

Text of the teaching of Fr. Emmanuel PINOT

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Fraternity of Jesus retreat  
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## "The JEWISHNESS OF CHRIST AND THE MISSIONARY PRINCIPLE OF INTERCULTURALITY"

The complexity of the title of the teaching I have been asked to give reflects quite well the complexity of the subject it designates. What is hidden behind this title is intellectually demanding; It's also emotionally engaging.

The questions of "inculturation" or "interculturality" constitute **a major issue** for the catholicity of the Church in the current context<sup>1</sup>. They are also important for our Community, an international community born in France. Indeed, if we are all brothers and sisters by Christ's call, we are also beings of flesh and blood, rooted in different cultures; we belong to nations that may have been in conflict or are still in conflict; sometimes our collective memory is still marked by past abominations, I am thinking in particular of slavery, that "enormous crime" (J EAN-PAUL II<sup>2</sup>), the distant genesis of Western atheism (Card. Jean-Marie LUSTIGER<sup>3</sup>).

The international dimension of the Community allows us to taste the beauty of the catholicity of the Church; However, it is not without being a source of misunderstandings and hurts. Perhaps the word will be free more and more, opening the way to a deepening of our fraternity. For example, Belgian, German, Austrian or American brothers may have been unbearable by the clumsiness if not the limitations of French brothers who had difficulty perceiving their particularities; our seminarian brothers of the Maison Saint-Joseph in Abidjan could also testify that the gap between the cultures of West Africa and the cultures of Africa of the Great Lakes can be a source of tension before becoming an opportunity for a joyful complementarity. In the midst of this, I must risk a word. How to proceed?

I will start with a sentence of Saint John Paul II who said in 1990:

"the Church's reflection on its mission and its very nature is intrinsically linked to its reflection on the lineage of Abraham and the nature of the Jewish people."<sup>4</sup>

➔ **I would therefore like you to see that certain issues concerning the evangelization of cultures in general – and the inculturation of the community charism in particular – are linked to the full recognition of Christ's "Jewishness".**

With this word "Jewishness" taken from the title, I mean in particular the relationship of Christ to the Old Testament and to his people Israel.

By using the word "re-recognition" here, I affirm that this is not self-evident and that our freedom is at stake. My teaching will be seemingly theoretical, not immediately applicable, but my goal is to take a

step back and help us **discern** the inner movements, naming certain temptations that are obstacles to the evangelization of cultures and the building of an authentic fraternity.

*In one hour, I do not pretend to attempt a synthesis, but I would like to offer you an itinerary more modestly; So I made choices and left aside questions that were important for the balance of the whole.*

I will proceed in two stages. The first will be longer than the second.

### Participants

## I. "And the Word became a Jew," "servant of circumcision" (*Rom 15:8*) and "saviour of the world" (*Jn 4:42*)

Our reflection starts from what is at the heart of our retreat: the Mystery of the Incarnation.

## INTRODUCTION: CONTEMPLATING THE MESSIAH OF ISRAEL

We could have begun by taking a time of prayer to contemplate Christ in the different ages of his life and in his public ministry.

It is possible that many do not spontaneously depict Jesus **as an observant Jew** of the first century, with Semitic facial features, with long hair, perhaps red like King David, speaking Aramaic, reading Hebrew, perhaps muttering a few words of Greek, wearing bangs at the hem of his garment (cf. *Num 15:38*), dancing in the streets of Jerusalem to the sound of Hebrew melodies and the shofar.

Many artistic representations do not help us to nourish our memory, since Christ is often represented as a Caucasian in Europe, as an African in Africa and as an Asian in Asia.

### A. THE "JEWISH CHRIST»

"The Jewish Christ". This title is redundant; it should be enough to say: "Christ", without needing to add "Jew", since "*Christos*" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew "*Massiah*", "Messiah", and the "Messiah" is that of Israel...

### 1. "And the Word became a Jew"

With Saint John, we confess: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory" (*Jn 1:14*). Through the Incarnation, the Son of God took on the humanity of a real, concrete man, with his determinations: he was born of a woman, in a given place, in a given time; he assumed a gendered body; he took on the processes of growth proper to every child (cf. *Lk 2:40, 51-52*) and, as the Second Vatican Council emphasizes in its decree *Ad Gentes*: "[he] bound himself to the specific social and cultural conditions of the men with whom he lived."<sup>5</sup> In 1979, in a decisive speech, John Paul II forcefully affirmed that

"The term '**inculturation**' [...] expresses very well one of the components of the great mystery of the Incarnation"<sup>6</sup>.

As its construction suggests, the term "in-culturation" refers to this idea of insertion into a culture. Thus we must say not only that the "Word became flesh," but also that the "**Word became a Jew.**"

This implies that, through his Incarnation, the Word became **like every man** and at the same time **not like every man**, but only **like a few**.<sup>7</sup> In fact, he became man, like all of us present here, and, at the same time, not like all of us, since he became a Jew and not a Gaul or an Egyptian. There is obviously a difference between Jews, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks and Amerindians, as between all peoples, but it must be added that **the Jews also have "a different way of differing"**<sup>8</sup>. What for? Because they belong to the People chosen by God; they are **"according to election"** (cf. *Rom* 9:11).

With the Second Vatican Council we confess that "by his incarnation, the Son of God has in some way united himself to every man. He worked with the hands of man, he thought with the intelligence of man, he acted with the will of man, he loved with the heart of man" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22). We can gloss: "He united himself to every man as the Son of Abraham, he worked with Semitic hands, he thought with a Jewish intelligence shaped by the Scriptures and exchanges with his own, he acted with the will of an obedient son of Israel, he loved with a heart educated by Mary, the daughter of Zion."

So we need to spend time contemplating how Jesus, according to his human nature, deciphered his path in the Scriptures. How did he pray as a teenager *Psalms* 21 – "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? [...] all my limbs are dislocated. My heart is like wax, it melts in the midst of my bowels. [...] They pierce my hands and feet; I can count all my bones. [...] They divide my clothes among themselves and draw lots for my garment" – ? How did he meditate, year after year, on the song of the suffering servant (cf. *Is* 52:13-53:12)? We must also spend time contemplating Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, animated by an ardent love for this city and for its Temple, his heart crushed by the hardness of some and its future consequences.

A note from a Roman dicastery stated in 1985: **"Jesus was a Jew and always remained so."**<sup>9</sup> The first part of the sentence never been a problem, the second needed to be remembered: "he always remained a Jew". The note continues with numerous references to the Gospels. I quote:

"Jesus was fully a man of his time and of his Palestinian Jewish milieu of the 1st century, whose anxieties and hopes he shared. [...] There is no doubt that he wants to submit to the law (cf. *Gal* 4:4), that he was circumcised and presented in the Temple, like any other Jew of his time (cf. *Lk* 2:21, 22-24), and that he was trained in [the observance of the Law]. He advocated respect for it (cf. *Mt* 5:17-20) and invited us to obey him (cf. *Mt* 8:4). The rhythm of his life was punctuated by the observance of pilgrimages on the occasion of the great feasts [...] (cf. *Lk* 2:41-50, *Jn* 2:13; 7:10 etc.). [...] Jesus often teaches in the synagogues (cf. *Mt* 4:23; 9:35; *Lk* 4:15-18; *Jn* 18:20, etc.) and in the Temple (cf. *Jn* 18:20, etc.) [...]. He wanted to place in the context of the worship of the synagogue the proclamation of his messiahship (cf. *Lk* 4:16-21). But above all, he wanted to carry out the supreme act of self-giving in the context of the Easter feast (cf. *Mk* 14:1, 12 and par.; *Jn* 18:28). [etc.]<sup>Art. 10</sup>. »

## 2. A very unique way to be Jewish

If Jesus is a Jew and has always remained so, it must be recognized that he had **a unique way of living as a "subject of the law"**, a sign that the "fullness of time" had come (cf. *Gal* 4:4).

God's Law, the *Torah*, must be interpreted.<sup>11</sup> It must "be explained" and then "put into practice". When a Jew embodied in his life an aspect of the *Torah* that was still hidden, it was said that he was "renewing" the *Torah* and that it became a "living *Torah*."

Like his predecessors and contemporaries, Jesus interpreted God's Law and put it into practice. Historians can try to situate his answer among the diversity of the answers given by the different groups or currents of Palestinian Judaism of the 1st century, some of whose names you know: the Essenes, the Sadducees and of course the Pharisees. This is not enough. It should be added that **the "renewal" brought about by Jesus is out of all proportion to all other interpretations of the Law.**

In his book *Jesus of Nazareth*, Benedict XVI gives the floor to an eminent specialist on Judaism, Jacob Neusner (+2016)<sup>13</sup>. In a way, he puts himself in the shoes of Jesus' listeners when he delivered his discourse on the mount; The Jewish professor says he is at first seduced, but at one point he blocks completely. What for? In his eyes, Jesus' interpretation of the Law seems to **endanger the very identity of the people of Israel**. Jacob Neusner is not wrong... For him, it is therefore obvious: **only God** would be entitled to propose such an interpretation of the Law of Moses. He doesn't think he's saying so well... Here we are on the threshold where everything changes.

The teaching of Jesus, the "*Torah* of the Messiah" (cf. *Gal* 6:2), does not only bring a renewal, it brings **"every renewal"**<sup>14</sup>. The Gospel does not only propose *a* fulfillment, it is in itself the fulfillment of all the accomplishments that preceded it. Jesus is not simply "a living *Torah*," but he is "the living *Torah*," according to an expression in Benedict XVI<sup>15</sup>, that is, the *Torah* incarnate.

Where is the renewal? One aspect of this renewal is that Jesus' obedience to God's will leads him through **the boundary of death and life**. This is madness! This is the excess! All people and all cultures are constantly confronted with this limit of death and life. All the Scriptures were secretly directed toward his crossing, but only the Father's beloved Son could open a way "through the ravines of death" (*Psalms* 21[22]) by offering his life as a sacrifice for multitudes.

Jesus does not take a step aside from the Law of Moses, but rather deepens it; by his death and resurrection, he does not explode the Law of Moses, but **rather implodes certain provisional structures, bringing to light what was definitive in it**.<sup>17</sup>

## **B. A "JUDAHITE" OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD, EVEN DENIED, BUT TODAY HAPPILY REDISCOVERED**

### **1. The "Teaching of Contempt" and Its Tragic Consequences**

In the history of the Church, there has been a tragedy with tragic consequences. From the moment when the "Church of the circumcision", that is, the Jewish component of the Church, had almost disappeared and only the "Church of the Nations", that is, the non-Jewish component of the Church, remained, there was **a recurrent tendency to "de-Judaize" the figure of Christ**, or at least not to draw all the consequences of Christ's belonging to the Jewish people<sup>18</sup>.

In the second century the Church was able to react forcefully against the heresy of Marcion, who rejected the Old Testament purely and simply, but then it was not always able to fight against this less crude tendency towards "de-Judaization."

What explains this fact? It is certainly a story of mediocrity and sin. One thing is certain: the controversy between Jews and Christians is both one of the causes and one of the consequences. I do not wish to elaborate here on what Jules Isaac called *The Teaching of Contempt* (1962) for the Jewish people; I can only assure you that if you take a close interest in the history of anti-Judaism in the Christian milieu, you may make some shameful and frightening discoveries.

There have always been great saints and good theologians, but it must be recognized that over the centuries there has been **a tendency to depreciate the Jewish people and the Old Testament**. The antitheses of St. Paul have been taken up again – "carnal/spiritual", "old/new", "darkness/light", etc. – without perceiving all the nuances brought by the apostle who was "of the seed of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew, the son of Hebrews [and] a Pharisee" (*Phil* 3:5; cf. *Rom* 11:1). Alas, how many teachings and homilies have given the impression of depreciating the Law of Moses... an almost ridiculous law from which Christ would have happily distanced himself!

Brothers and sisters, I say solemnly: **if this were really so, God's plan and the mission of the Church would be absurd!** One would have to imagine that God would have given birth to his Christ in the only culture that was irreconcilable with his plan<sup>19</sup>. In such a perspective, if Christ had indeed denied

his own culture, I wish the missionaries courage in convincing the recipients of the Gospel that his acceptance will not be an uprooting, but a fulfillment!

If the incarnation of the Son of God in the Jewish people is ultimately only a meaningless detail, then Christ is not the one who definitively renews the whole of history; he is no more than a vague figure that is imagined to be **the "ideal man"** and the Gospel is no more than a vague humanism instead of being a call to conversion and the proclamation of salvation. From then on, **each culture can project its entire ideal onto this abstract "Jesus", without seeing that this ideal has not been converted.** This is what may have happened first in Europe and then on other continents. By making Christ a European, an Indian or an African, we can do so in our own image. This is nothing but **"idolatry,"** as Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger repeated<sup>20</sup>.

This tendency not to fully honor the Jewishness of Christ is not only an ancient and European trend. It is **a temptation that is always and everywhere.** I could multiply the quotes, obviously to be put in their context to do them justice. In Cameroon, the venerable "baba Simon" (+1975), a holy priest, said too quickly: "For me, the incarnation is not God who was incarnated in a Jew [...] For me, Jesus Christ is a Kirdi", from the name of an ethnic group<sup>21</sup>. In Germany, the great theologian Karl Rahner, in an exchange with a Jewish scholar on the subject of the preferential option for the poor, rather awkwardly asserted: *"The Jewish origin in Jesus is of no interest to Christians today."*<sup>22</sup>

## 2. A recent change in outlook and a promise for the future

For almost a few decades, we have been living in a favorable moment (or "*kairos*"). The catastrophe of the "*Shoah*" played a triggering role in Europe and provoked **a change in the way the Jewish people were viewed throughout the Church.** What for? The lack of resistance of the baptized to pagan anti-Semitism can unfortunately be explained by anti-Judaism in the Christian milieu. We must confess it. At the Second Vatican Council, no. 4 of the declaration *Nostra Aetate* was a decisive step in this conversion. Pope John Paul II and then Pope Benedict XVI contributed to the development of a Christian theology of Judaism and to the renewal of Christology. Much work remains to be done.

Thanks to the work of historians and exegetes, we learn to reread the New Testament today with a new perspective. It's fascinating. When we open the Gospels or the epistles of Paul **by taking the glasses of the Jewish apostles,** we make a more respectful and coherent reading. Thus, where we used to think that Jesus distanced himself from a Law of Moses defended by the Pharisees, we discover that in reality Jesus defends what is written in the Law and reproaches the Pharisees for annulling it, adding human traditions (cf. *Mk* 7:5-13)<sup>23</sup>. If Jesus shows himself in a sense more conservative than the Pharisees, it is because their new interpretations threatened the future of a Church called to one day bring together Jews and non-Jews.

## C. EXAMINATION OF OUR RESISTANCE ON THE PATH TOWARDS A RECONCILED FRATERNITY WHERE DIVERSITY IS WELCOMED

We are coming to the end of this first part. In a few flashes, I tried to tell us again that Christ was Jewish and had always remained so; it has been so in an absolutely unique way, bringing the Law to fulfillment by passing through death; after centuries in which the "Jewishness" of Christ has not been sufficiently honored, recent rediscoveries open up fruitful perspectives.

Until now, we have remained as external observers of these developments. We need to go one step further. In the light of the Word of God, I would like to try to **name the temptations that are played out in the secret of hearts, yesterday as today, with regard to the election of Israel and the "Jewishness of Christ".**

If I have ever lost you along the way, you can hang on here: I am going to talk about the difficult path to fraternity!

## 1. The Election of Israel as a Paradoxical Path to Fraternity

### *a) Salvation as the re-establishment of unity with God and among men*

What can hinder Christ's disciples from fully recognizing his Jewishness? What makes us resist entering into the "*feelings*" (Phil 2:2) of the Heart of Christ towards his own people – given that the current drama of the Holy Land (the war in Gaza) adds a great deal of darkness<sup>24</sup>? In response, allow me to take up with you **the common thread of salvation history**.

We know that we were created out of love and for love. Called to live the "**communion of persons**" in the image of the Trinitarian communion<sup>25</sup>.

The book of Genesis shows us how the drama of sin is a "**dispersion**" : intimate fragmentation of man within himself, destructive opposition between man and woman (Adam and Eve), violent rivalry between brothers and sisters (Cain and Abel); finally, the impossibility of living a respectful unity of communion at the level of society (Tower of Babel).

Since sin is a "rending of human unity", then salvation history will pass through "the restoration of the lost unity", both the "restoration of the supernatural unity of man with God" and the restoration of "the unity of men among themselves"<sup>26</sup>. Saint John expresses it in a decisive sentence: Jesus must die in order to "**gather together in unity** the scattered children of God" (Jn 11:52).

### *b) Election, a paradoxical remedy for divisions*

We come to the point that interests me.

To heal humanity of its divisions and build a fraternity, God first had recourse to a **paradoxical "remedy"** such as a vaccine. This remedy is "**election**"<sup>27</sup>. Certainly, God always has the whole of humanity in view, but he begins by choosing one man, one man only, Abraham. Not only does he choose and bless him, but he asks all the others to bless him in turn:

"The Lord said to Abram, '... I will make you a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will become a blessing. I will bless those who bless you; whoever curses you, I will reprove.'" In you will be blessed all the families of the earth. (Gen 12:1-3)

At first, this remedy for division tended to exacerbate it! Is that clear!

– On the one hand, **the temptation for the chosen one, that is to say the Jew,<sup>28</sup> is to be proud** of having been chosen, on the one hand forgetting that this choice was gratuitous and on the other hand resisting being a channel of blessing for others. I notice that the Jewish people had the humility to humbly recount that, like their father Abraham, they made mistakes and were sometimes more a channel of violence than a blessing to the nations.

– On the other hand, **the temptation for the one who is not chosen first, that is, the non-Jew, is to be jealous of God's choice**. It's very concrete. Think about your sometimes hurt family histories: do you feel like you're the unloved one in the family? We ask you to start by blessing your favorite! There is something to resist! There is reason to revolt!

This pride and jealousy that nourish a **deadly "rivalry"** <sup>29</sup> **between brothers and sisters**. This rivalry originates in a fear of missing out and therefore an original doubt about God's goodness.

Why, then, did God use this remedy, which at first caused the opposite effects, by increasing pride and jealousy in a way? Because in order to properly treat a patient and involve him in his rehabilitation, we must reveal to him **the disease** from which he suffers!

Here, illness prevents communion in difference, either because the two parts are separated and there is nothing more in common, or because one has absorbed the other and there is no longer any difference. Conjugal life confirms to us, moreover, that the absorption of one by the other is no less violent than the opposition. The same is true for all of humanity. God does not want rivalry or artificial

harmony. Thanks to the election, he began by **establishing an irreducible difference** between Jews and non-Jews.

In particular, we must understand that **the Old Testament is not the history of the people of Israel, but the history of Israel in its relationship with the pagan nations, with the promise of reconciliation on the horizon.**<sup>30</sup>

*c) Salvation in Christ as reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (=non-Jews)*

This detour through the Old Testament allows us to understand why, for the author of the Letter to the Ephesians, **the salvation brought by Christ is above all a reconciliation between Jews and Pagans**, between the children of Israel to whom the covenants and the promise belonged (cf. *Rom* 9:2) and those who were "*strangers to the covenants and the promise*" (cf. *Eph* 2:12):

"It is he, Christ, who is our peace: from the two, the Jew and the pagan, he made one reality; with his crucified flesh he destroyed what separated them, the wall of hatred [...]"<sup>Art. 31</sup>. Thus, from both, the Jew and the pagan, he wanted to create in himself a single new Man by making peace. (*Eph* 2:14-15)

If we were asked to express what Christ's salvation is in a single sentence, it is highly likely that many of us would say something like, "Christ has set me free from my sin," and few of us would first evoke the gathering of mankind into unity! This reconciliation between the two parts of humanity is nevertheless the great "mystery", the "mystery" once "hidden" and now "revealed" (cf. *Rom* 16:25; cf. *Eph* 3:5)<sup>32</sup>.

In February 1994, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said in Jerusalem:

"We have understood nothing of Jesus if we do not enter with him into the dynamic of reconciliation", if we do not see that his mission consists in "gathering Jews and Pagans into a single People of God where the universalist promises of Scripture are fulfilled, which repeatedly proclaim the adoration of the God of Israel by all nations"<sup>33</sup>.

*d) In the Church, the maintenance of differences is made possible by fraternal charity and stimulated by praise*

I would like to add here a final remark which is not without consequences for the question of legitimate diversity within the Church and the Community.

For the apostolic generation, as you know, the Church is above all a "Fraternity" (cf. *1 Pet* 2:16: "*adelphotès*"<sup>34</sup>) where both, Jews and pagans, can live together in communion, without dissolution of their respective identities. Before Christ, the identities of Jews and non-Jews were protected by the obligatory prescriptions of the Law of Moses. After Christ, these prescriptions are "deactivated", according to an expression of Paul (cf. *Rom* 3:31). What for? Because **love, which is the fulfillment of the Law (cf. *Rom* 13:8), is what now makes it possible to guarantee respect for differences**. It is a call for freedom. Different answers are possible. Saint Paul says: Jews and non-Jews, "welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you" (*Rom* 15:7). It's risky! It's fragile! It is a question of fraternal delicacy. Saint Paul explains, moreover, that this mutual respect can lead some to renounce practices that are legitimate in themselves, in order to adapt to others who, for the moment, cannot envisage them.

Brothers and sisters, this is very interesting for us. I am not saying that we do not need statutes, customs, or principles of life to ensure unity, but we do need to reflect on how they promote charity without limiting it, because only "inventive charity" allows us to welcome each other with respect for their differences.

This charity is possible... because the pride and jealousy that prevented fraternity have been banished... in theory. A sign of this is praise. In the Letter to the Romans, Paul describes the Church as a community in which Jews and Pagans praise God for his mercy (cf. *Rom* 15:7-11). **Praise is the antidote**

**to pride and jealousy!** In particular, non-Jews rejoice for what God has done for Israel and to now share in his blessing. Thus, the promise made to Abraham is fulfilled in the Church!

Brothers and sisters, the grace of praise that we have received is a royal road to welcome this other grace, that of Fraternity.

## 2. "The Jew first, the Greek second" (*Rm 2,9*)

In the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul solemnly says:

"I say to you, Christ made himself the servant of the Jews because of God's faithfulness, in order to fulfil the promises made to our fathers" (*Rom 15:8*).

Literally, Christ is the "servant of circumcision". With aptitude, Saint Thomas Aquinas sheds light on this verse from the Epistle to the Romans by quoting the Gospel<sup>36</sup>:

"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (*Mt 15:24*)

Brothers and sisters, as you know, Christ's public ministry was limited to the people of Israel alone, and he first asked his apostles to do the same (cf. *Mt 10:6*). It was only after his resurrection that Christ sent them to all nations (cf. *Mt 28:28*). Obviously, the pagans were never far from him and were always present in his heart: in the manger, there are shepherds and the Magi; On the cross, there are Jews and the Roman centurion. However, apart from two incursions on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee and on the borders of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus remained in the Holy Land and reserved his ministry to the "sheep of the house of Israel." What for?

Israel's vocation is to be the "light of the nations" (cf. *Is 42:6; 49:6*) and **the purpose of Jesus' ministry was first of all to enable Israel to respond to its vocation**. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger stated it bluntly:

"Jesus did not have to found a people of God ("the Church"). It already existed. His task was limited to renewing this people through a deepening of its relationship with God, and to opening it to the whole of humanity.<sup>37</sup> »

This renewal is profound. To become the light of the nations, Israel must undergo a profound reconfiguration that leads to an implosion of certain aspects of its existence, as Jacob Neusner noted. **In order to be able to be a missionary to the ends of the earth, Israel must in some way "pass" through a death.** This is what Jesus does first, opening the way.

Following him, his brothers and sisters according to the flesh must "pass" through death, that is, live a "Passover"<sup>39</sup>. The apostles are "passed away". It is impossible to follow this path without being led by the hand through the darkness and without a special grace: St Paul experienced it on the road to Damascus (cf. *Acts 9:1-20*).

Not all the children of Israel seem to have taken this path. Was it due to disobedience? Was it because God had not given them this grace and was leading them down a different path? This is God's secret. One thing is certain: what sensible man would dare to reproach a Jew for not having easily followed Jesus in death?

The opening of Israel to all nations has produced **a tearing in the people** that is for the apostle Paul the cause of great suffering: "I have great sorrow in my heart, unceasing pain. I myself, for the sake of the Jews, my brothers and sisters of race, would like to be anathema, separated from Christ" (cf. *Rom 9:1-5*). Paul's suffering is only an echo of the even greater suffering of the Heart of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, it seems impossible to be a missionary without passing through death in turn – often by death in our highest religious beliefs and certainties, sometimes by death in the flesh in the wake of the martyrs. It also seems impossible to be a full missionary without sympathizing with this suffering of the Heart of Christ for his own people torn apart by the Gospel.

### 3. And you, how do you position yourself in relation to your brothers?

Faced with the "choice of God", with regard to election, Scripture puts before us two possible attitudes.

#### a) *"Do not be proud of the branches" (Rom 11:18)*

First attitude. In chapter 11 of the Letter to the Romans, St Paul addresses Christians from the pagan nations (cf. *Rom* 11:13) and tries to make them understand that "to be saved is to participate in Israel [...], to be saved is to receive the Jewish sap"<sup>40</sup> it is to join a history that preceded them. To do this, he uses the image of the grafting of a wild branch onto a frank olive tree.

Paul is worried and warns the pagan Christians to **be proud** at the expense of other branches that have been temporarily "set aside", that is, the Jews who, for the moment, have not visibly welcomed the Gospel.

"Do not be proud of the branches" (*Rom* 11:18)! Paul's fears were well-founded, as we have seen. Pagan Christians, that is, the vast majority of the baptized, have often found **it difficult to accept Israel's election and priority** – "Jew first, Greek (i.e., non-Jew) second" (cf. *Rom* 1:16). You accuse Israel of being hardened? You don't see that if you hold on to the faith, it's because of God's grace! Therefore, says Paul, "do not boast" (*Rom* 11:20)!

#### b) *"Lord, the little dogs under the table eat the crumbs of the little children!" (Mk 7:28)*

Second attitude: rather than pride, **a path of humility**. The Gospel gives us the example of a pagan woman who was able to share in God's blessing because she recognized Israel's priority. You know this strange scene. A Syrian-Phoenician woman comes to ask Jesus to come to the aid of her little girl. Jesus seems to refuse, saying:

"Let the children be full first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (*Mk* 7:27).

It must be understood: "Leave the children of Israel first; it is not right to take the blessings of the Covenant given to the children of Israel and throw them away to the (little) pagans."<sup>41</sup>

What does the woman answer?

"Lord, the little dogs under the table eat the crumbs of the little children!" (*Mk* 7:28)

She doesn't protest! She does not cry scandal in the face of divine preference! It humbly acknowledges **the precedence of Israel...** but she adds that this precedence is not **an exclusion of others, but the means chosen by God to reach them**. This magnificent confession of faith pushes Jesus to anticipate in a way the "hour" of openness to the pagans: his daughter is freed from the grip of the devil.

For this woman, as for all of us, to recognize Israel's priority, to recognize that God leads the history of salvation in an astonishing way, is **to recognize that God's gift is always absolutely free**, since I receive something that was not originally intended for me: I, who am not Jewish, discover that I share in the grace given to Israel!

From this biblical journey, let us remember in particular these two temptations that oppose the Fraternity:

on the one hand, wanting to keep for ourselves what you have received in order to give it to others; on the other hand, wanting to receive the gift of God directly without it passing through another. Let us

remember more positively that this dynamic of **receiving** and **giving** is at the heart of a reconciled Fraternity where pride and jealousy are healed, as evidenced by **praise**.

In the midst of such a Fraternity, election is joyfully recognized as the providential means used by God for the salvation of the entire human race. The "Jewishness" of the Incarnate Word is then joyfully confessed. This confession functions as a test of truth.

## II. Inculturation and catholicity of the Church

"Go out of all nations and make disciples" (*Mt 28:17*)

### INTRODUCTION:

#### CONTEMPLATE THE SPLENDOR OF JERUSALEM FROM ABOVE

In a few days, on All Saints' Day, we will contemplate the immense crowd of saints in heaven gathered in a common prayer: Our Father!<sup>42</sup> In Heaven, the gathering of the human race in unity will be accomplished.<sup>43</sup> The "Jerusalem above" (*Gal 4:26*) will be "resplendent" (*Eph 5:27*)! The Church welcomed into its bosom "an immense crowd [...] of all nations, kindreds, peoples and tongues" (*Rev 7:9*).

Brothers and sisters, the **Church, our Mother, is beautiful, beautiful in her diversity that does not undermine her unity!** The Church is as diverse as the tunic of Patriarch Joseph was multicolored (cf. *Gen 37:3*), it is richly adorned like the robe of Solomon's wife (cf. *Ps 44:10*), marveled at many of the Fathers of the Church.

The way that leads us to this magnificent horizon is obviously **the mission of the Church from "Jerusalem"**, "to all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (cf. *Acts 1:8*).

While waiting for heaven, we can already taste the beauty of Catholicity when we participate in large gatherings in Rome, at *WYD*, or in international retreats of the Community.

#### A. THE PROCESS OF CULTURAL "TRANSFIGURATION»

##### 1. All cultures have to do their part for the common good of the whole Church

Brothers and sisters, each one of us is unique and makes a fragment of the Body of Christ shine forth as we allow ourselves to be converted. In the same way, **civilizations are "original as persons"**, "irreducibly diverse", and when one of them allows itself to be transformed by the Gospel, it makes **new aspects shine** forth that it alone can make shine forth, for the joy of all<sup>44</sup>.

As one theologian wrote, "in order to make the most of the divine treasure of which she is the depositary, [the Church] knows that all races, all centuries, all centres of culture have to contribute their share."<sup>45</sup> Yes, all nations are to come from Ephah, Sheba, and Kedar to bring their "treasures" to Jerusalem, according to the magnificent prophecy of *Isaiah 60*.

The first centuries of the Church were marked by **the providential encounter of the Gospel with Greece and Rome**<sup>46</sup>. This was only the beginning. **It is a very serious misunderstanding that the Church of the Jewish Christ is still often associated with the West**; it is the height of irony that many Asians consider Jesus to be a Westerner even though he was born on Asian soil, John Paul II noted.<sup>47</sup> The mission must continue: not only must the Mediterranean basin be evangelized anew, but the evangelization of other continents is only just beginning on a historical scale. As a young Chinese man remarked the day

after his baptism: "Scripture will not be fully understood [...] until it has been translated, read, meditated on, in all the languages of the earth."<sup>48</sup> It takes time! We are not patient.

## 2. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, every culture is called to live an intimate "transfiguration"

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, St. Paul VI wrote in 1975:

"It is important to evangelize – not in a decorative way, as if by a superficial varnish, but in a vital way, in depth and to their roots – the culture and cultures of man" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20)

"To evangelize [is] to make humanity itself new." (*ibid.*, 18)

"For the Church, [it is] a question of attaining and as it were of overturning by the power of the Gospel the criteria of judgment, the determining values, the points of interest, the lines of thought, the sources of inspiration and the models of life of humanity, which are in contrast to the Word of God and the plan of salvation." (*ibid.*, 19)

When a catechumen welcomes the Gospel into his life, he experiences a "Passover" in the footsteps of Christ, a **"passage" from death to life**, from the "old man" to the "new man" (cf. *Col* 3:9-10), as the baptismal liturgy signifies. The whole Christian life, we experience, is then a long process of transformation. The Holy Spirit not only comes to remove sin and heal what leads to sin, he also comes to reveal to us our deepest desires and leads them little by little to their fulfillment. With Origen (+253), we could say that the Christian life is an incessant "passage" from the Old to the New Testament, from waiting to fulfillment: there is a part in me that is in a way still in the Old Testament and that must "pass" into the New through the gift of the Spirit of Christ.

In a similar way, as some of their members are converted, cultures are called to experience a "Passover", a "passage", a "transformation" made up of continuity and discontinuity, or even a **"transfiguration"**<sup>49</sup>. Every culture is called to enter into this long and never-ending process that discards what is bad, heals what is wounded, confirms what is good and leads further what was pending.

What is **the connection between this process of transfiguration of cultures and the recognition of Christ's "Jewishness"**? The question is very difficult. For our purposes, I would just say this: if we closely analyze the way in which Christians have been able to interpret the Word of God and evangelize cultures,<sup>50</sup> from the Fathers to the medieval period, and then from the medieval period to the present day, **we can discover a correlation between the**

- **on the one hand, the understanding we have of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments;**
- **and on the other hand, the way in which cultures are approached in a missionary approach.**

Together, let us try to perceive some aspects of this "correlation" by examining what happens if the process of transfiguration is correctly perceived or on the contrary distorted. If that doesn't sound like you, spam the next two minutes !

- **If I have a correct understanding of the Mystery of the Jewish Christ**, if in interpreting the Old and New Testaments I actually perceive the way in which Christ brings the Promise to fulfillment, if I have the same love as Christ for the people of Israel, then **I am able to grasp how the Newness of Christ can transfigure cultures and bring them too to their fulfillment**. I can then be in **the right missionary attitude** : I can listen to the world – as Francis has often invited us to do – and I am able to discern the presence of the Spirit of Christ

already at work, not only in the history of the Old Testament, but also in the external world, even where we least imagine it, that is to say, on the margins, on the peripheries. At the same time, I am not unaware of the conversions still to be lived; but I am patient, because in the light of salvation history and my experience, I know that the process of conversion is always slow and never completed.

– **The first deviation is that I de-Judaize the figure of Christ**, I do not really accept the Old Testament for what it really is, I no longer announce a Christ who brings the Promise to its fulfillment. So in this case, **there is no longer any question of a process of transfiguration**. At the level of the teaching of morality, this leads either to Pharisee rigorism or to relativistic laxity, instead of indicating a path of conversion espousing a law of gradualness. At the missionary level, this leads to a procession of errors. To caricature, this can give rise to two extreme positions:

1°) We indiscriminately reject all elements of the culture to be evangelized **by demonizing it** and we act as if we had to replace it with another culture that we think is Christian. **The mission is experienced in the mode of destruction**. This was the temptation of certain missionary models, especially Protestants.

2°) Almost all the elements of the culture to be evangelized **by canonizing** it are accepted without discrimination; sometimes texts from pagan antiquity in Europe, the *Upanishads* in India, or oral traditions in Africa are put on the same level as the Old Testament; **The mission is not really necessary and leaves room for confusion**. Sometimes it was the temptation of theologians or pastors reacting to the damage of the previous error.

– **Second deviation** : I recognize the "Jewishness" of Christ, I truly welcome the Old Testament... but **I somehow underestimate the renewal of the New**. Christ is undoubtedly the greatest prophet in the series of prophets, but he is not really the one who renewed all things. So, in this case, **without denying the transformation that the proclamation of the Gospel brings about, we are no longer able to take the full measure of it**. One ends up having the illusion of believing that the process of transformation has already come to an end for one's own culture and one considers it as the model to be imitated. Mission no longer has a place in one's own culture, while it is difficult to truly listen to others when one encounters other cultures. This was undoubtedly the temptation of certain messengers of the Gospel from Europe when they approached other cultures at the time of the "missions"<sup>51</sup>.

Let us only remember this: **the more we accept the Mystery of Emmanuel in its entirety and progress in understanding Christ's relationship with the Old Testament and with his people, the more we will be able to have a right missionary attitude towards cultures**, whether it is our own culture today or yesterday, or another culture that we encounter.

## B. "INCULTURATION" AND "INTERCULTURALITY"

In missionary reflection, we first spoke of "adaptation", then of "indigenization". In 1979, John Paul II introduced the word "inculturation" into the language of the Magisterium to designate a deeper missionary process with a double dimension.<sup>52</sup>

I take up here the definition given by Bishop Barthélemy Adoukonou, bishop and theologian from Benin, former secretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture [*who died exactly at the time of this teaching*!]:

Inculturation is the process "by which the Gospel is proclaimed and carried to the roots of cultures and thanks to which, *when put in the process of conversion*, cultures serve as expressions of the Gospel faith"<sup>53</sup>.

The expression "inculturation of the Gospel" was not without its problems because it could give the impression that there would be a naked, ethnically neutral, abstract, ahistorical Gospel, which could then be clothed in African or Asian garments as it had been clothed first in Jewish and then European garments.

In Asia, where the still too European features of the Church could be experienced as an aggression, some theologians and bishops were moving in this direction. In 1993, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger gave a masterful lecture in Hong Kong<sup>54</sup> and addressed sensitive issues. Yes or no, has the proclamation of the Gospel destroyed cultures by violently imposing the transplantation of a foreign heart? Shouldn't we think of "inculturation" as the transplantation of "a faith stripped of culture into a culture that is religiously indifferent"?

The future Benedict XVI replied:

"God himself has linked himself to a history that is now his and from which we cannot free ourselves. Christ remains a man for eternity. However, being human and being a body inevitably include a rather particular history and culture, a rather particular history and culture, whether it suits us or not. We cannot [...] take away the flesh of Christ and give him another. [...] ».

Note: "whether it suits us or not"! We have trouble with God's choice: Christ is "Jewish"... and it is for eternity!

Subsequently, the Cardinal engages in a luminous reflection on "culture" and "faith" which he leads him to affirm:

**"We should no longer speak of inculturation, but of encounters of cultures or interculturality."**

What for? He wants to emphasize that there is no such thing as an abstract Gospel and that the missionary process is always part of a meeting of cultures, at the deepest level, at the level of the heart, where the great questions are asked and where there is an openness to the universal. This makes it possible to understand that the acceptance of the Christian faith promotes "a transforming conversion" which is not a destruction, but rather a **"transforming preservation"**.

The greatness of a culture is revealed, and I quote, in "its openness, **its capacity to give and to receive**, its power to develop, to accept purification, and to become more conformable to the truth of man."

When you hear this expression "ability to give and receive", you should react! We find **the movement essential to the reconciled fraternity between Jews and pagans** evoked at the end of the first part. It is not surprising, then, that in 2011, on his way to Benin where he was going to officially deliver the exhortation *Africae Munus*, Benedict XVI returned to the question of "inculturation," pointing to "fraternity" as his horizon. I quote:

"I would prefer to speak of **interculturality** rather than inculturation, that is, of a meeting of cultures in the common truth of our human being, in our time, and thus grow in **universal fraternity**; not to lose that great thing which is catholicity, that in all parts of the world we are brothers, we are a family that knows each other and collaborates in a spirit of fraternity.<sup>55</sup> »

### **C. EXAMINATION OF HISTORY: THE SAME DOOR ALLOWS US TO RECEIVE HUMBLY AND TO GIVE WITHOUT HURTING**

In this second part, we have (too) quickly seen that if we do not correctly recognize the "Jewishness" of Christ, his relationship to the Old Testament and to his people, then we lose the understanding of the process of cultural transformation, with quite important missionary consequences. The history of the missions has certainly been a history of holiness, it is also linked to disfigurements and wounds.

I would like to rephrase this by taking an image, that of **the "door"** : in the Catholic Church – as in any international community, no doubt – **it is the same "door" that opens to receive or to give.** This can malfunction.

By resisting "acknowledging the saving role played by the Jewish people in their birth to the gospel" – despite Paul's warnings – peoples of Christian culture have found it difficult to "approach other cultures with the respect they had enjoyed at the founding of the Church."<sup>56</sup> By having had difficulty *receiving*, by resisting fully *internalizing* God's choice, the Church in Europe may have found it difficult to *give* the Gospel to others without hurting. We have to recognize that. I could say a lot more.

What will the new recipient of the Gospel do, the one who receives the proclamation no longer of Jewish apostles, but of missionaries from Greece and Rome? Here the testimony of Bishop Barthélémy Adoukonou is very interesting\*. When he was appointed secretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture by Benedict XVI, he reread his itinerary as follows:

"At first, I was conditioned by the pan-African current for the affirmation of the black man and his self-management: a reading based on distrust of everything Western. I questioned any external contribution, seeing in it a subtle attempt at cultural imperialism... <sup>57</sup> ".

His thesis director was a certain Professor Joseph Ratzinger. After reminding him that at the end of the war the starving Germans had had to accept American aid, the latter told him:

**"He who does not have the simplicity to *receive* has no right to give either "58.**

In the light of this sentence, Archbishop Barthélémy Adoukonou says that he has changed his perspective, ceasing to tirelessly denounce the misdeeds of Western imperialism and ceasing to seek to build an African theology by opposing each other, but now seeking to positively elaborate an African theology. To go beyond resentment in order to open oneself to the fraternal logic of giving and receiving, is to embark on the path of a just "inculturation" of the Gospel.

I am not sure that Archbishop Adoukonou interpreted these words of the future pope in the light of the logic of reconciliation between Israel and the Nations, but we can do so and it gives an additional meaning.

**"Whoever does not have the simplicity to *receive* has no right to *give*. »**

By rereading history in the light of the Word of God, it becomes possible to name temptations and wounds, not to look at the past, but to open together a path to the future.

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\*Surprisingly, Bishop Adoukonou died on the very morning of teaching, October 27, 2025...

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## Conclusion: Fraternity and Inculturation

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Christian fraternity has been wounded or is still wounded by the way in which the Gospel has been transmitted and is being transmitted; my conviction is that, reciprocally, **an increase in fraternity can heal hearts and promote an authentic "inculturation" of the Gospel** in each of our respective cultures – including in Europe where the process is constantly being renewed. Because cultures evolve.

I hope that I have suggested, in the absence of having shown that a right missionary attitude requires a good understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, which corresponds very exactly to the right understanding of the Mystery of Christ who, through his Passover and the gift of the Spirit, transforms and saves the world. Here, there is a challenge not only to frequent the Bible daily to extract a few verses, but to know more and more **the "total narrative" that runs from Genesis to the Apocalypse** in order to perceive how transformations and reconciliations take place. **The full recognition of Christ's "Jewishness" functions here as a test of truth.** We who have been given the Hebrew name of "Emmanuel" should be sensitive.

When in the Church and in the Community we say "At home in France..." or "At home in Africa..." To justify our particularities, we are often right because it is important to name our differences; however, we should always ask ourselves whether it is "at home" **before, during or after the conversion** to which Christ calls us, if I may say so.

The charism of the Community is not the Gospel and the Community is not the Church. The foregoing reflections remain enlightening and warn us against **the dream of an abstract, naked community charism that could be isolated and then incarnated on all continents.** No, in its genesis, it is inseparable from its insertion into a singular story, that of Pierre Goursat, a French consecrated man, in the 1970s. Charisma is not limited to this, however, and as it encounters new cultures – and French culture today is not exactly the same as it was 50 years ago – **new potentialities appear.**

Inculturation is a process that unfolds **over time**, over the long term, and that is played out at the root, **in the heart.** If we want to make "French", "American", "Chinese" in a proactive way, we risk missing out; rather, it is a question of each person, wherever the Lord has placed him, to be faithful to the radicality of the call that Christ has addressed to him. Under the guidance of the Spirit, purifications will be lived at the same time as new missionary experiences will be set up, which will produce new fruits.

Finally, one last remark. In the process of inculturation, there is always **an uncomfortable moment.** What for? Let us take the example of theology: on the one hand, the Magisterium is the norm for theological research, but on the other hand, the Magisterium is enriched by theological research. There is therefore a moment of hesitation when the theologian can go a little further than the Magisterium, without necessarily knowing yet whether it is in the right or the wrong direction. The same is true of the "inculturation" of the Gospel, and the same is true of the inculturation of the charism. For the members of the Community, there is a risk of not obeying the calls of the Spirit enough; for the government, the risk is to see too short by wanting to defend an existing structure without letting itself be moved by the Spirit. It's uncomfortable for everyone. This situation calls for a "common discernment" that takes time.

This "common discernment" can only be lived because Christ has gathered us together in a single Fraternity, Jews and non-Jews, "Parthians, Medes and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, of the provinces of Pontus and Asia, of Phrygia and Pamphylia, of Egypt and the regions of Libya near Cyrene, [...] Cretans and Arabs" (cf. *Acts* 2:9), etc. where we receive one another, without pride or jealousy, each praising God for what he has done for the others.

*P.S. This reconciled fraternity is both the condition and the consequence of a fruitful inculturation of the Gospel. The complete reading of the Bible teaches us that between the account of sin and the story of forgiveness there is the story of confession. For this there must be an "examination of conscience" in prayer – I have tried to put words – and a liberation of speech between brothers and sisters. This is undoubtedly before us.*

## Plan

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### I. "And the Word became a Jew,"

**"servant of circumcision" (Rom 15:8) and "saviour of the world" (Jn 4:42)**

**Introduction: Contemplating the Messiah of Israel**

#### A. The "Jewish Christ"

1. "And the Word became a Jew"
2. A very unique way to be Jewish

#### B. A "Jewishness" often misunderstood, even denied, now fortunately rediscovered

1. The "Teaching of Contempt" and Its Tragic Consequences
2. A recent change in outlook and an opening for the future

#### C. Examination of conscience of our resistance on the path towards a reconciled fraternity where diversity is welcomed

1. The Election of Israel as a Paradoxical Path to Fraternity
  - a) *Salvation as the Restoration of Unity with God and Among Men*
  - b) *Election, a paradoxical remedy for divisions*
  - c) *Salvation in Christ as the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (=non-Jews)*
  - d) *In the Church, the maintenance of differences is made possible by fraternal charity and stimulated by praise*
2. "The Jew first, then the Greek" (Rom 2:9)
3. And you, how do you position yourself in front of your brothers?
  - a) *"Do not be proud of the branches" (Rom 11:18)*
  - b) *"Lord, the little dogs under the table eat the crumbs of the little children!" (Mk 7:28)*

### II. Inculturation and catholicity of the Church: "Go out of all nations and make disciples" (Mt 28:17)

**Introduction: Contemplating the splendour of Jerusalem from above**

#### A. The process of "transfiguration" of cultures

1. All cultures have to do their part for the common good of the whole Church
2. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, every culture is called to live an intimate "transfiguration"

#### B. "Inculturation" and "interculturality"

**C. Examination of conscience of history: the same door allows us to receive humbly and to give without hurting**

**Conclusion: Fraternity and Inculturation Plan Notes**

**Notes (for further information)**

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N.B. In the following, in order not to overload this text, I will not give the detailed bibliographical references.

- 1 This context is as follows: the exit from Western hegemony, far from having opened up a communion between peoples where each can finally be respected in his or her particularity, has rather given way to a "world war in pieces" (FRANÇOIS).
- 2 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, "Address to the Catholic Community of the Island of Gorée", Saturday, 22 February 1992.
- 3 Cf. J.-M. LUSTIGER, *Pour l'Europe un nouvel art de vivre*, Paris, Puf, 1999.
- 4 In JOHN PAUL II, "Address to the participants in the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the *Nostra Aetate* declaration", Thursday, 6 December 1990. Taking a closer look at the role of the people of Israel in the history of salvation or in the "Jewishness of Christ" is not the business of a few who would be inclined towards Judeo-Christian dialogue, just as others might be engaged in other missions: it is in reality impossible to carry out a deep reflection on Christ and his Church without embarking on this path. The first words of no. 4 of the declaration *Nostra Aetate* are significant: "*Scrutinizing the mystery of the Church*, the Holy Council recalls the bond that spiritually binds the people of the New Testament to the lineage of Abraham." In VATICAN II, Declaration *Nostra Aetate* on the Church's Relations with Non-Christian Religions, 28 October 1965 (we will celebrate the 60th anniversary tomorrow!).
- 5 In VATICAN II, Decree *Ad Gentes* on the Missionary Activity of the Church, no. 10.
- 6 Cf. John Paul II, "Address to the Pontifical Biblical Commission," April 26, 1979: "The term 'acculturation' or 'inculturation' may be a neologism, but it expresses very well one of the components of the great mystery of the Incarnation. As we know, 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (*Jn* 1:14), so when we see Jesus Christ, 'the carpenter's son', we can contemplate the very glory of God (cf. *Jn* 1:14). »
- 7 Cf. P. BEAUCHAMP, *Le récit, la lettre et le corps*, Paris, Cerf, <sup>11982, 21992</sup>.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Cf. Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, "Notes for a Correct Presentation of the Jews and Judaism in the Preaching and Catechesis of the Catholic Church", May 1985.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 To go further on this subject, it is fruitful to look at the distinction between the "written *Torah*" and the "oral *Torah*" which already existed at the time of Jesus before being systematized in the rabbinic period.
- 12 I am referring here to the "*biddush*". *Hiddush*, or "renewal," is the activity by which a Jew, teacher or disciple, manifests a new aspect of the oral or written *Torah*. The word also signifies the result of this activity, that is, a new aspect of the Torah. On this theme, see the magisterial contributions of P. Lenhardt, *À l'écoute d'Israël, en église*, vol. 1 and vol. 2, Paris, Parole et silence, 2006 and 2009.
- 13 Cf. J. NEUSNER, *Un rabbin parle avec Jésus*, tr.fr. depuis l'orig. engl. (*A Rabbi Talks with Jesus*, Montréal, McGillQueen's University Press, 2001 [rev. ed. and augm. of the 1993 edition]), Paris, Cerf/MédiasPaul, 2008.

- 14 Cf. the famous expression of St. Irenaeus of Lyons: Christ "brought all novelty by bringing himself", "*Omnem novitatem attulit, semetipsum afferens*", in IRENEE DE LYON, *Adversus haereses*, IV, 34, 1.
- 15 Cf. J. RATZINGER-BENEDICT XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, II. From the Entry into Jerusalem to the Resurrection, Paris, II. From the Entry into Jerusalem to the Resurrection, Chapter IX.
- 16 I am thinking here of these luminous reflections of Fr. Paul Beauchamp (+2001), a French Jesuit and exegete, on the way in which Jesus fulfills the Scriptures (that is, the Old Testament): "To adjust himself to the place dug out by the Old Testament is for Christ exactly the condition of his kenosis, outside of which he cannot be known. Because the said location is slowly deepening, under the effect of a historical process, until its extreme emptiness, which the Spirit has come to fill. Jesus "had to" go through similitude in order for his identity to be revealed beyond any similitude. It is not because of the similarities that we believe, but because of the excess which is revealed only through them", in P. BEAUCHAMP, *L'un et l'autre Testament*, 2, *Accomplishing the Scriptures*, Paris, Seuil, 1977.
- 17 On this point, one can read with great benefit J. RATZINGER, "The Theology of the Covenant in the New Testament", in ID., *The Unique Covenant of God and the Pluralism of Religions*, Paris, Parole et Silence, 12005, 2 2017 (be careful: do not take the first edition of this book, because the reproduction of the article contains serious omissions). The text can also be found online on the website of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences of Paris. German and English translations can be found in the German- and English-language editions of the journal *Communio*. It is appropriate to complete with J. RATZINGER, "Israel, the Church and the World", *ibid.*
- Jesus does not set aside the Jewish Scriptures, but on the contrary he provokes their full openness. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 112, quoting St. Thomas Aquinas, *Psal.* 21:11: "The heart (cf. Ps 22:15) of Christ points to the Sacred Scripture which makes known the heart of Christ. This heart was closed before the Passion because the Scripture was obscure. But Scripture was opened after the Passion, for those who now have the understanding of it consider and discern how the prophecies are to be interpreted."
- 18 It has been rightly possible to speak of a "Docetist contamination", Docetism being that heresy of the first centuries denying the reality of the Incarnation and attributing to Jesus only a human "appearance". For those who want to go (much) further, we can see that this contamination is linked to a messianic deficit that will leave open a space that will never cease to be occupied by millenarianisms and so-called Joachimite aspirations.
- 19 On this point, see P. BEAUCHAMP, *Le récit, la lettre et le corps*, op. cit.
- 20 Cf. J.-M. LUSTIGER, *L'Alliance*, Paris, Presses de la Renaissance, 2010, and ID. *La Promesse*, Paris, Parole et Silence, 2002.
- 21 Interview of Father Simon Mpeke, or Baba Simon, Tokombéré among the Kirdis, by Father Michel Farin S.J. (Literal transcription of the Lord's Day broadcast of October 20, 1974). Baba Simon: "For me, Jesus Christ is everything, it's the whole. Jesus Christ is life. Jesus Christ, for me, *is not the incarnation of a Jew*, for me he is the incarnation of humanity... I want everyone to be like Jesus Christ, for everyone to see God as Jesus saw Him. And that all men see all men, as Jesus saw them. For me, the incarnation *is not God who was incarnated in a Jew*, for me, it is God who incarnated in human nature by taking a man who was in that family... I see that God became incarnate in him and that it is good for him to know God as Jesus knew him, to love God as his Father as Jesus loved him. For me, *Jesus Christ is a Kiridi*, but he is not sufficiently aware of his state and I reveal him to himself. That's Jesus Christ. [...] For me, *Jesus Christ is not a Jew*, for me Jesus Christ is man. Certainly,
- 22 Cf. P. LAPIDE, K. RAHNER, *Heil von den Juden? Ein Gespräch*, Mainz, Matthias-Grünwald Verlag, 1983. There is an English translation. In the 1950s, the theologian had expressed his regret that Christology had taken a formal and abstract turn; in the 1980s, in this exchange, he obviously does not deny the Jewishness of Christ, but he finds it difficult to follow his interlocutor who tells him that "Jesus Christ was necessarily Jewish" and that "God became man in Jewish flesh." On the contrary, he makes a distinction in Jesus' attitudes between those that are historically contingent and those that are normative for Christians, which leads him to pronounce the quoted statement which is clumsy.

- 23 On this point, see a bright and relatively accessible little book by Daniel Boyarin: D. BOYARIN, *The Jewish Gospel. The Story of the Jewish Christ*, New-York, New Press, 2012. French translation: ID., *Le Christ juif. À la recherche des origines*, pref. card. P. BARBARIN, Paris, Cerf, 2013. See in particular ch. 3 "Jesus ate kosher".
- 24 Engaging in a theological reflection on the "Promised Land" or trying to take a Christian look at the current war is obviously outside our subject, even if it is difficult not to think about it. However, let us remember the importance of "distinguishing between three realities that are too often confused: Israel, the Jewish people and the State of Israel." "Israel" designates a vocation: that of a people chosen to carry the Word of God throughout history. The Jewish people, heir to this vocation, has survived the centuries, until today. As for the State of Israel, which was born in 1948 in a particular geopolitical context, it is part of the right of nations to self-determination. But it should not be confused with the faith of Israel or with the entire Jewish people. In A. MASSIE, "Gaza, Israel and the voice of the Church. The Theology of Intra-Family for Justice" in ID. (ed.), *Israel and the Church in God's Design*, Paris, CLD, October 2025.
- 25 Cf. e.g. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gaudium et Spes*, 24
- 26 Cf. H. DE LUBAC, *Catholicism. The Social Aspects of Dogma*, (1938, 41947, 71952) 71983, reprinted in ID. *Complete Works*, VII, Cerf, Paris, 2003. This book is one of the major theological works of the twentieth century.
- 27 Here, I am once again freely inspired by the work of the Jesuit Paul Beauchamp, which Piero Bovati publicly acknowledged as "the most brilliant (Catholic) synthesis of the theology of the two Testaments."
- 28 This is a kind of "typology": it is not said that all Jews succumbed to this temptation; Nor is it said that only Jews have been or are confronted with it, since this temptation can also be that of pagans who have become Christians...
- 29 On the subject of "mimetic rivalry", we can refer with great benefit to the thought of the philosopher and anthropologist René GIRARD.
- 30 Without even mentioning the universalist prophecies (Isaiah, etc.), certain passages of the *Torah* are significant: Moses married a pagan woman; at the heart of the Law, for the commandment of the Sabbath which is proper to Israel, the figure of the stranger or the immigrant reappears (cf. *Ex* 20:10); etc.
- 31 In the quotation, I deliberately omit the statement "he removed the legal prescriptions of the law of Moses" which could be misunderstood. A careful exegesis can establish that it should not be concluded that for the author of the epistle the law of Moses was simply suppressed by Christ.
- 32 A Father of the Church uses a beautiful image for this work of reunion that Christ carries out by loving to the extreme: "Christ is that needle which, painfully pierced during the Passion, now pulls everything after it, and thus repairs the tunic once torn by Adam, sewing together the two peoples, that of the Jews and that of the Gentiles [=the Gentiles], and making them one forever." It is Fr. Henri de Lubac who quotes this image in his book *Catholicism*.
- 33 Cf. J. RATZINGER, "Israel, the Church and the World. Their relations and their mission", in ID., *L'unique Alliance de Dieu et le pluralisme des religions*, op. cit.
- 34 On this point, see the contributions of Fr. Michel DUJARIER. Some conferences are available free of charge online.
- 35 Cf. *Rom* 14-15.
- 36 Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Com. Rom.*, cap. 15, lec. 1, n°1154.
- 37 In J. RATZINGER, *Schauen auf den Durchbohrten. Versuche zu einer spirituellen Christologie*, Einsiedeln, Johannes Verlag, 1984. English translation: ID., *"They will look at Him whom they have pierced." Contribution à une christologie spirituel*, Paris, Salvator, 2006. See also J.-M. LUSTIGER, *La Promesse*, op. cit.
- 38 Israel must pass through death in the sense that it must die to some of its representations, to the image it could have of the Messiah and its own mission; it must consent to changes in what was the summit of its practice ( *halakha*) until then, etc. Paul's journey is significant here, as is that of Peter, of whom we see in the Acts of the Apostles that he too needed divine intervention in order to open himself to this newness of openness to non-Jews (cf. *Acts* 10-11)

- 39 In Hebrew, the word "Passover", "*Pesach*" means "passage"...
- 40 In P. BEAUCHAMP, "Israel and the nations outside and in the Church. Lecture de Rom 9-11", in ID., *Conférences. Une exégèse biblique*, Éditions Facultés jésuites de Paris, Paris 2004.
- 41 In the account of St. Matthew, Jesus says directly: "*I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel*" (Mt 15:24).
- 42 Cf. VATICAN II, *Decree Ad Gentes* on the Church's missionary activity: "Finally, through this missionary activity, God is fully glorified, from the moment that men consciously and fully accept his saving work which he has carried out in Christ. [...] In this way, the Creator's plan for forming man in his image and likeness is truly fulfilled, when all those who share in human nature, once they have been regenerated in Christ by the Holy Spirit, will together reflect the glory of God (cf. 2 Cor 3:18) and will be able to say: "Our Father".
- 43 The Church is the "sacrament" of this gathering in unity. Cf. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 1: The Church is "in Christ [...] the sacrament, that is, both the sign and the means of intimate union with God and of the unity of the human race."
- 44 Cf. H. DE LUBAC, *Catholicism*, op. cit.
- 45 *Ibid.* Cf. H. DE LUBAC, *Images de l'abbé Monchanin*, Paris, Aubier-Montaigne, 1967.
- 46 This encounter can be called "providential", because it is clearly according to God's plan in the history of mankind: Jewish culture had already entered into dialogue with Greek culture before Christ, as certain books of the Old Testament attest; it is also remembered that the apostle Paul had a vision in Troas of a Macedonian calling him to go to "Europe" while he was insisting on taking the opposite direction, towards the Province of Asia. It is God's "choice"...
- 47 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 20: "It is a paradox that many Asians tend to consider Jesus, born on Asian soil, as a Westerner rather than as an Asian figure. It was inevitable that the announcement made by the Western missionaries would be profoundly influenced by the cultures from which they came, and it cannot be denied that at times even a certain narrow-mindedness, defensiveness and lack of sensitivity accompanied their efforts. The Synod Fathers took note of this as a fact to be taken into account in the history of evangelization, and they did not summarily condemn the missionaries for the "Western figure" of Jesus. At the same time, they took the opportunity to "express in a very special way their gratitude to all the missionaries, men and women, religious and laity, foreigners and natives, who have brought the message of Jesus Christ and the gift of faith. [...]"
- 48 Cf. H. DE LUBAC, *Le fondation théologique des missions*, Seuil, Paris, 1946.
- 49 The choice of the word "transfiguration" in the Tradition of the Church obviously refers to the mystery of the Transfiguration where Jesus dialogues with Moses and Elijah about his next "exodus" through death: it is symbolically the New Testament that "dialogues" with the Old Testament about the Passover.
- 50 It should be noted that the reading and interpretation of the Bible in a given culture contributes to evangelizing that culture. Cf. for example Benedict XVI, "Discours au monde de la culture", Collège des Bernardins, Paris, 12 September 2008. In the midst of a troubled world, the pope explains, the monks sought in God what could serve as a point of support. How did they do it? They read and interpreted the Bible (the Old and New Testaments, implementing the "doctrine of meaning of Scripture"), in community, incorporating secular sciences (grammar); in doing so, the monks made possible the "culture of Europe", that is, its evangelization.
- 51 To make such a discernment by rereading *the history of the missions a posteriori* is obviously not to pass judgment on the holiness of those thousands of missionaries who gave their lives, often to the point of martyrdom, to bring the Gospel of salvation to peoples who had not yet accepted it, but it is to point out with John Paul II "a certain narrowness of vision, a defensive attitude and a lack of sensitivity" (cf. previous note).
- 52 Cf. John Paul II, "Address to the Pontifical Biblical Commission," April 26, 1979, already cited above.
- Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, 16 October 1979, 53. John Paul II quotes the preceding passage and adds: "Two things should be remembered, however: on the one hand, *the*

*Gospel Message cannot be isolated purely and simply from the culture in which it was first inserted (the biblical universe and, more specifically, the cultural environment in which Jesus of Nazareth lived), nor even, without serious losses, from the cultures in which it has already expressed itself over the centuries ; it does not arise spontaneously from any cultural soil; it has always been transmitted through an apostolic dialogue which is inevitably inserted into a certain dialogue of cultures; – on the other hand, the power of the Gospel is everywhere transforming and regenerating. When it penetrates a culture, who would be surprised if it straightens many elements of it? There would be no catechesis if it were the Gospel that had to be altered by contact with cultures. To forget this would simply lead to what Saint Paul calls, with a very strong expression, 'to reduce the cross of Christ to nothing'".*

Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Slavorum Apostoli*, 21: "[...] a model of what is now called "inculturation": the incarnation of the Gospel in indigenous cultures, and at the same time the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church. ». Cf.

JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 52: "Inculturation 'means an intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration into Christianity, and the rooting of Christianity in the various human cultures.'"

53 In B. ADOUKONOU, "Evangelization, Inculturation and Interculturality", lecture at the Lateran University, 25 November 2011, *pro manuscripto*, text available online on the website of the Pontifical Council for www.cultura.va Culture.

Between the first moment (welcoming) and the second moment (giving), "the process of conversion" constitutes a decisive intermediate moment: it is that of *the interiorization* of the Gospel that begins to initiate in the heart of culture a life-giving dynamism.

54 Cf. J. RATZINGER, "Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures," Meeting with the Doctrinal Commissions in Asia, Hong Kong, March 3, 1993. The next quotes are from this text.

55 In BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Journey to Benin, interview granted to journalists during the flight to Benin, Friday, November 18, 2011. The oral and improvised nature of the intervention allowed for a significant and happy accumulation of terms: "meeting", "commune", "fraternity" (twice), "brothers" and "family", terms with a historical variable since it is a question of "growing up".

56 In P. BEAUCHAMP, *Le récit, la lettre et le corps*, op. cit.

57 In B. ADOUKONOU, "Theology and Culture of Africa at the Service of the Church", interview with the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture interviewed by G. BICCINI, *Osservatore Romano* (ed. .fr.), Tuesday, March 9, 2010.

58 *Ibid.*