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Mundus huius temporis as locus theologicus
in the writings of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI
Doctoral dissertation in the field of dogmatic theology,
written under the supervision of Fr. Prof. Dr. Habil. Jerzy Szymik

Summary

The aim of the work was to examine whether and how the contemporary world (*mundus huius temporis*) is a theological place for the theological work of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI. And if so, to what extent, in what way, and under what conditions? Also, for what purpose, for the good of the world and the Church, in what terms? During the elaboration of the study material, subsequent questions were added to the aforementioned enquiries: Does the contemporary world influence the practice of theology and how? How consciously is this influence performed? How should a theologian endure the pressure of the times and not succumb to it, so as to conduct a constructive dialogue with the contemporary world?

Looking for the answers to the above questions, the author, on the basis of studies, examined the theological work of Joseph Ratzinger in terms of his relationship to the contemporary world. The source literature formed all the writings of Ratzinger/Benedict, both those collected in the *Opera omnia* series and line items not included in it, especially encyclicals, homilies and pontifical speeches.

The conclusions that emerge after examining the works of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI are as follows: Ratzinger's theology is thoroughly contemporary, it is created under the influence of modernity, it answers the questions of the world and, at the same time, it does not lose itself in it as it is able to oppose it and stick to the truth, regardless of the consequences. With all this, the German theologian is not a bitter artist, a eulogist of "good old times", nor a "prophet of despair". He does not create a reconstructive theology that would simply return to the past, cutting off from what is here and now. His writings emanate a quiet and humble hope which has its source not only in faith and private piety, but also in great erudition. In this theological work, concern for the salvation of humanity, missionary momentum and readiness to talk to every man of "good will" are also visible.

Thus, for Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, the contemporary world constitutes one of the theological places. The dissertation developed this thesis and presented the exemplification, argumentation and interpretation in three research stages consisting of three chapters. Each of the chapters referred to a different understanding of the concept of *locus*, which means primarily "place", but also "space", "source" and "argument" (these three nuanced ways of understanding the concept of

locus are the "skeleton" on which the entire dissertation is based). Summing up the deliberating in chapter one (space), second (source) and third (argument), the answer to the following question emerges: How is *mundus huius temporis* a *locus theologicus* for Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI?

The first chapter presents a description of the contemporary world derived from Ratzinger's writings. The contemporary world is a space where theology is created. That is why, the space is worth exploring, diagnosing and understanding. Ratzinger does it very carefully and devotes a lot of space in his work to the description of the present. This description is quite critical, although ambiguously negative. Ratzinger believes that the world may be favorable to theology, but it may harm it. However, the world is worth understanding and hearing, discerning its maladies and flaws, and getting to know the solutions that it proposes in response to its own problems. These solutions are rarely supported by faith, but they may constitute the starting point for the dialogue between the Church and the world.

The second chapter describes the sources of the theology of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, with particular emphasis on the *mundus huius temporis*. The "contemporary world" studied in the dissertation is neither the main nor the most important source of the theology of Pope Benedict. His thought stands firmly on three pillars which are: the Bible, the Fathers of the Church and doctrinal statements and inspirations of theologians of his time. The world is a subsidiary source for his theology, but it does not mean that it is irrelevant. The present serves Ratzinger to draw the issues of many of his texts (he tries to respond to the present by referring to the past, so as to transform the old theological theses and use them creatively) What is more, he also draws linguistic inspirations (in order to adapt the form of content transmission to today's recipient).

All of the above makes the "world of this time" not only a theological source for him, but also a meta-theological one. How he defines theology, what goals he sets for it and how he tries to conduct his research is largely inspired by the present.

The third chapter presents the contemporary world as a theological "argument" and "counterargument". Ratzinger tries to lead a lively discussion with the times in which he was to create. He tries to see every opportunity that the present offers to theology, the Church or faith. However, he also notices the threats. He names them, defines them and analyzes them in order to face them in his creation. The conclusion of the third chapter and, to some extent, of the entire dissertation, is a presentation of how the above theory, concerning the contemporary world as a theological place, finds its application in Ratzinger's most important trinitological theses.

In conclusion, it can be said that according to Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, the contemporary world is not a curse for the theologian and their work, but rather "God's permission" in a positive sense. Pope pensioner believes that if the Lord puts the theologian in a given place and time, it means that they have something to do there. This is how Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI understands his mission. He creates his theology, remaining in a difficult dialogue with the world and not "taking offence" at the present. His attitude is an inspiration and a role model for the younger generation of creators, including the author of this dissertation.