

Not only Islam. A reasoned panorama of religious pluralism in Europe

Prof. PierLuigi Zoccatelli

Vice-Director of CESNUR - Centre for the Study of New Religions

Professor of the Sociology of Religion – Pontifical Salesian University (Turin)

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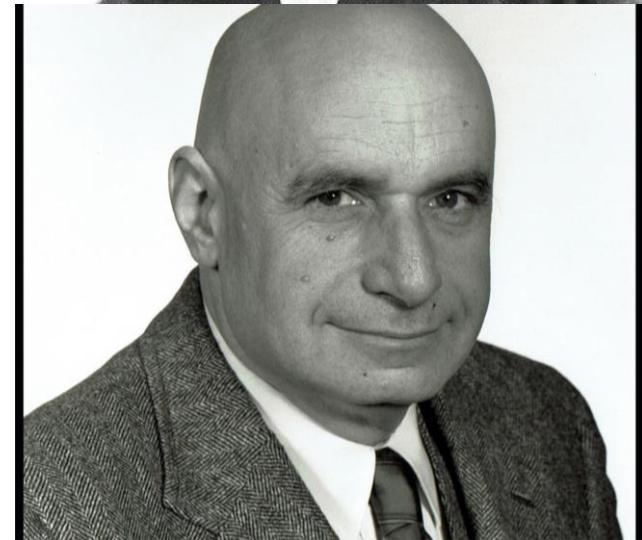
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Modernity and disenchantment

Scholars have never really agreed on what exactly modernity is. However, in the 1970s-1980s many believed that it brought about what Max Weber (1864-1920) called 'disenchantment', i.e. the disappearance of belief in supernatural forces, replaced by a general reliance on science and materialism.

Peter Berger (1929-2017) added that modern religious pluralism would contribute to the end of religion: if different religions coexist, many will end up believing that none is true.



The end of religion?



For decades, the prevailing thesis among Western scholars was that the religious experience was in decline and that, in the words of anthropologist Anthony Wallace (1923-2015):

“The evolutionary future of religion is extinction”.

(Religion: An Anthropological View, 1966, pp. 264-265)

An “American exception”?



Later in his academic career, Berger began to doubt whether his approach to the theory of secularisation was universally true. He noted how, in the United States of America, religious pluralism and technological progress coexist with a significantly higher presence of institutional religion than in Europe, thus introducing the idea of an “American exception” in the religious phenomenon.

A “European exception”?

Continuing in this vein, there has been a growing realisation that countries of more rapid modernisation - such as South Korea or Taiwan - have a similar religious trend as in North America, i.e. development. The conclusion was drawn that perhaps the classical theory of secularisation - that modernity causes the decline of religion - would only be true in Western Europe, where we would see a peculiar “European exception”.



The debate on secularism

" By secularisation, I mean the process by which religious institutions, actions and consciousness lose their social significance."

(Bryan R. Wilson [1926-2004], *Religion in Secular Society*, Watts, London 1960, p. XIV).

"[...] the process of secularisation, that is, the removal of religious motivation and purpose from every act of human life, continues apace."

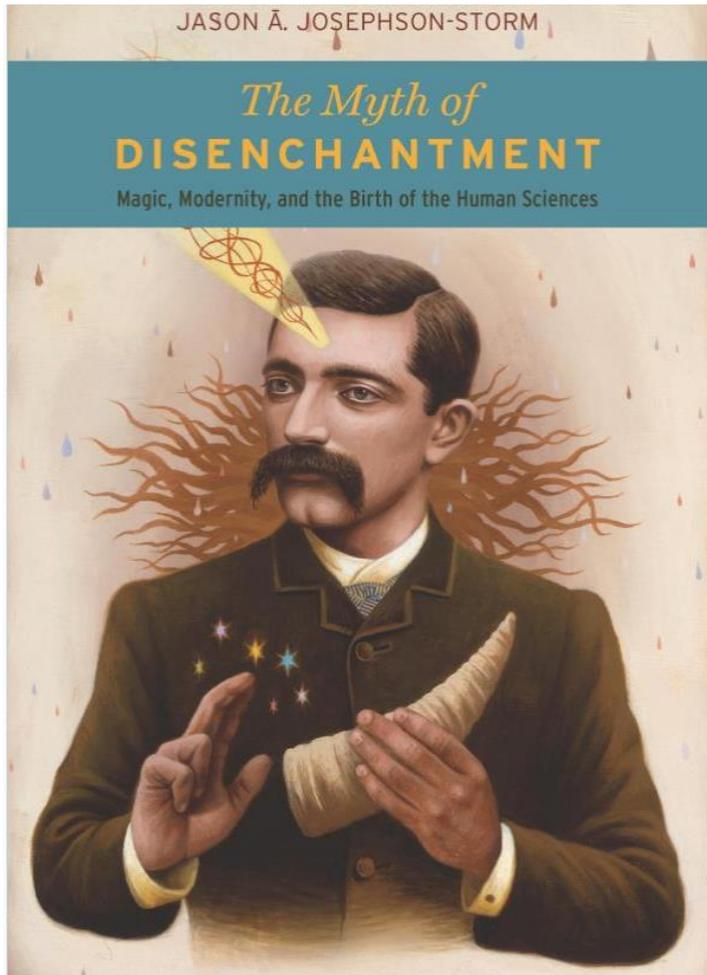
(Saint John Paul II [1920-2005], Address to the visiting bishops of Emilia-Romagna on their visit *ad limina Apostolorum*, 1 March 1991).

The effects of secularism

"Secularism with a Western stamp, different from and perhaps more subtle than the Marxist brand, is showing us very worrying signs. Only think, for example, of the unbridled search for material goods, the reduced birth rate, and further, the dwindling religious practice, together with a tangible decrease in vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life."

(Benedict XVI, Address to the Bishops of the Slovenian Bishops' Conference on their visit *ad Limina Apostolorum*, 24 January 2008).

Multiple modernities



Rather than "exceptions", the XXI century has begun to speak of "multiple modernities" - questioning the model of a single relationship between religion and modernity (each local situation is different from the others) -, "multiple secularisations" and processes of "re-enchantment". That is if, as Jason Josephson-Storm suggested in a controversial but important 2017 study, "disenchantment" never actually existed.

The religions of the world (2021)

- **Global population** = 7.953.953.000
 - **Christians** = 2.559.875.000 (32.2%)
[of which: Catholics 1.256.120.000 (15.8%); Protestants including Anglicans 600.772.000 (7.5%); Orthodox 295.508.000 (3.7%)]
 - **Muslims** = 1.961.323.000 (24.7%)
 - **Hindus** = 1.073.784.000 (13.5%)
 - **Buddhists** = 545.938.000 (6.9%)
 - **Chinese religions** = 476.543.000 (6.0%)
 - **Ethno-religionists** = 279.035.000 (3.5%)
 - **New Religions** = 65.971.000 (0.8%)
 - **Sikhs** = 27.891.000 (0.3%)
 - **Jews** = 14.945.000 (0.2%)
 - **Agnostics** = 750.045.000 (9.4%)
 - **Atheists** = 147.079.000 (1.8%)
- [Total non-religious (agnostics + atheists): 897.124.000 (11.3%)]

Religious practice in Italy (1994-2017)

	1994	2007	2017
• Never	13.0%	21.8%	30.0%
• Several times a year	37.3%	36.0%	33.0%
• 1-2 times a month	18.5%	15.7%	15.0%
• Every week or more	31.1%	26.5%	22.0%

Encyclopaedia of religions in Italy

CESNUR
Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni

Massimo Introvigne - PierLuigi Zoccatelli

Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia



Italy 2021 — In general

- Residents = 59.257.256
- Italian citizens = 54.244.351
 - [Immigrants who have acquired citizenship = 1.865.132 (3.4%)]
- Immigrants = 5.013.215 (8.5%) [*European average* = 8.2%]
- Religious minorities among citizens = 2.184.400 (4.0%)
- Religious minorities (with immigrants) = 6.070.100 (10.2%)
- Number of religious and spiritual minorities = 870

Immigration in Italy (1861-2021)

Year	Population	Foreigners	Percentage
1861	22.182.000	89.000	0.4%
1951	47.516.000	130.000	0.3%
1981	56.557.000	320.778	0.5%
1991	56.778.000	625.000	1.1%
2001	57.844.017	1.686.606	2.9%
2011	60.626.442	4.570.317	7.5%
2021	59.257.566	5.013.566	8.5%

Religious minorities among Italian citizens (CESNUR 2021)

Jews	36.600 (1.7%)	Buddhists	215.500 (9.9%)
Fringe and dissident Catholics	24.700 (1.1%)	Osho movement (and similar)	4.000 (0.2%)
Orthodox	386.800 (17.7%)	Sikhs and Radhasoamis	23.500 (1.1%)
Protestants	383.100 (17.5%)	Other groups of oriental origin	7.200 (0.3%)
Jehovah's Witnesses (and equivalents)	426.500 (19.5%)	New Japanese religions	3.800 (0.2%)
Mormons (and equivalents)	28.100 (1.3%)	Esotericism and 'ancient wisdom'	16.800 (0.8%)
Others of Christian origin	9.300 (0.4%)	Movements of human potential	30.000 (1.4%)
Islam	493.300 (22.6%)	New Age and Next Age	20.000 (0.9%)
Bahá'ís and others of Islamic origin	4.500 (0.2%)	Others	17.500 (0.8%)
Hindus and neo-Hindus	53.200 (2.4%)	Total	2.184.400 (100.0%)

Protestants among Italian citizens (CESNUR 2021)

Historical Protestants	71.100	18.6%
Restoration Movement	5.700	1.5%
Brothers' Movement	23.900	6.2%
Free churches (non-Pentecostal) and other evangelicals	9.500	2.5%
Pentecostals	250.500	65.4%
Adventists	19.800	5.1%
Others	2.600	0.7%
Total	383.100	100.0%

Religious affiliation of immigrants

(Statistical Dossier on Immigration 2021)

Orthodox	1.441.500	28.8%
Catholics	885.100	17.7%
Protestants	224.400	4.5%
Other Christians	40.000	0.8%
Other Christians	1.667.400	33.3%
Jews	4.800	0.1%
Hindus	154.800	3.1%
Buddhists	118.000	2.4%
Other Eastern religions	83.300	1.7%
Atheists and agnostics	242.400	4.8%
Traditional religions	66.500	1.3%
Others	85.000	1.7%
Total	5.013.200	100.0%

Some comparisons between indicators (2001-2021)

Category	2001	2013	2021
Immigrants	2,9%	8.0%	8.5%
Religious minorities (citizens)	1.9%	2.5%	4.0%
Religious minorities (with immigrants)	3.7%	7.6%	10.2%
Number of religious minorities	658	836	870
Italian Muslim citizens	10.000	115.000	493.300
Immigrant Muslims (non-citizens)	543.849	1.650.902	1.667.400
Christians among immigrants	49.4%	53.9%	51.8%
Muslims among immigrants	36.5%	32.9%	33.3%
Italian Protestant citizens	363.000	435.000	383.100
Italian Jehovah's Witnesses citizens	400.000	415.000	426.500