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## Christ and Caesar – a Neotestamentary Perspective

### Abstract

This study examines the relationship between divine power and worldly power, beginning with a few New Testament texts. The first text to be considered is found in the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 2, and it refers to the order issued by Emperor Octavian Augustus concerning the census of “the whole world”.

The next text represents a lapidary phrase, a sort of apothegm of Jesus who left a deep mark in history and in the common language of people: “Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22: 21; Mark 12: 16-17; Luke 20: 27). The interpretations given to these words could very rarely grasp and highlight the significance of Jesus’ answer and the impact His answer had on His adversaries.

The third analyzed text regards the kingship of Jesus or his imperial



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dignity, brought up during His trial in front of the procurator Pontius Pilate.

We will reveal two types of God's sovereignty over the world, from a qualitative point of view: the spiritual sovereignty, exerted directly through Jesus Christ, and the temporal or political sovereignty, which God exerts indirectly, entrusting it to the free choice of secondary interests.

### Keywords

Supreme Power, kingship, reign, order, interpretation, trial, Kingdom, Gospel, Augustus, Caesar

## 1 Preliminaries

After the account of the Lord's Baptism and after John the Baptist was imprisoned, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God's kingdom and saying: "The time is fulfilled! The Kingdom of God is at hand! Repent and believe in the Good News." (Mark 1:14-15). In these words, Mark the Evangelist describes the beginning of the Savior's public activity and defines, at the same time, the essential content of His preaching. Matthew the Evangelist summarises the activity of Jesus in this way: "Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people." (Matthew 4: 17), and further on he says: "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Good News of the Kingdom. He also healed every kind of disease and sickness among the people" (Matthew 9: 35). Matthew and Mark the Evangelists define the preaching of Jesus as "Gospel".

In classical literature, in non-Christian Greek, the word τὸ εὐαγγέλιον indicated the reward for bringing good news, especially in the context of war victories, and, in time, designated

the content of this announcement. Later, the word gospel was also applied to other messages that brought joy to the people. The birth of the emperor, for example, as well as his presence in a certain place, represented so-called good news for the Roman world<sup>1</sup>.

In the language of theologians, the word *gospel* was translated as *good news* or *annunciation*. This sounds good, but it does not cover the meanings of the Greek word completely. This word belonged to the language of Roman emperors who considered themselves the saviors or redeemers of the world. The decrees issued by the emperors of Rome were called “gospels”, irrespective of their content, good or bad. The implicit idea was that everything that came from emperors represented a redemptory message. Therefore, not just simple news, even if good, but the transformation of the world for the better.

If Matthew and Mark, the Evangelists use this word to describe the preaching activity of Lord Jesus Christ and if, starting with that moment, the word gospel defined the literary genre of their writings, this occurred as they wished to tell their readers that what the Roman emperors, who considered themselves gods, claimed unjustly, in the case of Jesus, was true. The gospel of God’s kingdom is a message that has authority, being not only a word but also a concrete reality. The Gospel does not offer simple information about God and His plan for the world; it is the living and active word of God, a word that comes into the world, transforms it, and saves it.

Thus, in the Holy Gospel, the word of God manifests. It is a living and active word, and again, in the Gospel, occurs what the Roman emperors only claimed, without being able to accomplish, as the

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<sup>1</sup> Werner G. KÜMMEL, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, Eidelberg, Quelle & Meyer, 1983, 11. Stöger ALOIS, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 1. Teil, Geistliche Schriftlesung vol. 3/1, Patmos, Düsseldorf 1963, p. 74. (trad. it. *Vangelo secondo Luca*, Vol. 1, Città Nuova, Roma, 1981).

Gospel participates in the real Lord and Master of the world: the Living God.

## 2 Messiah-Christ and Augustus Caesar

Narrating the event of the Lord's nativity in Bethlehem of Judea, Saint Luke includes it in the general picture of human history. Messiah-Christ is born during the reign of Caesar Octavian Augustus (27 BC–14 AD), when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Augustus is not only a proper name but also an honorary title (Sebastos = the one who is worthy of being honored and glorified), a terminological detail that highlights the discreet contrast with the Infant in the manger. To the divine Augustus (*divus Augustus*), who had absolute power at the time, opposes the Infant Jesus, to Whom all the honor and glory is due. Octavian Augustus issued a decree that brought the whole world into play; everybody had to register their names, and the population of the Empire had to record their names in the tax lists, so that everybody's goods could be counted. For Saint Luke, the census ordered by Augustus serves God's plan. Thus, Caesar was interested in registering the whole world, in registering the subjects of the empire in records, but Messiah was interested, too. To the first, people owed taxes, excessive and oppressive tolls, and to the second, they owed the liberation from sin at the cost of His own Blood<sup>2</sup>.

For the first time, everyone (οἰκουμένη) was registered. For the first time, there is a government and a secular kingdom able to encompass all mankind. For the first time, there is a period, an epoch, of peaceful domination in the world. Between 13-9 BC, by order of Octavian Augustus, the Ara Pacis Augustae was erected, a monument which promoted the ideals of Rome's emperor and

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<sup>2</sup> Alexandru MOLDOVAN, *Evanghelia „copilăriei” lui Iisus, Luca 1-2; Exegeză și Teologie*. Cluj-Napoca, Mega Publishing House, 2011, p. 302.

which, accidentally or not, has been preserved. In approximately the same period, the Greek citadels in Asia Minor, probably not far from where Saint Luke was writing his Gospel, adopted the day of September 23rd, Octavian Augustus' birthday, as the first day of the New Year, calling Caesar "the Savior of the whole world".

The connection between Christ and Caesar in Rome must, nevertheless, be analyzed more profoundly. Augustus did not wish to be just an ordinary sovereign, like the ones before him and the ones after him. He had other intentions. As we have seen, Augustus was regarded not only as a political figure but also as a theological figure, given that, at the time, there was no separation between politics and religion. Soon after Octavian assumed office, the Roman Senate awarded him the title of "augustus", in Greek "sebastós" = one worthy of adoration. This title, which ancient Greek literature ascribed to Zeus, to Epicurus, and to Asclepius, is reserved in the Septuagint for God alone. For Octavian as well, this title had a *spiritual connotation*: the emperor of Rome ushered in a changed world, a new era. His military victories led to the end of the wars that had devastated the territories under the domination of Rome after the assassination of Julius Caesar, so that in 29 BC it was possible to close the gates of the temple of Janus. This tabernacle was always open in times of war in the Roman Forum.

Two relevant aspects of Octavian's perception of himself are worth mentioning. Octavian, „the savior”, brought *peace to the world*, which allowed its inhabitants, even if only for a limited period of time, to feel relief and hope for a better world. In this sense, Marius Reiser, citing Antonie Włosok, writes as follows: On 23 September (the Emperor's birthday), "between morning and evening, the shadow of this sun clock moved about 150m straight along the equinox, to the very centre of the *Ara Pacis*; there is thus a direct line from the birth of this man to Pax, and in this way it is clearly demonstrated that he is *natus ad pacem* (born for peace). The shadow comes from a ball, and the ball... is

both the heavenly sphere and the earthly globe, a symbol of dominion over the world which is now at peace”<sup>3</sup>.

Here we see the second aspect of Augustus’ self-image: *the universality* that, once again, he himself put on display in a very public record of his life and work, listing specific facts in the so-called *Monumentum Ancyranum*. He documented them with concrete data and highlighted them for his contemporaries as well as for posterity<sup>4</sup>. In this document, Octavian Augustus informs the Senate that he concluded the census of Roman citizens in 746 (7 BC). The results of the censuses were evaluated by Emperor Augustus in order to have a panorama of the whole empire. At his death, besides his will, Augustus left a *breviarium totius imperii*, a sort of record of the documents issued in his time.

The census of the whole world interested both the Messiah-Christ and Caesar in Rome. The historical and theological framework that Saint Luke creates in the Gospel of the “infancy” of Jesus suggests the universal dimension of the Incarnation. The Savior of the world could not be waited for only by those of his nation; He had to fulfill all the human expectations as Lord and Master of history. Therefore, Jesus, the long-awaited and promised by God to Israel, was first promised to the forefathers in Eden, before Israel was formed as a people in history. He was waited for by the whole world, the whole world desires him, and the whole world needs Him.

Saint John Cassian, in his work *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*, written around 430, summarises admirably the way in which God uses people to accomplish his plan:

“Augustus, becoming the only ruler in the world, put an end to the multitude of dominations of people, and You, incarnate from

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<sup>3</sup> Marius REISER, *Wie wahr ist die Weihnachtsgeschichte?*, in „*Erbe und Auftrag*”, 79 (2003), p. 459.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph RATZINGER, Benedetto XVI, *L’infanzia di Gesù*. Roma - Città del Vaticano, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012, p. 74. Titlul original al operei: *Jesus von Nazareth. Die Kindheitsgeschichten*.

a Virgin, destroyed the multitude of idols. The cities were under the rule of a worldly kingdom, and the peoples fell under the rule of the Godhead. The people were written following the orders of Caesar, we the faithful wrote ourselves in the name of Your Godhead”<sup>5</sup>.

### 3 Paying taxes to Caesar

Through the census ordered by Octavian Augustus, the Roman rule entered brutally into the life of God’s people. Caesar’s taxes, which the tax collectors of the Roman administration in Palestina collected, were too little felt as an economic and financial burden; the Judeans regarded them as an odious means of national enslavement, as an instrument of humiliating their irreducible religious exclusivism<sup>6</sup>. The synoptic evangelists present an episode (Matthew 22: 21; Mark 12: 16-17; Luke 20: 27) in which the enemies of Jesus come to Him with the obvious intention of “tempting Him” and “trapping Him in His words” so that they might “hand Him over to the power and authority of the governor” (Luke 20: 20). The ones who attacked Him were the powerful of the time from a religious and political point of view (the Pharisees and the Herodians). The preamble of the episode, which contains a *captatio benevolentiae*: “Teacher, we know that you say and teach what is right, and that you are not partial to anyone but truly teach the way of God” (Luke 20: 21) leads to the core of the problem “Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” (Luke 20: 22).

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<sup>5</sup> SAINT JOHN CASSIAN, *Stichera della natività del Signore*, în „*La Bibbia Commentata dai Padri, Nuovo Testamento 3, Luca*”. A cura di Sara Petri e Giovanna Taponecco. Roma, Città Nuova Editrice, 2006, p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> Grigorie T. MARCU, *Hristos și Cezarul sau Statul și Biserica în lumina Noului Testament*, în „*Mitropolia Ardealului*”, Anul XXII, Nr. 7-9 (1977), p. 488.

Caesar's taxes were imposed in Judea immediately after the abdication of Archelaos and the appointment of procurator Coponius in 6 AD, and they reminded the Hebrews that they had lost their freedom. Moreover, the taxes they had to pay represented a theological issue embraced by the Zealot movement founded by Judas the Galilean, which appeared in Palestine during this very period. The historian Josephus Flavius describes it like this: while procurator Coponius was in office, a certain Judas called the inhabitants of Galilee to a rebellion, "affirming that it is a crime to be faithful to the Romans by paying the taxes and acknowledging as master a mortal king, besides God"<sup>7</sup>. The taxes, called "κῆνσον" (lat. *census*) by Mark the Evangelist and "φόρον" (tribute) by Luke the Evangelist and Josephus Flavius, were seen as high personal taxes, levied equally on all, and they went directly into the imperial treasury<sup>8</sup>. Before answering, Jesus asked them to show Him a denarius, and His answer was prepared through a logical demonstration, a common feature of Judean pedagogical dialogues. Jesus did not have money on Him (Mark 6:8). The demonstration by Jesus had another purpose: to persuade His adversaries that they were using the imperial coin. The denarius was a man's salary for one day's work (Matthew 20: 2). As the emperor's face was engraved on the coin, it could be easily described. Emperor Tiberius (14-37 AD) practiced a conservative monetary policy and produced only three types of coins, two of which were very rare. The third, just like any denarius, was made of silver and had on one side the emperor's face with a laurel crown on the head (the symbol of his divine dignity) and the inscription: TIBERIUS CAESAR DIVI AUGUSTI FILIUS AUGUSTUS. On the reverse of the coin, the inscription continued with the title: PONTIFEX MAXIMUS, and

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<sup>7</sup> JOSEPHUS FLAVIUS, *Istoria războiului iudeilor împotriva romanilor*. București, Editura Hasefer, 1999, p. 158.

<sup>8</sup> Joachim GNILKA, *Marco*. Assisi, Cittadella Editrice, 1998, 644. Titlul original al operei: *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, Benziger, 1978.

the face of the Empress Mother, Livia, was engraved. In the right hand, she had the Olympic scepter and in the left hand the olive branch, which characterized her as the personification of heavenly peace. Hence, the coin became a symbol of power. As long as the enemies of Jesus carry with them the emperor's coin, it proves that, somehow, they recognized his authority.

The answer of Jesus left a profound mark in the history and common language of people: "*give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and [give] to God what belongs to God!*" (Luke 20: 25). Therefore, under no circumstance "either Caesar or God, but one and also the other, each in his sphere of influence. Here one sees the beginning of the separation between religion and politics, until that moment the two having been inseparable in the case of all peoples and regimes. The Hebrews conceived the future kingdom of God, established by Messiah as a *theocracy*, but now the word of Christ reveals to them a kingdom of God which *is in this world*, but which *is not from this world*, a kingdom which advances and extends in a different way, and which can coexist with any type of regime, be it sacral or secular"<sup>9</sup>.

One must underline the closeness between the Roman emperor and God, which cannot be understood as an *equilibrium*. Caesar and God cannot be placed at the same level, as Caesar and his authority depend on God and must answer to Him. God is the absolute sovereign and master of history. We, the people, are not shared in two; we are not constrained to serve two masters. The Christian is free to obey the state and its authority, but also to oppose when the state authority opposes God and His law (see also Acts 4: 19; 5: 29). The truthfulness "*παρρησίας*" of one's creed represents a characteristic of Christian confession<sup>10</sup>. The

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<sup>9</sup> Raniero CANTALAMESSA, *Dal Vangelo alla vita*. Milano, Edizioni Piemme, 2009, p. 123.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph A. FITZMYER, *Gli Atti degli Apostoli*. Brescia, Editrice Queriniana, 2003, 288. Titlul original al operei: *The Acts of the Apostles. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York, Doubleday, 1998.

taxes of Caesar are approved and the imperial authority is acknowledged, however, at the same time, the words of Jesus indicate the limits imposed to secular power by divine authority. The accent of Jesus' speech is on God, to whom everyone and everything belongs, and in the eschatological horizon of the message we must balance the ephemerality of secular power to the stability and durability of the Kingdom of heaven. In the case where secular power would wish to compete with the divine one, a decision must be made in favour of God, the absolute master of history<sup>11</sup>.

The Gospel, unlike secular authority, has continuously changed the world for the better. The truthfulness can represent, at the same time, your missionary success, but also a great threat: "Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord or you will die by our hands!" (Jeremiah 11: 21). John the Baptist, for example, just as prophet Jeremiah in former times, preached a society established on moral bases, to be governed by honesty, justice and fulfilled duty. In order to impose such an ideal, any conflict with the opposing world is forbidden. The intransigence towards a society that tries to deny such values is not only allowed, but also necessary, being able to become even a virtue. "Talking to the world and its leaders, with the audacity and dignity of John the Baptist, making the word Of God redoubtable even at a king's court, being ready to suffer, but with dignity, for your creed, sets you indeed in a conflict with the world and its leaders, but this has been the very immortal glory of the one who is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, the glory of being honoured by all generations, the honour of being considered, even by God Himself, the greatest man among the sons of men!"<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Joachim GNILKA, *Marco*, p. 647.

<sup>12</sup> Stelian TOFANĂ, „S-a aflat Ioan Botezătorul în conflict cu lumea vremii sale? O perspectivă teologică a evangheliștilor”, Cluj-Napoca, „Renașterea”, nr. 1 (2009), p. 2.

#### 4 Jesus before Pilate. The Theme of Kingship

The Hebrew historian Josephus Flavius, but especially Philo of Alexandria present a completely negative image of the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate. In other testimonies, Pilate appears as a determined and ambitious leader, which is confirmed in the Holy Gospel by his answer to the Sanhedrins' reproach of his having written above Jesus' cross the words: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Pilate answers briefly and firmly: "What I have written, I have written!" (John 19: 22).

It has been said repeatedly, that because of a tendency in favour of the Romans, which was politically motivated, the Holy Gospels presented Pilate in a good light and placed the responsibility of killing Jesus on the Jews. However, the reality is different: the image of the Roman procurator during the trial of Jesus is that of a man who knows how to intervene in a brutal way, if this appears pertinent to him, in order to protect public order. But he was also aware of the fact that Rome owed its domination over the world to the diplomacy of tolerating foreign divinities and to the pacifying force of Roman justice. This is how he appears in the episode of the trial of Jesus<sup>13</sup>.

The episode referring to the taxes of Caesar prepared, in the perspective of Saint Luke, the accusation formulated in 23: 2: "We have found this man perverting the nation, forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king". These words include three accusations of a political nature: *the first* – This man is perverting the nation; *the second* – This man forbade us to pay taxes to Caesar; *the third*, and the most important – This man says he is a King! A representative of the Roman domination in Judea could ignore none of these

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph RATZINGER, Benedetto XVI, *Gesù di Nazaret. Dall'ingresso in Gerusalemme fino alla Risurrezione*. Roma – Città del Vaticano, BUR Saggi – Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012, p. 212. Titlul original al operei: „Jesus von Nazareth: Band II – Vom Einzug in Jerusalem bis zur Auferstehung”. Freiburg, Verlag Herder, 2011.

accusations. In Rome, the emperor was Tiberius, about whom the historian Suetonius says he was excessively suspicious and killed anyone for the slightest suspicion of revolt.

Upon hearing these accusations, Pilate realized that he had to talk to Jesus. He was more interested in the last accusation; then he was very much aware that those who tried in any way to avoid paying taxes to Caesar were the Sanhedrin themselves!

The theme of the first dialogue between Jesus and Pilate is *Jesus' kingship*. Although he is very critical about the historical value of the pericope, exegete Charles K. Barrett highlights remarkably, its theological value: "John has with keen insight picked out the key of the passion narrative in *the kingship of Jesus*, and has made its meaning clearer, perhaps, than any other New Testament writer"<sup>14</sup>.

The accusation that Jesus called himself King of the Jews was serious. Rome could indeed admit the authority of some local sovereigns – as was the case of Herod the Great –, but these had to be identified by Rome, and there they were granted the rights of sovereignty. An emperor lacking this was considered a rebel threatening *pax romana* and was consequently liable to capital punishment<sup>15</sup>.

Nevertheless, Pilate knew that Jesus did not cause any revolutionary movement. According to everything he had heard from the Jews, Jesus seemed rather *a religious visionary*, who may have violated the Mosaic law, but this was not of interest to him.

There remains a question without an answer: Did not Pilate find it curious that the Judeans presented themselves with Christ before him as protectors of Rome's interests, since his personal knowledge did not leave him the impression that the use of force was necessary? We do not know the answer. Yet, during the

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<sup>14</sup> Charles K. BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St. John*. Philadelphia, Westminster, 1978, p. 512.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph RATZINGER, Benedetto XVI, *Gesù di Nazaret*, p. 212.

interrogation in the Praetorium, an element appeared that stirred his interest: Jesus' affirmation. When asked: "Are you the King of the Jews?", Jesus answers: "You say that I am a king. I was born and I have come into the world for this reason: that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is 'of the truth' listens to my voice" (John 18: 37). Earlier, Jesus said: "My Kingdom is not of this world! If my Kingdom were of this world, my servants would have fought so that I would not be delivered to the Jews. But as it is, my Kingdom is not from here" (John 18: 36).

This confession of Jesus obviously puzzles Pilate: the accused claims kingship and a kingdom, but at the same time underlines the radical difference between the kingdom He mentions and the kingdoms of this world. The detail that surprised the Roman procurator the most was decisive: no one fights for this form of kingship, or at least does not fight with the power of the sword. If the power – and especially the military one – is a characteristic of worldly kingship or kingdom, none of these were in Jesus!<sup>16</sup>.

With these words, Jesus introduced an entirely new concept of kingship and kingdom and presented it to Pilate, the representative of worldly, classical power. What did Pilate think then, and what do we think about such a concept? Is it something real or is it nonsense that does not deserve our attention? Is this concept addressed to us? Can we pay attention to it?

I tend to answer affirmatively! After Jesus affirmed that no one fights for such a kingdom, He introduced a positive concept to help Pilate – and us, certainly – to understand the essence and the special character of the power defining the kingship He mentioned, the one nobody fights for with the sword: *the truth*. Pilate, in the ulterior part of the interrogatory, introduced another concept, a concept which came from his world, and which is usually connected to the concept of kingdom: *power* – authority (*exousía*). Domination or governance claims power;

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<sup>16</sup> Joseph RATZINGER, Benedetto XVI, *Gesù di Nazaret*, p. 218.

moreover, it defines it. Yet, Jesus names the essence of His kingship: *bearing witness to the truth*.

Now, the question is: *Is truth a political category?* Or does the Kingdom of Jesus have nothing to do with politics? If the answer is negative, then to which order does it belong? As long as Jesus founded His conception of kingship on truth as a fundamental category, Pilate righteously asks: “What is truth?” (John 18: 38). A question which did not receive an answer...<sup>17</sup>.

Thus, “*What is truth?*” It is the question that the modern state asks in its doctrine: can politics assume the truth as a category for its structure? Or must it leave the truth, as an inaccessible dimension, to subjectivity and try to establish peace and justice with the instruments available to the context of secular power? Given the impossibility of a consensus on truth, does not politics, staking on it, prove to be the instrument of certain traditions which, actually, are nothing else but forms of preserving power? On the other hand, what happens when truth is not taken into consideration? What sort of justice would be possible? Should not there be common criteria to guarantee justice for all, criteria avoiding the arbitrary and capricious opinions of people? History has shown that the emergence of great dictatorships was possible due to ideological lies, and that only the truth brought people liberation from them and freedom.

“*What is truth?*” The question of the pragmatic, superficially and skeptically asked, is very serious, in whose answer lies the destiny of humanity. And then, what is truth? Can we recognize it? Could it enter as a criterion in our thought and will, in the life of each man, and in the life of the community?<sup>18</sup>.

We will not insist now on the answers philosophy gave to these questions. We will remain in Pilate’s Praetorium to remain near *the Truth*, as in that moment, the Truth was there.

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph RATZINGER, Benedetto XVI, *Gesù di Nazaret*, pp. 213-214.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 214.

In our world, truth and wrong opinions, truth and lies are combined in a confused way. Truth in all its grandeur and purity is rarely seen in our world. But the world is true or authentic only to the extent to which it reflects God, its Creator and significance, the eternal Reason out of which it was brought into existence, and it becomes more and more authentic to the extent to which it approaches God. Only in this case does man reach his own truth. God is the reality that endows us with existence and significance<sup>19</sup>.

“*Bearing witness to the truth*” means preferring God and His will to the interests and powers of the world. God is the measure of existence. In this respect, the truth is the true king or emperor who gives everything grandeur and significance. The truth is the orientative character of the world and of man. We must not be wary of words! The world’s dwelling in darkness, its estrangement from God reflects the fact that man was not able to decipher correctly God’s creation, he was not able to recognise Truth, which inevitably led to the establishment of pragmatism, a philosophical trend which claimed what is useful and convenient from a practical point of view as the unique criteria of truth; this is how one reached the situation in which the power of the mighty became the god of this world<sup>20</sup>.

As modern people, we would be tempted to say: “Due to science, for us creation has become decipherable for us.” Science allowed creation to be deciphered. Indeed, Professor Francis S. Collins, who led the Human Genome Project, exclaimed joyfully: “The language of God has been deciphered!”

Indeed, in the incredible mathematics of divine creation, which we can at present read in the genetic code of man, we perceive

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph RATZINGER, Benedetto XVI, *Gesù di Nazaret*, p. 216.

<sup>20</sup> Rudolf PESCH, *Das Markusevangelium*. Zweiter Teil, Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Vol II/2, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1977, p. 465. Traducere în limba italiană: *Il Vangelo di Marco. Parte seconda. Testo greco e traduzione*. Brescia, Paideia Editrice, 2000.

the voice of God. Unfortunately, however, not the entire language. The truth about man and his significance has become visible. But the truth about himself – on what he really is, where he comes from, why he exists in the world, the meaning of evil and good – that truth, unfortunately, cannot be discovered following this way. Humanity has incontestably made much progress; technology made it possible to reduce distances between people, but it is also responsible for the coldness and indifference between people [14, p. 219].

*“What is truth?”* The Roman procurator gave up this question and did not listen to the answer, and, for his work that Friday morning, he considered it impracticable. Even today, in the political dispute, just as in the contradictory discussions on the formation of common justice, this question gives people a hard time, but without an answer to it, man cannot discover the meaning of his life and thus allows the mighty to impose through violence.

## Conclusions

The *redemption* or the *salvation* of the world in the ultimate sense of the word consists in the fact that the Truth was revealed in Jesus Christ. In Him, God entered the world and elevated the criterion of truth at the center of history. Truth on the surface is forceless. In the same way, Christ, according to the world’s criteria, lacks power: He did not have an army to defend Himself, and as such, He was crucified. Nevertheless, it was in this manner, in His total lack of power, that He proved to be powerful, and only in this manner does truth become a power, as through the Cross and the Resurrection, Christ was given *“All authority in heaven and on earth”* (Matthew 28: 18).

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