Return from exile
The Role of Religions in a Globalised World

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1.   **Introduction**

In the last decade, political scientists speak of '*return of religion to the public sphere of life*'. It is an ongoing unexpected process, especially in the West, evolving for quite some time with a multiplicity of aspects suggesting studies from different perspectives, involving political science and sociology of religions, but also ecclesiology with relevant implications for pastoral theology.

On February 11, 2013 in a conference held at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome[1], the then Italian Foreign Minister, Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata, concluded his inaugural speech with the following statement.

> the Western countries have, for a long time, dwelled in the illuminist illusion. … the religious discourse would fade away from the realm of politics and concentrate on the individual dimension of faith and belief. Today, nothing could be farther away from that. Religion remains in the full spotlight of domestic and international politics.[2]

What happened a few minutes later proved the Italian diplomat's considerations absolutely right. The hall of the Ministry, filled with diplomats and academics from different parts of the world and from several cultural and religious backgrounds, was suddenly crossed by a shock-wave. The Minister himself, other diplomats and journalists left the conference within seconds. The news had reached that Benedict XVI had announced his resignation from the papacy. What unfolded was a live confirmation that "*religion remains in the full spotlight of domestic and international politics*".

What has happened with the election of Pope Francis and the impact he has had for the last three years on public opinion all over the world is a further evidence that the phenomenon is very much present in today's world.

2. Historical aspects: the exile and the return of religion

2.1 Why religion was exiled?

The processes which caused the relegation of religion to the margins of the European society has its roots in the *Treaty of Westfalia* (1648). This act proposed – or imposed - a new reference paradigm based on the simple concept that religion, if politicised, represents a source of violence and never leads to peace. Consequently, European public life marginalized religion and, progressively, ignored its potential role in relations among states. Here lies the beginning of what has been named as the *exile of religion*.[3] From that moment onwards, the European ethos appeared to be marked by a rejection of whatever could be defined as religious or religion oriented. This tendency appeared to be "*inscribed in the genetic code of the discipline of international relations*".[4] In the following centuries, colonialism would have made "*the European idea that you cannot be modern without throwing off religion's yoke* [*have*] *a massive influence all around the world*".[5] In fact, from being an *agent of violence*, religion became a victim "*insofar as it was exiled from the modern constitution of international relations*".[6] Accused of being source of oppression and violence, through historical and hermeneutical processes, it was marginalised in the name of common good of civil society and for peace keeping among states. Especially after World War II, politics seemed to have secured a even more defined autonomy from religion, which saw its influence being restricted to the family life and private sphere.[7] The process seemed to be successful: secularisation appeared to emerge as the clear winner.

2.2 The world that none expected: historical return of religion

Something unexpected happened, as political scientist T. Fitzgerald, effectively describes: "*We saw what we thought was a body lying on the ground, either asleep or dead …, suddenly … moving. Then it sprang up to its feet and attacked us. Furthermore, this living corpse wears many masks*".[8] This body, believed dead by many, is religion, which, though in a variety of modalities, has come back to life.

In the last decades, in fact, much to the initial surprise of some observers, religion has probably represented the most effective and successful mobilising factor of public opinion, playing a fundamental role even in Europe, the continent which sanctioned its exile status. Already in the fifties of the last century, the religious element was present in disguise in the process towards the formation of European Union. The so-called founding fathers of Europe - Schuman, Adenauer and De Gasperi – shared, in fact, a profound Christian-Democratic formation. Later, in 1989, the dissident Christian spirit was one of the main factors –thought not the only one - which caused the sequence of events leading to the collapse of the Soviet system.[9] Moreover, it cannot be ignored the social and political impact of Pope John Paul II's amazing capability to attract hundreds of thousands of people for religious services and events. Outside Europe, the Khomeini revolution and the appearance of international terrorism, which, being identified with Islam, immediately took a religious colour, played a decisive role in the process of proposing the religious factor at the public level. Even other developments cannot be underplayed. The socio-political movements of South America, for instance, had a deep rooting in *Theology of Liberation* and conflicts which erupted in different corners of the globe, at the side of social and political motivations, often carried a religious shade: the civil war in Sri Lanka, the conflict in East Timor, the Tibet issue and the South-Sudan strife. The north-African upheavals of 2010, along with socio-political roots, also had a religious element which cannot be disregarded. To all this we can add the fact that United States of America proposes at different levels of public life constant references to religion. George W. Bush (Jr.), during his eight years mandate at the White House, kept on making religion-linked remarks. Bill Clinton himself was in close contact with Evangelical preachers like Billy Graham and in his public speeches often quoted Jesus Christ.[10] Another astonishing case is the one of Brazil, the largest catholic country in the world, where, without taking into consideration the role evangelicals play at different levels - in political parties, trade unions and other civil associations -, no analyses and understanding of the Brazilian present democracy is possible.[11]

3. Religion in today's world: a contrasting panorama.

As it emerges from what has been said so far, considering the role of religion in today's world, means to face profound contradictions. Here is an attempt to pin-point a few aspects.

3.1 A post-Christian and neo-Pagan world.

On one side, it is widely acknowledged that, in the Western world, Christian religion, both catholic and main-stream protestant churches, is going through rough time. "*Europe once co-terminus with Christendom is now post-Christian and neo-Pagan*".[12] "*In Europe we are hanging on by our fingernails*"[13], stated David Cornick, General Secretary of *United Reformed Churches* in United Kingdom. "*The fact is that Europe is no longer Christian*".[14] The barycentre of the Catholic and main-stream protestant Churches has, since long, shifted from Europe to Asia, Africa and, above all, South America. The western world is more and more post-Christian and Christianity is more and more a religion outside Europe. Nevertheless, thanks to Pentecostalism, Christianity is still the fastest growing religion. According to a wide-spread and almost unanimous conviction in Church environments, this present situation is the result of the rampant process of secularisation and of laicism, developed in Europe for long time. Globalisation has caused a further dip in religious affiliation, creating indifference. For several decades now, it is common to speak of Europe as of '*land of mission*' and the cry for a '*new evangelisation*' has the once-Christian countries as its main target.

3.2 "*We live in a world that is not supposed to exist*"

On the other side, in the effective words of American political scientist, Scott Thomas, "*we live in a world that is not supposed to exist*"[15]. In Europe, till a few decades ago, there was an adamant and unshakable conviction that society in future would be characterized more and more by secularism and rationality. On the contrary, for a few decades, almost without realising it, a multiplicity of phenomena are taking place, which can be effectively summed up by the titles of two books and an article: *La revanche de Dieu* (*God's Revenge*)*, God is back*

and *Return from Exile*. The first title[16] is by a French author, Gilles Kepel, who, already in 1991, had the perception that something significant was happening. Since mid-seventies, what was emerging was a new religious discourse which aimed not so much at seeking an adjustment with secular values, but, rather, at ensuring again a sacred foundation to the organisation of society.[17] In the last three decades, as already described, the role of religion has been more and more interwoven with phenomena, which, paradoxically, are the ones which were expected to provoke its progressive disappearance.

First among them is globalization with all the implications that it carries along. Looking around the world there are some facts which were absolutely unheard of and unthinkable till a few years ago: thousands of conversion to Christianity or to Jehovah Witnesses in the new republics which were part of the Soviet Union in Central Asia; spreading of Evangelical Churches in Morocco and Algeria, to the point that in this country in 2006 the local parliament has passed a Bill against proselitism. Evangelicalisms is growing at an amazing pace in Brazil, where according to 2007 data, had already reached 25 millions of faithful. Today, one eight of the two billions Christians is a Pentecostal or an evangelical.[18] This phenomenon is not confined to the Christian context. It represents the true religious reality in today's world. In fact, also in other religions there are similar manifestations, which confirm the shifting towards a specific type of religiosity. Within Islam we have Salafism or the so-called *Tablighi Jamaat* and some expressions of neo-Sufism. Radical Salafism, in its variety of shades and groups, apart from being a fast growing process, attracts youth of different cultures and ethnic proveniences, including Europeans or Americans with Christian background. Al-Qaida used to draw the highest number of converts (around 10-20% of followers at the international level)[19] and tended to entrust to them different kinds of responsibilities.[20] We all know very well what has happened with the insurgence of Daesh in the last two years and a half. Another phenomenon worth paying attention is the so-called *silent penetration* of Asian religions (Hinduism and Buddhism above all) in Europe and North America. In Italy, for instance, contrarily to what is widely believed, the largest move of people who change their religious affiliation is not the one from Christianity to Islam, but the one towards Buddhism.

In fact, neo-Buddhism, as much as neo-Hinduism and neo-sufi movements, are fast spreading in the West and not by migratory channels.[21]. Another interesting aspect is that access to religion is often through internet and social net work. There are frequent cases of young professionals who join contemplative life, both in Buddhist tradition as well as in Christianity, having come in contact with the monastery they have chosen, through the web. Till a few decades ago, Hinduism was a religion, or cultural phenomenon, easily identifiable with the Indian sub-continent with the exception of few important diasporas (in Australia, in Bali, in England and in other Commonwealth countries). Today, certain expressions of Hindu traditions attract followers in several European countries, in North America and other places too.

3.3   Some remarks on the phenomenon

The overall panorama is far from being simple and easy to read. Some considerations may be helpful to further explore its complexity.

3.3.1   Overlapping of New Religious Movements across boundaries

Many of these manifestations of religions come back are provoked or promoted by a umber of *New Religious Movements* (NRM) which carry common or similar elements: charismatic dimension, attitudes which are typical of or close to fundamentalism and capable of a powerful impact on people. A surprising factor of this revival of religiosity is the overlapping of phenomena which, at first sight, would appear contradictory. In France, for instance, in recent years, the construction of new mosques outnumbered the one of new churches and the areas where new Evangelical groups or Pentecostal communities make their appearance are, in 80% of cases, same vicinities where new mosques are built.[22]

Moreover, religious *revival* is often linked to public sphere of life. In Myanmar, a few years ago, Buddhist monks almost threw the dictatorship into a crises, eventually paving the way to some reforms. In Sri Lanka, religious element, though not the real cause, was definitely a relevant factor in the bloody war which was fought for 25 long years between Tamils and Sinhala army. Later, some Buddhist

monks have founded a political party - *Bodu Bala Sena* (BBS) - which, on line with the *Hindutva* phenomenon in India, aims at ensuring that Sri Lanka may be the country of Buddhists and strive, even violently, to recover its traditional values. At the beginning of the present decade, we have seen the religious element at work in the upheavals in north-Africa.

3.3.2 The role of migration processes and diasporas

A very important role is the one played by the growing number of small, medium or large ethnic, cultural and religious *diaspora*, created by migrating fluxes caused and favoured by globalisation. After two millennia during which the word *diaspora* was referred to the people of Israel, or, later, used also for large communities uprooted from their geographical contexts - Chinese, Armenians, etc. -, today almost each ethnic or cultural group has its own *diaspora* spread in different parts of the planet. Their role is crucial as "*religious diaspora communities are one of the most significant types of non-state actors in world-politics of the twenty-first century*".[23] They contribute, in fact, to formation of specific identities, which are often closed and self-centred. They favour transnational net-works, contributing to the globalising processes. Within their folds, a myriad of initiatives are born at the social, educational and religious level and to the benefit of the communities of origins. It may be limited to an economic support with educational aims, but it can cross certain legal borders up to the point of financing terrorist activities, guerrilla for independence or even a true conflict. Moreover*, diasporas* directly impact the new societies where they settled down and grow and the one they originally come from. Europe has become a true *Dar al-Islam*, home for Islam. With a population of approximately 15 million people of Islamic faith, the continent already counts many Muslims who are European citizens and soon there will be many more of second or third generation. This marks an epoch-making turn around for European history. On the macro-level, this change is visible in politics and policies about the legal regulation of religion in the public space and, more practically, in the everyday functioning of social services and reform of school programs.[24] The continent cannot ignore anymore the presence of so many people of different faiths. Willing or unwilling, Europeans are called to accept the fact that Islam and

Muslims are part of their continent and their integration is a must. Often, not only societies seem to be incapable of handling the problem, but also Churches feel threatened by a sort of Islamic invasion of what was the Christian stronghold. At the same time, such a large presence of Muslims in Europe impact Islam too. Through personal links and organized networks as well as the old and new media, the Muslims who live in what we could call the European part of *umma* also influence their Islamic areas of origin, including those from which first generations of immigrants originated. This carries numerous effects.

3.3.3 Reformatting religions in the globalised world

All phenomena described so far are transnational and transcontinental. As a consequence there had been a progressive erosion of the identity between religious and ethnic or cultural belonging. Moreover, the migratory processes favour a well marked de-territorialisation of religions.[25]

All religions are in the process of reformatting themselves as global faiths and not longer as typically European or Indian or Japanese. They are more and more detached from their typical national or continental culture and try to adapt themselves to be part of a world-wide market. The process of de-linking religion from a specific territory, which for millennia offered the cultural context for its birth, development and growth, is clearly visible in the spreading of Pentecostalism, which, moreover, offers an image of global denominationalism.[26] Pentecostalism appears to be the religious form best conducive and more easily adaptable to globalisation. It is defined as '*the first truly global religion*'.[27] At the same time, probably as a reaction to this process, we observe in all major religions of the world, a clear tendency to acquire a purer dimension of one's own religiosity. Another point which emerges from analyzing these processes, though apparently in contradiction with the previous considerations, is a sort of homogenisation of religions, probably thanks to the migratory waves which favour encounter of and reciprocal influence among cultures and religions. This is true especially at the level of religious practices: rituals and meditations. We cannot fail to grasp how religions which appear so distant one from the other, as they are born in contexts

which often had nothing in common with each other, often refer to similar values or propose benefits to their followers which are close to each other.[28]

3.4   Rethinking the role of religions

In front of the panorama which has been described, offering contradictory signals and complexity of problems, what seems to be most urgent is a re-thinking of the role of religion within the different states and in the relations among states. In reference to this, attention has to be drawn on two points: a phenomenon which was unexpected but it is now evident cannot be ignored any longer. It needs to be properly re-addressed. Furthermore, it is urgent to understand how can religion be acknowledged in its new role and what practical adjustments have to be made.

In order to find an answer to these questions, it is necessary to reflect on the type of role religion is destined to play in our present time. The 20th century, witnessed the presence of ideologies (Fascism, Nazism, Marxism and Leninism), which had a coagulating power for the European societies. They acted at the social and political level guaranteeing a sort of world balance. Their antagonist forces were also part of this process. This balance created after the Second World War, characterized by the Cold War as contraposition of the two blocks, was suddenly splintered with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which provoked an unexpected vacuum at the world level. To find a new equilibrium new models of belonging had to be identified, and religion offered the most handy contribution to this search. Religions, in fact, have replaced ideologies as a coagulating factor at the global level.

> In the last decades we have witness a coming back of the religious factor in international relations. Not only the foreseen decline of religion due to modernisation and secularising processes has not happened. In many countries, instead, religion has become a mobilizing … and influencing factor. Moreover in western societies the religious question has come back to the centre of debates and political dynamics, both at the national and international level. The religious revival is a global phenomenon, which ignores the geographical and cultural boundaries, involving all religions.[29]

3.5 Global and local, universal and particular

Re-thinking the role of religion in society, political life and state-to-state relations is not limited to one religion and one culture or even one corner of the world. It is a global phenomenon, often led by what is defined the *global south*, which involves countries with different cultures and religions, including the indigenous and traditional ones. This calls for the immediate necessity of redefining the normative structure of global society, which cannot be any more Eurocentric. It must include and express ethical, social and religious values of the great traditions in the world. This was clearly intuited, already in 1997, by a great prophet of the post-communist era, Václav Havel.

> It is not enough to take the set of imperatives, principles, or rules produced by the Euro-American world and mechanically declare them binding for all. Different cultures or spheres of civilisation can share only what they perceive as genuine common ground, not something that few merely offer to or even force upon the others. The tenets of human co-existence on this earth can hold up only if they grow out of the deepest experience of everyone, not just some of us.[30]

This perspective is, for sure, stimulating but reality is far more complex. Globalisation, in fact, apart from being the *locus* and the *humus*, where the return of religion is happening, is also its conveyor. This leads to two consequences which appear contradictory. On one side, as already suggested, contributes to a homogenization of cultures and religions which justifies the definition of a *global market* for information, youth culture and religions too. This phenomenon is transversal and break through all possible geographical, regional, ethnic, religious and cultural barriers. At the same time, again it is globalization which favours a fragmentation of the world, giving life to more and more marked identities. The overall panorama tends to become a mosaic of small specific identities which strive to affirm themselves at the cost of or against the others. As a consequence, we simultaneously live in a reality which is global and, at the same time, local and particular[31]. In this context religion can take a significant role in creating conflicts

and clashes. If globalisation is influencing religions by transforming them, on the other side, it is true that religion has a role on the evolution of globalization.[32]

4.   The role of ecclesiology: a contribution towards a positive attitude

To the above mentioned questions - how can religion be acknowledged in its new role and what practical adjustment can be made? - answers are invited and sought for not only by political and sociological scientists. Also ecclesiology needs to address the problem and the sudden development, trying to read it and offer answers from its own perspective. The resurgence of religion, in fact, has a pluralistic components which is crucial. We cannot speak of coming back of religion but of '*religions*'. Faithful of different traditions, therefore, today are called to meet in order to avoid clashes or solve tensions which unavoidably arise.

Ecclesiological reflection can contribute in a number of ways to positive developments of these processes. First of all, it is necessary to promote a positive reading of the present unfolding of historical developments. Secondly, all possible initiatives aiming at a constructive attitude towards pluralism have to be encouraged. Finally, it has to be facilitate the putting into action of methodologies which can favour encounter, rather than a clash, among people of different religions and cultures. Three dimensions can be suggested. They are not necessarily to be promoted in a temporal succession, but rather fostered in a harmonious way.

4.1   Events with symbolic relevance

It is useful to favour processes which can facilitate the deepening of the role of religions as instruments of encounter and social integration. In this context, we have to reflect on the positive role played by some events which can be easily defined as historical, having offered a highly symbolic value with a powerful impact on public opinion and state authorities[33]. A definite land mark, was the *Assisi Religious Leaders Meetings* called by Pope John Paul II in 1986 and in 2002, and the more recent ones, convened by Pope Benedict XVI, in October 2011 and by Pope Francis on 20th October 2016. Referring to 1986 meeting, which

remains a reference point, not only as an ecclesial event, but as a world-politics approach to pluralism, a theologian commented:

> John Paul's initiative … cannot be easily framed in the context of any of the then existing theologies of religions. That gesture stands till today as something unique … and no theology of religion is equipped to comprehend the richness of that event. … It was not a World Parliament of Religions, which was celebrated for the first time in 1893, …. It was the witness that one's own identity can welcome the *other*. … religious difference was celebrated in common as a practical commitment to peace[34].

All this should suggest a due reflection at the ecclesiological level on the consequences that events of highly symbolic significance can carry, not only within Church domain, but also at the political and diplomatic level with positive impact on peace building and conflict resolutions process. At the same time, ecclesiological analysis can help to ensure that the necessary attention is addressed to avoid the risk of overemphasizing the role of religions and religious leaders at the international level. Religious leaders, in fact, should not be charged with responsibilities, functions and duties which are not theirs and which have to remain political.

4.2 Encouragement of the role of new actors in the encounter among religious traditions

In the complex and articulated processes we have tried to explain in a summary so far, a relevant, though not exclusive, role is the one played by new actors: ecclesial communities, movements and associations or NGO's. Many of them are religiously affiliated or spiritually motivated.

4.2.1 Associations, Movements and Ecclesial Communities

Some of the ecclesial movements, which were born and developed within contemporary society, appear to be a positive answer to the process of secularisation. The phenomenon has been visible, above all but not exclusively, in

the Catholic Church, which witnessed the birth and development of many small, medium and large ecclesial communities. Quite a few of them, in the course of time, were able to achieve a visibility even at the international level.[35] Some observers have no doubts in affirming that the presence of these new realities in the Church was a surprise event which posed complex problems to sociology of religion in the domain of secularised theories[36]. These new ecclesial realities propose, in fact, an interest in religious life which focuses on rediscovering the centrality of the Gospel, with a renewed commitment in living it in daily life. It is through this vital approach that these associations and communities, largely but not exclusively, formed by lay people, have an impact at the social, political, educational and cultural level. Some of them, with a highly international spreading, - *Sant'Egidio Community* and the *Focolare Movement*, *Comunione e Liberazione* to mention the more developed ones - were able to join their commitment for renewal within the Christian folds with a very active involvement in the field of interfaith and intercultural dialogue. They are playing a constructive role in contributing to a mutually enriching encounter of faithful of different religious traditions.

> [*We wish to contribute*] so that religious pluralism can shed its connotation of division and conflict, and emerge to represent for millions of men and women, the challenge of recomposing the unity of the human family, so that the Holy Spirit may in some way be present and active in all religions, not only in the individual members but also in the inner workings of each religious tradition[37].

In fact - and here there is an even more surprisingly evident development - we cannot ignore similar phenomena of renewal which are happening within other faiths and traditions. They carry thought-provoking commonalities with the ones happening within Catholicism and Christianity. In fact, as much as the Catholic renewal movements and associations, also these groups in the Islamic, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu world show a commitment in renewing their own traditions, trying to make their Scriptures relevant in today's society. They often have the same commitment in building bridges with faithful of other religions, favouring positive end enriching encounters among cultures. As protagonists of this panorama we

can mention the Japanese *Risshô Kôsei-kai*, in the *Mahayana Buddhist tradition*, the once called *Muslim Society of America* within the Afro-American Islam. We cannot forget in the Hindu world the role played by *Gandhian movements* not only as a socio-political phenomenon which eventually led to Indian independence, but also as a re-interpretation of the *sanathana dharma*.

These movements can be important actors in the process of redefining the public role of religion.

> Representatives of the main world religions can provide the '*social capital*' in terms of social networks and commitment in rebuilding mutual trust, an essential condition to '*sustainable peace*'. The peace-building process, taken as a non-mechanistic and dynamic way does not start and end with the launch of a peach-keeping operation. In such cases religion can play a limited but essential role of conflict *de-escalation*[38].

Moreover, in the effort of deepening the role of the Church in humanity, it has to be acknowledged that today these communities and movements are true agents of dialogue and encounter between religious followers, capable of involving also leaders of the main religious communities at the national, continental and world level. An in-depth study of these agents of renewal, within the Catholic Church as well as in other religions, can help ecclesiological investigation to reflect on the fact that the Spirit is active also among followers of different religions. This enables to trace a common spiritual trade-mark.

5.   Conclusion: the category of *fraternity*

The reappearance of the public role of religion in today society at different levels calls for the urgent shaping of conceptual and hermeneutical categories capable of understanding the phenomenon and fully relocate the religious factor at the socio-political level. Religions, in fact, can contribute a great deal to peace building and social integration processes, through values which are often shared in common. Among these, *compassion*, *peace*, *love*, *justice*, *equality* seem to be the ones

largely shared by all cultural and religious traditions. They represent concrete reference paradigms, not only at the spiritual level, but also to favour formulation of foundational principles for a new global governance. In today's context, the need is felt for categories, which can be inclusive while ensuring a recognition of identities.

The idea of *fraternity*, one of the pillars of the French Revolution, is probably the key for this process as it can be applied to politics and social life, while it is widely referred to also in cultures and religions other than Christianity and the West. One the main principles of *sanathana dharma*, the religions of the Indian sub-continent, is *vaisudeiva kutumbakan*, the *world is one family*. The same perspective can be found in *Nostra Aetate*, the document which at the end of the Vatican Council II marked to opening up of the Catholic Church to other religions and cultures. In general all cultural and religious traditions accept the perspective of the so-called *Golden Rule*. Nevertheless, at present, the category of fraternity remains still largely unexplored from the hermeneutical view-point, as it has been always considered irrelevant as alternative to traditional principles. It appears irenic and unable to impact the present world[39]. Today some observers and academics are turning to *fraternity* trying to express its centrality and proposing its sustainability. To be aware, or to become more and more aware, of the world as of the same family, could foster an ethics of solidarity among human beings and of the value of creation. This will help to look at communities – religious, social, ethnic, linguistic etc – and individuals with full respect of human dignity but also with an attention to the processes of integration which are required in our globalised world[40]. In this vast effort of redefining categories for the sustainable existence of humanity as one family, the role of the Churches has to be re-examined to understand how it has to be re-defined in this context. An ecclesiological investigation cannot be missing at this juncture when religion has gain once again central stage and fraternity can be the new paradigmatic category for the world at the beginning of the new millennium.

(Footnotes)

1   International Conference - "*Promoting Religious Freedom and Peaceful Coexistence*", Italian Foreign Ministry, Rome, February 11, 2013.

2   Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata, "Introductory Remarks", (paper presented at the International Conference, "*Promoting Religious Freedom and Peaceful Coexistence*", Italian Foreign Ministry, Rome, February 11, 2013.) (http://www.esteri.it/MAE/IT/Sala_Stampa/ ArchivioNotizie/Interventi/2013/02/ 20130211_Terzi_seminario_Promoting_Religious_freedom_Peaceful_Coexistence.htm), (accessed on 20th May 2013).

3   See Gilles Kepel, *La revanche de Dieu: chrétiens, juifs et musulman à la reconquête du monde*, (Paris: Seuil 1991).

4   Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos (ed. by), *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2003).

5   John Micklethwait and Adrin Wooldridge, *God is Back¸* (New York: Peguin 2010), 10.

6   Petito and Hatzopoulos (ed. by), *Religion in International Relations*, 1.

7   See Kepel, *La revanche de Dieu* quoted in Luca Ozzano,*Fondamentalismo e democrazia. La destra religiosa alla conquista della sfera pubblica in India, Israele e Turchia*, (Torino: Progetto Alfieri and Bologna: Società Editrice il Mulino, 2009), 22.

8   Timothy Fitzegerald, *Religion and Politics in International Relations.*(New York: Continuum 2011), 30.

9   See Fabio Petito, "Il ritorno delle religioni nelle relazioni internazionali e qualche riflessione sul caso singolare dell'espansione globale del protestantesimo"*, ISPI - Quaderni di relazioni internazionali*, 12 (4/2010):44. (translation by the author of this article)

10 See D. Michael Linsday, *Faith in the Hall of Power: How Evangelical Joined the American Elite*, (New York: Oxford University Press 2007, 21.

11 Ricardo Mariano and Ari Pedro Oro, "La reciproca strumentalizzazione della religione e della politica in Brasile", *Credere Oggi*, 186 (6/2011): 70-84, 72. (translation from Italian into English by the author of the present paper).

12 John M. Roberts, *A History of Europe*, (London: Viking Adult) 1996, 583.

13 Quoted in Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *God is Back*, 134.

14 Frank Bruni, "Faith Fades Where it Once burned Strong",*New York Times*, October 13, 2003 in Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *God is Back*, 134.

15 Scott M. Thomas, "Religions and Global Security", *ISPI - Quaderni di Relazioni Internazionali*, 12 (4/2010): 4.

16 See G.Kepel, *La revanche de Dieu*. The other two texts were produced already in the new millennium. *God is back* was published in 2010 by John Micklethwait and Adrin Wooldridge. The subtitle of the book clearly explains the phenomenon which is the subject of this study: *How the Global Revival of Faith is Changing the World. Return from Exile* are the words used

by Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopolous to give a title to their work on the new role of religion in International relations.

17 See Kepel, *La révanche de Dieu*, 12

18 See Scott Thomas, "Religions and Global Security", 8.

19 See Olivier Roy, *La santa ignoranza. Religioni senza cultura*, (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2009), (Original in French: *La Sainte ignorance. Les temps de la religion sans culture*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2008), 17.

20 Olivier Roy, "Religious Revivals as a Product and Tool of Globalisation'", *ISPI - Quaderni di Relazioni Internazionali*, 12 (4/2010): 27.

21 It happens that young Japanese rediscover the Zen tradition in USA, and after long periods of residence in monastery in the West, return to Far East taking along with them an Americanized form of Zen Buddhism. Through the westernised version of an original Japanese Buddhism they try to revitalise the home religion, which is going through a critical period. (See Roy, *La santa ignoranza*, 239-247).

22 See Roy, "Religious Revivals as a Product and Tool of Globalisation", 27.

23 Scott Thomas, "Religions and Global Security", 12.

24 See Stefano Allievi, "Conflicts, Cultures and Religions: Islam in Europe as a Sign and Symbol of Change in European Societies",*Yearbook on Sociology of Islam*, 6 (2005): 18-27.

25 An example. A few years ago a young Muslim lady enrolled for a semester to attend lectures at the Gregorian University in Rome. Originally from Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, she was born a Sunni and married to a Sunni. Some years ago, she started following a Sufi master, who is a Shia. In the end, she decided to become a Shia. Moreover, the master is an American, born Christian, and turned to Islam, at present living in Finland. The case represents a summary of the characteristics of today's religion in the globalized reality: easy changing of religious denomination, following a religion which is no longer the one typical of the cultural and religious context of the concerned country, absolute de-link from cultural and territorial background.

26 See José Casanova, "Public Religions Revisited", in *Religion: Beyond the Concept,* edited by H. de Vries, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 101-119 in Pasquale Ferrara, *Religion, International Democracy and Global Governance*, Panel on "Religion and Democracy", Annual Conference of Italian Political Science Association (SISP), Venice, September 16-18, 2010 http://www.sisp.it/files/papers/2010/pasquale-ferrara-729.pdf (accessed on 20th May 2013).

27 Casanova, "Public Religions Revisited",

28 See Boris Biancheri, "Editoriale", *ISPI - Quaderni di Relazioni Internazionali*, 12 (4/2010), 1. (translation from the original text into English by the author of the present paper).

29 Biancheri, "Editoriale", 1.

30 Vlacav Havel, "*The Art of Impossible. Politics as Morality in Practice, Speeches and Writings 1990-1996*", (trans. Paul Wilson, (New York 1997), 195-196 inPetito, *Il ritorno delle religioni nelle relazioni internazionali e qualche riflessione sul caso singolare dell'espansione globale del protestantesimo,* 40 (foot-note 12). (translation by the author of this article)

31 See Scott M. Thomas, «Religions and Global Security» , 10.

32 An important role is the one, as already mentioned, of the growing number of small, medium or large ethnic, cultural and religious *diaspora*, created by migrating waves, which are a typical phenomenon of globalisation. Within the *diaspora* folds, a myriad of initiatives are born at the social, educational and religious level. There are also funds collections which are beneficial to the communities of origins. It may be limited to an economic support with educational benefits, but it can cross certain legal borders up to financing terrorist activities or a guerrilla for independence or even a true conflict.

33 See Pasquale Ferrara, "Religione e relazioni internazionali: un inquadramento metodologico per una diplomazia consapevole" *ISPI - Quaderni di Relazioni Internazionali*, 12 (4/2010), 48. (translation by the author of the present article)

34 Giuseppe Ruggieri, *Ritrovare il Concilio*, (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2012), 108-110.

35 See Salvatore Abruzzese, "Secolarizzazione e movimenti religiosi", *Sophia*, V, (1/2013): 31-44, 33.

36 See Abruzzese, "Secolarizzazione e movimenti religiosi", 33.

37 Lubich, "*Can Religions Be Partners on the way to peace?*.

38 Ferrara, «Religione e relazioni internazionali", 49.

39 See Ferrara, «Religion, International Democracy and Global Governance».

40 See Richard Falk, "A Worldwide Religious Resurgence in an Era of Globalization and Apocalyptic Terrorism" in Petito and Hatzopoulos (ed. by) *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, 196.