that would probably regard them had they chosen to remain in their home countries. These calculations should, obviously, be viewed as rough estimate.

The data available for the many other religiously oriented subjects residing in Italy, be they Sikhs, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Shintoists and so on, are so fragmentary that they are difficult to come by.

However a number of points seem to emerge quite clearly:

- 1) the majority of those who emigrate to Italy are members of some Christian church and account for about half of all the immigrant population;
- 2) of the Christian immigrants, members of the Orthodox Church account for the lion's share, even compared to Catholics, while Protestants appear to be the minority;
- 3) Muslims comprise the second most numerous religious group in terms of numbers and communities in Italy;
- 4) Hindus and Buddhists account only for a very small percentage (around 3%);
- 5) figures for both Jews and other religions are even smaller;
- 6) non-believers amount to about 12 %;
- 7) the Orthodox presence has increased also thanks to flows from Greece, Egypt, Ethiopia and Eritrea;

- 8) Muslims (especially Moroccans) are concentrated mainly in certain Italian regions like Puglia and Sicilia, Trentino Alto Adige and Valle d'Aosta, Romagna and Marche, as well as in Lombardy and Lazio;
- 9) Hindus and Buddhists are almost identical in number, though the former are slightly more numerous;
- 10) Sikhs are a case unto themselves, counting, as they do, for 30,000 people only, and live above all in northern Italy, especially in the Po valley where they look after livestock;
- 11) Philipinos and Bangladeshi account for numerical increase, the former in the Catholic and Protestant, the latter in the Muslim population;
- 12) most Indian immigrants are Hindus,
- 13) while most of those from Sri Lanka are Buddhists;
- 14) among the Africans there is a prevalence of traditional religions (animism, but also blends of historical religions and ancestral practice).

Other religions among Italian citizens**

If one pays particular attention to Italy's "autochthonous" population, it emerges that those who embrace creeds other than Roman Catholicism are a small minority. And yet the "new" denominations are quite numerous as is a widespread perception of growing religious pluralism, which may be seen as indicative of a kind of modernity inclined to appreciate freedom of individual inquiry and a broad range of religious choices.

According to the results of a pluriannual survey carried out by Turin's *Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni* [New Religions Study Centre], led by Massimo Introvigne,

today, about 2.5% of the national Italian population claims professing a faith other than Roman Catholicism and being a member of one of the creeds we find within the multifarious range of historical and recently-installed religions. The data published by the latest edition of the *Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia*⁷ [The Encyclopaedia of Religions in Italy] reveal that 836 religions are practiced in this country (they numbered 616 in 2001 and 647 in 2006)⁸ but they also show that the numbers of those who belong to these congregations, be they “historical” creeds or “new religious movements”, are rather limited.

Scholars and experts of religious matters hold that the actual congregations of many of these denominations, however relevant they may be from a cultural and typological point of view, are infinitesimal, so that, rather than of “an invasion of other religions”, one might speak of an “invasion of denominations”. In any case, in Italy, that sector of the population (2.5% of the whole) which claims a religious identity different from Roman Catholicism accounts for 1,417,000 out of a total of 60,820,764 residents⁹.

Italian religious diversity appears as follows:

Tab. 1 – Italian religious minorities (2012 estimate)

	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Jews	36,000	2.5%
“Fringe” and dissident Roman Catholics	25,000	1.8%
Orthodox Christians	110,000	7.8%
Protestants	435,000	30.7%
Jehovah’s Witnesses (and analogous)	415,000	29.3%
Mormons (and analogous)	25,000	1.8%
Other Christian creeds	5,000	0.4%

Muslims	115,000	8.1%
Baha'i and other religions of Islamic inspiration	4,000	0.3%
Hindus and neo-Hindus	26,000	1.8%
Buddhists	135,000	9.5%
Osho and derivative groups	4,000	0.3%
Sikh, Radha Swami and derivative groups	6,000	0.4%
Other oriental groups	2,000	0.1%
New Japanese religions	3,000	0.2%
Exoteric and "ancient wisdom" groups	15,000	1.1%
Human potential groups	30,000	2.1%
Organized New Age and Next Age groups	20,000	1.4%
Others	6,000	0.4%
Total	1,417,000	100.0%

Source: Massimo Introvigne, Pierluigi Zoccatelli (eds), *Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia*, (Leumann: Elledici, 2013), 8.

The existence of this sort of religious diversity among Italians brings with it, besides, other consequences, such as relations between the State and civil society, which, as far as the explicitly religious scenario is concerned, entails interaction between the State and non-Catholic denominations and this has a direct impact on the question of religious freedom, which, in recent years has led to political, juridical, sociological, philosophical and historical consideration of the need to adapt the Italian legal system to the country's present-day religious situation.

Relations between the State and religious confessions in Italy (1848-2013)**

The following is a brief historical account of how the theme of relationships between the State and religious denominations was addressed on several occasions with a view

to producing norms compatible with the country's multifaceted jurisprudential, historical and political network.

From a historical point of view, the 17th February 1848 comes to mind; that is, the date on which King Carlo Alberto granted religious freedom, by promulgating the *Lettere patenti* [Patent Letters], permitting the Waldesian Protestants “to enjoy all the [same] civil and political rights as Our subjects”¹⁰. At the same time, with the enforcement of the Statuto Albertino [Albertine Statute] of 1848, which remained a fundamental law of the Kingdom of Italy until 1948, the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church was proclaimed the “only religion of the State”. The other creeds were permitted, on the other hand, to be “tolerated compatibly with the law”. This concession initially regarded the Waldesian church, then the Jewish community and was eventually extended to embrace all the other evangelical religions practiced in the country.

In 1848, Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, destined to become the protagonist of Piedmontese politics up to the foundation of the Kingdom of Italy, 1861, the year of his death – according to Michele Madonna in a historical study of religious freedom in Italy – stated being “greatly disappointed at the lack of recognition of full Constitutional ‘freedom of worship’, a principle which, in his opinion, should not be introduced ‘indirectly’ into the constitution of a ‘highly civilized’ people, but be proclaimed as ‘one of the fundamental premises of the social covenant’. The future statesman expressed, however, the hope that article 1 might simply take the form of a ‘tribute to the Catholic religion’. This hope of Cavour's, upon closer examination, reflected the reality. A clear provision favouring a denomination does not prevent the simultaneous development of legislation designed to guarantee the equality of citizens regardless of religious affiliation. A few weeks prior to the adoption of the

constitution, in February 1848, with his 'patent letters' the sovereign 'emancipated' the Waldensians, while at the end of March of the same year, Jews were accorded civil rights, and in April access to military office.

But above all, the Sineo Law (19th. June 1848) established in its single article, that "religious difference does not pose an obstacle to the enjoyment of civil and political rights or to eligibility for civil and military offices'. It is a broad statement of the equality of all citizens, whatever their denomination, a formula open to other religions, new compared to those previously 'emancipated'"¹¹.

In March 1871, the Italian House of Deputies voted the "Mancini" Order of the Day, which established equality in the eyes of the State of all religions as far as personal freedom of creed was concerned. This separatist State of affairs continued until the *Patti Lateranensi* [Lateran Pacts] of 1929, a "Concordat" between the Roman Catholic Church and the Fascist State. Article 1 of this agreement stated that "the Roman Catholic Christian and Apostolic faith was the official religion of the State" while the Kingdom of Italy "admitted" the other denominations.

Although, at first sight, this represented a statutory improvement for all the non-Catholic creeds, which, rather than being "tolerated" were now "admitted" according to Law n. 1159 of 1929. In actual fact, many of the restrictions laid down by the norms regarding public order and the "admitted creeds" remained. The congregations that were not as yet recognised included, for example, the Pentecostal churches, the Salvation Army and the Jehovah's Witnesses, heavily discriminated against and, at times, even arrested and banished.

Article 2 of the same law (n. 1159/1929) also proclaimed that "institutions other than the State religion might be considered charitable organizations" and accorded

juridical status. This gave some denominations the possibility of becoming legal entities¹².

Later on, in 1948, the Republican Constitution recognised “equal freedom” of practice and the right for religions to be founded and draw up their own statutes. In article 7, the Constitution accepted the Lateran Pacts of 1929 *in toto* without amending them, but article 8 pointed out that “all religious confessions are equally free in the eyes of the law”. The third clause of this article established that relations between the State and the non-Catholic creeds were to be regulated by *Settlements*, that is, by bilateral agreements.

The previous norms concerning public order and the laws regarding the “admitted creeds” remained in force, and were only partially abrogated by the Constitutional Court at the beginning of the 1960’s in keeping with the new attitudes expressed by the Roman Catholic Church starting with the Second Vatican Council.

Articles 3, 19, 20 and 21 of the Constitution also recognised the equality of citizens regardless of creed, the equal freedom of all religions and the right for people to practice their various faiths. Citizens, foreigners and the stateless were granted the possibility to propagate and practice their relative cults, on the sole condition that their rites do not go against the Italian laws of common decency.

Yet, the third clause of article 8 of the Constitution, that regarding the *Settlements*, was not applied immediately and had to await the mid 1970’s before transactions regarding the first *Settlement* with the Waldesian Church were begun and endorsed by the then Prime Minister Bettino Craxi (*Italian Socialist Party*) on the 21st. February 1984, a week after ratification of a new Concordat with the Roman Catholic Church, which abolished some of the norms incompatible with religious freedom.

Later, *Settlements* between the Italian Republic and the Adventist Church and Assemblies of God were stipulated on the 22nd. November 1988. This first set of *Settlements* concluded with those established with The Union of Italian Jewish Communities, on the 8th. February 1989¹³, with the Christian Evangelical Baptist Union of Italy, on the 12th. April 1995, and with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy, on the 29th. November 1995.

From the 1980's on, however slowly, changes have been made to safeguard religious freedom in Italy, within the context of a religiously and culturally pluralist and essentially secular State. Sentence n. 203 of the 11th. April 1989 permitted those who did not wish to avail of it to be exempted from the "compulsory" teaching of the Roman Catholic religion in Italian State schools. Referring to the principal of secularity, the Constitutional Tribunal, in a series of sentences (n. 440 of the 18th. October 1995, n. 329 of the 14th November 1997, n. 508 of the 13th November 2000, n. 327 of the 9th. July 2002, n. 168 of the 18th April 2005) declared the privileged position regarding matters of penal law enjoyed by the Roman Catholic Church, illegitimate. The entire issue was reformed by the legislator in 2006 when all religions were placed on an equal footing, also as far as town planning was concerned (an Abruzzi Region law of 1988 and a Lombardy Region law of 1992); previously the concession of benefits was subject to the stipulation of a *Settlement* with the State¹⁴.

Today, for the congregations that have stipulated *Settlements* with the State, particular laws, the implementation of which is the task of the Minister of the Interior, apply. In 2012, on the 30th. July and the 31st. December, during Mario Monti's Government (technical government), the Parliament approved the last five *Settlements*. In 2013, therefore, the confessions whose *Settlements* were approved by Law were the following:

1. *The Waldesian Church* (Law n. 449, 11th. Aug. 1984; Law n. 409, 5th. Oct. 1993; Law n. 68, 18th. June 2009);
2. *The Italian Union of Seventh-day Adventist Christian Churches* (Law n. 516, 22nd. Nov. 1988; Law n. 637, 20th. Dec. 1996; Law n. 67, 8th. June 2009);
3. *The Assemblies of God in Italy* (Law n. 517, 22nd. Nov. 1988);
4. *The Union of Italian Jewish Communities* (Law, n. 101, 8th. Mar. 1989; Law n. 638, 20th. Dec. 1996);
5. *The Christian Evangelical Baptist Union of Italy* (UCEBI) (Law n. 116, 12th. Apr. 1995; Law n. 34 of the 4th. April 2012);
6. *The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy* (CELI) (Law n. 520, 29th. Nov. 1995);
7. *The Holy Orthodox Archdiocese of Italy and Exarchate of Southern Europe* (Law n. 126, 30th. Jul. 2012);
8. *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Law n. 127, 30th. Jul. 2012);
9. *The Apostolic Church in Italy* (Law n. 128, 30th. Jul. 2012);
10. *The Italian Buddhist Union* (Law n. 245, 31st. Dec. 2012);
11. *The Italian Hindu Union Sanatana Dharma Samgha* (Law n. 246, 31st. Dec. 2012)¹⁵.

A *Settlement with Christian Congregation of Jehovah Witnesses* was signed on April 4th 2007.

A new Bill concerning religious freedom**

Between the end of the 1980's and the early 1990's, a need was felt for a general law governing religious freedom, also because, at the time, many new denominations extraneous to the country's age-old Judaic-Christian tradition, like Islam (practiced by many immigrants¹⁶), Buddhism, Baha'i, as well as a number of atypical Christian

creeds like the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, had become a part of the Italian religious scenario.

In 1989, the then head of government, Ciriaco De Mita (*Christian Democrat*), declared that a new Law regulating freedom of religion, capable of surpassing the old 1929 norm of "admitted creeds" was needed. Later, the proposal was taken up again by Giulio Andreotti's (1989-1992, *Christian Democrat*) government, but the Bill did not even make it to the House.

Afterwards, during Giuliano Amato's (1992-1993, *Italian Socialist Party*) government further *Settlements* were signed with the Baptist and Lutheran churches and ratified during Silvio Berlusconi's (*Forza Italia*) and Lamberto Dini's (1994-1995, technical government) terms of office.

The Bill was introduced again during the 13th. Legislature headed by a left-centre *Ulivo* government (in office from the 9th. May 1996 to the 29th. May 2001) led, in turn, by Romano Prodi, Massimo D'Alema and Giuliano Amato. In this instance, Domenico Maselli, a *Christian Socialist*, Evangelical pastor and historian of Christianity, was appointed rapporteur, but the Bill did not make to the final vote. In view of changes within the religious ambit in Italy, Maselli sought to promote a general norm which did not exclude but, on the contrary, facilitated the stipulation of *Settlements* between the State and non-Catholic creeds, whose members were also non-Italians. It is important to point out that, by Law, the State can stipulate *Settlements* only with Italian citizens who represent the religions practiced in the country.

An *erga omnes* Law proposed securing individual rights and the legal obligations governing cohabitation, while the system of *Settlements* had the task of guaranteeing

the particular needs of the single religions. Among the changes recommended was that whereby the Department for religious Creeds – originally part of the Ministry of Justice, later of the Minister of the Interior – should be made autonomous, or else that the Prefects and not the Police be put in charge of religious matters. The idea was that relations between the State and religions should not appear to be a matter of “public order”.

The Prodi government re-opened *Settlement* negotiations almost completing agreements with the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Buddhists, but, on the eve of ratification, matters entered a stalemate, and had to wait five more years in the case of the Buddhists, while the *Settlement* with the Jehovah’s Witnesses has not been concluded to date.

In 2001, when Valdo Spini (*Democratic Left*) proposed the Bill again, Silvio Berlusconi, the head of government, declared being in favour and Mario Bondi was appointed rapporteur but, due to the opposition of Umberto Bossi’s *Northern League*, the Bill was rejected once again.

A further attempt was made in the House during the following legislature, and the Bill was championed by Valdo Spini and Marco Boato (*Green Party*) with Roberto Zaccaria (*Democratic Party*) as rapporteur, while Lucio Malan (*Forza Italia*) presented a similar Bill at the Senate. But after several hearings by the Commission for Constitutional Affairs, in which representatives of all the religious confessions took part, and following lengthy discussions, the Bill was postponed once more.

The various bills, despite a few differences, tend to be homogeneous: their first part is dedicated to individual and collective freedom of religion, the second refers to the legal position of religious denominations and the third deals with procedures accruing to the stipulation of a *Settlement*.

It should be noticed that a general law on religious freedom in Italy has not been forthcoming to date, despite the support the various political movements (both centre-right and centre-left, with the exception of Northern League) have given to the various efforts, and the favour expressed by the various religious organizations, despite a few objections concerning some of the content raised by the Catholic Church and other denominations regarding the general configuration of the proposed bills.

At the present state of the arts, the *parliamentary* journey of the religious freedom issue has ground to a halt, but the following commissions of the Prime Minister's office have been set up to address issues concerning ecclesiastic affairs and religious freedom¹⁷:

- The Inter-ministerial Commission for Settlements with the religious denominations;
- The Religious Freedom Advisory Committee;
- The Government Commission for the implementation of the provisions as per the Agreement between the Holy See and Italy, signed on 18th. February 1984 and ratified by Law n. 121 of the 25th. March 1985;
- The Government Commission for the solution the difficulties encountered when interpreting the rules and regulations of the Concordat;
- The Government Commission for the revision of the personal income tax deductions and shares with a view to carrying out changes;
- The Commission for the recovery of the bibliographic heritage of Rome's Jewish community of Rome, pillaged in 1943;
- The Committee for the co-ordination of Shoah memorial ceremonies.

Conclusions**

The Italian Law foresees different kinds of relational modes between the State and the religious denominations. The first mode concerns the Roman Catholic Church, which

stipulated a “Concordat” with the State in 1929 and ratified it in 1984. This is an “international agreement” between two sovereign States, Italy and the Vatican. It envisages not only religious freedom but concessions regarding other matters such as the inclusion of the Catholic religion as a subject in Italian State-school curricula, the display of Roman Catholic symbols in public places, the salaried presence of Catholic chaplains in the army and in prisons, the reservation of transmission time for religious programmes on the State radio and television networks.

Another mode is that regarding relations between the State and the non-Catholic religions and their representatives, regulated by *Settlements*. This have not the same juridical and constitutional status as the Concordat reserved only to the Roman Catholic Church the exclusive historical and cultural role of which in Italy the Fathers of the Constitution wished to acknowledge.

Settlements are stipulated with those religious denominations which are structured, organized, hierarchical and whose leaders have the authority to represent the faithful and interact with the State on their behalf: for example the Waldesian Synod or the chairman of the Italian Jewish Communities. A *Settlement* is a bilateral agreement between the State and the authorities of the religious confession in question. This is why a *Settlement* with the Islamic creed is difficult to put into practice given the absence of a sole hierarchical structure capable of representing the various Islamic realities present in Italy.

Then there are the “admitted creeds”, declared such by Law n. 1159 emanated by the Mussolini Government in 1929, and still in force, and which regards the majority of the many non-Catholic religions practiced in this country. This law foresees two levels of recognition, one for confessions with juridical status, another for those

devoid of it. The latter can only obtain official recognition of their ministers for the celebration of civil marriages and ministry in hospitals and prisons.

Finally, there are also religious communities that have no form of legal or administrative recognition, at times due to their own choice, at others because of bureaucratic difficulties.

Concluding, we can say that the Italian scenario, characterized historically by a culturally and religiously homogeneous tradition, is today quite variegated¹⁸. Although the quantitative dimensions of this diversity are rather limited, their social significance is far greater than their statistical value. Of considerable interest is the prevailing perception that society in Italy is now multi-ethnic and multid denominational and the impact of this feeling is relevant. Of comparable importance is the fact that the immigrant population in Italy now numbers 4,859,000, equal to 8.0% of the whole (higher than the EU average which stands at 6.6%). These immigrants, thanks to their cultural and religious traits, have brought the national figures for non-Catholic practice up from 2.5% to 7.6%¹⁹ and have made a considerable contribution towards change in the composition of Italian society, which, to those who live here, spells pluralism, multiculturalism and multi-denominationalism. In this context, politics and the law too are called on to address this new social complexity born of an increasingly varied religious reality.

Notes

¹Francesco Margiotta Broglio, *Religione, diritto e cultura politica nell'Italia del Novecento* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2011).

²Alessandro Ferrari, *La libertà religiosa in Italia. Un percorso incompiuto* (Roma: Carocci, 2012).

³*IRInews: Insegnare le Religioni in Italia*, quarterly review edited by Mariachiara Giorda, Current documents, opinions on the teaching of religion and religious studies in Italy (IRInews2010@gmail.com).

⁴Vincenzo Cesareo, Roberto Cipriani, Franco Garelli, Clemente Lanzetti, Giancarlo Rovati, *La religiosità in Italia* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1995), 330.

⁵Franco Garelli, *Religione all'italiana* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2011); see also Franco Garelli, "Flexible Catholicism, religion and the Church: The Italian Case," *Religions*, no. 4 (2013), 1-13.

⁶Giuseppe Giordan, "La costellazione delle chiese ortodosse in Italia," in Enzo Pace (ed.), *Le religioni nell'Italia che cambia. Mappe e bussole* (Rome: Carocci, 2013).

⁷Massimo Introvigne, Pierluigi Zoccatelli, *Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia* (Leumann: Elledici, 2013).

⁸Massimo Introvigne, Pierluigi Zoccatelli, Nelly Ippolito Macrina, Verónica Roldán, *Enciclopedia delle Religioni in Italia* (Leumann: Elledici, 2001); Massimo Introvigne, Pierluigi Zoccatelli, (eds), *Le religioni in Italia*, (Leumann: Elledici, 2006).

⁹Demographic data, issued in 2012 by the National Statistics Agency.

¹⁰Paolo Naso, *Protestanti, evangelici, Testimoni e Santi*, in Enzo Pace, *Le religioni nell'Italia che cambia. Mappe e bussole* (Rome: Carocci, 2013), 99.

¹¹Michele Madonna, *Breve storia della libertà religiosa in Italia. Aspetti giuridici e problemi pratici* (2011), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/breve-storia-della-liberta-religiosa-in-italia-aspetti-giuridici-e-problemi-pratici_\(Cristiani_d'Italia\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/breve-storia-della-liberta-religiosa-in-italia-aspetti-giuridici-e-problemi-pratici_(Cristiani_d'Italia)/)

¹²Today, recognition of the legal status of institutions (organizations, associations or foundations) of this kind of confessions is conceded after careful and detailed investigation by the Office responsible for these affairs and is granted by decree of the President of the Republic at the proposal of the Home Office, having heard the Board of State and the Council of Ministers.

¹³Enzo Pace, *Le religioni nell'Italia che cambia. Mappe e bussole* (Rome : Carocci, 2013), 133.

¹⁴ Michele Madonna, *Breve storia della libertà religiosa in Italia. Aspetti giuridici e problemi pratici* (2011), cit.

¹⁵See the website of the Italian Minister of the Interior:

<http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/temi/religioni/sottotema002.html>

¹⁶Stefano Allievi, *Islam italiano. Viaggio nella seconda religione del paese* (Turin : Einaudi, 2003).

¹⁷ <http://www.governo.it/Presidenza/USRI/confessioni/commissioni.html>

¹⁸Enzo Pace, *Vecchi e nuovi dei. La geografia religiosa dell'Italia che cambia* (Milan : Edizioni Paoline, 2011).

¹⁹Massimo Introvigne, Pierluigi Zoccatelli, *Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia* (Leumann: Elledici, 2013).