

# THE «CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER» AS A WAY TO PREVENT AND RESOLVE CONFLICTS IN THE MODERN WORLD (IN THE LIGHT OF THE TEACHINGS OF POPE FRANCIS)

Д. Туловецки  
Краков, Польша

Richard Dawkins, in his famous book «The God Delusion» in a very clear way creates a thesis of the need to «release» a man and civilization from the fake «God hypothesis»<sup>1</sup>. Call for «freedom from religion» and «disenchantment of the world» is nothing new in the social thought of recent centuries. It stood at the origins of sociology as a science with therapeutic implications for the community<sup>2</sup>. However, Dawkins' book is not only a justification for atheism, but also the act against religion. Religion – in his opinion rises violence between communities functioning within different cultures. It is not just political, but also cultural violence, violence in families, at schools, noticed already at the stage of education<sup>3</sup>.

But, is it in fact religion guilty of wars and is the cause of hatred? Were the antagonism and hostility taught by the greatest religious leaders and founders of great religions of the world: Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad? Thus, are those right who want to eliminate God from the stage of history and the human mind<sup>4</sup>, because God is evil: «God is against man. Each human progress is a victory against God»<sup>5</sup>? In order to, at least partially, respond to posed above theses and questions, it seems reasonable to analyze the doctrine and assumptions of the unquestionably of greatest range religion, i.e. Christianity, and in this particular case – the get concerned of the statements of Pope Francis.

The social thought of the Church, which grounds peace on the

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<sup>1</sup>*Dawkins, R. The God Delusion. / R. Dawkins. – Boston; N. Y., 2008. – P. 51–98.*

<sup>2</sup>*Whimster, S. Max Weber – Work end Interpretation, in: Handbook of Social Theory / S. Whimster; ed.: G. Ritzer, B. Smart. – London-Thousand Oaks-New Delhi, 2003. – P. 54–65.*

<sup>3</sup>*Dawkins, R. The God Delusion. / R. Dawkins. – Boston; N. Y., 2008. – P. 318–387.*

<sup>4</sup>*Alberoni, R. La cacciata di Cristo / R. Alberoni. – Roma, 2007. – P. 6–8.*

<sup>5</sup>*Tułowicki, D. Bez Boga, Kościoła i zasad? Studium socjologiczne nad religijnością młodzieży / D. Tułowicki. – Kraków, 2012. – P. 27.*

brotherhood, equality of all people, and respect for the dignity of every person, the common good, human rights and social love, truth, freedom and justice and the concept of the community of nations – appears to go beyond Christianity. One neither has to be a Christian nor Catholic and recognize the authority of the Pope – to accept these principles sketched in the social teaching of the Church. This over-Christian understanding of the foundations of peace includes the same social thought with not strictly religious nature, but based on human rationality and their quest for fair governance and social coexistence<sup>1</sup>.

Pope Francis, during his pontificate expands the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, on peace and the prevention of international tensions and conflicts<sup>2</sup>. In his first encyclical, he recalled that the Christian faith has given the new meaning to human relations: of brotherhood. This new quality of interpersonal attitudes – brotherhood – is, according to Francis, an important contribution of Christianity in building the common good of humanity and international order and peace. Love of God – what is strictly theological reasoning – enables to see in the other man, brother and sister and releases from selfishness and violence relationships between communities, which after all, are also formed by people «Faith makes us appreciate the architecture of human relationships»<sup>3</sup>.

Francis also notes that the disappearance or simply a lack of faith is a threat to human relations, and may even take the form of

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<sup>1</sup>*Piwowarski, W.* Historia katolickiej nauki społecznej / *W. Piwowarski // Słownik katolickiej nauki społecznej.* – Warsaw, 1993. – 61–63 p.; *Tułowicki, D.* Społeczna doktryna chrześcijańska / *D. Tułowicki // Encyklopedia Katolicka KUL.* – T. 18; *Gryglewicz, F. R.* Łukaszyk, from. *Sułowski / F. Gryglewicz.* – Lublin, 2013. – Columns 695–696; *D. Tułowicki, Społeczna myśl katolicka / D. Tułowicki // Encyklopedia Katolicka KUL.* – T. 18; *Gryglewicz F. R.* Łukaszyk, from. *Sułowski / F. Gryglewicz.* – Lublin, 2013. – Columns 700–701.

<sup>2</sup>Actually Bergoglio Jorge Maria Si; Argentine; 17 December 1936 given birth in Buenos Aires in the family of Italian emigrants; from 1958 Jesuit; studied philosophy, theology, psychology, literature and chemistry, the professor of theology and the Colegio Maximo rector de San José in San Miguel, from 1969 priest in the of Jesus Company (jezuiat), from 1992 bishop, in 1998–2013 years archbishop Buenos Aires and in the process primate of Argentina, in 2001–2013 years cardinal, chosen 13 March 2013 on 266. of bishop of Rome.

<sup>3</sup>*Francis.* Lumen fidei / Francis. – N. 51.

«globalization of indifference»<sup>1</sup>: «If we remove faith in God from our cities, mutual trust would be weakened, we would remain united only by fear and our stability would be threatened»<sup>2</sup>. This indifference may have very different faces today: the persecution of the most vulnerable, including the unborn<sup>3</sup>, the persecution of Christians<sup>4</sup>, the elimination of «unnecessary people»: old, young, immigrants, unemployed<sup>5</sup>, the use of poor by the rich and building wealth by generating poverty<sup>6</sup>. «However, we must go out to meet them, and with our faith we must create a «culture of encounter», a culture of friendship, a culture in which we find brothers and sisters, in which we can also speak with those who think differently, as well as those who hold other beliefs, who do not have the same faith. They all have something in common with us: they are images of God, they are children of God. Going out to meet everyone, without losing sight of our own position»<sup>7</sup>.

It must be presumed that the theoretical understanding of «culture of encounter» Jorge Mario Bergoglio built on the thought of Romano Guardini which he studied while preparing a doctoral thesis. The concept of this theologian regarding the issue of «encounter» implies that a real encounter between individuals should meet the following conditions: freedom, respect, right distance, respect for each other, dialogue, bi-directional actions<sup>8</sup>. Authentic encounter opens human

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<sup>1</sup>Francis. Address for the Lent / Francis. – 2015.

<sup>2</sup>Francis. Lumen fidei / Francis/ Francis. – N. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Francis. Speech to Italian Catholic doctors / Francis. – 2014, 15 November.

<sup>4</sup> Francis. Meditation finishing the way of the cross in the – Coliseum, 2015, 3rd April.

<sup>5</sup> Francis. Act believing of the city and Sardinia the Mother of God from Bonaria in Cagliari / Francis. – 2013, 22sd September; Francis. Homily in the time of mass of the St in the Sanctuary of the Mother of God in Bonaria / Francis. – 2013, 22sd September; Francis. Address for the World Day of the Migrant and the Refugee in 2015 / Francis.

<sup>6</sup> Francis. Address for the World Day of the Peace / Francis. – 2014, 1st January.

<sup>7</sup> Francis. Speech during the prayer vigil into the Christmas Eve of the descent of the Holy Spirit / Francis. – 2013, 18 May.

<sup>8</sup> Guardini, R. Libertad, gracia y destino / R. Guardini. – Buenos Aires, 1994. – P. 40.

life-changing. «Man of encounter» is a man full of life, his relationship to the world is very young, he can keep an open mind and enjoy learning the truth, he has the ability to live encounters and keeps stable relationships until an old age<sup>1</sup>.

The openness of Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born from an encounter with Jesus. «It was a personal meeting, which touched my heart and gave me direction and a new meaning to my life». Before Bergoglio became the bishop of Rome, he was very strongly marked by his Argentine experience of Jesuit and Bishop of the State capital. As a professor and rector of the Jesuit higher university he studied contemporary rift between the Gospel and culture, between the structures of the Church and the faithful. This observation led him to an attitude of listening: «What do my people ask me about?». Bergoglio never assumed that the common people, the Indians, the descendants of former slaves and the people living in the mountains and leading a very simple and poor way of life do not have the ability to tell their own opinion, and require to speak «for them» and «to them». This ability is, however, conditioned in listeners' humility<sup>2</sup>.

The answer to the attitude of «encounter» is – according to Bergoglio – solidarity. Exclusion of some of the main trends of life, from the possession, economic and political decision-making, access to culture, medicine, law – rises the need for new, more equitable governance. Lack of control over the power, which has become a 'faceless', free of the responsibility for the lack of justice, leads to the times of the primitive world, «pushes into the desert of fear and horror of darkness»<sup>3</sup>. «Man again lives in the chaos»<sup>4</sup>. Solidarity unites the group and individuals. It is the value that Bergoglio opposes to egoism and the power of stronger. «Solidarity as a way to create history, solidarity as a living environment where conflicts, tensions and contradictions strive for unity in the «multiple form» which gives

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<sup>1</sup> *Guardini, R. Ética. Lecciones en la Universidad de Múnich / R. Guardini. – Madrid, 2000. – P. 190.*

<sup>2</sup> *Fares, D. Papież Franciszek o kulturze spotkania / D. Fares. – Kraków, 2014. – P. 27–35.*

<sup>3</sup> *Bergoglio, J. H. Reflexiones espirituales / J. H. Bergoglio. – San Miguel, 1987. – P. 290–308.*

<sup>4</sup> *Fares, D. Papież Franciszek o kulturze spotkania / D. Fares. – Kraków, 2014. – P. 38.*

life»<sup>1</sup>. This encounter is possible on the basis of faith and the Church. Church – universal in its nature – is open to all people and all cultures, no one is excluded from the invitation. Neither social position nor sinfulness excludes from Church<sup>2</sup>.

Developed in Argentina look at the world, Jorge Mario Bergoglio moved to Rome<sup>6</sup>. As the most important bishop in the Roman Catholic Church he is valued as «man of encounter». This joint road – of the Bishop and the people – does not mean that «culture of encounter» is limited to the moment. Similarly, as the emergence of God to people is not disposable, short, closed at the time. According to Francis «culture of encounter» is not an issue of time, closed in the past, but the present, which affects the future. Dialogue as a future-oriented task and lifestyle – already at the stage of Argentina – Bergoglio found as a way to build peace within the country. The dialogue had to overcome historical «heritage» of contempt for the «other brother», destroy the pride of oligarchic mentality which claims that «some is better than the whole». Future-oriented task of an encounter can build them common good of the nation, in the spirit of truth, respect for every human being, solidarity, freedom and justice<sup>3</sup>.

According to the Pope, atmosphere of encounter is extremely important. The researcher of Cardinal Bergoglio thoughts – Diego Fares – described the atmosphere as «music». Behind this term a kind of position of those forming «culture of encounter» is hidden: trust, lack of fear of another human being, good will, mutual listening, conversation, emotions, intuition<sup>4</sup>. Full of «music» atmosphere of emotions and opening was suggested by Francis, for example, during the meeting with Muslim leaders in Jerusalem. He said: «Dear brothers, dear friends, from this holy place I make a heartfelt plea to all people and to all communities who look to Abraham: may we respect and love one another as brothers and sisters! [...]»<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bergoglio, J. H.* Reflexiones espirituales / J. H. Bergoglio. – San Miguel, 1987. – P. 297.

<sup>2</sup> *Fares, D.* Papież Franciszek o kulturze spotkania / D. Fares. – Kraków, 2014. – P. 40–41.

<sup>3</sup> *Fares, D.* Papież Franciszek o kulturze spotkania / D. Fares. – Kraków, 2014. – P. 59–61.

<sup>4</sup> *Francis.* Evangelii gaudium / Francis. – N. 122–26.

<sup>5</sup> *Francis.* Speech of the course of the meeting with Large Muffi of Jerusalem / Francis. – Jerusalem, 2014. – 26th may.

At the core of a «culture of encounter» in terms of Francis is «exit». Output of oneself – from their own selfishness, their own affairs and their own satisfaction – is the first step. The next one is to go towards those who are condemned to oblivion and are now remorse – the poor and useless. Openness for poverty is for Francis theologically motivated<sup>1</sup>. When today we can talk about «people rejected and unnecessary», which are condemned to marginalization and even ghettoisation<sup>2</sup>, Francis sees in each – including the unnecessary one as well – a person who has their dignity, their rights, their place on earth. For Pope Bergoglio, the poor are not just the case, the problem, objects of interest and help, but they are people, who rise emotions of movement in others, and that «emotion transforms in communion»<sup>3</sup>.

Poverty – within the meaning of Francis – is not limited to economic issues, this is social poverty: exclusion, mental poverty: abandonment, cultural poverty: the rejection. Poverty rises «periphery», which as a result of modern dynamisms throw masses of modern humans beyond the margin of the world, making them «redundant» and «rejected». Francis sees exclusion mechanisms in consumer culture and the dominant «logic of production and profit», as well as standing outside the community of the Church also because of the Church itself. The first of these is to be overcome by breaking the logic of profit, thirst for power and cult of money<sup>4</sup>, the second – the new evangelization<sup>5</sup>.

«Culture of encounter» grows out of a particular anthropology, the essence of which is the integral development: of every person and the whole person<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, everything that is opposed to such understood authentic development and the common good should be broken down, by ethics and solidarity<sup>7</sup>. Only then a «healthy

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<sup>1</sup> *Fares, D. Papież Franciszek o kulturze spotkania / D. Fares. – Kraków, 2014. – P. 69–70.*

<sup>2</sup> *Bauman, Z. Praca, konsumpcjonizm i nowi ubodzy / Z. Bauman. – Kraków, 2006. – P. 127–156.*

<sup>3</sup> *Fares, D. Papież Franciszek o kulturze spotkania / D. Fares. – Kraków, 2014. – P. 70–71.*

<sup>4</sup> *Francis. Address for the World Day of the Peace / Francis. – 2014. – 1st January. – N. 4.*

<sup>5</sup> *Francis. Evangelii gaudium / Francis. – N. 25–33.*

<sup>6</sup> *Paul VI, Populorum progressio. – N. 5.*

<sup>7</sup> *Fares, D. Papież Franciszek o kulturze spotkania / D. Fares. – Kraków, 2014. – P. 73–74.*

coexistence» gets possible<sup>1</sup>. Peace is not possible without ethics. Ethics is necessary in both political and economic life. «No ethics in public life makes a lot of evil for all mankind»<sup>6</sup>. Lack of ethics arises crises: economic, political, cultural and threatens peace as it alters the natural – placed in the natural law – the order of things. When this order is disturbed, the objectives become means. And then – as claimed by the Pope from Argentina – «money rules». «Money has to serve, not to rule»<sup>2</sup>.

The effect of the adoption of the logic of «culture of encounter» is – according to Francis – social integration and peace. Dialogue breaks the «culture of rejection» and «culture of encounter»<sup>3</sup>. «No one should be rejected because we are all brothers»<sup>4</sup>. Only in dialogue – according to the current bishop of Rome – it is possible to build peace. It is not only accuracy, but the task of all Catholics and people of good will. «Dialogue can overcome the war. [...] Dialogue is the way of peace. For dialogue fosters understanding, harmony, concord and peace. For this reason, it is vital that it grow and expand between people of every condition and belief, like a net of peace that protects the world and especially protects the weakest members»<sup>5</sup>.

As Bishop of Rome, Bergoglio develops his idea of «a culture of dialogue and encounter». In promoting dialogue, he sees his own mission and ongoing commitment imposed on him. He promotes the atmosphere – a kind of «music» – of dialogue, which is based on emotions, respect, intuition, trust and lack of fear. The dialogue in this sense perceives a partner in each person, always evaluates positively the exchange, and as a result, it leads to making life more ethical, bringing back respect for life and rights of every human being, granting the world a more human face. Society integrated in this way,

<sup>1</sup> Francis. Speech to the diplomatic corps by the Holy See / Francis. – 2013, 16th may.

<sup>2</sup> *Fares, D. Papież Franciszek o kulturze spotkania / D. Fares. – Kraków, 2014. – P. 80–81.*

<sup>3</sup> Там же. – P. 82–83.

<sup>4</sup> Francis. Speech during the prayer vigil into the Christmas Eve of the descent of the Holy Spirit / Francis. – 2013. – 18th may.

<sup>5</sup> Francis. Speech to participants in the international meeting and in intention of the room prepared by community Saint Egido / Francis. – 2013. – 30th September.

constantly following «culture of encounter», renews itself constantly and steadily builds peace. All people are called to such building:

believers and non-believers, all people of good will. Also leaders have great job and responsibility in this effort to break the cycle of violence and the «culture of conflict» – both in economic and political dimension. Pope Francis reminded about this in a special letter to president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, on September 14, 2014 year. «Without peace, there can be no form of economic development. Violence never begets peace, the necessary condition for development»<sup>1</sup>. On the basis of the current teaching of Pope Francis, it can be concluded that the key to peace in the world in many dimensions – even between religions – is a dialogue developed within the framework of a «culture of encounter».

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<sup>1</sup> *Francis*. Letter to the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin / Francis.