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## JOSEPH RATZINGER-BENEDICT XVI: “CO-WORKER OF THE TRUTH” AND DISSENTER OF CONTEMPORARY RELATIVISM

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**Abstract.** The current crisis of truth relates us to the attitude of relativism, which is becoming increasingly popular not only in the academic world, but also among ordinary people. The response to this attitude is the unambiguous stance taken by Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI, who has explicitly condemned the idea. In his statements, he has repeatedly addressed relativism and emphasized its absurd claims to stand above truth. In this article, the authors cite numerous statements made by Ratzinger as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and later as the Successor of St. Peter; they also suggest solutions to restore the position of truth in the international arena and in private life.

**Keywords:** truth; relativism; battle; Joseph Ratzinger; Benedict XVI; lie.

**Streszczenie.** Joseph Ratzinger-Benedykt XVI „Współpracownik prawdy” i dysydent współczesnego relatywizmu. Aktualna sytuacja kryzysu prawdy odnosi nas do postawy relatywizmu, który ciszy się coraz większym powodzeniem w świecie nie tylko uczonych, lecz także zwykłych ludzi. Reakcją na te wypowiedzi staje się jednoznaczna postawa Josepha Ratzingera-Benedykta XVI, który zdecydowanie potępił ów problem. W swoich wypowiedziach wielokrotnie odnosił się do tej postawy, wskazując jej niedorzeczne roszczenia do stawiania się ponad prawdą. W artykule autorzy przytaczają liczne wypowiedzi ówczesnego Prefekta Kongregacji Nauki Wiary, jak i późniejszego Następcy

św. Piotra, podając jednocześnie rozwiązania służące odzyskaniu pozycji prawdy na arenie międzynarodowej, jak i życiu prywatnym.

**Słowa klucze:** prawda; relatywizm; walka; Joseph Ratzinger; Benedykt XVI; kłamstwo.

As we face the challenges of the modern world, we can undoubtedly see that apart from issues such as peace, equality, freedom, justice and prosperity, there is also the issue of truth, or rather a crisis of truth. Its causes can be found in another crisis, the crisis of values whereby everyone is able to prioritize their values as they see fit, according to their own preferences and at their own discretion. Therefore, there is a reason why the 21st century has been called a period of a crisis of truth – a period of dominance of relativism where an attitude of consensus is being created even at the expense of sacrificing one's values, which leads to the distortion of truth.

The constant technological advances and the expanding capabilities of the Internet foster rapid dissemination of information even to the furthest corners of the globe. At the same time, however, we can observe a trend to distort truth on the Internet, on the radio, in the press and on television which manifests itself in the promotion of “fake news” intended to stir a sensation in the world and mislead the audience. This trend causes significant confusion and disorientation not only in the world at large, but also in individual minds, sometimes blurring the thin line between what is true and what is a lie. For these reasons, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger – the future successor of St. Peter as Pope Benedict XVI – often spoke about the degradation of truth in the modern world when he served as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

## 1. A DISSENTER OF RELATIVISM

The term “relativism” derives from the Latin word *relativus*, from *referre*, which means “to bring back” or “to give back.” It describes a belief that truth is variable or gradable and that it depends on what one claims under specific circumstances. The opposite of “relativism” is “absolutism”

(from the Latin word *absolutus*, which means “certain” or “unconditional”). The history of relativism traces its roots to ancient Greece, and more specifically to the sophists. The concept came into being in response to a cognitive crisis in reaching truth. Later, it also became the basis of skepticism and agnosticism,<sup>1</sup> two views which are present in both daily life and science to this day and are becoming an increasingly common impediment to the search for truth. During his General Audience on May 15, 2013, Pope Francis noted that “we are living in an age in which people are rather sceptical of truth. Benedict XVI has frequently spoken of relativism, that is, of the tendency to consider nothing definitive and to think that truth comes from consensus or from something we like.”<sup>2</sup>

Examining the contemporary references to truth, Joseph Ratzinger observed that it was increasingly losing importance and being shunned to the margins of existence. This is why he inscribed the words *Cooperatores Veritatis* (taken from the Third Epistle of St. John) into the agenda of his ministry as bishop. As he himself admits, he chose the phrase mainly because

for one, it seemed to be the connection between my previous task as teacher and my new mission. Despite all the differences in modality, what is involved was and remains the same: to follow the truth, to be at its service. And, because in today’s world the theme of truth has all but disappeared, because truth appears to be too great for man and yet everything falls apart if there is no truth, for these reasons this motto also seemed timely in the good sense of the word.<sup>3</sup>

From today’s perspective, we can clearly see that the words of the motto adopted by Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI as bishop have proven to be prophetic. As Robert Moynihan notes, the work of the Prefect of

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<sup>1</sup> See H. Kiereś, *Relatywizm*, in: *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, vol. 8, A. Maryniarczyk et al. (eds.), Lublin 2007, p. 716.

<sup>2</sup> Francis, General Audience of May 15, 2013, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130515\\_udienza-generale.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130515_udienza-generale.html) (retrieved on August 17, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927–1977*, transl. E. Leiva-Merikakis, San Francisco 1998, p. 153; see also J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World: A Conversation With Peter Seewald*, transl. H. Taylor, San Francisco 2002, pp. 262–263.

the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith focused on three primary “battles”:

In the 1980s, the battle over liberation theology, where his watchword was Christian “freedom” over against Marxist “liberation”; in the 1990s and into the new millennium, the battle over relativism, where his watchword was “truth exists” over against “there is no truth”; finally, from 1982 through 2005, a series of battles over the Church’s way of worshipping God, which in the Catholic Church is called “the liturgy” [...] where his watchwords have been “communion” and “love” over against false understandings of Christian worship and communion with God and others. Thus, in the years from 1982 to 2005, Ratzinger’s work was a calculated defense of the Christian view of man, society, and the universe – of freedom, truth, and love – over against the dominant secular outlook of our time.<sup>4</sup>

This clearly demonstrates the great commitment of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the time to the defense of the fundamental values (i.e. values considered absolute and universal) that prevail in the world and remain valid at any time and in any place – regardless of who holds the power at any given moment and what beliefs they hold. The invariability of these laws stems from the fact that they are the underlying foundation of the human nature, which does not undergo any changes and therefore remains constant. These laws are set above political affiliations and the creativity of the human mind; they can never be changed or used in contravention of their purpose, of the goal which they are intended to serve. The term “natural law” itself indicates that the values which derive from it cannot be transformed or altered by man because man himself is part of these values and therefore cannot change something that pertains to him or was given to him in order to protect him from himself and from others.

The German theologian’s position appears to echo the words directed to the Angel of the Church in Ephesus: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:7). As a “guardian of the faith,” Cardinal Ratzinger has never been indifferent to Jesus’s teach-

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<sup>4</sup> R. Moynihan, *Let God’s Light Shine Forth: The Spiritual Vision of Pope Benedict XVI*, New York 2005, p. 45.

ing and to the importance of doctrine in the life of Christians. In fact, he has consistently reviled all errors and distortions that contravene the faith or teaching of the Church, which is apparent from the many documents and letters he published between 1982 and 2005.<sup>5</sup> This has earned him the (rather appropriate) nickname of “Panzer Cardinal” – a guardian of the Church’s faith and doctrine.

A common theme in the above discussion has been that of a “battle” (in a good sense of the word) for the value of truth in today’s world, and it appears that the greatest battle for truth has been fought by Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI against relativism. In his view, relativism manifests itself particularly strongly in our times due to the universal and easy access to information. However, the problem is especially acute when it comes to faith, and thus also truth, which becomes restricted in the name of tolerance. Today, what everyone accepts is considered right as long as it respects the opinions of others, without requiring any reference to objective and generally applicable truth; this demonstrates the current attitude of “I may do anything; I can do anything.”<sup>6</sup> Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger has noted that “relativism has become the central problem for

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<sup>5</sup> Some of the more important documents include the following: *Instruction on Some Aspects of Liberation Theology*, AAS 76 (1984) no. 10, pp. 876–909; *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, AAS 79 (1987) no. 5, pp. 554–599; *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, AAS 79 (1987) no. 5, pp. 543–554; *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation*, AAS 80 (1988) no. 1, pp. 70–102; *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation*, AAS 82 (1990) no. 4, pp. 362–379; *Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian*, AAS 82 (1990) no. 13, pp. 1550–1570; *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*, AAS 85 (1993) no. 9, pp. 838–850; *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Concerning the Reception of Holy Communion by the Divorced and Remarried Members of the Faithful*, AAS 86 (1994) no. 12, pp. 974–979; *Declaration “Dominus Iesus”*: *On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*, AAS 92 (2000) no. 10, pp. 742–765; *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*: AAS 96 (2004) no. 10, pp. 671–687, and many other documents and letters available on the website of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

<sup>6</sup> For more on freedom as a gift and as a responsibility, see W. Cichosz, *Czy szkoła katolicka może ulegać postmodernizmowi?*, <http://cichosz.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/5.pdf> (retrieved on March 20, 2019).

faith in our time. It by no means appears simply as resignation in the face of the unfathomable nature of truth, of course; rather, it defines itself positively on the basis of the concepts of tolerance, dialectic epistemology, and freedom, which would be limited by maintaining one truth as being valid for everyone.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, as he observed in his homily during the Holy Mass *pro eligendo Romano Pontifice* on April 18, 2005, relativism “seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Robert Sarah (Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments) noted that “today relativism appears to be the philosophical basis for Western democracies that refuse to consider that Christian truth might be superior to any other.”<sup>9</sup> This is particularly visible in France,<sup>10</sup> where faith and religious practice

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<sup>7</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, transl. H. Taylor, San Francisco 2004, p. 117.

<sup>8</sup> J. Ratzinger, Homily of His Eminence Card. Joseph Ratzinger during the Holy Mass *pro eligendo Romano Pontifice*, [http://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice\\_20050418\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_20050418_en.html).

<sup>9</sup> R. Sarah, N. Diat, *God or Nothing: A Conversation on Faith*, transl. M. J. Miller, San Francisco 2015, p. 181.

<sup>10</sup> France has recently seen an increase in the number of attacks on Christian places of worship. In February alone, 15 acts of vandalism, 15 break-ins, 10 profanations and 1 case of arson were reported. The most recent act of vandalism took place at the Basilica of Saint-Denis, where vandals destroyed historic stained glass windows (which were being restored at the time). The historic organ was also vandalized. See [https://www.vaticannews.va/pl/kosciol/news/2019-03/francja-profanacje-bazylika-saint-denis.html?fbclid=IwAR3y2bCqsGcWiEuwjMtefuTvTYPT44\\_qEe1qLyL5TnO\\_1HmZOWXVgiiTRAo](https://www.vaticannews.va/pl/kosciol/news/2019-03/francja-profanacje-bazylika-saint-denis.html?fbclid=IwAR3y2bCqsGcWiEuwjMtefuTvTYPT44_qEe1qLyL5TnO_1HmZOWXVgiiTRAo) (retrieved on March 9, 2019); <https://www.vaticannews.va/pl/kosciol/news/2019-02/francja-profanacje-nimes-wattebled-adoracja.html> (retrieved on March 9, 2019). On February 11, 2019, Cardinal Robert Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, spoke about profanations of the Most Blessed Sacrament in France (specifically in Dijon and in Nîmes). In addition, fire was set to the restored Cathedral of St. Alan in Lavaur, and the Church of St. Nicholas in Houilles was the target of vandalism three times in a period of 10 days. See also <https://www.vaticannews.va/pl/swiat/news/2019-02/robert-sarah-profanacje-kosciolow-francja.html> (retrieved on March 10, 2019); <https://www.vaticannews.va/pl/kosciol/news/2019-03/muller-wywiad-zamet-klerykalizm-skandale.html> (retrieved on March 13, 2019).

have been relegated to the margins of human life in accordance with the principle of the secular state. This reduction of religion to a private matter represents a promotion of relativism, which is the dominant idea in the public life controlled by “progressive” politicians from the left side of the political scene. And thus, new standards of democracy are set that promote truth in a subjective sense, defined in the context of a system in which the state exists, rather than in an objective sense where it remains invariable and permanent.

Furthermore, Pope Benedict XVI made the following comments during his General Audience on October 17, 2012:

Today we are living in a society in constant movement, one that has changed radically, even in comparison with the recent past.

The processes of secularization and a widespread nihilistic mentality in which all is relative have deeply marked the common mindset. Thus life is often lived frivolously, with no clear ideals or well-founded hopes, and within fluid and temporary social ties. Above all the new generations are not taught the truth nor the profound meaning of existence that surmounts the contingent situation, nor permanent affections and trust. Relativism leads, on the contrary, to having no reference points, suspicion and volubility break up human relations, while life is lived in brief experiments without the assumption of responsibility.<sup>11</sup>

On a different occasion, he also noted that “by obscuring the reference to God the ethical horizon has also been obscured, to leave room for relativism [...]”<sup>12</sup> And, in addition to the attitudes referred to by Pope Benedict XVI, there are also others to which Pope Francis drew attention during Angelus on the first Sunday of Lent in 2019. The Pope pointed to the temptations of greed, vainglory and exploitation of God,<sup>13</sup> which are

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<sup>11</sup> Benedict XVI, General Audience of October 17, 2012, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20121017.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20121017.html) (retrieved on August 16, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Benedict XVI, General Audience of November 14, 2012, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20121114.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20121114.html) (retrieved on April 20, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> See Francis, Angelus of March 10, 2019, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2019/documents/papa-francesco\\_angelus\\_20190310.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2019/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20190310.html) (retrieved on March 10, 2019).

very widespread today, especially in countries which are attempting to eliminate religion from public life and promoting instrumental treatment of others. This is why there is a strong need to reverse the current trends and eradicate the philosophy of relativism from public awareness, starting by reducing its influence so that it can be eliminated in a gradual manner. In its place, ethical values should be promoted that comply with the requirements of the natural law, and thus with the moral principles which should characterize a society in which the role of relativism is minimized.

## 2. TRUTH CANNOT BE REDUCED

In his interview for Peter Seewald, Benedict XVI made the following observation regarding the contemporary approach to truth:

It is obvious that the concept of truth has become suspect. Of course it is correct that it has been much abused. Intolerance and cruelty have occurred in the name of truth. To that extent people are afraid when someone says, "This is the truth," or even "I have the truth." We never have it; at best it has us. No one will dispute that one must be careful and cautious in claiming the truth. But simply to dismiss it as unattainable is really destructive.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, in his first encyclical letter *Lumen fidei* – largely co-written by Benedict XVI – Pope Francis referred to the attitude towards truth in modern culture and explained:

In contemporary culture, we often tend to consider the only real truth to be that of technology: truth is what we succeed in building and measuring by our scientific know-how, truth is what works and what makes life easier and more comfortable. Nowadays this appears as the only truth that is certain, the only truth that can be shared, the only truth that can serve as a basis for discussion or for common undertakings. Yet at the other end of the scale we are willing to allow for subjective truths of the individual, which consist in fidelity to his or her deepest convictions, yet

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<sup>14</sup> Benedict XVI, P. Seewald, *Light of the World: The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times*, transl. M.J. Miller and A.J. Walker, San Francisco 2010, p. 50.

these are truths valid only for that individual and not capable of being proposed to others in an effort to serve the common good.<sup>15</sup>

Here, Pope Francis touches upon an important dimension of truth, namely the community dimension. In our search for truth, we can only succeed through the “we” of working together, never through the “I” of acting alone. Truth carries in itself the notion of collaboration, that is working as a team while expending the effort to discover truth with the human mind. Without that effort, it becomes impossible to reach a consensus which would – in an objective manner – allow one to understand the essence of things, to reach its source. This is why we need an impulse to “go into” ourselves and confront both our beliefs and the beliefs of others with natural law and reality, so that what exists in the mind becomes consistent with the actual state of things (reality).<sup>16</sup>

Hans Kelsen has also made the following observation:

Truth is replaced by the decision of the majority [...] precisely because there can be no truth, in the sense of a binding and generally accessible entity for man. Thus the multiplicity of cultures serves to demonstrate the relativism of all cultures. Culture is set against truth. This relativism, which is nowadays to be found, as a basic attitude of enlightened people, penetrating far into the realm of theology, is the most profound difficulty of our age. This is also the reason why practice is now substituted for truth and why the whole axis of religions is thereby displaced: we do not know what is true, but we do know what we should do: raise up and introduce a better society, the “kingdom,” as people like to say, using a term taken from the Bible and applied to the profane and utopian sphere.<sup>17</sup>

What the above discussion reveals is that relativism claims to be regarded as “the philosophical basis of democracy, which is said to be founded on no one’s being able to claim to know the right way forward,” and that “it draws life from all the ways acknowledging each other as

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<sup>15</sup> Francis, *Lumen fidei* (encyclical letter), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130629\\_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html) (retrieved on April 10, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> See also *ST I*, Q. 21, art. 2c.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, p. 72.

fragmentary attempts at improvement and trying to agree in common through dialogue, although the advertising of perceptions that cannot be reconciled in a common form is also part of this.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, as Cardinal Ratzinger observes,

The dogma of relativism has, however, yet another effect: Christian universalism, which is carried out concretely in mission, is no longer the obligatory handing on of a good meant for everyone, that is, of truth and love; with this presupposition, mission becomes the mere presumptuous attitude of a culture that imagines itself to be superior, that tramples upon a whole multitude of religious cultures in the most shameful fashion, thus, it is held, depriving those peoples of what is best: their own heritage. Thence comes the imperative: Give us back our religions, as the right ways for the various peoples severally to come to God and God to them; where these religions still exist, do not touch them!<sup>19</sup>

As we can see, the attitude of relativism to faith shows us that it equates the Christian religion with other religions, claiming that they constitute equal paths leading to God – as long as God’s existence is certain,<sup>20</sup> which is universally questioned these days and ridiculed by opponents of the Catholic Church, a good illustration being the events that took place in Poland during recent gatherings and demonstrations.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>20</sup> See G. Watts, *Pracownik Winnicy Pańskiej. Portret papieża Benedykta XVI*, transl. J. Wilk, Częstochowa 2005, p. 77:

“Secularism states that society should be organized without God, if He exists in the first place, whereas relativism states that if God exists, then all religions are equal paths to Him.”

<sup>21</sup> This mainly refers to parodies of the Holy Mass and Corpus Christi processions, profanation of the image of the Virgin Mary of Częstochowa, attacks on priests and vandalism of places of worship. Other examples include the (in)famous speech by Leszek Jażdżewski, editor-in-chief of the *Liberté!* quarterly, and the recent attacks on Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski.

### 3. TRUTH CAN BE KNOWN

Today's philosophy has also reversed its classical belief that it is possible to understand truth thanks to human reason. In other words, the same philosophy that praises the great capabilities of reason also restricts it and distorts its role when it comes to the understanding of truth through observation of the world and through contact with the Absolute. As Benedict XVI notes,

A large proportion of contemporary philosophies, in fact, consist of saying that man is not capable of truth. But viewed in that way, man would not be capable of ethical values, either. Then he would have no standards. Then he would only have to consider how he arranged things reasonably for himself, and then at any rate the opinion of the majority would be the only criterion that counted. History, however, has sufficiently demonstrated how destructive majorities can be, for instance, in systems such as Nazism and Marxism, all of which also stood against truth in particular.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, we can see that if the question of truth is ignored and we do not presume that everyone is capable of truth, then "life ends up being reduced to a plethora of hypotheses, deprived of assurances and points of reference. As the famous humanist, Erasmus, once said: 'Opinions are the source of happiness at a cheap price! To understand the true essence of things, even if it treats of things of minimal importance, costs great endeavour' (cf. *The Praise of Folly*, XL, VII)."<sup>23</sup>

Rejecting the arguments of contemporary philosophy with regard to man's capability of truth, Benedict XVI firmly emphasized the following during his meeting with the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See on January 9, 2006: "Man is capable of knowing the truth! He has this capacity with regard to the great problems of being and acting: individually and as a member of society, whether of a single nation or of humanity

<sup>22</sup> Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, p. 50.

<sup>23</sup> Benedict XVI, Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Pontifical Lateran University on October 21, 2006, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/october/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20061021\\_lateranense.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20061021_lateranense.html) (retrieved on March 24, 2019).

as a whole.”<sup>24</sup> It is in Jesus Christ that “God entered the world and set up the criterion of truth in the midst of history”<sup>25</sup> so that man can verify and falsify it: “It goes without saying that truth requires criteria for verification and falsification. It must always be accompanied by tolerance, also. But then truth also points out to us those constant values which have made mankind great. That is why the humility to recognize the truth and to accept it as a standard has to be relearned and practiced again.”<sup>26</sup> Then, truth becomes perceptible and discernible. It can be seen in the face of Jesus Christ, who came into the world to reveal the fullness of truth to man and enable man to encounter it. As Pope Francis notes, “the truth is not grasped as a thing, the truth is encountered. It is not a possession, it is an encounter with a Person.”<sup>27</sup> Only during an encounter with the criterion of truth – that criterion being God – does it become possible to grasp truth, to see it and to understand reality through comparison with it.

In summary, we can see how firm and unambiguous Joseph Ratzinger–Benedict XVI has been as a dissenter of relativism who is not afraid to publicly demonstrate the errors of contemporary thinking that stem from the misperception of truth in the world, especially in the public, social and political spheres of life. Having analyzed the statements he has made as both Cardinal and Pope, we can conclude that relativism is an “illness” that afflicts humanity. This illness manifests itself, in particular, in the many cases where the boundary becomes blurred between what is true and what is created as convenient to the modern man, who – as has been demonstrated – finds it difficult to differentiate between what is true and real and what is a lie that has penetrated his mind to wreak havoc on his way of thinking and perceiving the world. Hence we can

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<sup>24</sup> Benedict XVI, Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See for the Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings on October 17, 2012, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/january/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20060109\\_diplomatic-corps.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060109_diplomatic-corps.html) (retrieved on March 24, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, transl. Philip J. Whitmore, New York 2012, p. 194.

<sup>26</sup> Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> Francis, General Audience of May 15, 2013, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130515\\_udienza-generale.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130515_udienza-generale.html) (retrieved on August 17, 2019).

say that Benedict XVI is a witness to and a reflection of truth in today's world. In his teaching and conduct, he has never been afraid to point to the *Logos* – Jesus Christ, which to him means facing a great mystery and discovering it by exploring the truth that stands in opposition to the modern world – a world for which truth represents an incidental part of the modern civilization.

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