

**THE CHURCH AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE
LINKED BY AN UNFINISHED MESSIANIC SALVATION**

**A lecture by Fr. Jean-Miguel Garrigues, OP
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Since 2000, I have been participating with Mark Kinzer in a group of mutual discovery and religious dialogue that brings together Roman Catholics and Messianic Jews. Each year we have met a few days, alternating between Jerusalem and Rome. It has been a fascinating experience, which has changed us all, deepening our faith and renewing us spiritually. Through the working papers that Mark has successively presented each year, I have witnessed the composition of the wonderful book he has recently published: *Searching her own Mystery: Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People and the Identity of the Church*.

The guideline of Mark's research, and at the same time the outcome of his investigation, is the belief in a "mutual indwelling" of the Jewish People and the Church. He summarizes the means by which this "mutual indwelling" takes effect in the following sentence: "Jesus as 'King of the Jews' and the Church of the Circumcision (*ecclesia ex circumcissione*, the Church of the Jews) as his appointed mediator, together constitute the 'spiritual bond' linking the Church to the Jewish People"¹.

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 21.

Regarding the Church of the Circumcision, I supported the thesis of Kinzer in the third appendix of his book², by affirming the structural and permanent meaning that the Jewishness of the Apostles should have for the Church. I would like now to support the first part of what he sees as the “mutual indwelling” of the Jewish People and the Church of Christ: Jesus himself, which is most often considered as the “stumbling block” separating the Christian community from the Jewish community. Kinzer formulates his thesis in a rather provocative way: “Jesus is as much the mystery hidden in the depths of Jewish People and the Jewish way of life, as he is the mystery of the ecclesia [that is of the Church]”³. My own contribution to Mark Kinzer’s research would show here that Jesus could only be accepted by the Jews as an inner bond between our two communities, if we Christians recognise that Jesus’ Redemption is accomplished but even so remains still unfinished.⁴

1) The unfinished messianic salvation

If we attentively examine the New Testament, we can observe that the time of the Church appears to be intimately related to what I would call the ***unfinished*** messianic salvation.

² *Ibidem*, p. 198-215.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 174.

⁴ Kinzer has offered similar reflections on this theme in his article entitled “Beginning with the End: The Place of Eschatology in the Messianic Jewish Canonical Narrative” found in his book *Israel’s Messiah and the People of God* (ed. Jennifer M. Rosner; Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 91-125. In this article Kinzer draws upon the helpful insights of R. Kendall Soulen in his seminal volume, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

At first glance, this expression appears rather shocking, because Christians usually think of salvation as fully achieved in and by Christ Jesus. Was that not the last word that he himself uttered when he died on the cross: “It is accomplished (**τετέλεσται**)” (Jn. 19:30)? We should note however, that Christ did not say, as is often translated, “Everything is finished.” In Greek there is only the verb in the *perfect* tense: “It is accomplished [perfectly]”. In Latin: “*Consummatum est*”. Christ is alluding here to the essential dimension of salvation that is accomplished once and for all when he breathes his last breath on the cross. The Letter to the Hebrews says that we “inherit salvation” Heb 1:14, which could suggest the idea that, salvation having been in Christ, the time of the Church is merely the time during which we enter into the possession of that salvation. The role of the Church would then simply be, to distribute or pay out by her ministry, a salvation that would extend and spread out until it reached a final rest. When all of humanity will have entered into the Church, it would only remain for Christ to come in glory and crown this great ecclesial edifice. But is this true?

To say that salvation is achieved since the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, is to forget that the Paschal mystery of the Lord Jesus, in whom salvation is accomplished, contains His coming in glory as one of its essential elements. Scholastic theology focused almost exclusively upon the Eucharist as the memorial of the redemptive sacrifice of Calvary. Today, in a perspective that is more faithful to the New Testament and to the Tradition of the ancient liturgies and the

Fathers of the Church, it is said that that Eucharistic memorial is also, inseparably, the memorial of Christ's Resurrection and Ascension, because these, together with the Passion and Death on the Cross, belong to the same Pascal Mystery. But the memorial (*anamnesis*) of all the Eucharistic prayers of the Church also mentions the coming in glory of Christ. This is also part of the Eucharistic memorial and of the salvation, which that memorial actualizes or renders present. Salvation is fully accomplished only with the Second Coming of Christ. The salvation that the Lord brings cannot be fully achieved without this final “**παρουσία**” through which, Christ having submitted all things to the Father, “God will be everything in every one” (1 Cor. 15:28).

With respect to this, we need to reconsider our way of conceiving the Coming in glory of the Lord. We tend most often to conceive it as a “return”, but the expressions “return” or “come back” are used nowhere in the New Testament to designate the final and glorious Coming of Christ. These expressions would be signified in Greek by the noun **ἐπιστροφή** or the verb **ἐπιστρέφω**. The latter is indeed found in the N.T., but it is not applied to the glorious Coming of Christ: instead, it expresses the conversion of men and women towards God. It is always towards God that people must turn back. Christ, in contrast, does not have to turn back to his Father, from whom he had never in any way separated himself (cf. Jon. 1:18; 8:29; 16:32). On the contrary, in “going to the Father” (Jon. 13:3) with our humanity through his Passover, Christ *comes* to us as the Savior. It is this

paradoxical mystery that John expresses in an astounding formula, which is often poorly translated because it is misunderstood: “I go away [to the Father] and I come to you” (Jon. 14:28). Both verbs are in the present tense, while most versions translate the second verb in the future, saying: “I go away and I *will come* to you.” If the text were referring to a *return* of Christ *towards us*, that would indeed call for the use of the future tense, because we would be the reference point for him in the time of history. But the final Coming of Christ is an event (**καιρός**) that closes the time of history without being referred to its chronology. And thus, in the New Testament, it is expressed by the simple verb “to come” (**ἔρχομαι**), always in the present tense when Jesus is speaking about his own Coming, especially in the Gospel of John, even though our Biblical translations often render the Greek present, by a future (cf. Mt. 24: 24-44; Mk. 13: 35; Lk. 12: 42; Jon. 14: 3.18.28; Rev. 16:15; 22:7; 12:20).

The same holds true for the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in its original Greek text. At Nicæa the Son was declared by the Council to be “coming” (**ἐρχόμενον**, a participle in the present and not the future tense, as is already the case in the Latin version “*venturus*”). The Lord is acknowledged as “coming in glory to judge the living and the dead”. At Constantinople, the council Fathers simply added, in reference to Jon. 14:18 “**πάλιν ἐρχόμενον**, *coming **again** in glory to judge the living and the dead*”. The direction of Christ's coming always goes from God to us. Christ does not make a **return** towards us, because it is not we, who are his point of departure but instead the Father. The

humble coming of Christ in the “form of the Servant” (Ph. 2:7) is the first stage of a unique Coming that is only completely achieved with his coming in glory. Having finished his coming in the form of the servant by passing over to the Father with our human nature, he henceforth comes towards us in glory. Saint Maximus the Confessor, a Greek father of the Church, expresses this in a stunning way when he says (*Ambigua* II ch. 21) that Christ, in “the first **παρουσία**, compared to the second, is his own precursor”⁵.

The New Testament gives the global name of salvation (**σωτηρία**) to this unique *Coming* in two steps (**καιροὶ**). Indeed, salvation is not fully achieved until the glorious coming of Christ. The New Testament therefore uses this same term of salvation for the eschatological Coming, in order to designate it as the supreme saving intervention of God, putting an end to the present age (*olam ha zeh*). For this reason, we see the time of the Church as the time of unfinished salvation.

Even in Heb 1:14 where salvation is presented as an inheritance, it refers to us as “those who are about to inherit salvation”. The auxiliary verb *to be about to* maintains the idea of an impulse towards the eschatological achievement. We are in no way “pensioners of salvation annuities” that derive from a capital already achieved and stored up by Christ, and that the Church through her ministry would merely have to administer to us. The adventure of salvation continues to move forward during the time of the Church. Paul has no hesitations about saying: “it is *in hope*

⁵ *Patrologia Graeca* 91, 1256 C.

that you are saved" (Rom. 8:24). The accomplishment of salvation in Christ plunges us more deeply into the hope of the messianic promises (cf. Is. 60 et seq.), whose fulfillment is not yet complete. The Jews never fail to remind us of this fact. That is why Paul can say: "From the heavens we are eagerly awaiting Jesus as our *Savior*" (Phil. 3:20). Peter employs an even stronger formula when he speaks of "*salvation* ready to be manifested at the end (**ἐν καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ**)" (1 Pet. 1:5). The final salvation is not a mere ecclesial development in the chronological time of history. Instead it remains suspended in an ultimate moment of grace (**καιρός**): God's final intervention in history by the glorious coming of Christ.

Because salvation is not yet complete, the New Testament can present it as constantly **coming** or approaching, throughout the course of the Christian life. It comes in a form that is not merely the communication of that which was achieved in the past. Paul exclaims: "Behold, now is the favorable time (**καιρός**), now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). But Paul conceives this present coming of salvation, as tending toward a final completion that is still awaited: "The salvation is now nearer to us than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11). This completion totally escapes any evaluation along the lines of a chronological order. Jesus, before the Ascension, reminds us of this. To his disciples who asked him if he would now restore the kingdom to Israel, he said: "It is not for you to know the times (**χρόνους**) and moments (**καιρούς**) that the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Ac. 1.7; Paul reacts similarly in 2 Thess. 2:1-3).

We find the same eschatological pressure in the New Testament with regard to another term that is synonymous with salvation: Redemption (**απολύτρωσις**). This may seem even more surprising, since we tend to employ the term Redemption to designate only the sacrifice of the cross. This sacrifice, accomplished once and for all by Christ on Golgotha, cannot be situated in the future. But just as with *salvation*, we find in the New Testament places where redemption is expressed in the future. This is the case already in the eschatological discourse of Christ, according to Luke: "When these things begin to happen, look up and raise your heads because your *redemption* is drawing near" (Luk. 21:28). As for Paul, he sees our participation in the Holy Spirit and in the life of the Church, as an advance on the legacy of the Redemption to come: "The Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance and prepares the *redemption* of the people whom God has acquired "(Eph. 1:14). And further on Paul writes: "Do not sadden the Holy Spirit of God in whom you were sealed *for the day of redemption*" (Eph. 4,30).

The notion of redemption, even more so than that of salvation, enables us to discern in the New Testament that which is already accomplished in Christ, compared to what is left unfinished until his glorious coming. In the Redemption, that which is already accomplished, and perfectly so, is the *justification* (**δικαίωσις**), the forgiveness of sins through the reconciliation effected once and for all by the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. It is in reference to this that Christ, dying on the

cross, exclaimed: "It is accomplished" (Jon. 19:30). And thus the theology of grace reminds us that justification is an action which is entirely divine, coming before any merit on the part of men: "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5: 19). On this point Luther was right to remind us what Paul says: "The proof that God loves us is that Christ, while we were yet sinners, died for us" (Rom 5:8). The justification of sinners constitutes this decisive act of the redemption that Christ accomplished once and for all: "All have sinned and all have been deprived of God's glory, and they are *justified by His grace as a gift, in virtue of the Redemption accomplished in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 3:23-24). Also: "In Christ we find redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph 1:7). And elsewhere: "Jesus in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:14). Note the very specific sense that the term redemption has in these passages: justification, remission and forgiveness of sins. In this area, even our growth in grace through spiritual warfare and trials is a consequence of our initial reception of the grace of our Redeemer, Head of the redeemed humanity: "From his fullness we have all received, and grace for grace" (Jon. 1:16).

On the other hand, that which remains radically incomplete in the Redemption, because it is still waiting for a new saving intervention of God, is the redemption of our bodies, and through them, the redemption of the entire ~~the~~ world of nature, human society and history with which we are in communion thanks to our body. Indeed, it is through the body that we belong to the

cosmos, to its material nature and its evolution, as well as to the social life of humanity and its history. According to biblical revelation, the body is an integral part of the human person. Therefore, Paul can speak of a waiting period for our filial adoption itself, because this adoption will only be complete with the resurrection of the dead. Our adoption as “children of God” involves our entire human person, including our bodies. And since the body will not be redeemed from death until the final resurrection, salvation and redemption are still part of that which is the object of our hope. Speaking of “the entire creation” which is “groaning up until now in travail,” Paul adds: “And it is not alone; we ourselves, who possess the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as *we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies*. For it is in hope that we were saved” (Rom. 8,22- 24). Our Biblical translations sometimes follow those Greek manuscripts that do not carry here the term “*adoption as sons*.” But, as is most often the case, we need to follow here the “*lectio difficilior*”-the more difficult version, which may have been omitted by some copyists because they failed to understand it. We need to maintain here the expression, “filial adoption” which is explained immediately afterwards by the term “*Redemption of our bodies*”, bodies that are an integral part of our human person adopted by God (cf. Rom. 12:1).

The filial adoption, which has already been given by the Holy Spirit to our spirit (cf. Rom 8:15-16), will only be completed by the resurrection of our bodies. It is only at the glorious coming of the “Total Christ”, that we will rise again with our individual

bodies. It is only together with the rest of humanity, that we will recover our full personal integrity in glory. It is only in the Body of the Total Christ, that our individual bodies will be restored to us. The individual resurrection of Christ is itself presented by Paul as the "first fruits" of the general resurrection, which will be accomplished by the universal, eschatological **παρουσία**: "Christ is risen from the dead" says Paul, "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Co. 15:20). Paul sees the resurrection of Christ, not only as the principle, but also as the "first fruits" of the general resurrection. Here too we find the eschatological impulse of salvation: "Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all shall be made alive. However, each in his own order: the first fruits, Christ..." (1 Cor. 15:22-23).

The redemption of our bodies implies not only the final resurrection of all humanity, but also the submission of the world of nature and history, to which our our bodies are linked, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Today, however, not only are our bodies subject to death, but the entire world continues to be under the influence of the power of evil (cf. 1 Jon. 5:19). Our world is far from experiencing the state of justice and peace announced by the messianic promises: "At present, it is true, we do not see that everything is submitted to Christ" (Heb. 2: 8). The lordship of Christ over all things is not complete during the time of the Church: "Then comes the end, when he shall hand over the kingdom to God to the Father, after destroying every sovereignty, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death;

for God has put all things in subjection under his feet “ (1 Cor. 15:24-27). Here St Paul maintains that Christ already rules the world. But at the same time, he adds "he must reign *until he puts all his enemies under his feet*" (1 Cor. 15:27-28). And thus Paul recognizes, along with the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, that "at present, everything is not yet submitted to Christ" (Heb. 2:8).

The cosmic and historical dimension of the Redemption remains incomplete. This differs from the spiritual domain, where the grace of Christ the Head is already entirely given, even if it has not yet produced all the growth of his Mystical Body (cf. Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Jon. 3: 2). Before the cosmic and social dominion of Christ can enter into a state of completion, it must await a new and final action of the Lord: his coming in glory as King of the universe. All this obliges us to take seriously the scandal that Jews experience in confronting Jesus, who remains a "humiliated Messiah" in the face of the world. We Christians cannot claim that the Messianic promises are entirely fulfilled. This same scandal was expressed in the question that John the Baptist, from the depths of his prison cell, sent to Jesus: "Are you he who is to come or should we expect someone else?" (Mt. 11: 2-3). And Jesus answered him saying: "The blind see and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor; and blessed is he, who takes no offence in me"(Mt. 11:4-6). Blessed is he, for whom the Messiah Jesus is not a "stumbling block" (Is. 8:14; Rom. 9: 33; 1 Pet. 2:7-8); it is reasonable to be scandalized by Jesus, as we can

see when considering the "unbelief" (Rom. 11:20) "of a part of Israel" (Rom. 11:25). Jesus only produced **some signs** of the glorious Messianic kingdom (cf. Is 26:19; 29:18; 35: 5-6; 61: 1): a relatively small handful of people who were blind, lame or lepers were healed; the Gospels also mention three people who were risen from the dead; but in all this, we are far from the full measure of expectations set for the Kingdom as promised by God in the prophet Isaiah (Is. 11:1-9, and passim).

We only perceive the signs of a Kingdom which comes first, with the humiliated Messiah, into the secret place of men's hearts: "The Good News is preached to the poor"; these poor are the *anawim*, the humble of heart (cf. Is 57:15; So 2:3), the "poor in spirit" (Mt. 5:3). The Kingdom begins under a humiliated Messiah, through the reception of the Good News. Jesus clearly says this to the "Pharisees who question him about the moment when the Kingdom of God is to arrive": "The Kingdom of God" says Jesus, "does not come as an object that can be observed; nor will they say: lo, here it is, or there! For behold, the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you"(Luk. 17:20-21). "**In you,**" or "**in the midst of you**" literally translated according to the Greek, can mean both "inside of you" and "among you." The coming of the Kingdom is first of all a mystery of interiority, whether in relation to each individual person considered in himself, or in regard to interpersonal relationships within the human community.

Similarly, when the Pharisees ask him for "a sign" (Mt. 12:38), or "a sign from heaven" (Mt. 16:1), Jesus only proposes

the "sign of Jonah" (Mt. 12:39; 16:4), that is to say, the sign of his own resurrection after three days in the tomb (cf. Mt 12: 40). But here too the risen Jesus manifests himself neither to the "world" (Jon. 14:22 and already Jon. 7:4), nor even to "the entire People" (Acts 10:41) of God, Israel, but only to "those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now his witnesses to the people "(Acts 13:31). If Jesus had intended to manifest himself by spectacular miracles, he would have agreed to the temptation of Satan, who, at the beginning of his messianic ministry, invited the Lord to jump off the pinnacle of the temple (Mt 4.5-7) as if the Kingdom of God could become manifest in the manner of an "object capable of being observed."

The distinction is now clear between, on the one hand, that which has been accomplished by Christ in the condition of the Servant, and, on the other hand, that which, in regard to salvation, will only be achieved with his last coming in glory. These two dimensions of salvation are very well distinguished and at the same time articulated together by the Letter to the Hebrews: "Christ, having been offered once and for all to remove the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but on behalf of those who are waiting for salvation "(Heb. 9:28). The complete salvation that goes beyond the spiritual justification of man, to include his body, all of humanity and the cosmos itself, requires a second manifestation of Jesus, a manifestation, this time, in glory. This is what St. Paul affirms: "How much more, now that we have been justified in his blood, shall we be saved from wrath! If, being enemies, we were

reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, shall we be saved by his life?" (Rom. 5:9-10).

"It is *in hope* that we have been *saved*" (Rom 8:24). Even in the area of justifying and sanctifying grace, where "Christ has become" the principle of salvation for those who obey him "(Heb. 5: 9) since "through him we now have obtained reconciliation "(Rom. 5:11), the application of salvation to our souls remains unachieved, because it depends in part on our own acceptance and on our commitment to others in the communion of saints. The New Testament affirms this very strongly in two passages. Saint Paul declares: "I rejoice in the sufferings I endure for your sake, as I complete in my flesh that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his Body which is the Church" (Col. 1:24). Let us recall the excellent interpretation that Thomas Aquinas gives to this passage. He asks: "What was missing so in Christ's afflictions for his Body which is the Church?" To this he replies: "Nothing other than the fact that Christ had to endure these afflictions in Paul"⁶.

The mystery of the communion of saints is formulated just as strongly by John: "In this we know love, that he laid down his life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for our brethren"(1 Jon 3:16). John marks both a continuation and a parallelism between Christ and us. A continuation: we can only give our lives for our brothers because Christ first gave his life for

⁶ *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians*, lect. VI

us. But there is also parallelism: the sacrifice of Christ solicits our sacrifice and is achieved by it.

II The Church and the Jewish People

In the following section I would like to show that this understanding of the time of the Church in reference to the incompleteness of salvation, is essential if the Church is to situate herself correctly in relation to Israel.

The sign of Jonah, fulfilled through the resurrection of Christ, was directly manifested neither to the people of Israel (cf. Acts 10:41) nor to the world (Jon. 14:22- 23), but only to the disciples (cf. Ac. 13:31). And thus, the Church can only give this sign to those who receive in faith the Apostles' testimony of which she has been entrusted (cf. 2 Tim. 1:14). But in Jesus' response to the Pharisees, who asked him for a sign, the sign of Jonah is not merely limited to Christ's resurrection after three days in the tomb. By mentioning the repentance of the inhabitants of Nineveh in response to the preaching of Jonah, and by also recalling the arrival of the Queen of Sheba to listen to Solomon (Mt 12:42), Jesus announced the fulfilment of another aspect of the sign of Jonah: the conversion of the Gentiles, represented by the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba, to the true God who revealed himself to Israel. The massive conversion of the heathen nations to the God of Israel is a major messianic sign (Is. 42:6; 49:6). It came to pass with the entry of the pagans into the People

of God. At the "Council of Jerusalem", James acknowledges that "God has visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" (Ac. 15:14). And he recognizes in this, the fulfilment of the prophetic oracle of Amos 9:11-12 (especially in the universalistic version of the Septuagint Greek translation quoted in Acts 15:16-17).

Through her repentance of anti-Judaism and supersessionism the Church should truly become for Israel the "*sign of Jonah*" with respect to the conversion of the Gentiles to the true God. This is a reminder that the messianic times have begun in a quite visible way, and that Israel is no longer alone in its adoration and service of the living and true God. But conversely, the unbelief of Israel in regard to Jesus as Messiah, and the permanence of Israel against all odds over the past twenty centuries, reminds the Church that the fulfilment of the Messianic Kingdom remains unfinished, and that the Messianic hope of Israel retains its significance until the coming of Christ in glory. The Jews are right when they point out that all Messianic promises have yet to be fulfilled. From the point of view of believers in Christ they are wrong, however, in underestimating or in discounting the sign of Jonah, the conversion of the pagans, as a sign of the beginning of the Kingdom.

The time of the "patience of God" (2 Pet. 3:9) is the time of the mission of the Church to the Gentiles (cf. Luk. 21:24; Romans 11:25) by which she accomplishes the sign of Jonah until "all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26). During this time, the

Church is a pilgrim on earth, in the condition of an "exile" (1 Pet. 1:17; 2:11), that is to say, in a state of temporary residence, "scattered" throughout the world (Jas. 1:1; 1 Pt 1:1). She therefore cannot identify herself with the fully accomplished Kingdom, or with any of the various forms of historical Christianity to which she has given rise during her earthly pilgrimage. These are all destined to pass away with this world. That does not disqualify the efforts continually put forth by the Church to evangelize the lifestyle and culture of any given society. But it forbids her from identifying these forms of Christianity with the fully achieved Kingdom, which is still to come.

When Christians attempt to identify any of the particular forms of Christianity with the fully achieved Kingdom, their misguided messianism inevitably leads to the exclusion of the Jews from society, with efforts to forcibly convert them, or to expel them from the city. Simply by existing, the Jews remind Christians that the fully achieved Kingdom still only exists "in hope." Only the final "adjunction" (**πρόσληψις** Rom 11,15) of Israel will put an end to the "times of the Gentiles". This will enable the Kingdom to come in its finished state. Until then, the Jews are *missing*. The word **ἀποβολή** in Rom 11:15 signifies the "loss" they represent for the fulfilment (**πλήρωμα** Rom. 11:12) of God's plan, so that the Kingdom can be achieved as "life from the dead "(Rom. 11:15). Only with their "adjunction" will "come the time of respite when God will send the Messiah intended for them [the Jews], Jesus, whom heaven must keep until the universal

restoration of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets" (Ac. 3:20-21).

The permanence of Israel reminds the Church of the incompleteness of the messianic salvation, which is to consist in the restoration, the general resurrection and the renewal of the cosmos. As they await the coming of the glorious Messiah, Christians have to share "the hope of Israel" (Ac. 28:20). It is the same hope, even if, for Christians, it is enlightened by the radiance of the Passover of the humble Messiah, which is not the case for the Jews. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explicitly teaches this point in paragraph no. 840.

The eschatological achievement of the universal Redemption cannot be accomplished until the Jewish people has been fully "adjoined" to it (Rm. 11:15). This point is sufficiently affirmed by Paul in Romans 11:12.15.25-26, but also in the eschatology of the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Mt. 23:38-39; Luk. 21:24). For this reason, it has been adopted without exception by the entire Tradition, particularly in the commentaries of Romans chapter 11 given by Church Fathers like John Chrysostom and Augustine, and by many subsequent spiritual authors and doctors, like William of Saint-Thierry and Thomas Aquinas. Nonetheless, these authors present this idea in a somewhat problematic manner, since they begin by asserting the collective condemnation and rejection of Israel by God because of its failure to believe in Christ.

Indeed, when interpreting chapters 9-11 of the Epistle to the Romans, predestination theology has tended all too often to see, the “setting aside” (**παράπτωμα** Rom 11:15; cf. 11:11.17-24) by God of a non-believing Israel, as a collective "rejection". In reality, the text is speaking not about a rejection (Rom 11: 1.11), but about an economic non-use (a setting aside as an instrument) ~~by God~~ of a certain "portion of Israel" (Rom 11:25), in the messianic work of the New Covenant. The "non-believing" part of the Jewish people, "cut off" (Rom 11:20) from Jesus, cannot fully respond to this part of its vocation, which is to be a "light and salvation for the Gentiles" (Ac. 49:6, which quotes Is. 13:46-47) in bringing to them the Messianic Redemption. This part of Israel still perseveres, however, in the grace of its irrevocable Election, when it testifies to the world, alongside the Church, concerning the moral Law given by God as the basic reference for the redemption. Israel's "stumbling" then did not result in a "real fall" (Rom 11.15) but in a "fall and recovery" (Luk. 2:34; cf. Rom. 11:23). Therefore Israel, in virtue of both its election and the Law, remains forever in the hands of God, and this is why the Lord will make use of it again in the final act of the world's redemption.

In the light of the rectifications initiated by the magisterium of the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent Popes, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has been able to give a much more well-founded interpretation of the eschatological role which is indisputably assigned to the Jewish people by New Testament Revelation. The Catechism teaches: "The coming of the glorious

Messiah is suspended at every moment of history (Rom 11:31) until his recognition by 'all Israel', (Rom. 11:26; cf. Mt. 23:39) [...] The full inclusion of the Jews" (Rom. 11:12) in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of "the full number of the Gentiles" (Rom 11:25; Luk. 21:24), will enable the People of God "to achieve the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13) in which "God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28) "(CCC No. 674).

Just as the first Messianic Advent of Jesus, in the form of "a servant" (Phil. 2: 7), did not happen without the cooperation of Israel, represented by its "remnant" (Rom. 11:5) who believed, his second coming "with power and great glory" (Mt. 24:30), will likewise not come about without the cooperation of "all Israel" (Rom. 11:26). Therefore, speaking of the "adjunction" (Rom 11,15) of the Jewish people in connection with the glorious Coming, Paul writes: "And thus, all Israel shall be saved, as it is written: "From Zion will come the deliverer, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob ""(Rom. 11:26, which quotes Is. 59: 20). On this point, Thomas Aquinas testifies to the previous patristic tradition when in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, he says, concerning Rom. 11:15: "What will such an adjunction [of the Jews] by God do, if not to bring the Gentiles back to life? The term 'Gentiles' may designate here, the believers who have become lukewarm: 'Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall grow cold' (Mt. 24:12). Or perhaps it refers to those who have fallen away, totally deceived by the Antichrist. By the converted Jews, they will be brought back to their initial fervor".

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* places its teaching on the eschatological role of the Jewish people under the title "The glorious coming of the Messiah, hope of Israel" (CCC No. 674). This is a reference to an expression of Paul in the Acts of the Apostles (cf. Ac. 23:6; 26:6-8; 28:20) by which the Apostle wants to show that the Resurrection of Christ is "the first fruits" (1 Cor. 15:23) of the fulfilment of the Jewish hope in the resurrection of the dead. But in order that the glorious Coming of Christ may fulfil the messianic and eschatological hope of Israel, the Jewish people must preserve the "mystery" (Rom. 11:25) of its divine election throughout the history the Church, through the "times of the Gentiles" (Luk 21:24). The collective "hardening" (Rom. 11:25) of a "part of Israel" (ibid.), which became "non-believing" (Rom. 11:20) and "an enemy with respect to the Gospel" (Rom. 11:28) will last until "the full number of the Gentiles has entered" (Rom. 11:25), that is to say, during the entire time of the universal mission of the Church.

Accordingly, in light of the New Testament Revelation itself, any human attempt to convert, assimilate or exterminate the Jews as the people of Israel, a people which is both distinct and inseparable from the Church in the one divine plan of salvation, can only be doomed to failure, as contrary to the "mystery" of the divine plan. True, the Church has received from Christ the mission to bear witness to all men without exception, concerning the universal redemption from sin, accomplished once and for all by God in Jesus Christ, through his first Messianic Advent. But the Church must take great care, especially where the Jews are

concerned, to announce the Good News of salvation in such a way that, in response, as John Paul II recalled when speaking in the synagogue of Rome, "the adhesion arises in the order of faith, that is, as a free assent of the mind and heart guided by faith, something that can never be subject to external pressure in one direction or the other."

The writings of Mark Kinzer and the witness of the movement he represents show that today, as in the apostolic era, "a certain number" (Rom 11:14) of Israelites adhere freely to Jesus as their promised Messiah thanks to an inner illumination of grace (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14-16); they have become the "remnant" of Israel (Rom. 11:5), both inside their people and inside the Church. Far from encouraging a new Christian program aimed at "converting" Jews, Kinzer's efforts actually confirm the need for Christians to reject, as a truly evil act, any proselytizing that would seek to suppress the identity and presence of the people of Israel in history. Israel as the people of the Election remains in God's plan, and God will "adjoin it" (Rom 11:15) in "fullness" (Rom. 11:26) at the time freely chosen by Him, so that "life can issue forth from the dead" (Romans 11:15). In the meantime, as Kinzer rightly contends, the Church has a twofold task: on the one hand, to embrace partnership with those Jews living "outside" her body, as part of the "mystery" (Rom. 11:25) of the divine plan of salvation; and, on the other hand, from inside herself, in the same body of Christ, to welcome again Jewish believers in Jesus and their Jewish way of living the messianic faith in Jesus, as in the original apostolic Church of the Circumcision in Jerusalem. In this way, waiting side by side for

the “coming” of the Messiah and the completion of God’s work of salvation in him, the Church and the Jewish people can bear witness to the reality of their mutual indwelling, through the Messiah who dwells in them both.

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