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Europe and the Challenge of Islam in the Thought of J. Ratzinger /Benedict XVI

Summary: J. Ratzinger takes into consideration the complexity of Islam, the diversity of attitudes in the scope of the orthodoxy recognized by all Muslims. There are examples of openness to the tolerant rationality and terrorism rooted in religion, peaceful cooperation with Christians as well as cruel persecutions. In the 20th century a revolutionary interpretation has developed which subordinates religion to politics. An open question remains if and to what extent the culture of freedom and democracy can develop in the framework of Islam and if violence can be eradicated to be replaced with respect of human freedom, especially religious freedom.

Benedict XVI has expressed the need and the necessity to continue the mutual dialogue. He was the first pope to visit the Muslim mosque Al-Aksa in Jerusalem. The dialogue should serve as a joint testimony of faith in God, peace and profound respect towards human life, recognition of the dignity of man and woman. It worth to meet Muslims in the common search for the truth. By helping those in need Christians and Muslims can give a testimony of God's love, the creator of all human kind. The return to Christianity in Europe, respect for moral and religious values can help to alleviate the conflict with the world of Islam.

Keywords: Europe, Islam, J. Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, dialogue

The twentieth century was a time of undertaking the Christian-Muslim dialogue. Its beginning can be traced to the Council Constitution *Nostra aetate*. At the same time it was also a time of a rising conflict which became apparent during the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. The heated controversy which followed Benedict XVI's address in Regensburg on the 12th of September 2006 serves as an encouragement to take an overall look at this author's reflection concerning the future of Europe in relation to the challenge of Islam.

1. A difficult history of Islam in Europe

The author recognizes the importance of confrontation with Islam and the significance of a life-and-death struggle in European history. The spread of Islam in the 7th

and 8th century divided lands situated around the Mediterranean Sea which were united by cultural and trade ties into the following continents: Asia, Africa and Europe. The Conquest of Constantinople by the Turks was also important factor in shaping our continent¹. Europe was forming itself during this confrontation.

The defence of Vienna (1683) or the battle of Lepanto (1571) were an expression of a struggle to maintain Europe's identity. It was a time when Europe had to defend its history, culture and religion in an attempt to escape the fate of a marginalized colony. However, the Pope recognizes the difference between the current situation characterized by a radical secularization². Acknowledging the historical merit of Malta's inhabitants in their defence of Christianity on land and at sea, he directs the thought of his contemporaries to the significance of defending Christian values, especially the indissolubility of marriage and the holiness of human life³.

The theologian recognizes the active presence of Islam in Europe, especially in the Balkans. He points out the fact that despite tensions various ethnic and religious groups used to live there in peace for generations. They suddenly started to fight with each other with unbelievable cruelty. In this context, it is clear that Christians have a particular role to play in seeking peace through forgiveness and reconciliation⁴.

2. Non-homogeneity of the Islamic world

The cultural space of Islam is characterized by tensions: "There is a broad spectrum between a fanatical absolutism and attitudes that are open to tolerant rationality"⁵.

J. Ratzinger observes that there is no instance uniting all believers in Islam, as well as no common orthodoxy recognized by everyone. There are various divides, for example between the Sunnis and Shiites, *noble Islam*, extremists and terrorist⁶. Therefore, a significant obstacle to dialogue arises.

The theologian does not hide the problem of strengthening the terrorism with

¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Europa. Jej podwaliny dzisiaj i jutro*, Kielce 2005, p. 10-20. [English edition: *Europe: Today and Tomorrow*, San Francisco 2007].

² Cf. Benedict XVI in a conversation with Peter Seewald, *Światłość świata. Papież, Kościół i znaki czasu*, Kraków 2011, p. 110 [English. edition: *Light of the World: The pope, The Church and the signs of the Times*, San Francisco 2004]

³ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address during the welcoming ceremony at the airport in Luqa on 17th April 2010 on the occasion of Apostolic Journey to Malta, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100417_welcome-malta.html [29.06.2017].

⁴ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Europa. Jej podwaliny dzisiaj i jutro*, Kielce 2005, p. 86-88. [English edition: *Europe: Today and Tomorrow*, San Francisco 2007]

⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Wykłady bawarskie z lat 1963-2004*, Warszawa 2009, p. 230-231 [original: *Grundsatz - Raden aus fünf und Jahrzehnten*, Regensburg 2005]

⁶ Cf. *Sól ziemi. Chrześcijaństwo i Kościół katolicki na przełomie tysiącleci. Z kardynałem Josephem Ratzingerem rozmawia Peter Seewald*, Kraków 2005, p. 209, [English edition: *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the end of the Millennium – an Interview with Peter Seewald*, San Francisco 1997].

its promise of everlasting happiness and recognizing the willingness for self-destruction as a form of martyrdom⁷. This realistic assessment of reality differentiates Ratzinger from authors⁸ who do not see any connection of Islam to terrorism or think that this issue should not be discussed.

The author notices the influence of Marxist thought in the world of Islam. In connection with Palestine's fight for independence, a revolutionary interpretation of Islam has been developed which to some extent is close to theologies of liberation. Islam reveals itself as a carrier of the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed. The supporter of Marxism Garaudy found a revolutionary opposition against dominant capitalism in Islam. This kind of political-revolutionary interpretation of Islam which means submitting religion to politics is challenged by prominent figures of the Islamic world, such as the King of Morocco Hassan⁹.

Muslims vary in their attitudes towards Christians. In some African countries an understanding between Christians and Muslims exists, in others Christians are second-class citizens, while in some they face aggression¹⁰. In many countries of the Black Africa there is a heartening tradition of peaceful coexistence. One can change their religion. Children of a Muslim father can become Christians. Similarity in understanding freedom and truth is visible. However, wherever Islam rules on its own, it perceives itself as a defender of religions against atheism and secularization. Christians experience intolerance and violence¹¹.

Ratzinger speaks up about persecutions of Christians in some Islamic countries where they are being imprisoned and tortured¹². He recalls an inspirational figure of the Italian priest Andrei Santoro murdered by a young Muslim during prayers on 5th of February 2006 in Turkey in the town of Trebizonda¹³. He points out the

⁷ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Europa. Jej podwaliny dzisiaj i jutro*, p. 88-89.

⁸ According to Anna Janiak there is no connection of Islam with terrorism in any of John Paul II's speeches and nothing that could be treated as blaming the Muslims for the slaughter of Christians, cf. A. Janiak, *Jan Paweł II a Islam*, in: *Jan Paweł II i Europa*, ed. K. Kalinowska, B. Brodzińska, M. Zamojska, Toruń 2009, p. 295.

⁹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Czas przemian w Europie. Miejsce Kościoła i świata*, Kraków 2001, p. 155. [English. edition: *A Turning point for Europe? The Church in the Modern World*, San Francisco 2010].

¹⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus... on the Church in Africa in service to reconciliation justice and peace*, 94, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html [29.06.2017].

¹¹ Cf. Benedict XVI, in an interview with Peter Sebald, *Światłość świata*, p. 112.

¹² Cf. *Sól ziemi*, p. 132.

¹³ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI Basilica of St John Lateran Holy on 13th April 2006*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20060413_coena-domini.html [29.06.2017]. Father Santoro, who was working as a fidei *donum* missionary, was shot during prayer in the church by a 16-year-old Muslim boy who did not express the slightest remorse during his trial and he explained that he did what he did as a revenge on Christians for the Danish caricatures of prophet Mohammed. The Pope recalled the figure of Father Santoro again during his pilgrimage to Turkey. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Homily during a Holy Mass in Ephesus* 29.11.2006, https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20061129_ephesus.html [29.06.2017].

indifference of public opinion in the West towards the drama of Christians in many parts of the world¹⁴.

3. Islam in relation to human rights and democracy

The author raises a question about the possibility of introducing a Muslim secularism. Is it possible for the culture of freedom and democracy to develop in Islam? Would it not be wonderful if democracy and human rights were respected everywhere in the world? But is it possible?¹⁵

Ratzinger stresses that a lot of people look at Islam through the lenses of Christianity and do not notice what it is in itself. Islam penetrates all spheres of life, regulates the economy, political and social life, subjects a woman to a man, imposes a rigid system of criminal law. It is not a religion which can be incorporated into the freedoms of a pluralist society. It may use partial freedoms but it aims at getting to a specific destination point¹⁶. The very nature of Islam creates difficulties in dialogue, causing anxiety about the place of Christians in the Muslim society as well as the question how to reconcile Islam with the democratic system. Islam does not differentiate between the religious and political spheres of life as Christianity does.

The author seems to think that a modern idea of liberty emerged in a Christian life space and this is why an attempt to impose the so called western values upon Islamic societies is doomed to failure. The basic premise of liberty is duality of the state and the Church, political and sacral instances. The social construction of Islam however is theocratic, therefore monistic¹⁷.

J. Ratzinger raises a daring question about Islam's attitude to human rights, especially human freedom. About its attitude today and in the future. However, the clarity of this standpoint does not mean that there is no hope.

4. The need for dialogue

J. Ratzinger took part in the II Vatican Council and co-created its documents. While commenting on *Nostra aetate*, he stresses the importance of ideas which are

¹⁴ Cf. *Bóg i świat. Wiara i życie w dzisiejszych czasach. Z kardynałem Josephem Ratzingerem rozmawia Peter Seewald*, Kraków 2001, p. 348. [Eng. *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, San Francisco 2002].

¹⁵ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Europa Benedykta w kryzysie kultur*, Częstochowa 2005, p. 53-55. [original title: *L'Europa di Benedetto nella crisi delle culture*, Cantagalli 2005]

¹⁶ Cf. *Sól ziemi*, p. 209-210. J. Balicki points out to a wide range of violations of religious freedom in Muslim countries. In seven countries the state law provides for death penalty for religious conversion from Islam to a different religion. In Egypt acceptance for death penalty for apostasy is as high as 84% (2010). Among young British Muslims it exceeds 30%. In Saudi Arabia some course books in school teach hatred for infidels and encourage killing of apostates. In the UK thousands of ex-Muslim converts to Christianity live in hiding. Cf. J. Balicki, *Religia i wolność religijna. Perspektywa islamska*, in: *Kościół - islam - świeckie państwo w Europie*, ed. P. Burgoński, Toruń 2012, p. 145-166.

¹⁷ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Kościół-ekumenizm-polityka*, Poznań-Warszawa 1990, p. 209-210. [*Church, ecumenism and politics*, San Francisco 2008].

included in this document and concern the relationship of Christianity with other world religions. God is the Father of all people and therefore we are called to love every human being. As members of the Church we should be able to notice the spiritual, moral, social and cultural values of people of other religions¹⁸.

During his pilgrimage to Turkey between 28th November and 1st December 2006 Pope Benedict XVI visited the mosque of sultan Ahmed in Istanbul. In November 2008 he met with participants of the first Catholic-Muslim debate, the aim of which is to eliminate the tensions which arise between two religions. He also met with Muslim religious leaders during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land (8th –15th May 2009).

As the first Pope in history he visited a Muslim mosque on the Temple Mount. He also met with the great Mufti of Jerusalem Muhammad Ahmad Hussein¹⁹.

After his speech in Regensburg Benedict expressed his serious and deep respect for Islamic believers. In connection with Ramadan which was about to start at that time he wished them the abundance of God's blessings. He sees his role in building bridges of friendship. He wants to follow a perspective indicated in the *Nostra aetate* declaration of the II Vatican Council. He emphasizes the great need for mutual dialogue which to a large extent will determine the future of the world. This dialogue is especially needed in a world marked by relativism and the one in which transcendence is often excluded²⁰. The world, which is endangered by radical secularization, needs a common effort to defend religious values – faith in God and obedience to Him²¹.

During his pilgrimage to Turkey the Pope called for dialogue between Christians and Muslims. He emphasized the need to respect the religious freedom in relation to an individual as well as to a community, both in the legal order and in the sphere of religious practice. Real dialogue is based on truth and respecting the choices made by each individual, especially in the area of religious beliefs²².

Benedict XVI expressed his gratitude for the letter of 138 religious Muslim leaders who proved their involvement in peace keeping efforts. Common for both

¹⁸ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Misje w świetle innych tekstów soborowych*, in: *Misje po Soborze Watykańskim II*, ed. W. Kowalak et al., Płock-Pieniężno 1981, p. 65. Cf. E. Sakowicz, *Dialog Kościoła z islamem według dokumentów soborowych i posoborowych (1963–1999)*, Warszawa 2000, p. 63.

¹⁹ Cf. *Światłość świata*, p. 209-217.

²⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI *Address to the Ambassadors of Countries with a Muslim Majority and to the Representatives of Muslim Communities in Italy, Hall of the Swiss, Castel Gandolfo, 25.09.2006* https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060925_ambasciatori-paesi-arabi.html [29.06.2017]. In his address the Pope makes references to his previous statements: *Address to the representatives of the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, 20th September 2005; Meeting with representatives of some Muslim communities, Cologne, 20th September 2005*, https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/august/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050820_meeting-muslims.html [4.07.2017].

²¹ Cf. *Światłość świata*, p. 110-111.

²² Cf. Benedict XVI, *Christians and Muslims are being called for dialogue. Meeting with the President of the Religious Affairs Directorate, Ankara, 28.11.2006*, <http://www.kath.net/news/15333> [4.07.2017].

Christians and Muslims the acknowledgement of existence of one God, who will judge each person's behaviour, constitutes a basis for common action to defend each human being's dignity so that the society becomes more fair and compassionate²³.

In Benedict's thought one can notice a reference to Pope Gregory VII's reflection from his letter to Sultan al-Nasir written in the 9th century: "Almighty God, who wishes that all should be saved and none lost, approves nothing in us so much as that after loving him one should love his fellow man and that no one should not to do others, what one does not want done to oneself"²⁴.

In Jordan in the mosque of the King Al-Hussein Bin Talal the Pope expressed the need for an authentic faith so that Muslims and Christians can be recognized as "*worshippers of God faithful to prayer, eager to uphold and live by the Almighty's decrees, merciful and compassionate, consistent in bearing witness to all that is true and good.*"²⁵ There is a great need for such a testimony in view of attempts to manipulate religion ideologically and to eradicate it from the public space.

During his visit to the Holy Land Benedict XVI stressed the significance of religion for the development of world cultures. Faith in one God sheds a light on the foundations of morality and ethics, encourages the mind to reach beyond its limitations, stimulates the creative genius, facilitates the critical assessment of human works. Members of various religions are able to live in a deep, mutual respect and acknowledgement and to provide support to one another²⁶.

During his pilgrimage to Cyprus on 4th–6th June 2010 Benedict pointed out the need of dialogue with the *Muslim brothers*. He had a meeting with a 89-year-old sheik Mohammed Nazim Abil Al-Haqqani who embraced the Pope and asked for a prayer. This call for dialogue gained special significance, as it happened right after the murder of the chair of the episcopate of Turkey Bishop Luigi Padovese (+3.06.2010). The Pope reminded that the bishop had been engaged in dialogue with Islam²⁷.

Expressing his desire for dialogue as well as the respect with which the Church looks at Muslims, the author pointed out the goals of dialogue, in particular the reinforcement of the respect for human life, the acknowledgement of the equal dignity of men and women, as well as the contribution of religion to the common good, while

²³ Cf. Benedict XVI, Przemówienie do *Kurii Rzymskiej* [Address to the Roman Curia], „Wiadomości KAI” 1 (2008), 30th December 2007/6 January 2008, p. 22.

²⁴ M. Ayoub, *Pope John II on the Islam*, w: *John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. B.L. Serwin, H. Kasimow, Eugene 2005, p. 66.

²⁵ Benedict XVI, *Meeting with Muslim Religious Leaders, Members of Diplomatic Corps and Rectors of Universities in Jordan, Mosque al-Hussin bin Talal-Amman, 9th May 2009*, https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090509_capi-musulmani.html [4.07.2017].

²⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Meeting with organizations for interreligious dialogue, Auditorium of Notre Dame Center-Jerusalem, 11 May 2009*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090511_dialogo-interreligioso.html [29.06.2017].

²⁷ Cf. *Papież z Cypru mówił do Bliskiego Wschodu*, [The Pope speaks to the Middle East from Cyprus] „Wiadomości KAI”, 23 (2010.), 13th June 2010, p. 3, 17.

at the same time keeping the differentiation between the sociopolitical and religious order²⁸.

It is worth noting, that on his last pilgrimage the Pope Benedict XVI went to Lebanon (14th–16th September 2012). The Pope met with the representatives of the largest Muslim communities: Sunni, Shia, Alawites and the Druzes. In view of the cruel civil war in Syria, the fear of spread of this conflict as well as the repetition of the situation which Lebanon had experienced in the last quarter of the 20th century, the Pope's call for peace had a particularly strong overtone. The path leading to peace lies in the acknowledgment of the dignity of each human being, seeing their gift and richness, as well as recognition of their freedom. What is needed are peaceful thoughts, words and gestures and that is why one should renounce revenge, acknowledge one's faults and forgive. Only then will understanding between cultures and religions grow²⁹.

5. In the common search for the truth

Ratzinger sees the clash of the great democracies with Islamic terrorism, as well as the conflict between the world of the West and Islam. In view of this clash, it is essential to find peace between reason and religion, to reject the abnormalities of religion and the abnormalities of the reason. God cannot be treated as a way towards defending one's own interest, power or the interests of a community. At the same time, once the human mind separates itself from God entirely, it loses its dignity and human rights. Without peace between reason and religion, sources of morality and law will dry up³⁰.

The Pope encourages to meet Muslims in their search of truth. As Nichols comments: "Ratzinger does not propose a way of isolating the 'problem' of Islam in Western societies through some Policy and cultural neutralization of Muslim difference but a common search for the truth of things"³¹.

6. The works of the Church in the society as a testimony of God's love

Benedict encourages us to be the witness of God's love by helping those in need, irrespective of their religion. To be the witness of God who is the creator of all hu-

²⁸ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini On the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 118, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html [4.07.2017].

²⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Meeting with Members of the Government, Institutions of the Republic, the Diplomatic Corps, Religious Leaders and Representatives of the World of Culture, Hall of the Baabda Presidential Palace 15 September 2012*, https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20120915_autorita.html [4.07.2017].

³⁰ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Europa. Jej podwaliny dzisiaj i jutro*, p. 90-92.

³¹ A. Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, London 2005, p. 217.

manity and in this way to be the call for an attitude full of respect for the other³². The author acknowledges the dialogue which is taking place between Christians and Muslims at the Balkans or in Africa. Also E. Sakowicz emphasizes the meaning of dialogue by providing the example of the community of the Polish Tatars who are the people engaged in a dialogue with their neighbours, who are compassionate and share the experience of dramatic events which touch the community³³.

7. Sharing the spiritual abundance

During the meeting with British Muslims, Jews, followers of Hinduism, Sikhs and representatives of other religions, Benedict XVI pointed out the possibility to share the experience of prayer and contemplation, as well as expressing the joy of encountering God's love. This dialogue of the spiritual experience can be one of the dimensions of the interreligious dialogue, aside for the dialogue of life and action and theological debate. Catholics are called to build the bridges of friendship with the representatives of other religions³⁴.

8. The rejection of Christianity inside Europe and the violent reaction of Islam

Ratzinger takes into account the fact that Europe is questioning its own spiritual foundations and that there is an ongoing crisis of the European law. The separation of the European legal systems from their Christian foundations is seen as godlessness in the world of Islam and perceived as a form of aggression³⁵. The contempt to one's own history and the spiritual roots increases the alienation and deepens the conflict between Europe and the world of Islam.

The theologian acknowledges the multi-shaped form of the world of Islam and the difficulty in describing it. Nevertheless, he believes that the word *fundamentalism* should not be seen as the key component of description as it directs our attention to the purely formalistic form and entails the criticism of strong convictions. The starting point of the Islamic awakening is not the desire to come back to the Middle Ages, but the fear connected to moral and religious agnosticism which is especially present in the American mass culture. The western way of life with its moral permissivism is perceived as an attack at the identity and the dignity to one's

³² Cf. Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful On the Church in Africa in service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 94, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost-exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html [29.06.2017].

³³ Cf. E. Sakowicz, *Rozmowy o islamie i dialogu*, Lublin 2007, p. 79.

³⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Meeting with Religious Leaders in the Waldegrave Drawing Room of St. Mary's University College in Twickenham, 17 września 2010*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100917_altre-religioni.html [4.07.2017].

³⁵ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Wykłady bawarskie z lat 1963-2004*, Warszawa 2009, p.172-175. [original: *Grundsatz - Raden aus fünf und Jahrzehnten*, Regensburg 2005].

own way of life³⁶.

The author has observed that in the secularized Europe there is a problem of understanding freedom as the right to ridicule what for others is sacred. "Thank God, in our society no one is allowed to make fun of what is sacred to a Jew or a Muslim. Yet numbered among the fundamental rights and freedom is the right to mock and cover with ridicule the things that Christians hold sacred"³⁷. Years after these words had been pronounced, Islam was ridiculed through the caricatures of Muhammad, for example in the publication of the Danish daily *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005.

Ratzinger notices the paradoxical time coincidence. The victory of the world of technology and the expansion of the post-European models of life and thinking coincides with the collapse of values which are particular for Europe. Europe is becoming internally empty, paralyzed, is losing its authentic identity. The decline of values is linked to a demographic crisis. Children are seen as a threat and limitation. The lack of will to survive is visible³⁸.

In view of the moral crisis of the western world, Muslims see Christianity as a religion which is becoming weaker and weaker in the Western world. The religious power of the future is in Islam. They are proud that they have maintained the moral message and faith through the age and feel superior. They are also happy with the financial power which allows the Arabic states to build great mosques or Muslim cultural institutes³⁹.

In the reflections of the author echoes the call for Europe to return to Christianity as its spiritual foundation, to regain the will to exist, its identity, the respect for the moral and religious values and those who believe in them.

9. Should we learn from Muslims?

Looking at the need of creating the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Ratzinger reminds that every Muslim knows the essential principles of their religion. Its creators thought of it as a basic reference for studying the elements which are the prerequisite to giving baptism. These are: faith, a Christian way of life, the ability to pray and participation in the liturgy of the Church⁴⁰. One could say that the followers of Islam remind contemporary Christians about the need of simplicity in communicating faith. In addition, the conclusion that can be made from previously quoted statements is that they also remind us about the respect for religious and moral values, about the significance of looking at a child as a gift of God and accepting one's own existence.

Being inspired by Islam can also lead to the deformation of Christianity. Among

³⁶ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Czas przemian w Europie*, p.153-155.

³⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Europa. Jej podwaliny dzisiaj i jutro*, p. 63.

³⁸ Cf. *Ibidem*, p.21-22.

³⁹ Cf. *Sól ziemi*, p. 211.

⁴⁰ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego a optymizm zbawionych*, „Communio” 14/4 (1994), p. 14.

the historical reasons of the iconoclasm the author points out the factors related to the political situation of that time. The emperors of the Byzantine Empire wanted to strengthen the unity of the state and relations with the Muslim neighbours⁴¹. A question arises if the Church is not put under similar pressures related to the issues of faith also in today's times?

10. The Problem of the speech in Regensburg

The famous speech given by Benedict XVI on the 12th September 2006 at the University of Regensburg was met with a violent reaction of the Muslim world⁴².

The quote expressing presenting the views of the Byzantine emperor Manuel II: "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached" was understood as an expression of the views of the Pope, even though he had explicitly emphasized his distance towards that statement.

The speech directed to the academia concerned primarily the relationship between faith and reason⁴³, the truth about God, who is the Logos and that is why violence in the religious sphere is a type of ungodliness and is linked to a profound deformation of the image to God.

In the discussion which took place after the aforementioned speech the problem of the Islamic voluntarism was undertaken⁴⁴.

In Pope's speech one can see a certain intuition concerning the future of Europe. Europe stands before the challenge of Islam. Closing our eyes or pretending not to notice the problem is not the solution. It is time to stand in the truth and return to the roots of the European culture.

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⁴¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, Poznań 2002, p. 109. [English edition: *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, San Francisco 2000].

⁴² Cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia Benedicta*, vol. II, Katowice 2012, p. 22-23. Text of the speech: Benedict XVI, *Faith, Reason and the University Memories and Reflections, Meeting of the Representatives of Science, Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg Tuesday, 12 September 2006*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html [4.07.2017].

⁴³ Cf. *Światłość świata*, p. 196-197.

⁴⁴ Cf. A. T. Houry, *Ist Gott ein absoluter, ungebundener Wille? Bemerkungen zum islamischen Voluntarismus*, in: Benedict XVI, *Glaube und Vernunft die Regensburger Vorlesung. Vollständige Ausgabe*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 2006, p. 77-96.

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Europa wobec wyzwania islamu - myśl J. Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI

Streszczenie: J. Ratzinger dostrzega złożoność zjawiska islamu, różnorodność postaw, brak uznawanej przez wszystkich muzułmanów ortodoksji. Obok otwarcia na tolerancyjną racjonalność istnieje, odwołujący się do motywacji religijnej, terroryzm, obok świadectw pokojowego współżycia z chrześcijanami występuje także okrutne prześladowanie. W XX wieku rozwinęła się rewolucyjna wykładnia islamu podporządkowująca religię polityce. Pozostaje otwarte pytanie, czy i na ile kultura wolności i demokracji może rozwinąć się w obrębie islamu, czy potrafi on wyrzec się przemocy i uszanować ludzką wolność, a w szczególności wolność religijną.

Benedykt XVI wielokrotnie wyraża potrzebę i konieczność wzajemnego dialogu. Jako pierwszy papież odwiedza muzułmański meczet Al-Aksa w Jerozolimie. Dialog powinien służyć wspólnemu świadectwu wiary w Boga, pokojowi, pogłębieniu szacunku dla ludzkiego życia, uznaniu godności mężczyzny i kobiety. Warto spotkać się z muzułmanami we wspólnym poszukiwaniu prawdy. Poprzez pomoc potrzebującym świadczyć o miłości Boga, Stwórcy wszystkich ludzi. Powrót do chrześcijaństwa w Europie, szacunek dla wartości moralnych i religijnych może przyczynić się do złagodzenia konfliktu ze światem islamu.

Słowa kluczowe: Europa, islam, Joseph Ratzinger, Benedykt XVI, dialog