# The Theological-Ecclesiological Thought

# of Benedict XVI (2005-2013)

# on the Christian Engagement with the Religions

# in the Context of the Modern Papacy

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## Abstract

This work is a theological reflection on interreligious dialogue in the thought of Benedict XVI from the twofold perspective of ecclesiology and history. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI develops his theology of interreligious dialogue in the ecclesial context of the modern papacy. This thesis demonstrates that Benedict‘s understanding of interreligious dialogue constitutes a stage within the development of the Church‘s notion of mission that in part emerged from the effort of the papacy, especially from the beginning of the twentieth century, to engage the Church with modernity in pursuit of adequate ways for it to be a relevant presence in and for the world and carry out its work effectively. Within this ecclesiological-missiological development, the value interreligious dialogue appears with increased clarity. In one sense interreligious dialogue is a relatively new discovery in the life of the Church, as it blossomed and flourished with the Second Vatican Council. However it was not an invention of the Council but the result of a natural evolution of the Church‘s self-understanding. In fact its seeds had already been giving fruits, although these were not yet clearly identifiable to the extent of being named as interreligious dialogue.

The thesis clearly sets out that for Pope Benedict XVI interreligious dialogue is essential to the Church, as a fundamental element of its identity and mission. For the Christian believer interreligious dialogue stems from a specific vision of the person, of the universe, and of history that is shaped by the Christian faith and is therefore theological. Its theological foundations make the dialogue with the religions a necessity and a priority in the life of the Church. One of the major obstacles to Catholic engagement in interreligious dialogue has been the suspicion that it might contradict the authenticity of the faith. Benedict‘s theological definition of dialogue as joint quest for the truth removes that suspicion, showing that authentic dialogue among religions in no way requires a relativistic stance, in fact it is actually damaged by it.

The thesis provides significant evidence of Benedict‘s unique contribution regarding two specific engagements, namely the Catholic-Jewish and Catholic-Muslim dialogues. By strengthening their theological foundations he makes irreversible the results achieved so far and provides wider and firmer ground for future engagement, in view of a joint response to the common responsibility that is the calling of all people of faith.

The thesis also shows that Benedict XVI has become a building block in the theological and ecclesial discourse regarding interreligious dialogue. He starts from what he has received in terms of the Church‘s achievements in interreligious engagement, re-thinks and develops it in conversation with the present historical context, and passes it on. For this he can be considered a Church Father of our times, whose thought can be a light to future generations.

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*To*
*Nello (1949-2012)*
*my father*
*who watches over me from heaven*
*and*
*Pina*
*my mother*

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# II. INTRODUCTION

This thesis is the result of a research motivated by the question of whether interreligious dialogue truly belongs to the essence of the Church. The question arises from a de facto tension between the affirmative answer of theology and official teaching on the one hand and, on the other hand, the fact that interreligious dialogue is often still perceived as marginal by the majority of Catholics.

The Second Vatican Council is a crucial moment in the history of the Church, and of Christianity, because it marked a new stage in the Church‘s self-awareness, i.e. an understanding of its identity and mission vis-à-vis the world. By understanding itself as sign and instrument of salvation (*Lumen Gentium*) for humanity that, while awaiting redemption, already displays the signs of God‘s active presence in its midst, the Church of Vatican II responds to the challenge of otherness in unprecedented ways, and gives special attention to religious otherness. A remarkable growth in this direction has occurred in the past hundred years or so: from the personal interest and vocation of a few `prophetic' figures in Catholic thought, to the first universal Church statement on the non-Christian religions in 1965, to an abundance of fruits both at the level of theory and of praxis during the following decades. However despite this development, which can hardly be overestimated, and besides very praiseworthy and extremely significant instances, the implications of the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate* are not yet fully reflected in the way most Catholic communities structure their day-to-day life. Why?

This work focuses on Benedict XVI in the light of this broader question. It examines his contribution to interreligious dialogue from an ecclesial perspective, i.e. not in isolation but seeking to assess whether he should be seen as an instance of a greater ecclesial development occurred in conjunction with the transformation of the papacy, at times as its cause and at others as its effect. Should this be the case then Benedict‘s contribution to interreligious dialogue acquires ecclesial significance.

The research is motivated by an underlying ecclesiological interest, as it arises from the need to translate the achievements of Catholic theology and Magisterium into adequate formation for all Catholics, in order to equip them with solid foundations for their commitment to interreligious dialogue.

As a Catholic missionary I have become familiar with various contexts both in Europe and in the Philippines, interreligious dialogue being a major foucus of both my academic work and in the actual engagement especially with Muslims. Both in Europe and in the Philippines, where the relationship with Muslims is nevertheless becoming increasingly real for Filipino Catholics, I have noticed that Catholic commitment to interreligious dialogue is often motivated more by practical necessity than seen as an implication of Christian faith. In fact these Catholics are often unsure whether they are doing something truly Catholic. The problem with insufficient grounding in the faith is that even praiseworthy initiatives tend to last only as long as the ‚problem' of the other is there. The lack of theological motivation can allow for interreligious dialogue to be reduced to a pragmatic response to a problem rather than seen as the vocation of every son and daughter of the Church (Cf. *NAe* 2).

At the academic level, years ago I began to explore the theological horizon surrounding interreligious dialogue. After the initial enthusiasm for the newest ideas, I began to acquire a more critical sense, and I have found increasingly unsatisfactory certain theological approaches to the religions and interreligious dialogue that do not take Church teaching and tradition sufficiently into account as points of reference. I find them unconvincing because they have led to theoretical deadlocks and have proved unable to assist believers to engage in interreligious relations without either depreciating one's religion in order to justify the goodness of the other's or having sincere appreciation for it for fear of being unfaithful to one's own.

The importance of interreligious dialogue is fully appreciated when it is seen as a vocation, originating not from the 'practical problem' of the *other* but from the Mystery of the

*Other*, from which my existence receives meaning. And if interreligious dialogue is an imperative arising from my Christian faith, it is intrinsically ecclesial. From the Catholic perspective, this means that interreligious dialogue is authentic when it takes place in communion with the Church and within the boundaries set by its teaching which is the accumulated wisdom born of faith across the centuries. The Church and its historical development are therefore the conditions of possibility of authentic interreligious dialogue.

Benedict XVI is an example of the fruitful synergy of thought, Church tradition and Magisterium and the demands of the contemporary context. By showing that interreligious dialogue has deep theological-ecclesiological foundations, he affirms authoritatively that interreligious dialogue is a legitimate, necessary and integral aspect of the Church‘s identity and mission (*Dialogue and Proclamation* 2, 38, 77). Without such grounding, interreligious dialogue is destined to remain, *de facto* for most Catholics, a good but ultimately dispensable enterprise, without which for the Church it is business as usual. It suffices to consider its place in the day-to-day life of many dioceses and parishes, to discover that only in relatively few cases interreligious dialogue is supported by appropriate structures. I believe that the reason behind this is primarily the lack of grounding in the faith. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI provides such grounding.

The thesis is articulated in three parts. The first focuses on the ecclesial-historical context of interreligious dialogue by tracing the emergence of a specific modern understanding of papacy that, as constitutive element of a Church that is for the salvation of all, understands itself as being in the service of humanity. Pope Benedict XVI belongs within this development.

The second part identifies the theological context of Ratzinger-Benedict XVI‘s notion of interreligious dialogue by describing his understanding of the nature and purpose of theology and the ensuing theological vision. This leads to unity as a fundamental ecclesiological category of his thought, and key element of his entire theology. In virtue of

the unity between Christ and the Church, the Church is called to make salvation, i.e. communion with Christ, available to humanity by becoming one with it. This is where the interreligious engagement finds its unique place in Ratzinger's theological vision.

Finally, on these premises, the third part articulates Ratzinger's notion of interreligious dialogue as shared quest for the truth, as it emerges from his theology of religions and ecclesiology, and as it finds concrete expression in the dialogue with Judaism and Islam.

An important theme that emerges from the research is that of Benedict as „modern Church Father". This is possible on the basis of McPartlan's understanding of Henri de Lubac – arguably the most important influence on Ratzinger's theology, as „modern Church Father". Together with like-minded theologians, de Lubac created a new methodology based on a re-articulation of the ancient Fathers as a living force for twentieth century theology, as noted by Etienne Fouilloux.[2] To understand Benedict XVI as a „modern Church Father" means acknowledging his identification with the theological perspective inaugurated by de Lubac.[3]

Another sub-theme is the relationship between interreligious relations and the Church's commitment to peace among the nations. The connecting line between Benedict XV, the Pope of Peace, and Benedict XVI's commitment to peace-building constitutes a trajectory along which all the popes of the twentieth century as well as those of the beginning of the twenty-first move. The great attention that at this very historical moment the present Pontiff Francis is giving to the question of peace among peoples, concretely with regard to Syria, must be appreciated in continuity with Benedict's understanding of Church and the papacy within it in the service of the integral good of humanity.[4]

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[2] Etienne Fouilloux, *La Collection Sources Chretiennes, Editer Les Peres de l'Eglise Au XXe Siecle* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1995); Michel Fédou: „Sources Chrétiennes. Patristique et renaissance de la théologie," *Gregorianum* 92, no. 4 (2011), 781-796.

[3] Paul McPartlan, „A Modern Father of the Church'. The Trials and Triumphs of Henri de Lubac," in *Sacrament of Salvation: an Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 45–60.

[4] As advisor to Benedict XVI and now to Francis, Chaldean Catholic Bishop of Aleppo Antoine Audo sj has assisted in the development of Vatican thought on Syria and the Middle East. Audo is concerned with the relation between religious tradition and modernity, a central issue for both Christians and Muslims in the Arab Middle East. He has contributed significantly to retrieving and articulating a Christian religious

As both theologian and Pope Ratzinger-Benedict XVI has offered the Church an understanding of interreligious dialogue that is non-renounceable and at the same time does not contradict the Church's evangelising task. He has thus provided a way out of an impasse that has often hindered either aspect of the Church's mission. Benedict XVI's legacy stands as a fundamental point of reference for Catholic engagement with the followers of the world religions, in the present and for the future.

vocabulary in the context of scriptural dialogue with Islam in the Quran. See Antoine Audo: *Zakî al-Arsouzî un arbe face a la modernité* (Beyrouth, Dar el-Machreq, 1988).

# III. PART ONE
# THE CONTEXT OF THE MODERN PAPACY

## A. INTRODUCTION

Benedict XVI belongs to a distinctive form of papacy whose roots can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century and whose contours have become increasingly clear in the Vatican II period, but which has eventually taken shape in the Post-Vatican II pontificates. To appreciate Benedict XVI and his approach to interreligious dialogue in depth it is important to understand the features of the modern papacy and the ecclesiological framework in which it operates.

As I seek to consider Benedict XVI next to Paul VI and John Paul II in particular in order to identify the specific characteristics of the modern papacy, two major aspects emerge.

In the first place, modern popes are aware that they lead a community of global dimensions. They speak and act in the awareness that the Catholic Church is present in virtually all political, social and religious situations, and is bound to engage in dialogue with all particular contexts, with the world.[5] They also understand that their role is significant not just for Catholics but for all Christians.

Secondly, modern popes have a strong sense that the Catholic Church exists for the salvation of the world understood as integral, and feel directly responsible for all humanity.[6]

This twofold awareness is manifested through a new style of presence of the Church in the socio-political sphere, through: the Holy See‘s diplomatic relations with an increasing

[5] Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 6 August, 1964, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis (AAS)* 56(1964*),*609-659; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December, 1965, *AAS* 58(1966*),*1025-1115.

[6] On the influence on personalism on Paul VI for example Giorgio Campanini, ―G.B. Montini e J. Maritain: dai ‗Tre riformatori‘ a ‗Umanesimo integrale‘,‖ in *Montini, Journet, Maritain: une famille d'esprit. Journées d'étude, Molsheim, 4-5 juin 1999*, ed. Rodolfo Rossi, Pubblicazioni dell‘Istituto Paolo VI 22 (Brescia; Roma: Istituto Paolo VI; Edizioni Studium, 2000), 225–237.

number of political realities (states, institutions);[7] the popes' personal contact with people, by apostolic journeys and the use of mass media; their outreach to other faith communities, both Christian and non, through words and important symbolic actions; their resistance to the anti-religious element of contemporary culture and politics; broader theological perspectives embracing cultures, ideologies and religions; special attention to human dignity and rights; and awareness of the significance of their role in society and politics in order to fulfil their mission.

At first sight, these features seem an absolute novelty in the life of the Church, almost as if Vatican II had been a radical break with the past. However, as far as the role of the pontiff is concerned, the modern popes stress that they stand in twofold continuity within the life of the Church.[8] The modern papacy reflects Vatican II theological and pastoral openness, but also sees itself within a process of transformation that began at the end of the nineteenth century, when the loss of political power forced the Holy See to re-understand itself and reshape itself accordingly. They are in continuity with Vatican II because the Council stands in fundamental continuity within the development of Catholic Tradition. This is evident in the fact that Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI constantly refer to Vatican II as well as to the teaching of their twentieth century predecessors (the social teaching provides a very clear example).[9]

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[7] Peter G. Kent and John F. Pollard eds., *Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age* (West Port: Praeger Publishers, 1994).

[8] For a major scholarly source on the papacy, see Philippe Levillain, ed., *The Papacy. An Encyclopaedia*, 3 vols. (New York and London: Routledge, 2002).

[9] Another example is the concern of the pre-Vatican II papacy regarding war and peace, for example under Benedict XV and Pius XII. John F. Pollard, *The Unknown Pope. Benedict XV (1914-1922) and the Pursuit of Peace* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999).

## B. EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY TRANSFORMATION OF THE PAPACY

### 1. Emerging attitudes of the papacy towards the world before the Second Vatican Council: Benedict XV, Pius XI and Pius XII

#### *a) Benedict XV: the papacy at work for reconciliation and peace*

Benedict XV, Giacomo Della Chiesa, was supreme pontiff of the Catholic Church from 3 September 1914 to his death on 22 January 1922. The First World War was the major influence on his pontificate and was instrumental to the emergence of a new understanding of the role of the pope and of the Church in the world.[10]

In presenting Benedict XV, François Jankowiak identifies some defining features of his style of papacy that reflect his idea of the Petrine office.[11] For Benedict XV the Church has a fundamental role of mediation and reconciliation in the world. Although this became a defining feature of his pontificate, Jean-Marc Ticchi has shown that a vision of the papacy as arbitrator in international disputes had already begun to emerge with Leo XIII (1878-1903) Pius X (1903-1914). Nevertheless, prompted by the magnitude of the First Word War, this notion of papacy gained *de facto* general acceptance by the international political community.[12]

Benedict XV initially articulated the idea in his first encyclical letter, *Ad beatissimi apostolorum,* published on 1 November 1914.[13] According to Jankowiak, Benedict XV sees the Church as guide of humanity, responsible for accompanying its development at the level

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[10] Stewart Stehlin, ―The Emergence of a New Vatican Diplomacy during the Great War and Its Aftermath, 1914-1929," in Kent and Pollard, *Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age*, 75-85. According to the author: ‗The period during and immediately after the First World War showed the role that the Vatican was being called upon and indeed did begin to play in the twentieth century.' (p. 85).

[11] François Jankowiak, ―Benedict XV," in ed. Philippe Levillain, *The Papacy. An Encyclopaedia*, 3 Vols. (London: Routledge, 2002), Vol. 1, 172-177.

[12] Jean-Marc Ticchi, Aux frontières de la paix: bons offices, méditations, arbitrages du Saint-Siège, 1878-1922 (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2002).

[13] Benedict XV, Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum. Encyclical Letter Appealing for Peace, 1/11/1914, *AAS* 6(1914),566-581; Italian translation, 584-599.

of both individual and collective life, by nourishing faith, which is the only guarantee of a world that is moral and fraternal.[14] This true life, explains Jankoviak, nourished by religious discipline, is the sole antidote to war, which stems from the ‗deadly elements brewed in materialism' and can only be ended by the restoration of the ‗rights of God'.[15] Later pontiffs would continue in Benedict XV's line of thought.[16]

Benedict XV's vision of peace stems from a theological vision of the world, history and from the conviction that the role of the Church is to bring them back to God by giving God his rightful place in the life of humanity. Benedict's vision recurs in his apostolic exhortations written during the war: *Ubi Primum,* addressed to all Catholics on 8 September 1914, forty-two days after the beginning of the war; *Allorché fummo chiamati,* to the belligerent peoples and their rulers, after exactly one year of war, on 28 July 1915; and *Dès le Début*, addressed to the leaders of the warring nations, on 1 August 1917.[17] Shortly after the the war, Benedict spoke of peace again in the encyclical *Pacem Dei munus* (23 May 1920) in which he exhorted all peoples to reconciliation and, despite some reservations on certain aspects, supported the League of Nations.[18]

Benedict XV seeks ‗just and lasting' peace.[19] This is possible only if based on strong foundations: the common good of all, the rights and dignity of every person and ultimately the fundamental brotherhood of all humanity.[20] From this theological theme of the brotherhood of all humanity, brought into unity by Christ ‗at the cost of his Blood', Benedict

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[14] Jankowiak, ―Benedict XV," 173.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid,.
[17] Benedict XV, *Ubi Primum*, 8/09/1914, *AAS* 6(1914*),*501-502; *Allorché fummo chiamati*, 28/07/1915, *AAS* 7(1915*),*366-368; English translation 375-377; *Dès le début*, 1/08/1917, *AAS* 9(1917*),*417-420. Francis Latour, *La papauté et les problèmes de la paix pendant la Première Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Harmattan, c1996) for an analysis of Benedict XV's apostolic exhortations in the specific historical context. See also, Francis Latour, ―Le discours pacifiste de Benoît XV pendant la Grande Guerre," in Sylvie Caucanas, Rémy Cazals and Nicolas Offenstadt, eds., *Paroles de paix en temps de guerre* (Toulouse: Privat, 2006), 63-74.
[18] Benedictus XV, *Pacem, Dei munus*, 23/05/1920, *AAS* 12(1920*),*209-218.
[19] Benedict XV, *Dès le début*, 417.
[20] Benedict XV, Allorché fummo chiamati, 375

articulates his vision of the Petrine ministry in terms of fatherhood.[21] The July 1915 apostolic exhortation defines the War as a ‗fratricidal struggle that has burst forth in Europe', toward which the Pope feels ‗the anguish of a father, who sees his homestead devastated.'[22] In the face of this catastrophe, the Pope is ‗fully conscious' of his ‗sublime mission of peace and love' and commits himself unreservedly to the ‗reconciling of all the peoples at war.'[23] The Pope is, by virtue of his divinely entrusted mission, the father of the Church, of Europe and ultimately of the whole brotherhood of humanity, and is responsible for its salvation.[24] This theme will become an increasingly important characteristic of the modern papacy and a central feature of Pope Benedict XVI's ecclesiology.

For Benedict XV peace must be manifested and supported by concrete actions and institutions, which he indicated in a seven-point proposal.[25] He called for a process of arbitration that would replace armed force and re-establish the supreme power of the law, for the freedom and community of the seas, a general and reciprocal condonation with regard to war damages, and the settlement of territorial questions taking into account the wishes of the peoples involved.[26] In the same document, Benedict XV famously defined the conflict as *un massacre inutile* (an unnecessary, or useless, massacre).[27]

Benedict XV responded also through action. His commitment to assist the victims of the war took shape in the creation of a specific pontifical agency for the wounded and prisoners of war; personal engagement with the heads of the states in order to facilitate the exchange of wounded prisoners between the warring armies; and the establishment of a

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Benedict XV, *Dès le début*, 417.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Jankowiak, ―Benedict XV," 173-174.
[27] Benedict XV, *Dès le début*, 420.

‗Missing Persons Bureau' at the Vatican Palace, which gave assistance to thousands of families.[28]

Della Chiesa considered diplomatic relations and political questions a necessary way for the Church to address the war, its roots and its consequences effectively and constructively.[29] From the geopolitical point of view, by the beginning of the First World War many would have thought that the papacy was about to end, as with the caliphate in the Muslim world. Since the death of Muhammad, despite undergoing several transformations across the centuries, the caliphate represented the only transnational religious authority of the Islamic world and guaranteed the visibility of the religion of Islam on the political international scene. Consequently, its dissolution, in conjunction with the demise of the Ottoman empire in 1924, meant the loss of the unifying institution of the Islamic world, which had been the inheritor of the theocracy inaugurated by Mohammad.[30] The fact that a conference of Islamic nations was held in Cairo in 1926 to discuss the reestablishment of the Caliphate gives an idea of how important the institution was for the Muslim world. In the climate immediately preceding and during the first years of the First World War, the pope was seen as the remnant of a Catholic political institution which, like the caliphate, was about to disappear from the scene and therefore irrelevant to the international community. On the contrary, with Benedict XV the papacy and the Catholic Church experienced a surprising revival which marked the beginning of a process ‗culminating in today's papacy, which enjoys an unprecedented degree of influence' in international affairs.[31] According to Rumi,

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[28] Jankowiak, ―Benedict XV, 174. Also John Pollard, ―Humanitarian Relief and peace diplomacy," in idem, *The Unknown Pope* (London: Chapman, 1999), 112-138. For an account of Benedict XV's commitment to peace, see Francis Betten, ―The Peace Action of Pope Benedict XV," *Thought* 10 (1936), 533-554.

[29] Jankowiak, ―Benedict XV," 174.

[30] P.M. Holt, ―Khalifa," article in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, E. Van Donzel et al. eds., (Leiden: Brill, 1978), Vol. 4, 937-953.

[31] Stewart A. Stehlin, ―The Emergence of a New Vatican Diplomacy during the Great War and Its Aftermath, 1914-1929," in Kent and Pollard, *Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age*, 75-85; Pierre Blets, *Histoire de la Représentation Diplomatique du Saint Siège des origines à l'aube du XIXe siècle* (Vatican City: Archivio Vaticano, 1982); Robert A. Graham, *Vatican Diplomacy: A Study of Church & State on the International Plane* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

Benedict XV is the protagonist of a major shift in the relationship between the papacy and the world, as from 1914 the world Powers begin to perceive the pope more as a important interlocutor than the sovereign of the old pontifical state.[32]

During the war the Holy See did its best to be present on the international scene. Although the London accords of April 1915 excluded the papacy from the League of Nations, immediately after the War, Benedict XV pursued a series of concordats with the states, while at the same time relaxing earlier restrictions with regard to official visits by Catholic sovereigns and heads of states. Three years after the end of the war, in November 1921, addressing the Cardinals gathered on the occasion of the Washington conference on disarmament, he explained the Vatican's intended line of action in international negotiations: the new states born with the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would not simply inherit the status of the latter vis-à-vis the Holy See, but would be treated as potential new partners with whom new relationships would have to be established *ex novo*.[33]

While during the first year of the war the focus was on humanitarian work, by mid-1915 Benedict XV seems to have matured the conviction that the Holy See can and must play an effective role in peace building.[34] The 28 July 1915 apostolic exhortation "to the Belligerent People and their Rulers," marks the beginning of an active period of peace diplomacy that culminates in the "Peace Note" of 1 August 1917 in which, Benedict XV took his 1915 address further by setting out proposals to end the war and secure just and enduring peace. According to Pollard, "this was the first time during the course of the war that any person or power had formulated a detailed and practical schema for peace negotiation."[35]

In doing so, he courageously challenged all the powers involved in the war to take responsibility. Although the pope's appeal did not yield the expected results, Pollard argues

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[32] Giorgio Rumi, "Corrispondenza fra Benedetto XV e Carlo D'Asburgo," in Giorgio Rumi ed., *Benedetto XV e la Pace 1918* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1990), 21.

[33] Benedict XV, *Allocutio ad Sacrum Consistorium*, 21/11/1921, *AAS* 13(1921),522-524. Jankowiak, "Benedict XV," 175. Giorgio Rumi, "Corrispondenza," 21.

[34] Pollard, *The Unknown Pope*, 112.

[35] Ibid., 125-126.

that the remarkable similarities between US President Wilson's _Fourteen Points' speech of January 1918 and Benedict XV's 1917 Peace Note seem to imply that the President had been _heavily inspired' by the pope.[36] However, despite their apparent failure, signified by the absence of the Holy See from the peace negotiations and the League of Nations, Benedict XV's interventions would yield greater fruit in the longer run, as the moral stature of the Holy See grew among people and states. According to Rumi, what Benedict XV defined as the _most bitter hour of our lives,' actually ushered in _a new age' as _a higher moral point of reference appears in the conduct of World affairs,' that is to say the papacy.[37]

Two other aspects of Benedict's papacy confirm that he saw the Holy See and the pope as belonging legitimately on the stage of international relationships: the attention to the Eastern Churches and the establishment of ties with them, and the renewed impetus he gave to the Church's missionary activity. With regard to the former, he created a new office of the Holy See for the _Oriental Church' responsible for issues related to the Alexandrian, Chaldean, Byzantine, Armenian and Antiochene Churches, and established the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome under his personal supervision. As far as mission is concerned, the 1919 encyclical letter *Maximum Illud* stated clearly the pope's intention to separate mission activity from the colonial interests of the colonial powers, and insisted on the establishment of indigenous clergy, who would be educated in colleges newly established for this purpose in Rome, Italy, Switzerland and Germany.[38]

Benedict XV played a fundamental role in placing the Church on the map of international relations. The Holy See, which was paradoxically still _imprisoned', since 1870, in Italian territory, asserted itself as a legitimate interlocutor and a mediatior at the level of international relations, giving voice to the cause of peace and to the victims of war regardless

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[36] Ibid., 128. Also Anthony Rhodes, *The Power of Rome in the Twentieth Century* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1983), 239-248.
[37] Rumi, –Corrispondenza," 27.
[38] Claude Prudhomme, *Missions Chrétiennes et colonisation XVI-XXe siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 2005).

of their national identity.[39] In this sense Benedict can be considered a distant precursor of the modern Catholic Church's commitment to pacifism and human rights, which is can essential dimension of the modern popes' understanding of their ministry. According to Rumi, from 1914 the great powers "began to consider the pope an interlocutor more important than the sovereign of the ancient Pontifical States."[40] Admittedly Benedict XV failed to stop the war but, according to Pollard, his peace diplomacy

> laid the foundations for a new peace-making role for the papacy which has been continued by the majority of Benedict's successors, most notably Pius XII at the beginning of the Second World War, John XXIII during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Paul VI during the Vietnam War and John Paul II during the Gulf War.[41]

### *b) Pius XI: peace, concordats, Catholic Action and missions*

When on 6 February 1922 the newly elected Pope Pius XI appeared on the balcony of St Peter's to bless the people gathered in the square, he was the first to do so since the time of Pius IX in 1846.[42] That action pre-announced a pope who intended to have a voice in the contemporary world and engage directly with the members of his Church and the larger society.[43] After the death of Pius XI, by stating that he "dominated events and he dominated the men of his time", Archbishop Jules Saliége highlighted the fact that this pontiff was able to influence world history at the crucial time between the two World Wars.[44]

A central concern of Pius XI was the defence of the human person, which could be seen as the key to interpreting his pontificate.[45] Commitment to peace-building, conciliation among nations through the means of diplomacy, condemnation of totalitarian ideologies, encouragement of Catholic action and missions, all seem to flow from this central concern.

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[39] Charles I of Austria, "Lettera a Benedetto XV Del 23 Dicembre 1917 (Documento 12)," in Benedetto XV e La Pace. 1918, ed. Giorgio Rumi, Biblioteca Di Storia Contemporanea (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1990), 38–39.

[40] Giorgio Rumi, "Corrispondenza," 23.

[41] Pollard, *The Unknown Pope*, 136.

[42] John O'Malley, *A History of the Popes: from Peter to the Present* (Lanham: Sheed & Ward, 2010), 274; Frank Coppa, *The Modern Papacy since 1789* (London; New York: Longman, 1998), 179.

[43] O'Malley, *A History of the Popes*, 274-275.

[44] Marc Agostino, "Pius XI," in *The Papacy: An Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, 1199.

[45] Ibid., 1199.

As apostolic visitator to Poland from 1918 to 1921, Achille Ratti had understood the complexity of Church-state and religion-politics relations.[46] The important ideas and attitudes of the future pope emerged during his time in Poland, like a certain suspicion of excessive nationalism and his skills of negotiation. Later, as archbishop of Milan (1921-1922), he acquired, in Agostino's words, a reputation as a pastor „who tended to be conciliatory in political affairs and extremely active in the pastoral domain."[47]

Two phases can be distinguished in the pontificate of Pius XI. Predominant in the first, from his election until 1929, were a special focus on Italian affairs and a „policy aimed at giving the Church a place in the Europe of Versailles."[48] The second phase, from 1930 to 1936, after the creation of the Vatican state following the Lateran Accords with Italy (1929), was characterised by a more pastoral concern.[49] This second period saw important innovations such as a substantial effort to internationalise the College of Cardinals (by 1939 twenty-seven out of sixty-two were non Italian) which provided the pope with authoritative spokesmen in key countries.[50]

Pius XI outlined his program in his first encyclical, *Ubi Arcano Dei* (23 December 1922), and in the encyclical *Quas Primas* (11 December 1925).[51] His goal was to build „Christ's peace in Christ's kingdom" by establishing this kingdom more firmly in a contemporary world context that was adverse to Christ in the social, political, and economic spheres.[52] The return of Christ's kingdom depended primarily on a solid Church, „the base of all action, founded on the ministry of Peter," who holds the „chair of truth and love."[53] For Pius XI Christ's kingdom and universal peace belong together. According to Confalonieri, his

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[46] Ibid., 1200.
[47] Ibid., 1201.
[48] Ibid., 1202.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 1203.
[51] Pius XI, *Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio*, 23/12/1922, *AAS* 14(1922),673-700; Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, 11/12/1925, *AAS* 17(1925*),*593-610.
[52] Pius XI, *Ubi Arcano*, 694. Agostino, „Pius XI," 1203.
[53] ibid., 1204; Pius XI, *Ubi Arcano*, 673.

private secretary, Pius XI consecrated himself to ‗a program of peace', and ‗the true form of peace he hoped for was to be found in the Kingdom of Christ.'[54]

Thus Pius XI attempted to establish a Christian presence in the midst of the contemporary world, something which he recognised as unprecedented, by influencing public opinion through the means of communication. He used the *Osservatore Romano* as a means to express the thought of the pope without it being an official newspaper, and established Vatican Radio in 1929. Beyond his criticism of cinema and its dangers, which admittedly show the limitations of his analysis of the phenomenon, the encyclical *Vigilanti cura* (29 June 1936) signals what Agostino calls a ‗beginning awareness of modernity' and a ‗concern to have a presence in the contemporary culture.'[55] Pius XI worked towards placing the Church on the world's cultural stage through various initiatives, like the foundation of the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology, of the Pontifical Academy of Science, the Ethnological Museum and the Vatican *Pinacoteca*; renovations of the Vatican Library and the Vatican Astronomical Observatory; the rehabilitation of scholars previously censured as modernists.[56]

Pius XI did not fail to address social questions. In the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno,* published in 1931 on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of Leo XIII's social encyclical *Rerum Novarum,* he further developed Leo XIII's themes, and this ‗consolidated in most people's minds the right of the papacy to speak' on these matters.[57] With Pius XI, the people's image of the pope was greatly transformed, to the extent he was now expected to speak out on important events and questions.[58]

During the pontificate of Pius XI, the Holy See's diplomatic activity focussed predominantly on bilateral agreements with other states, i.e. concordats. The defence of the

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[54] Carlo Confalonieri, *Pius XI. A Close-up* (Beverly Hills, CA: Benziger, 1975), 165. (Original Italian edition *Pio XI visto da vicino*, Torino, 1957).

[55] Pius XI, *Vigilanti Cura*, 29/06/1936, *AAS* 28(1936),249-263*;* Agostino, ―Pius XI," 1206.

[56] O'Malley, *A History of the Popes*, 275.

[57] Ibid., 277; Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 25/05/1931, *AAS* 23(1931),177-228; Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 15/05/1891, *AAS* 23(1890-91*),*641-670**.**

[58] Agostino, ―Pius XI," 1206.

rights of the person and of the Church make political involvement necessary, and in the awareness that this aim needed to be pursued in different situations, Pius XI offered ‗a general path..., a method to be adapted to countries and circumstances.'[59] This path was the Holy See's diplomatic activity, which increased greatly under Pius XI. According to Coppa the purpose of his ‗broad diplomatic outreach' was ‗to guarantee the life of ecclesiastical organisations in various countries'.[60] It was Pius XI's way to ‗consolidate the rights of the church and the position of the Holy See.'[61]

From the perspective of the Holy See, post- First World War period can be defined as the era of concordats, characterised by the establishment of concordats with a large number of states. This was facilitated both by a certain prestige that the papacy had gained under Benedict XV in public opinion, and the need of newly established states to secure diplomatic recognition with the support of the Church.[62] Pius XI employed concordats to make the voice of the Church heard, at the international level and within particular national contexts, in order to protect the life and work of Catholics worldwide.[63] According to Agostino Pius XI's *concordatory* policy ‗was founded on grand principles and a certain pragmatism' and its primary aim was ‗to preserve the freedom of the Church and her apostolate, the rights of the family, and those of the human person.'[64] This was true even when this kind of engagement was enacted with regimes having a totalitarian ideology.[65]

The concordatory policy was possible because Pius XI's solution to the Roman Question by an agreement with the Italian Government provided the papacy with an international status. The concordat with Italy was exceptionally significant in the reshaping of the place of the papacy in the post-war era; with the signing of the Lateran Pacts on 11

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[59] Ibid., 1203.
[60] Coppa, *The Modern Papacy*, 172.
[61] Ibid., 174.
[62] Stewart A. Stehlin, ―The Emergence of a New Vatican Diplomacy During the Great War and Its Aftermath, 1914-1929," in Kent and Pollard, *Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age*, 82.
[63] Ibid., 82.
[64] Agostino, ―Pius XI," 1206.
[65] Ibid., 1207.

February 1929 the pope was no longer a voluntary prisoner in Italian territory, but the head of an independent sovereign state, with the status of all other national leaders within the international community. Pius XI had managed to gain a key entry point into the international political network.[66]

For Pius XI, human dignity is always above politics. He is not naive with regard to the risks of concordats. Concerned with the rise of totalitarianism in Europe, especially from the end of the 1920s, Pius XI made it clear that concordats did not entail the approval of regimes and ideologies. In fact, his denunciation of the excesses of fascism in Italy despite the concordat culminated in the encyclical on Catholic Action, *Non Abbiamo bisogno* (29 June 1931), in which he „came close to rejecting fascism ideology tout court."[67]

The explicit rejection and condemnation of Nazi totalitarianism came on 14 March 1937 with the encyclical *Mit brennender sorge* on the situation of the Church in the German Reich, in response to the increasingly grave violations of the concordat signed with Hitler's regime in 1933.[68] Later, on 15 July 1938, Pius XI stated that Nazism opposed the Christian faith.[69] Speaking to a group of pilgrims in September that year Pius XI proclaimed that through Christ and in Christ, Christians are the spiritual descendants of Abraham, anti-Semitism is unacceptable and Christians are spiritually Semites.[70] A stronger condemnation was on the way, as in 1938 the pope had commissioned the preparation of another encyclical to condemn anti-Semitism. The draft of this document, entitled *Humani generi unitas,* „did not permit the Catholics to remain silent in the presence of racism" and noted that the

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[66] See Stehlin, „The Emergence of a New Vatican Diplomacy," 83; Frank Coppa, *Controversial Concordats: the Vatican's Relations with Napoleon, Mussolini and Hitler* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999).

[67] Ibid., 35; Pius XI, *Non abbiamo bisogno*, 29/06/1931, *AAS* 23(1931*),*285-312.

[68] Pius XI, *Mit brennender sorge*, 14/03/1937, *AAS* 29(1937*),*145-168. Italian official translation, ibid., 168-188.

[69] Coppa, *The Modern Papacy*, 182.

[70] Yves Chiron, *Pie XI (1857-1939)* (Perrin, Paris, 2004*),* 455; *La Documentation catholique*, 5 Decembre 1938, coll. 1459-1460; O'Malley, *A History of the Popes*, 278; Frank Coppa, „Between Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism, Pius XI's Response to the Nazi Persecution of the Jews: Precursor to Pius XII's „Silence'?," *Journal of Church and State* 47 (2005*),*63-89.

persecution of the Jews had been condemned by the Holy See in the past.[71] However, Pius XI died before receiving the document and his successor decided not to publish it, although he used some of the themes in his first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus* (20 October 1939).[72]

Pius XI considered international Communism a great threat, and condemned it in the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (19 March 1937) on Communist atheism.[73] Nevertheless he tried for years to maintain a relationship with Soviet Russia. When this was not possible through diplomatic relations, Pius XI tried to do so through a mission of charitable assistance to the needy, the Pontifical Relief Mission's work in Moscow, which functioned for several years until its expulsion from the country.[74] For Pius XI, the Church was not in principle against Communist regimes, nevertheless it demanded that the state not interfere with freedom of worship and the Church's ministry.[75] He also protested against the persecution in Mexico with the encyclical *Iniquis afflictisque* (18 November 1926) and the persecution of the Church in Spain with the encyclical *Dilectissima nobis* (on 3 June 1933).[76]

Pius XI's broad vision was also reflected in his concern for the evangelising mission of the Church. In He reorganised *Propaganda Fide* (June 1922), extending its scope and activity.[77] His understanding of mission is expressed in his specifically missionary encyclical, *Rerum Ecclesiae* (28 February 1926).[78] In line with his predecessor, he insisted on the need for local priests and bishops in _mission lands' and ordained six Chinese and three Japanese

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[71] Coppa, *The Modern Papacy*, 183- 184.

[72] John F. Pollard, –The Papacy," in McLeod Hugh ed., *World Christianities c.1914-c.2000*, *The Cambridge History of Christianity,* Vol. 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 35; Coppa, *The Modern Papacy*, 183-184; and Georges Passelecq and Bernard Suchecky, *The Hidden Encyclical of Pius XI* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997). Also Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus (on the Unity of Human Society*), 20/10/1939, *AAS* 31(1939*),*413-453. The Latin text was published alongside several official translations: Italian, 454-480; French, 481-509; Spanish, 510-537; English, 538-564; German, 565-594.

[73] Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris,* 19/03/1937, *AAS* 29(1937*),*65-106; Italian translation, 107-138.

[74] Confalonieri, *Pie XI,* 167-168; also Pollard, –The Papacy," 174; Constantin Simon, *Pro Russia: the Russicum and Catholic Work of in Russia* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2009).

[75] Coppa, *The Modern Papacy*, 174.

[76] Confalonieri, *Pie XI*, 169-171. Coppa, *The Modern Papacy*, 181. Pius XI, *Iniquis Afflictisque,* 18/11/1926, *AAS* 18(1926*),*465-477; Pius XI, *Dilectissima Nobis*, 3rd/06/1933, *AAS* 25(1933*),*261-274.

[77] Coppa, *The Modern Papacy*, 180.

[78] Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, 28/02/1926, *AAS* 18(1926*),*65-83.

bishops in 1926.[79] He also strongly insisted that in its missionary activity the Church keep a clear distance from the interests of the nations, and be concerned with Catholicism and not nationalism.[80] For Coppa like Benedict, Pius knew that ‗the days of the Eurocentric church were over.'[81] As a result of Pius XI's missionary policy, the position of the faith in Latin America, Southeast Asia, the Congo, as well as South and Central Africa was greatly strengthened.[82]

Another major focus of Pius XI's pontificate was the defence and support of Catholic Action. Early in the twentieth century the papacy had accepted Catholic political parties, Pius XI however did not believe in this kind of political involvement and did not support the Italian Catholic Popular Party founded by the Italian thinker Fr Luigi Sturzo.[83] He strongly believed that Catholics had a crucial contribution to make to society, and he encouraged the active engagement of the laity in the mission of the Church not through party politics but by bringing Christian values to all aspects of society. This is what he meant by Catholic Action, a comprehensive reality that had necessarily to take different forms according to the specific contexts.[84]

In conclusion it is legitimate to agree with Stehlin, who argues that during Pius XI's pontificate, especially the years 1922-29, the Holy See emerged as a presence on the world stage. Even more interestingly, Stehlin observes that the papacy of Pius XI ‗indicated many of the directions or tendencies in its policies that it was to manifest or take up again in more expanded form especially after Vatican II.'[85] Pius XI did this while standing on the shoulders of his predecessor. Together, Benedict XV and Pius XI

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[79] O'Malley, *A History of the Popes*, 276; Pollard, ―The Papacy," 34.
[80] Pollard, ―The Papacy," 34
[81] Coppa, *The Modern Papacy*, 180.
[82] Ibid. See also Josef Metzler, ―The Legacy of Pius XI," *Bulletin of Missionary Research* 17 (April 1993*),*62-65.
[83] Coppa, *The Modern Papacy*, 172. See Gabriele De Rosa, *Luigi Sturzo,* (Torino: UTET, 1978); Luigi Sturzo, *Il Partito Popolare Italiano* (Bologna: Zanichelli 1957).
[84] O'Malley, *A History of the Popes*, 277.
[85] Stehlin, ―The Emergence of a New Vatican Diplomacy," 84.

> had attempted a blend of moral vision and political realism: to act in bringing about mediation when others were not willing to do so, to remind nations of the suffering of individuals and minorities when nations were bogged down with national self interest.
>
> In order to speak freely on issues of concern for all people, Rome had to ensure that no nation's policy or outlook be dominant; it needed the support and cooperation of all states, victor and vanquished, to work together. The Vatican perhaps had a vision of Europe as whole earlier or perceived it with greater urgency than did some states...
>
> While lacking the normal instruments of power available to secular states, such as an army, the Vatican did have unique means at its command – a reputation for confidentiality, a claim to impartiality, a strong influence over its many adherents throughout the world, and, of course, the threat of using a morally condemnatory thunderbolt in order to bring nations into line.[86]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the papacy moved increasingly towards political, social and moral questions, as it began to feel called to assume a role of mediation and become a „conscience to the world."[87]

### *c) Pius XII: the Church as global movement for the restoration and salvation of the world*

Pius XII contributed to the transformation of the papacy in the twentieth century through his clear sense that the raison d'être of the Church and of the papacy is the service of humanity for the salvation of the world and all people.[88] According to Peter Nichols, if it is true that the Popes John XXIII and Paul VI together raised the papacy to a degree of influence such as would have been unthinkable of just a few years before, the foundations for such development were laid by Pius XII .[89]

The pontificate of Eugenio Pacelli (2 March 1939 – 9 October 1958) began shortly before the Second World War. The war predicted by his predecessor would be the major challenge of his pontificate and would profoundly shape his mission.[90]

At the end of the 1930s the role of the papacy on the international scene was different from the time of the First World War, however, Pius XII could at least in part rely on Benedict XV's experience as he faced a challenge of comparable magnitude. This legacy was

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[86] Ibid., 85.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Andrea Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa* (Bari: Laterza, 1993), 114. According to Riccardi, Pius XII and his Church exist in symbiosis, one being the reflection of the other. If this is true, his understanding of the task of the Church also reveals his idea of the role of its supreme leader.
[89] Peter Nichols, *The Politics of the Vatican* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), 97.
[90] Andrea Riccardi, „Pius XII," article in *The Papacy: an Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, 1213.

a style of involvement based on strict impartiality and neutrality aimed at placing the Church on the world map and earning her a seat at the table of the decision makers; in order to facilitate the influence of the Gospel on world events, towards authentic and lasting peace. The involvement of the papacy in world matters would be of a diplomatic nature, as had been with Benedict XV and even more under Pius XI. Now the election of the diplomat Pacelli as pope reflected the conviction, shared by both the cardinals and his predecessor, that diplomacy should be key in the shaping of Church-world relationship at a time of great international instability. However, Pius XII's neutrality became controversial as, in the opinion of many, unprecedented factors (like the extermination of European Jews born of the Nazi ideology) required a more courageous and straightforward condemnation on the part of the pope.[91]

During the Second World War Pius XII saw his role, and that of his Church, as twofold: i.e. to create spaces of mediation and reconciliation among the warring nations to hasten the end of the conflict, and to provide spaces of safety for the victims. The second stage of the pontificate coincided with the first years of the Cold War and its major focus was to contribute to rebuild the world and stable peace. Pius XII's response to the tragedy of World War II was the commitment to a peace built on theological foundations: the human family is created by God and has in God its end and raison d'être. The human person is truly human when its relationship with God is intact, and societies are truly human when they are constructed on respect for human dignity, on natural moral law, on the pursuit of the good of all the members of the great human family; God being the origin and goal of humanity. These are the principles for a social reform that Pius XII considers as a necessary precondition for

[91] The question of Pius XII and the Jewish people is still controversial. Opinions range from the thesis that Pius XII was an instrument of Nazi anti-Semitism to the position that Pius XII did more than any other to save Jews persecuted by Hitler. The debate, which started with the appearance, in 1963, of Rolf Hochhuth's controversial drama *Der Stellvertreter. Ein christliches Trauerspiel* (*The Deputy*, *a Christian Tragedy*), was in recent years reignited with the advancements in the cause of the canonisation of Pius XII (started in 1965 by Pope Paul VI; in 1990 John Paul II declared him a Servant of God; in 2007 the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints recommended that he should be declared Venerable, and Benedict XVI did so on 19/12/2009).

world peace.[92] Because forgetfulness of God is the ultimate root of what has the power to destroy humanity, it follows that peace and order among people can exist „only if God occupies the place that is proper to him, the first.“[93] For Pius XII the new world order must rest on „filial fear of God, fidelity to his commandments, respect for human dignity and the principle of equality of rights for all people and states, large or small, weak or strong.“[94] He insisted on the need for a universally recognized form of morality, the rejection of which he sees as „the radical and ultimate cause of the evils in modern society.“[95]

The „primacy of the human person and the pre-eminence of the ethical in the organization of the life of society“ are fundamental aspect of Pius XII's ecclesiology. During the war these principles motivated Pius XII to protect Catholics and others against the power and violence of totalitarian regimes. Even the decision not to denounce openly the Nazi regime's actions against the Jews and other minorities, was for Pius XII necessary in order to prevent further persecutions of Catholics and Christians in Germany and in the occupied territories, and ensure that the Church might continue to work silently to save many lives. Diplomacy, the central feature of Pius XII's style of governance, was aimed at protecting the Church and the people. Having been a diplomat for most of his life, he believed in the fine art of negotiation as the way to minimize the damage of the war and ensure some freedom of action for the Church. For this reason he choose to uphold human rights not directly by public statements and actions, but by delegating direct responsibilities to the episcopates to raise prophetic voices when necessary in their particular contexts.[96]

After the war, the principles of the primacy of the human person and the pre-eminence of the ethical prompted Pius XII to insist that in the void created by the World War the

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[92] Donald MacLean, „Pope Pius XII, Apostle of World Peace," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 6, no. 2 (January 1947), 263.

[93] Pius XII, *Homilia in Die Paschalis Resurrectionis*, 9/04/1939, *AAS* 31 (1939*),*145-151, quoted in MacLean, „Pope Pius XII, Apostle of World Peace," 266.

[94] Pius XII, *Address to the World*, 9/05/1946, quoted in MacLean, „Pope Pius XII," 265.

[95] Pius XII. *Summi Pontificatus*, 20/10/1939, *AAS* 31(1939*),*423.

[96] Andrea Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 19.

Church had a unique contribution to make.[97] In the reconstruction of the new world order the Church contributes as ‗educator of the nations' in two ways. The first is by offering itself as a model for the international order, a model radically different from that of the empires. In this regard, Pius XII strongly emphasizes the supranational character of the Church, which is a community of communities where unity founded on Gospel values is possible alongside cultural diversity and where belonging to the universal Church is compatible with national identities.[98] Pius XII reformed the Sacred College of Cardinals by creating thirty-two new members on one single occasion, on 18 February 1946, and by increasing the number of non-Italian cardinals from fifteen to forty-two, while the Italian representation increased only from twenty-three to twenty-eight.[99] By increasing the international character of the College of Cardinals, Pius XII made it a visible sign of this supranational character.[100] Secondly, the Church is educator of the nations because its mission is to ‗form the whole human person', that is to mould the individuals that must constitute a new world order characterised by true peace.[101] Pius XII claims that the Church's message to the world is a ‗proposal for civilization and human coexistence' especially at difficult times of darkness.[102] While the war was the result of the ‗lacerations of the contemporary world' (individualism, liberalism, nationalism and totalitarianism) the Church's universal unity constitutes the antidote to these negative forces and therefore an asset in the establishment of authentic peace.[103] To fulfill its service to humanity, the Church must be present in all aspects of society and its institutions, from

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[97] At the ceremony of the creation of the new cardinals on 20/02/1946 Pius XII spoke of the power and influence of the Church for the restoration of the world. Pius XII, *Saluto ai nuovi cardinali,* 20/02/1946, *AAS* 38(1946*),*141-151.

[98] Pius XII, *Il Sesto Natale di Guerra. Nuntius Radiophonicus in Pervigilio Nativitatis*, 24/12/1944, *AAS* 37(1945*),*10-23. Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 23-24.

[99] Pius XII, *Allocutio,* 18/02/1946, *AAS* 38(1946*),*101-106.

[100] In his 1945 Christmas address to the College of Cardinals and the Roman Curia, Pius XII announced the forthcoming renewal of the Consistory, and spoke of the number and the nationality of the new cardinals and of the supranational character of the Church (Pius XII, *Negli ultimi sei anni*, 24/12/1945) *AAS* 38(1946*),*15-25. Also Peter Nichols, *The Politics of the Vatican*, 104.

[101] Riccardi, ―Pius XII," 1214.

[102] Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 24

[103] Andrea Riccardi, ―La Chiesa di PIo XII educatrice di uomini e di popoli," in Luciano Pazzaglia ed., *Chiesa e progetto educativo nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra (1945-58)* (Brescia: La Scuola, 1988), 9-36.

education to politics, to science and culture, and likewise the pope has the duty to speak both to the Church and to the international community, to politicians as well as ordinary people, and provide spiritual and moral guidance.

After the war Pius XII broke the silence of the previous years and systematically employed the modern means of communication to make his and the Church's voice clearly heard. As a result radio and television placed the Roman pontiff on the stage of human affairs. He thus established a direct connection with the Catholic faithful, as well as with the larger world community, bringing the person of the pope close to them, and as the consensus of the masses towards him grew, he asserted himself as "interpreter of the tradition of his Church as well as of the discomfort of many people who seek a more stable peace."[104] In this way Pius XII inaugurated a new phase of the history of the Church characterised by a new devotion towards the pope, whose face and voice were now familiar to Catholics everywhere.[105] He treasured this personal relationship with the people, to the point that public appearances, speeches, and audiences in the Vatican become a fundamental part of his work.[106] Despite his ascetic character, Pius XII loved the crowds and was convinced that in his program to earn the Church a visible place in the modern world, his role as pope was to "show himself to as many people as possible."[107] According to O'Malley "no pope addressed so many people from so many different walks of life on so many occasions." With his massive corpus of teaching (i.e. forty encyclicals and so vast a number of speeches as to fill twenty volumes) he set "the trend that would be followed by his successors."[108]

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[104] Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 22-23. Francis MacManus, "The Pope and the People," *The Furrow* 8, no. 3 (March 1957), 135-138.
[105] Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 116.
[106] Ibid., 20.
[107] Nichols, *The Politics of the Vatican*, 97-98. Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 22.
[108] O'Malley, *A History of the Popes*, 282.

Thanks to the combination of the diplomatic activity and Pius XII's personal relationship with the people, by the end of the Second World War and at the onset of the Cold War, the world recognized the pope as a great moral leader.[109]

Pius XII saw the Catholic Church as a great movement led by the pope. In the post-war world divided into two clearly defined political spheres of influence, being no longer a political power and without a territory of its own, the Church must rely on its own means in order to carry on its mission. This can be achieved by becoming a movement within societies aimed at transforming humanity from within.[110] Pius XII understood the Church dynamically, as a force present in all aspects of human life, whose purpose is to regain those who have been lost and to make its message understood once again in the midst of society. For these reasons the laity has a special role in the Church and their task is to "act in society in order to consecrate and sanctify it".[111] However, in order to remain faithful to their mission, lay people need formation and guidance and it is the duty of the pope to provide it. He supports their commitment wholeheartedly, as long as it does not degenerate into centrifugal movements that lead away from and create disorder within the Church, whose task is, on the contrary, to be a witness of order in midst of the world's chaos.[112]

Consequently, Pius XII considered the presence of Catholics in politics as a necessary aspect of the Church's task. He was the first pope to accept democracy as compatible with the Church's message of civilization based on the gospel, although he spoke of democracy in the broad sense, possible in various forms and within monarchies as well as republics.[113] The first characteristic of authentic democracy regards the citizens: they are a people and not a

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[109] Pollard, "The Papacy," 38.

[110] Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 120-122. Pius XII, *Adhortatio Radiophonica: Dal Nostro Cuor*, 10/02/1952, *AAS* 44(1952*),*158-162.

[111] Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 115.

[112] Ibid.

[113] In his 1944 Christmas address Pius XII spoke on democracy and peace. Cf Pius XII, *Il Sesto Natale di Guerra*, 24/12/1944, *AAS* 37(1945*),*10-23. Also published in Pius XII, *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi, vol. 6, Marzo 1944-Febbraio 1945* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana), 235-251. For a commentary on Pius XII's idea of democracy see Michael Connolly, "Pope Pius XII on Democracy," *The Irish Monthly* 73, no. 868 (October 1945),410-412.

‗shapeless multitude', the ‗mass'; persons who are ‗aware of their own responsibilities and convictions', who have an active role in the life of the state.[114] On the contrary, the ‗mass' needs to be moved from outside, and is more easily manipulated by those in power for their own purposes.[115] A second characteristic relates to those who hold public office in the democratic state. Their authority is legitimate and credible when they recognize ‗God's order of beings and ends' as absolute and understand their role as a mission to realise such order, which has human dignity as its foundation and end.[116] A healthy democracy is based on natural law and revelation (therefore on respect for human dignity) which prevent it from becoming an absolutist system.[117] As nations seek ‗better and more perfect forms of democracy,' the role of the Church, is to ‗proclaim to the world... the highest and most necessary message: the dignity of the person, the calling to be a child of God.'[118]

Pius XII believed that authentic democracy is possible and desirable, and supported the creation of Christian democratic parties in various European countries, including Italy, France, Germany and the Benelux.[119] Nevertheless he also experienced a fundamental tension vis-à-vis the pluralism that is inherent in democracy. He was convinced that, on the one hand, the Church is the sole possessor of the Truth for the salvation of the world. On the other hand, he understood that democracy requires tolerance towards other ideological and religious opinions. In his address to the Italian jurists in 1953, Pius XII spoke of Catholicism as state religion and seemed to go beyond traditionally held ideas by accepting religious tolerance.[120] While opposing the idea that the voice of the Church may be considered as just one among

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[114] Pius XII, *Il Sesto Natale di Guerra*, 13-14.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., 15.
[117] Ibid., 17.
[118] Ibid., 22.
[119] Pollard, ―The Papacy," 38.
[120] On Pius XII and religious tolerance, see *Ci riesce*, 6/12/1953, Fifth National Conference of the Unione Giuristi Cattolici Italiani, in *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di Sua Santità Pio XII*, Vol. 15, 483-492.

many, he was prepared to take democracy seriously by accepting pluralism if necessary for the Church to contribute effectively to the reconstruction of world order.[121]

Pius XII's papacy faced unprecedented challenges. The first was modernity, which has great potential for the authentic development of humanity, but must be governed by ethical principles lest it degenerates and unleashes destructive power; as humanity has recently experienced with the extermination camps and the atomic bomb.[122]

Pius XII also faced Communism as a destructive force and mobilised the entire Catholic Church against it. He saw it as imperative that the values of the Gospel replace all instances of the materialistic atheism on which the Communist ideology stands.[123]

Pius XII's pontificate also faced the decolonisation of the Third Word.[124] He supported the independence of new nations, but also warned against the risk of being led astray by ideologies contrary to Christian values and the primacy of the human person.[125] He has a broad vision of the world. He is lucidly aware that Eurocentrism has come to an end with the establishment of the bipolar model in international relationships, and also that a bipolar understanding of the world is inadequate to explain the complexity of international relationships, and invites Catholics to broaden their vision. He does this, for example, by recalling the Church to be aware that the human family, for whose salvation the Church exists, extends far beyond the First and Second Worlds.[126] Therefore Vatican diplomacy must seek direct relationships with the new states on the concrete terrain of their own problems. According to Riccardi, in the 1950s Pius XII set in motion a _wave' that, through changes of perspective, was destined to reach Vatican II and beyond.[127] For Pius XII, the Church is the ideal model of the proper new order on which humanity's salvation depends. He also sees a

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[121] Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 28-30.
[122] Ibid., 115.
[123] Riccardi, –Pius XII," 1215-1216.
[124] Ibid., 1217-1218.
[125] Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 131.
[126] Ibid., 133.
[127] Ibid.

united Europe as an important intermediate step towards the establishment of a world order based on the Christian message.[128] O'Mahony argues that, although the Holy See had always looked at Europe as a whole, it was only with the pontificate of Pius XII that „a distinct Catholic vision of Europe appeared." [129] For Pius XII, Europe is founded on Christian values and the creation of a European Union depends on the restoration of such values.[130] Although the theme of the Christian roots of Europe would become a central concern of his successors, especially Benedict XVI, Pius XII was the first to identify clearly a historic mission of Europe, and for this reason supported the creation of a Christian Democratic European Union.[131]

Pius XII's papacy was characterised by a broad vision of the Church and its mission for the whole of humanity however certain tensions prevent him from being a modern pope like his post-Vatican II successors.

First, although with Pius XII the pope starts to become the „pope of the people," there still remains a certain distance between them. The emphasis in the relationship is on a „systolic" movement of the faithful towards the centre (e.g. in the 1950 Holy Year more than three million pilgrims visited the pope), and not yet on a „diastolic" movement of the pope going to meet the people in their own contexts, which will be inaugurated by Paul VI's travels.

Second, Pius XII is open to dialogue with modernity but is also convinced that the Church must maintain a certain degree of isolation as a visible sign of the superiority of the Truth that she bears. In this sense, he cannot be seen as a precursor of ecumenism or of

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[128] Riccardi, „Pio XII," 1216-1217; Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 151. Pius XII, *Allocutio ad delegatos, qui Romae convenerant, ob Conventum internationalem pro Unione Foederati Europea instauranda*, 11/11/1948, *AAS* 40(1948*),*507-510 (*Address to the participants in a conference for the establishment of a European Federation*).

[129] Anthony O'Mahony, „The Vatican and Europe: Political Theology and Ecclesiology in Papal Statements from Pius XII to Benedict XVI," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (August 2009), 177-179.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., 182-184. For Pius XII's discussion of Europe, Pius XII, *Nuntius Radiophonicus*, 24/12/1947, *AAS* 40(1948*),*8-16. The mention to the mission of a „Christianly inspired' Europe is on p. 14.

interfaith dialogue. As a matter of fact he rejected the invitation of the Patriarch of Costantinople, Athenagoras, to establish relations between the two Churches, convinced that the only way to unity is the return of other Christians to Rome.[132] Similarly although under Pius XII the Holy See wishes to establish diplomatic relations with „non-Catholic" states, it seeks to avoid engagement at the religious level or at the level of common action.[133]

Third, Pius XII was open-minded towards modern thought albeit with some reservations. For example some of his liturgical innovations broke with longstanding traditions showing that he is not in principle against renewal. However, in his encyclical *Humanis Generis*, he harshly condemned the *nouvelle théologie* as a dangerous weakening of Catholic theology and identity.[134]

It would be anachronistic to expect from Pius XII the posture of the post-Vatican II popes, however his broad understanding of the mission of the Church and of the pope's role in the world contributed significantly to preparing for the open attitude to the world later adopted by the Second Vatican Council and which has since become the springboard for the confident engagement in dialogue with religions and cultures that is an essential feature of the ministry of the modern popes.

## 2. The seeds of the modern papacy: John XXIII's 'modern instincts'

Although the new style of papacy to which we are referring here as „modern" was more clearly defined by the pontificates of Paul VI and John Paul II, its antecedent can be found in John XXIII and in the theological and pastoral change represented by Vatican II. In many ways John XXIII still operates within a „pre-Vatican II" model of papacy, but for certain aspects he became the precursor of a new era in which the Catholic Church and its leader

[132] Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 136; Pius XII, *Orientalis Ecclesiae. Encyclical on Saint Cyril, Patriach of Alexandria*, 9/04/1944, *AAS* 36(1944),129-144, in particular 132 („Quae quidem... intellegi quidem posit.")

[133] Riccardi, *Il Potere del Papa*, 139.

[134] Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 12/08/1950, *AAS* 40(1950),561-578.

would acquire an unprecedented universal significance. Certain ‗modern' instincts can be detected in John XXIII, which can be traced back to his earlier formation and life experience.[135]

Angelo Roncalli started travelling very early, as secretary to bishop Radini-Tedeschi (1904-10), accompanying him to Lourdes and to Palestine in 1905. He further travelled to France, Vienna, Krakow and Budapest between 1908 and 1912.[136] His term as president of the Italian section of *Propaganda Fide* (1920-1925) also contributed to his awareness of the Church as a universal reality. His work for the Holy See diplomatic service (1925-1953) brought him to Bulgaria as apostolic visitor and then apostolic delegate, and then as apostolic delegate in Turkey and Greece he worked very actively on behalf of war prisoners and especially to protect Jewish refugees and prevent their deportation during the Nazi occupation of Greece (1941-44).[137] He was sent to Paris in 1944, as apostolic nuncio and was also Vatican observer to UNESCO between 1951 and 1953, before being created cardinal and appointed patriarch of Venice, until his election as pontiff in 1958. Most of his life, then, was spent as diplomat, although he had never been formally trained for that purpose.[138]

Some of John XXIII's ‗modern' instincts emerge from the beginning of his pontificate. He manifested his conviction that the Church is a larger reality than the small portion confined within the walls of the Vatican in various ways. First, he immediately increased the College of Cardinals so as to exceed the traditional number of seventy. Second, by creating the first cardinals from Philippines, Mexico and Tanganyika (Tanzania) he showed a Catholic Church that embraces all continents. Third, the convocation of an ecumenical council for the universal Church revealed his program for updating and opening up the Church. Lastly, he was the first pope to leave Rome for almost a century, when he went on pilgrimage to Assisi

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[135] Pollard, ―The Papacy," 39-40.
[136] Frank Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy in the Modern World* (Westport: Praeger, 2008), 162.
[137] Francesca Della Salda, *Obbedienza e Pace. Il vescovo A. G. Roncalli tra Sofia e Roma 1925-1934* (Genova: Marietti, 1989); and Alberto Melloni, *Fra Instanbul Atene e la guerra. La missione di A. G. Rocalli* (1935-1944) (Genova: Marietti, 1992).
[138] Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy*, 162-163.

and Loreto before opening the Council. Thus, Coppa argues that, although he did not travel abroad, he inaugurated the era of „papal travel that would be adapted and extended by his successors as he struggled to transform the papacy from a Roman to a universal institution.“[139]

John XXIII wanted to change the Church‘s self-understanding, but also wanted this to happen smoothly and without affecting its unity. This is evident in his effort to maintain the balance between „conservatives‘ and „progressive-liberals‘ within the Church. Concretely, he created both the conservative Tardini and the liberal Montini cardinals; he chose Tardini as secretary of state, pacifying the conservatives by signalling his intention to maintain continuity; he appointed Tardini and Felici (traditionalist) as president and secretary of the Preparatory Commission respectively; however he chose Montini (then archbishop of Milan) as his close co-operator in the preparation of the Council.[140] In fact it was Montini‘s pastoral letter, *Pensiamo al Concilio* (1962), that revealed more explicitly the pope‘s intention for the Council: a renewal of the inner life of the Church with a redefinition of its relationship to the modern world.[141]

John XXIII introduced a new style of papal relationship with the Church and the world fro the very beginning when, with his decision to deliver a homily on the day of his coronation, a novelty within the tradition, he expressed his desire to speak to the people directly. Underlying John XXIII‘s open and outgoing style is the idea that the Church must get closer to the world. This became a principle of action at various levels: first, in a clear commitment to improve the Holy See‘s relationships with the Soviet Union and the East through the policy of accommodation which later under Paul VI took the name of

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[139] Ibid., 164-65.

[140] Carlo Felice Casula, *Domenico Tardini (1888-1961)* (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 1988). After the death of Cardinal Luigi Maglione (22/08/1944), who had been Secretary of State (since 10/03/1939), the position remained vacant and Domenico Tardini (1888–1961) and Gianni Battista Montini (later Pope Paul VI, 1897-1978) were appointed as heads of the foreign and internal sections of the Secretariat of State respectively, under the pontiff‘s direct supervision. In 1952 both men were offered elevation to the College of Cardinals but neither accepted. They were eventually created cardinals by Pope John XXII on 15/12/1958, and Tardini was appointed as Secretary of State the previous day, 14/12/1958.

[141] Giovanni Battista Montini, P*ensiamo al Concilio. Lettera pastorale all''Arcidiocesi Ambrosiana per la Santa Quaresima del 1962* (Milan, 1962). Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy*, 164.

*Ostpolitik*;[142] second, in taking concrete steps towards ecumenical relationships, such as: the establishment of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (5 June 1960), the encounter with the Anglican Primate Geoffrey Fisher (1960) and the exchanges with Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras and Patriarch Alexis of Moscow, his approval of the participation of Catholic observers in the WCC meeting in India (1961); third, through his special interest in correcting and improving the relationships with the Jewish People, through the changes in the Good Friday liturgy and his personal request that a draft on Jewish-Christian relations be prepared and submitted to the Council for discussion.[143] Lastly, John XXIII manifested a sincere concern for all humanity in his social teaching, stressing the equality of rights for all on the basis of the fundamental unity of humanity in a single family (*Pacem in Terris,* 132);[144] presenting the Church as mother and teacher of all nations (*Mater et Magistra*);[145] and insisting on the right of every person to worship God according to their conscience both in public and in private (*Pacem in Terris*, 14).[146] The encyclical *Pacem in Terris* can be considered his legacy to the Church and to humanity.[147]

These were important prophetic beginnings as, according to Coppa, „John's papacy was in the forefront of foreseeing the emergence of a new world order" and wished for the Church to be prepared to engage with it. In this sense, his relatively short pontificate was the prelude to profound changes to come.[148]

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[142] O'Mahony, „The Vatican and Europe, 177-194.

[143] John M. Oesterreicher, „Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. Introduction and Commentary," in Herbert Vorgrimler ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. 3 (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), 4-8.

[144] John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 11/04/1963, *AAS* 55(1963*),*292, („Humanae unitatem... hominum familiae interest.")

[145] John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 15/05/1961, *AAS* 53(1961*),*401-464.

[146] John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris, AAS* 55(1963*),*260-261 („In hominis iuribus... nomen accepit.").

[147] Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy,* 166-168. On Pope John XXIII see also: Peter Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII: Pope of the Council* (London: Chapman, 1984).

[148] Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy*, 169.

## C. PAUL VI

The Second Vatican Council was born from the _modern instincts' of John XXIII, which were assumed and developed in unprecedented ways by his friend and successor Giambattista Montini, Pope Paul VI. On him fell the task of leading the Church through the radical transformation set in motion by John XXIII, and he carried it with both faithfulness to the Catholic tradition and creativity in responding to the challenges of the time. It was no easy task, especially as Paul VI inherited the Council at a time in which internal divisions seemed to threaten its continuation; nevertheless he readily declared that his primary task as pontiff would be to bring the Council to completion.[149]

It is precisely by taking further what had been started by his predecessor that Paul VI accomplished the tremendous task of giving Pope John's _modern instinct' clear theoretical and pastoral articulation, and the result of that process was the birth of the modern papacy, as we know it today. If openness to the followers of other faiths and the desire to engage in more positive relations with them was one of the _instincts' of John XXIII, it acquired a strong theological foundation with Paul VI both directly, by his teaching and practice, and indirectly, through his role in the Second Vatican Council. He became one of the pillars of the modern papacy, to the extent that his successors could not but take forward what he started, as they have done. The theological foundation of the dialogue with other faiths is a fundamental implication of Pope Paul's understanding of Church, of its mission in the world and, consequently, of the specific role of the papacy within the Church. Paul's notion of Church is linked to a specific understanding of the _world' and of _humanity': understanding the Church in the modern world requires a deep understanding of the modern world, with both its lights and its shadows.

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[149] Ibid., 169-171; Vincenzo Fagiolo, –Il Cardinal Montini, Paolo VI e Il Vaticano," in *Paul VI et la Modernité dans l'Église: Actes Du Colloque organisé par l'École Française de Rome (Rome 2-4 Juin 1983),* Collection de L'École Française de Rome 72 (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1984), 561–568.

## 1. Pope Paul VI's ecclesiology: a global vision of the Church

On the occasion of a journey to the United States and Brazil in 1960, when he was still archbishop of Milan, Montini manifested his idea that it was necessary for the Church to assume a truly "universal posture" by transcending Italy and Europe. According to Coppa this would become a guiding principle for his papacy and also for Vatican II.[150]

Paul's "universal posture" emerged at the beginning of his pontificate. As pontiff he took the name of St Paul, the Apostle of the Nations, as if to express his determination to re-launch the Catholic Church towards the entire world. His vision of a universal Church was explained in his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, published on 6 August 1964, which earned him the title of the "pope of dialogue".[151] *Ecclesiam Suam* presents the Church as an intrinsically dialogical reality, whose true nature is necessarily manifested at four levels: dialogue within the Catholic Church, with other Christian communities, with the world religions, and with the world. Just over a year earlier, on 22 June 1963, Pope Paul had addressed his first papal allocution to the entire human family and not just to the Catholic Church.[152]

Jean-Pierre Torrell has observed that "ecclesiology is a theme omnipresent in the works of Paul VI," as it is quite difficult to find a document in which he does not dedicate at least some lines to the theme of the Church. He devoted numerous homilies to the Church and it is not accidental that his programmatic encyclical letter was entirely dedicated to it.[153] Torrell believes that Paul VI's constant emphasis on ecclesiology is deliberate and translates his clear awareness of his duty and willingness to respond to an urgent demand of the modern times.[154] For Paul VI, the Church is: a) the extension of Christ throughout humanity and therefore, b)

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[150] Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy,* 171 quotes Paul VI: 'As far as understanding the modern world and drawing close to it, I think I am on the same lines as Pope John.'

[151] Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 6/08/1964, *AAS* 56(1964*),*609-659.

[152] Paul VI, *Qui Fausto Die*. *Nuntius Radiophonicus*, 22/06/1963, *AAS* 55(1963*),*570-578.

[153] Jean-Pierre Torrell, "Paul VI et L'ecclesiologie de Lumen Gentium," in *Paolo VI e i Problemi Ecclesiologici al Concilio*, ed. Rodolfo Rossi, Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto Paolo VI 7 (Brescia; Roma: Istituto Paolo VI; Edizioni Studium, 1989), 147.

[154] Ibid., 148.

an organic communion, the body of Christ; and as such, c) the Church is the faithful People of God.[155] Within the organic unity of the body of Christ, the authority of the pope and of the hierarchy exists exclusively as service. Paul VI said that he realised this immediately after his election, almost in a vision, in which ‗authority and charity become one single thing; a thing so great that it extended to the ends of the world and to all the needs of humanity.'[156] The Church of Paul VI faces the modern world, not to condemn it but to engage in a dialogue with it for the salvation of all the human family.

In order to serve the world, and continue the divine dialogue with it, the Church needs to understand the world and modernity. Accordingly the pope enters himself in dialogue with contemporary culture, with science and with philosophy, to understand what is good but also to identify what needs to be corrected.[157] The most dangerous risk of modernity is to introduce the ultimate separation between Man and God, in the name of the emancipation of the former from its dependence on the latter. This would be deadly, because in placing Man above God's law, and making Man the ultimate criterion of morality, Man feels entitled to cross all ethical boundaries in order to pursue his purposes, and eventually ends up destroying the dignity and life of fellow human beings. On the other hand, modernity has great potential for the edification of humanity. The Church must serve humanity by offering modernity a new humanism based on Christian revelation. Modernity needs to be urged to render every human person the respect and honour that derive from an inherent dignity as God's creation, bearing the image of the Creator.[158] This task required an adequate understanding of

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[155] Ibid., 148-161.

[156] Paul VI, *General Audience*, 21/06/1972, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/audiences/1972/documents/hf_p-vi_aud_19720621_it.html

[157] For example the relatioship between Paul VI and Jacques Maritain and Louis Massignon, among others, reveals the strategic importance of French Catholic thought for Paul VI. See Jacques Prévotat, ―Les Sorces Françaises de La Formation Intellectuelle de G.B. Montini (1919-1936)," in *Paul VI et La Modernité Dans L''Église: Actes Du Colloque organise Par l'Ecole Française de Rome (Rome 2-4 Juin 1983)*, Collection de L'Ecole Française de Rome 72 (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1984), 101–127.

[158] Giorgio Campanini, ―Le radici culturali del nuovo umanesimo proposto dalla *Populorum progressio*," in *Il magistero di Paolo VI nell'Enciclica Populorum Progressio* (Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI, Edizioni Studium, Roma, 1989), 43-50. The influence of the philosopher Jacques Maritain on the thought of Paul VI's philosophical and theological anthropology is well documented: see: Philippe Chenaux, *Paul*

modernity and Montini was interested in Maritain as interpreter of both the ambiguities and the potential of the modern world.[159] According to Campanini the question of modernity is the area in which the thought of Maritain has influenced Paul VI the most. The French philosopher saw modern culture as ‗culture of separateness,' based on clear-cut separation: between faith and reason, body and soul, individual and society.[160] According to Maritain modernity had emerged from three revolutions led by the three reformers: Luther at the religious level, Descartes at the philosophical level, and Rousseau at the social level. Montini appreciated Maritain's ability to identify the common motif that underlies all three, in ‗contemporary subjectivism.' Maritain's response to this state of affairs is the call to ‗distinguish in order to unite', the title of one of his most important works: for modernity not to turn against humanity but to be beneficial to it, the ‗separations' had to be re-understood in terms of distinctions and not oppositions.[161] What modernity had separated, needed to be brought back into unity, and this could be done by the retrieval of classical thought, and especially the thought of Aquinas. This was necessary in order to pursue true humanism concerned with all aspects and dimensions of the human person (*humanisme integrale)*, this being the notion of humanism in keeping with the Christian faith.[162] Montini agrees with Maritain's critique of modernity as, in Campanini's words,

> progressive detachment from Western tradition of thought. The recovery of tradition is therefore necessary, however not as mere return to the past, but in the perspective of dialogical engagement with modern culture.[163]

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*VI et Maritain: les rapports du "montinianisme" et du "maritainisme"* (Roma: Edizioni Studium, 1994). Jacques Prévotat, ―Les Sources Françaises de la Formation Intellectuelle de G.B. Montini (1919-1936)," in *Paul VI et la Modernité dans l'Église,* 101–127; Giorgio Campanini, ―G.B. Montini e J. Maritain," 225–237.

[159] Campanini, ―G.B. Montini e J. Maritain," 227.

[160] Ibid., 228.

[161] Jacques Maritain, *Distinguer Pour Unir, Ou, Les Degrés Du Savoir* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946).

[162] Campanini, ―G.B. Montini e J. Maritain," 232-235; Jacques Maritain, *Humanisme Intégral: Problèmes Temporels et Spirituels D'une Nouvelle Chrétienté* (Paris: Aubier, 1936).

[163] Campanini, ―G.B. Montini e J. Maritain," 230.

In 1946, after the experience of totalitarianism, which in Europe had taken the shape of Nazism and Fascism, Montini translated Maritain's *Humanisme* into Italian. At that particular time Montini thought it was necessary to look ahead and identify possible paths for a radical reconstruction of modern culture. While in the *Three Reformers*, Maritain's judgement of modernity had been more negative, in *Humanisme* he sees modernity as filled with Christian values which needed to be revealed in a constructive dialogue in order to reconstruct the modern world together. In this sense Maritain has greatly contributed to the reconciliation between Christianity and modernity which has been a great concern of Pope Paul VI. According to Campanini, Maritain influenced Montini in shaping his vision of Christianity opened to the world, without anathemas and nostalgias, which unfolded during his pontificate.[164]

In his in-depth study of the relationship between Pope Montini and Maritain, Philippe Chenaux has examined their relationship during three phases: the years Montini was assistant of FUCI, (the Federation of Italian Catholic University Students); the period when Maritain was French ambassador to the Holy See (1945-48) and Montini Substitute Secretary of State; and the years of the Council.[165]

The strongest influence was during the first period, when Montini was concerned with enabling his students to approach critically the political systems that were appearing on the horizon (Fascism ruled in Italy), and ultimately for a political resistance at the level of culture, through a profound reflection on the conditions of a possible political renewal on Christian bases.[166] This was the reason why Paul VI translated *The Three Reformers*, into Italian in 1928. According to Chenaux, Paul VI found in Maritain's Thomism a kind of thought able to face modernity with that in it which was irreconcilable with the Christian

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[164] Ibid., 237.

[165] Philippe Chenaux, "Paul VI et Maritain," in Yves Floucat and Bernard Hubert, *Jacques Maritain et ses contemporains* (Paris: Desclée, 1991), 323–342.

[166] Ibid., 328.

conscience but also, and perhaps especially, in what could be acceptable to it.[167] With regard to the second period, Chenaux seems to suggest that, although he is far from being absolutely certain, through Montini's work at the Secretariat of State, Maritain may have had some influence on Pope Pius XII with regard for example to the condemnation of anti-Semitism and the opening to Communist Russia.[168]

During the years of the Council, Paul VI discreetly sought Maritain's opinion particularly with regard to the question of religious freedom. According to Chenaux, by making Charles Journet a cardinal in January 1965, Paul VI created the opportunity for Maritain's ideas to find their way into the teaching of the Council. Journet, a very close friend of Maritain, played an extremely important role during the last session of the Council (14 September-8 December 1965) vis-a-vis the question of religious freedom (especially his address on 23 September 1965), and also through his support for *Nostra Aetate*.[169] Probably, in choosing Maritain as receiver of the Second Vatican Council's _Message to Men of Thought and Science', Paul VI also intended to acknowledge the importance of his contribution to Catholic thought and to the Church. In the homily at the end of the last session of the Council on 7 December 1965, Paul VI spoke of the Catholic faith as an ally of human life by its _extremely precise and sublime interpretation... of humanity' which is based on the knowledge of God which is a prerequisite for knowledge of man as he really is, in his fullness;' and he actually used the phrase _hominem integrum_, i.e. _integral man', which echoes the title of Maritain's 1936 book and summarises the latter's _theocentric humanism.'[170] Later, in 1967, Paul VI referred to Maritain in his social encyclical *Populorum*

[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid., 331-333.
[169] Ibid., 340. On the relationship between Maritain and Journet, see Charles Journet and Jacques Maritain, *Correspondance,* eds. Claude Favez, Pierre Mamie, and Georges Cottier, 6 Vols. (Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1996-2008).
[170] Paul VI, *Homilia ad Patres Conciliares*, 7 December 1965, *AAS* 58(1966*),*58.

*Progressio*, in the section on the necessity for a new humanism.[171] These examples show the significant convergence between the thought of Paul VI and that of Maritain. Chenaux recalls that Montini called Maritain "his teacher", but also shows that while their friendship never failed, Maritain's influence on Paul VI was not *tout-court*, and that the latter maintained the interior freedom to think independently. According to Chenaux it was mainly the "first Maritain", before the Second World War, that influenced Paul VI by contributing significantly to shaping the fundamental attitudes of the young man who, as pope, would face the great task of reconciling the Church with modernity.[172]

The re-establishment of the rightful relationship between God and Man is the necessary condition for the unfolding of modernity's positive potential. This Church exists to serve the modern world by being the sacrament of that unity that is the vocation and ultimate fulfilment of humanity, and by entering into dialogue with the forces that have the power to determine the destiny of the human race. One such force is religion, that is to say the capacity of the person to relate to the transcendent, in its different manifestations.

Paul VI is convinced that only a truly universal Church can fulfil its mission for humanity. The notion of a global church underlying his "universal posture," emerges in the different aspects of his pontificate.

First, Paul VI introduced important changes in the governing structure of the Church. For example, he transformed, the College of Cardinals by raising their number significantly and adding more non-Italian members to make it more international and change its internal dynamic.[173] This transformation came about through six consistories between 1965 and June

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[171] Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 20: "If development calls for an ever-growing number of technical experts, even more necessary still is the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism, one which will enable our contemporaries to enjoy the higher values of love and friendship, of prayer and contemplation,[17] and thus find themselves. This is what will guarantee man's authentic development—his transition from less than human conditions to truly human ones." Footnote 17 reads: "J. Maritain, *Les conditions spirituelles du progrès et de la paix*, in an anthology entitled *Rencontre des cultures à l'UNESCO sous le signe du Concile Oecuménique Vatican II*, Paris: Mame (1966)".

[172] Chenaux, "Paul VI et Maritain," 340-341.

[173] O'Malley, *A History of the Popes*, 311.

1977. At the first of these, on 22 February 1965, among the twenty-seven new cardinals Paul included the four major Eastern patriarchs.[174]

Likewise, the establishment of new bodies such as the Secretariat for non-Christians (1964), the Council on the Laity (1967), the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace (1967) and the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum* (1971), were clear practical consequences of his vision of a global Church that engages actively in dialogue with the world at different levels.

Second, Pope Montini manifested great interest in world events and genuine willingness to understand and engage in the political arena in order to have his say vis-à-vis the relationships among states. Two significant examples were his exchanges with United States President Kennedy, particularly with regard to the situation of Vietnam (which included the Pope's offer to visit the country on a peace mission) and the inauguration of the *Ostpolitik,* namely the Holy See's commitment to dialogue with Communist countries, as a direct development of the openings towards the East that had taken place with John XXIII.[175] Another important example was his open support for the United Nations, which he visited and addressed on 4 October 1965, when he acknowledged that the aims of that organisation "mirrored those of the papacy."[176] In this line are also to be seen, for example, the participation of the Holy See in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Helsinki (30 July-1 August 1975), and other similar global events; and the official visits of Secretary of State Casaroli to Moscow (1971) and Cuba (1974).[177]

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[174] These were: Maximos IV Saïgh, Patriarch of Antioch of the Greek Melkites (Syria), Titular Patriarch of Alexandria of the Greek-Melkites, Titular Patriarch of *Jerusalem* of the Greek-Melkites**;** Paul Pierre Méouchi, Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites (Lebanon); Stephanos I Sidarouss, Patriarch of Alexandria of the Copts (Egypt); and Josyf Ivanovyce Slipyj, Major Archbishop of Lviv of the Ukrainians (Ukraine).

[175] Roy Palmer Domenico, "America, the Holy See and the War in Vietnam," in Peter G. Kent and John F. Pollard eds., *Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age* (West Port: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 202-219. Philippe Levillain, "Ostpolitik," article in *The Papacy An Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, 1084-1086; Andrea Riccardi, *Il Vaticano e Mosca* (Bari: Laterza, 1993), 305-342.

[176] Paul VI, *Allocutio in Consilio Nationum Unitarum*, *AAS* 57(1965*),*877-885. Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy*, 174. See also Roman A. Melnyk, *Vatican Diplomacy at the United Nations. A History of Catholic Global Engagement* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009).

[177] Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy*, 174.

Third, Paul VI's notion of a global Church actively engaged in the life of humanity explains his direct interest in specific issues on the Council's agenda, like the question of collegiality, the laity, ecumenism, Christian unity, dialogue with the modern world, and relations with the followers of other religions. In this regard it must be remembered that it was thanks to his direct intervention that the draft of *Nostra Aetate* was not removed from the Council's agenda and was eventually approved and promulgated.[178]

Lastly, the new Pope was also open to the new means of communications as ways of engaging in dialogue with the modern world, "particularly the press, cinema, radio and television that influence... the whole of human society."[179]

## 2. Paul VI's and the invention of the apostolic journey

Church historian Andrea Riccardi has stated that Paul VI's apostolic journeys are central to his understanding of the role and the mission of the pope.[180] Riccardi argues that, although it may have been inspired by John XXIII, the papal apostolic journey was invented by Paul VI. It marked a profound change in the way the figure of the pope related to the Catholic Church, to society, to politics and to the world at large.

Over the centuries Rome had acquired enormous symbolic value for the papacy, to the extent that residing in Rome was seen as a visible sign of its stability. Popes had left Rome only in moments of history when their position was weak or in danger.[181] For centuries Rome had signified the freedom of the Church and of the pope and his unquestioned universal

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[178] Oisterreicher, "*Nostra Aetate,"* 81-90.

[179] Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy*, 172.

[180] Andrea Riccardi, "Significato e finalitá dei viaggi apostolici di Paolo VI," in Rodolfo Rossi ed., *I Viaggi Apostolici di Paolo VI. Colloquio Internazionale di Studio*, *Brescia, 21-23 settembre 2001* (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 2004), 14-28; in the same collection see also Giuseppe Pittau, "I viaggi di Paolo VI in Asia: l'incontro della chiesa con le culture e le religioni asiatiche," 151-165. Italian Church historian Riccardi is the founder of the Sant'Egidio Community, a Catholic movement committed to the poor, interreligious dialogue and peace-building. It played an important mediating role in conflicts in Lebanon, Albania, Kosovo, Mozambique and Guatemala. The movement begun in 1968, as a fruit of Vatican II, and in its development is very much an expression of the Modern Papacy. See Andrea Riccardi, *Sant'Egidio: Rome and the World*. (London: St Pauls, 1999).

[181] Riccardi, "Significato e finalitá," 15.

authority. However, being in Rome meant that at the global level the pope was largely an anonymous figure to most of his subjects. Things start to change in the twentieth century, as we have seen, when popes gradually acquire a face and people can relate to them more personally, but it is only with Paul VI that they actually break their symbiosis with Rome and start making the world the scene of their apostolic ministry. In Riccardi's words, the apostolic journey

> takes the pope out of his habitual scene, redefines his relationship with the world, and establishes a sort of new pontifical liturgy. With unprecedented language the papacy starts to consider the entire world as its own space, not just from the perspective of apostolic concern or governance, but also in terms of direct contact.[182]

This innovation is very significant at various levels. First, the apostolic journey is a new language: internal to the Catholic Church as well as external to engage with the world; it speaks to both Catholics and outsiders of a new Catholicity, showing the former how they should be, and assuring the latter that the Church is on their side.[183]

Second, this new language is aimed at redefining catholicity. For centuries the popes had claimed the 'right to convoke'; now with the apostolic journeys they claim and exercise the 'right to encounter' overcoming the ancient limitation of geographic boundaries.[184] For centuries the Catholic Church had been identified with the Roman papal court. The apostolic journeys of Paul VI mark the end of such identification and the retrieval of the correct notion of the Catholic, that is to say universal, Church. This aspect is clearly reflected in Paul VI's effort to internationalise the Roman Curia and de-Romanise the structures of governance of the Church, as seen earlier.[185]

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[182] Ibid., 16. My translation.
[183] ibid., 17.
[184] Ibid., 17-18.
[185] Ibid., 18. See Étienne Fouilloux, "Réformer La Curie Romaine?," *Il Cristianesimo Nella Storia* 33 (2012), 875–890.

Third, the apostolic journey signals the papacy's reconciliation and alliance with modernity, and the emergence of the modern papacy, characterised by great emphasis on its universal significance and responsibility.[186]

Fourth, it reveals a pontiff that is aware of the world, of social and political trends and events, and the problems and sufferings of humanity, and shows his concern by speaking to people no longer from a distance but by coming near them, and becoming more real and credible to them.

Finally, Paul VI's apostolic journeys have enormous symbolic value. They were relatively few in comparison with those of his successor. Out of eight, Riccardi defines three of these journeys as "conciliar" because they took place during the years of the Council (Holy Land, India, and the United Nations' Organisation in New York); two as "ecumenical" (Turkey, and the WCC in Geneva); three as oriented towards the "new worlds" (Colombia, Uganda, Asia). The fact that they all took place between 1964 and 1970 and that there were none during Paul VI's last eight years of pontificate, seems to indicate that their importance was more symbolic than practical. In his eight journeys Paul VI was able to symbolically touch the whole world: the people and nations of all continents, the Christian Churches as well as the religions, thus completing in eight broad strokes the picture of the new Church and papacy that Paul VI intended to present to the World, which he has also sketched in *Ecclesiam Suam*. The journeys of Paul VI have great value in connection with the three circles of "external" dialogue indicated in the encyclical.[187]

The first circle of the Church's external dialogue is that with humanity and the world. Here are to be located Paul VI's political encounters with the leaders of the states and other institutions. Paul VI undertakes his journeys as a spiritual leader. He constantly highlights the spiritual nature of his mission in order to manifest the nature of the Church's mission, which

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[186] Ibid., 17.

[187] Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, *AAS* 56(1964),649- 657 ("Is demum... fortes!"), corresponding to nos 96-113 in the English version. Giuseppe Pittau, "I viaggi," 165.

he describes as ‗a mission of friendship in the midst of humanity; a mission of understanding, encouragement, promotion, elevation; let us say more, of salvation.'[188] Paul VI expressly declared that the immediate purpose of the Church's, and therefore the pope's, mission is ‗the good of the world, its interests, its salvation,' and manifested his conviction that the world needs the salvation that the Church offers.[189] Consistently, he plays down the idea of the sovereign-pontiff, and the style of the travels reflects his intention of keeping a low profile. Nevertheless, the apostolic journeys of the pope inevitably take on political significance, of which he is aware and from which he does not shy away while at the same time trying to limit as much as possible the element of official encounters with political personalities.[190] When such encounters take place though, the pope's concern is for the suffering of the people, for the dignity and the rights of all, and for the equal progress of all humanity. This is a constant in all his journeys, but emerges more strongly in his visits to Latin America, Africa and Asia, and to the UNO.

The second level is that of interreligious relations. Albeit cautiously, Paul VI also begins to usher the Church into the territory of interreligious encounter and, by meeting the representatives of other religions, creates openings that John Paul II, and later Benedict XVI, would pursue more systematically as priorities of their respective pontificates.

The third circle is that of ecumenism. Ecumenical concern is present in all of Paul VI's apostolic travels, although the pilgrimage to the Holy Land was certainly the most significant in this regard, as it ‗shows the pope no longer as the only protagonist of the ecclesial scene'.[191] However, ecumenical encounters take place during all his journeys and Paul VI

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[188] Paul VI, *Discours en la Solennité de l'Épiphanie a la Sainte Grotte de Bethléem*, *AAS* 56(1964),177. Riccardi, ―Significato e finalita'," 25.
[189] Paul VI, *Discours en la Solennité de l'Épiphanie*, 177.
[190] Riccardi, ―Significato e finalitá," 25-26.
[191] Ibid., 21-22.

_starts speaking also on behalf of the other Christian churches, almost as their spokesperson, as can be seen in his visit to the UNO.'[192]

During the pontificate of Paul VI the face of the modern papacy appears clearly. He saw that _the office of the supreme shepherd of the Church implies the itinerant mission, a pilgrimage on the roads of the earth. Papal journeys are above all pilgrimages… to the living shrine of God's people.'[193] Paul VI's apostolic journeys become the visible manifestation of Paul VI's _modern' ecclesiology, embraced by Vatican II and rooted in the biblical and apostolic tradition.

## 3. Paul VI, the Church and the world: politics and diplomatic relations

During the second half of the twentieth century, papal diplomatic activity experienced a remarkable increase, and especially during the pontificate of Paul VI, the growing presence of the Holy See within the activity of the international community was a remarkable phenomenon.[194] First of all, with regard to bilateral diplomacy: as of June 1963 the Holy See had diplomatic relations with forty-nine states, while by August 1978 the number was eighty-nine.[195] Secondly, in the area of multilateral diplomacy the Holy See established representations to a number of international organisations like the United Nations in New York (1964) and in Geneva (1967), the Organisation of the American States (1978); since 1970 there has been an apostolic nuncio to the European Community and a special envoy to the Council of Europe as observer.[196] Thirdly, under Paul VI, the number of international meetings and conferences in which the Holy See participated annually grew from fifty-seven

[192] Ibid., 23-24.
[193] Pittau, "I viaggi," 164.
[194] André Dupuy, "Paul VI et la diplomatie pontificale," in *Paul VI et la modenité dans l'Église* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1984), 455-477; André Dupuy, *Words That Matter. The Holy See in Multilateral Diplomacy. Anthology (1970-2000)* (New York: The Path to Peace Foundation, 2003), 19- 41.
[195] On the employment of concordats in diplomatic relations during the pontificate of Paul VI see Francesco Margiotta Broglio, "I concordati di Paolo VI," in *Paul VI et la modernité dans l'Église* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1984), 479-505.
[196] Dupuy, "Paul VI et la diplomatie pontificale," 457-458.

to over two hundred. One last factor that reveals the growing connections of the papacy with the international community was the increasing number of political personalities received by Paul VI in the Vatican.[197]

In the light of the fact that after Vatican II the very legitimacy of papal diplomacy was questioned, Paul VI's efforts in this aspect of the work of the Holy See appear as even more surprising. André Dupuy explains that in those years a number of voices denounced the diplomatic character of the nuncios as a "residue of a juridical notion of church as perfect society, preoccupied with maintaining its temporal privileges and rights."[198] According to these voices this preoccupation is detrimental to the Church's credibility and its witness, and so is the Holy See's diplomatic activity, which is an expression of such temporal attachment.[199] Those who expected the new pope to do away with it in favour of an exclusively "spiritual" emphasis in the papal ministry were to be disappointed. Paul VI accepted the critique insofar as it referred to a notion of diplomacy which did not actually correspond to the Church's proper concept of diplomacy, which he endeavoured to clarify. In the speech to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See in January 1968, the pope – who had been a diplomat himself for much of his life - explained that true diplomat is first of all "aware of the situation of humanity" and practices "not the art of succeeding at all costs but that… of establishing and maintaining an international order; the art of establishing human

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[197] Ibid, 459.

[198] André Dupuy, "Paul VI et la diplomatie pontificale," 455. André Pierre Louis Dupuy (b.13/02/1940), French Roman Catholic archbishop, studied theology at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy and historical sciences and canon law at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He worked in the diplomatic corps of the Holy See in Venezuela, Tanzania, the Netherlands, Lebanon, Iran, Ireland then at the United Nations. He was ordained bishop in December 1993 and appointed as Apostolic Nuncio to Ghana, Togo and Benin. In 2000 he was nuncio in Venezuela, at the time of President Hugo Chavez; in 2005 he was nuncio to the European Union in Brussels and in 2006 he became the first nuncio to the Principality of Monaco. Since 2011 he has been nuncio to the Netherlands. Since 16/11/2012 Dupuy has been the permanent representative of the Holy See to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

[199] See Dupuy, "Paul VI et la diplomatie pontificale," 455-456 (and n. 2). Dupuy documents two examples: first, a letter of the *Assemblée européenne des prêtres* gathered at Coire, 10/07/1969. This was a movement of French priests who demanded the declericalisation of the Church; second, the interventions at the Synod of 1971 by the French, Spanish and Portuguese-speaking groups (*Osservatore Romano* 31/10/1971).

and reasonable relations among peoples.'[200] The true diplomat is the "artisan of peace, the man of right, of reason, of dialogue, sincere dialogue.'[201] According to him, besides patience and wise realism, the virtues of the diplomat, are magnanimity, being "imbibed with humanism,' and seeking the good not of just one nation but of all humanity.[202] For Paul VI, the diplomatic work of the Holy See is a ministry in the service of the human person and of peace.[203]

For Paul VI diplomacy, correctly understood, is an integral dimension of the mission of the Church and of the pope in particular, which allows them to announce the Word of salvation in response to the great problems affecting humanity. The diplomacy of Paul VI aims at the service of humanity first of all through the pursuit of peace and justice and the promotion of authentic human development, which requires the defence of human rights and especially of religious freedom.[204] This aspect emerges with exceptional clarity in the engagement of the Holy See with the Communist regimes (*Ostpolitik*). It is a clear understanding of the ultimate aim of diplomacy, that is to say to improve the conditions of people, both Catholics and not, in human societies, that enables Paul VI to maintain a diplomatic relationship with atheistic regimes during a difficult period.[205] The *Ostpolitik* is not based on "enthusiasms or consonances between Christianity and Communism,' but on the awareness of the painful religious situation of the East.[206] The dialogue with atheistic regimes, which does not automatically entail negotiations and compromise, offers the opportunity to the leaders of the regimes for a more accurate knowledge of the Catholic Church, and gives the pope the opportunity to raise the question of the right to religious freedom.[207] A rejection

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[200] Paul VI, *Discours au corps diplomatique accrédité près le Saint-Siège*, 8/01/1968, *AAS* 60(1968),93.
[201] Ibid., 94
[202] Ibid.
[203] Dupuy, "Paul VI et la diplomatie pontificale," 455.
[204] Ibid., 466-473.
[205] Riccardi, *Il Vaticano e Mosca,* 305-321.
[206] Ibid.,, 315.
[207] Dupuy, "Paul VI et la diplomatie pontificale," 469.

of diplomatic dialogue on the part of the Church would simply result in the loss of such opportunities.

Religious freedom was the pivot of papal diplomacy under Paul VI.[208] Since his address at the end of the last session of Vatican II, when he promulgated the Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, Paul VI continued to insist on it as the most fundamental of the human rights, on the basis of a specific vision of the human person based on Christian revelation. For Paul VI the dignity of the human person is the foundation on which all socio-political order rests, and that dignity is guaranteed by the fact that the person is created by God and is called to be in communion with God in Jesus Christ. The truth of the human person is to be found in Revelation and is fully realised when the person is able to respond to God's call. It is therefore a fundamental right of the person that no obstacles be put between the person and God; more concretely it is a fundamental right to be allowed to profess and practice one's faith. For this reason, respect of religious freedom is for Paul VI the criterion of correct Church-state relations.[209] According to Luigi Mistó, religious freedom based on this Christian theological anthropology is a constant of Paul VI's teaching and practice.[210]

André Dupuy describes the papal diplomacy of Paul VI as diplomacy ‗of difference.' It contributes not at the level of technical solutions but at that of moral values, in line with his vision of the Holy See as ‗the voice of human conscience enlightened by the Gospel.'[211], Diplomacy is for Paul VI profoundly pastoral in character, being deeply rooted in his ecclesiological and anthropological vision; It is no longer aimed at protecting privileges but instrumental to the Church's service to humanity

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[208] Luigi Mistò, ―Paul VI and Dignitatis Humanae: Theory and Practice," in *Religious liberty: Paul VI and Dignitatis Humanae*, Istituto Paolo VI (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 1995), 12–38; Vitaly Borovoi, ―Paul VI and His Intervention at the Council During the Discussion on Religious Freedom," in *Paolo VI e il rapporto Chiesa-Mondo al Concilio: Colloquio internazionale di studio, Roma, 22-23-24 settembre 1989*, Istituto Paolo VI, Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto Paolo VI, 11 (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 1991), 205–215; Renato Papetti, Rodolfo Rossi eds., *Dignitatis humanae: la libertà religiosa in Paolo VI: colloquio internazionale di studio: Brescia, 24-25-26 settembre 2004* (Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI; Roma, 2007).

[209] Second Vatican Council, *Aux Gouvernants*, *AAS* 58(1965*),*10-11.

[210] Mistò, ―Paul VI and Dignitatis Humanae," 13-17.

[211] Dupuy, ―Paul VI et la diplomatie pontificale," 471.

## 4. Paul VI and the religions

Paul VI was the first pope to assign a specific place to the non-Christian religions within an ecclesiological vision: they are a very specific and privileged dialogue partner of the Church, within the larger scope of the Church's dialogue with humanity. It is a positive theological assumption that underpins Paul VI's attention to other believers. He spoke of interreligious relations from the beginning of his pontificate, a year before the publication of his first encyclical.

On 29 September 1963, Paul VI opened the second session of the Council, with a programmatic address in which he commented on the main themes of the Council: the Church, its renewal, its relationship with other Christian Churches and its dialogue with the world; it is in the context of the latter that he also addressed the issue of the Church's relationship with other religions.[212] The Catholic Church – he said – looks farther, "beyond the boundaries of the Christian family" to the other "religions that retain the concept of God, one, creator, provident, most high and who transcends the nature of things." Although he did not refer to religions in general, this statement is important because here Paul VI offers the theological foundation of interreligious dialogue: as the Church must imitate the love of God for all, she cannot put any boundaries to her love. Although aware, "not without pain", that they contain "deficiencies and errors", the Church is intrinsically bound to look at these religions and compelled to appreciate "whatever true, good and honest can be found in them", and defends the religious sense among the men and women of this time.[213]

The following year, speaking to the College of Cardinals, Paul VI referred to his decision to create the newly established Secretariat for non-Christians as a sign of the pope's and Church's concern for the spiritual need of all men and women, which is a mark of the

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[212] Paul VI, *Allocutio,* 29/09/1963, *AAS* 55(1963*),*841-859, in particular 857-858 (corresponding to par. 13-14 in the Italian version, *Allocuzione all''Inizio della seconda sessione del Vaticano II*).

[213] Paul VI, *Allocutio,* 29/09/1963, 857-858. The language here echoes *Nostra Aetate 2,* which would be promulgated two years later (Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate*, 28/10/1965, *AAS* 58(1966*),*740-744.

Church's authentic catholicity, and as expression of her desire to _encounter all people of good will.'[214] Paul VI saw the Secretariat as _a means to achieve some loyal and respectful dialogue with those who still _believe in and worship God'' (quoting from Pius XI's *Divini Redemptoris*).[215] A month earlier he had already presented the Secretariat as a visible sign of _the effort of the Church to become closer to the members of other religions'.[216] With the establishment of the Secretariat, says Paul VI, _no pilgrim, regardless of how distant, both religiously and geographically, the country from where he or she comes, will any longer be a complete stranger in this city of Rome,' to which the Catholic faith bestows the role of common fatherland (*patria communis)*.[217]

During his apostolic journey to India, Paul VI addressed a group of members of non-Christian religions. He began his speech by acknowledging that _the human race is undergoing profound changes and is groping for the guiding principles and the new forces which will lead it into the new world of the future.'[218] Paul VI saw this as a challenge that all religions face together; they are engaged in _a common struggle for a better world' and their shared task is _to make available to all people those goods which are needed to fulfil their human destiny and to live lives worthy of the children of God.'[219] He added that in order to face the common challenge, Catholics and members of different religions _must come together… with our hearts, in mutual understanding esteem and love'; as _pilgrims who set out to find God', in a _sacred communion'; and _work together to build the common future of the human race.'[220] This remarkable address contains a whole programme for interreligious dialogue based on three fundamental principles: the common search for God, which binds

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[214] Paul VI, *Discorso al Sacro Collegio in occasione del suo onomastico*, 23/06/1964, *AAS* 56(1964*),*581-589, esp. 584. With regard to the Secretariat for non-Christians (later renamed Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue), see Michael Fitzgerald, –25 Years of Dialogue: the Pontifical Council for Interreligios Dialogue," *Islamochristiana*, 15 (1989), 109-120.

[215] Paul VI, *Discorso al Sacro Collegio in occasione del suo onomastico*, 23/06/1964, 584.

[216] Paul VI, *Omelia nel giorno di Pentecoste*, 17/05/1964, *AAS* 56 (1964*),*428-433, 433.

[217] Ibid..

[218] Paul VI, *Address to the Members of the non-Christian Religions*, 3/12/1964, *AAS* 57 (1965),132-133.

[219] Ibid., 132.

[220] Ibid.

believers into unity, and enables them to cooperate for the good of all humanity. These ideas also underlie his short speech to representatives of Shinto whom he received in the Vatican in February 1975.[221]

Paul VI spoke of non-Christians in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the apostolic exhortation that followed on from the 1974 Synod of Bishops on evangelisation.[222] *Evangelii Nuntiandi* has been criticised for allegedly bringing to a halt the opening of Vatican II to other faiths, because it states that esteem and respect for the religions should not be understood as ‗an invitation to withhold from these non-Christians the proclamation of Christ', because the Church believes it is their ‗right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ' in which humanity ‗can find, in unsuspected fullness, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his destiny, life and death, and truth.'[223] Christ is the only one who can bring the human person into full contact with God.[224] In fact, if it is true that *Evangelii Nuntiandi* articulates it in more detail, it is also true that the idea was already expressed ten years earlier in *Nostra Aetate* 2 where, after professing that ‗the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy' in the religion, and before encouraging Catholics to ‗recognise, preserve and promote' what is good in the faith of other believers, the Declaration clearly reminds them that ‗she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ ‗the way, the truth, and the life' (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself.'[225] Paul VI's clarification ensured that the tension between openness and faithfulness retained by Vatican II remains as a constant challenge to the Church's identity and mission in the modern world. John Paul II and even more emphatically Benedict XVI have later insisted on this tension as the necessary condition for

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[221] Paul VI, *Incontro con i rappresentanti dello Shintoismo*, in *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church from the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II*, 1963-2005, ed. Francesco Gioia (Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 201–202.

[222] Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8/12/1975, *AAS* 68(1976*),*5-76.

[223] Jacques Dupuis, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 170-173. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* 53.

[224] Ibid.

[225] *Nostra Aetate* 2.

authentic interreligious engagement. Paul VI's general concern for interreligious dialogue found more concrete expression prevalently in the engagement with Jews and Muslims.

### *a) Paul VI and Judaism*

If the initial thrust toward the establishment of good relations with the Jewish people originated in the instinct of John XXIII, inspired by his personal experience, it was Paul VI who found himself invested with the task of giving Jewish-Christian relations a place within the life of the Church. The Council had certainly provided him with the powerful foundations of *Lumen Gentium* 16 and *Nostra Aetate* 4, but it was still Paul VI who had to translate the teaching into praxis, and ensure that from the outset Catholic relations with the followers of Judaism be established on those solid foundations, in a spirit of openness as well as in faithfulness to Christian identity. In this context it is not surprising that the number of speeches and writings in which Paul VI speaks to or about the Jewish people and Christian-Jewish relations is not comparable with that of John Paul II, and they are generally an exposition of the teaching of the Council. However, speeches and documents are not the only aspects to be taken into consideration when assessing the contribution of Paul VI to this specific dimension of interreligious dialogue.

Jean-Marie Delmaire has described Paul VI's approach to Judaism and Israel as "prudent opening."[226] This could explain the fact that Paul VI, the first pope to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land almost two thousand years after the seeds of the Church had spread from there, did not on that occasion make explicit use of the terms "Jews" and "Israel," nor did he meet the Chief Rabbi. His was the "prudence to which circumstances forced the head of a Church present in the East as well as in the West."[227]

On 5 January 1964, after confessing his emotion at standing in the place where Christ lived, he explained that he had come as a pilgrim to pray for all humanity and he referred

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[226] Jean-Marie Delmaire, "Une ouverture prudente: Paul VI, le Judaïsme et Israël" in *Paul VI et la modernité dans l'Église* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1984), 821-835.
[227] Ibid. 822.

particular to the Jewish people. He addressed them, however, as the ‗children of the people of the Covenant,' adding that their ‗rde in the religious history of humankind must not be forgotten.'[228] Once again the choice of words manifests openness and prudence: Paul VI avoids any language that might have unforeseen political consequences. During the Council the main obstacle to the draft on the Jewish people had been the fear that the Muslim countries would see its approval as an implicit recognition of the State of Israel and therefore as against the Palestinians.[229] There was a concern that, as a consequence, Christians living among Muslim majorities might be affected. Paul VI's caution must be understood in this context. Nevertheless, he defines the Jewish people by their essential characteristic, they are the people of the Covenant, and acknowledges their role in the religious history of humanity, an aspect that is not found explicitly in the teaching of the Council on the Jews.[230]

Paul VI's openness and prudence are also accompanied by a deep sense of service to the truth. This emerges at the end of the short visit when Paul VI, who had made it quite clear that he had come to the Holy Places as a pilgrim, nevertheless takes advantage of his farewell address not just to express his gratitude and prayers for those who received him so warmly, but also two make two statements – obviously worded with great care.[231] Firstly, that what Pope Pius XII had done to save and protect many of the victims of the Nazi persecution should be acknowledged and the accusations against him be dropped. Secondly, he requested that the religious freedom of Catholics in the Holy Land continue to be respected.[232]

Paul VI delivered his most significant pronouncement on Judaism when he addressed the Liaison Committee between the Catholic Church and World Judaism at the end of their

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[228] Paul VI, *Discourse au „Peuple de l''Alliance''*, 5/01/1964, *AAS* 56(1964*),*165-166.

[229] Oesterreicher, ―Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 46. On Vatican-Israeli relations, see Raymond Cohen, ―Israel and the Holy See Negotiate: A Case Study in Diplomacy across Religions," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 5 (2010), 213-234.

[230] Paul VI, *Discourse au „Peuple de l''Alliance''*, 5/01/1964, *AAS* 56(1964*),*165-166.

[231] In the Christmas radio message to the whole world he insisted that his journey to the Holy Land would be a pilgrimage and have exclusively religious purposes. See Paul VI, *Radiomessaggio di Pace e di Unita''a tutti i popoli,"* 23/12/1963, *AAS* 56(1964*),*55-62, 62.

[232] Paul VI, *Salut de départ aux authorités Israëliennes*, 5/01/1964, *AAS* 54(1964*),*170-171.

fourth meeting, which took place in Rome on 7-10 January 1975.[233] After referring to recent important developments with regard to Catholic engagement with the Jewish people, he pointed out that the difficulties and confrontations mentioned in the documents are not all there is in the history of Christian- Jewish engagement. There have been in fact good things as well and he mentioned two. First, the great display of solidarity by the Catholic Church to save many Jewish lives during the Second World War, when ‗under the energetic impulse of Pius XII', numerous Catholics risked their own lives. Second, the ‗connections, often too little marked upon, between Jewish thought and Christian thought', in particular the influence of Maimonides on Thomas Aquinas and the that of Aquinas on Jewish thought, confirmed by the existence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of ‗a whole Jewish Thomistic School' in the Latin West.[234] These examples prove that relationships of mutual enrichment between Christianity and Judaism have existed during their history, characterised by ‗a real and profound mutual esteem and a conviction that we had something to learn from one another.'[235] The importance of this reflection should not be underestimated as it shows that, while Paul VI took *Nostra Aetate* 4 (the only available official Church pronouncement) as *the* authoritative teaching on Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations, he also made some subtle but clearly original additions when referring to it. For example, the account of the positive Christian-Jewish relationship in *Nostra Aetate* 4 is based on the biblical data and therefore limited to a distant past, while the Declaration recalls the history of the relationship only

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[233] Paul VI, *Discours au Comité International de Liaison entre l'Église Catholique et le Judaïsme mondial,* 10/01/1975, *AAS* 67(1975*),*95-97. Following the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate* (1965), a formal international meeting took place in Rome between members of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) and the Vatican's representatives for Catholic-Jewish Relations. A *Memorandum of Understanding* was drafted which established an International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee (ILC). Since 1971 the ILC has held twenty-one meetings in various parts of the World on various topics, the latest in Paris in 2011.

[234] The address mentions the studies of Jewish scholars Charles Touati (Paris) and Joseph Sermoneta (Jerusalem). See Gérard Nahon and Charles Touati, eds., *Hommage à Georges Vajda: Études D'histoire et de Pensée Juives* (Louvain: Peeters, 1980); Joseph Sermoneta, ―Jehuda Ben Moseh Ben Daniel Romano, Traducteur de Saint Thomas," in Charles Touati and Gérard Nahon eds. *Hommage à Georges Vajda*, 235–262; Joseph Sermoneta, ―Pour une Histoire du Thomisme Juif," in Gérard Verbeke, *Aquinas and Problems of His Time* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1976), 130–135.

[235] Paul VI, *Discours au Comité International de Liaison entre l'Église Catholique et le Judaïsme mondial*, 10/01/1975, 96.

when it mentions its conflictive side, and includes no mention of historical instances of good Christian-Jewish engagement. The fact that Paul VI's additions are in the form of simple statements instead of being more extensive explanations does not diminish their significance; they show that Paul VI did have clear ideas as regards the potential directions in which the teaching of *Nostra Aetate* (and *Lumen Gentium* 16) could be advanced in order to bear fruit. This confirms the observation of Jean-Marie Delmaire that the teaching of the Council was, for Paul VI, not a final point but a basis for an encounter that must find new ways forward, and also that the pope expected Christians engaged in the Jewish-Christian conversation to take the initiative rather than merely expecting ready made developments from the highest authority of the Church.[236]

The January 1975 address contains similar additions. For example, *Nostra Aetate* states that mutual understanding between Christians and Jews originates in study and the practice of dialogue.[237] However, while the object of the study is specified (biblical and theological), with regard to the conversations (*colloquiis*, dialogues) the document does no more than to qualify them as fraternal. Paul VI takes a step further by wishing there may be "true dialogue" betweeing Christians and Jews beyond "merely speculative and rational exchanges."[238] He thus affirms the need for the "intellectual" dimension of dialogue to become a dialogue of life and exchange at the level of religious experience, to borrow the language employed sixteen years later in *Dialogue and Proclamation* 42.[239]

Another original addition concerns the aims of the dialogue. *Nostra Aetate* 2 presents the purpose of dialogue as a general principle that applies to interreligious engagement in general. "Colloquia et cooperatione" (conversations, dialogues, and cooperation) are instrumental to the discovery, the preservation and the promotion (*agnoscant, servent et*

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[236] Delmaire, "Une ouverture prudente," 826.
[237] *Nostra Aetate*, 4.
[238] Paul VI, *Discours au Comité International de Liaison entre l'Église Catholique et le Judaïsme mondial*, 10/01/1975, 96.
[239] Pontificium Consilium Pro Dialogo Inter Religiones, *De Evangelio Nuntiando et de Dialogo Inter Religiones (Dialogue and Proclamation)*, 19/05/1991, *AAS* 84(1992),428.

*promoveant*) of the ‗good things' present in other religions.[240] Admittedly, reflecting on the text of the document leads us to understand dialogue in part as the act of contemplating God's action within the religions and therefore as the experience of encountering God in them, although this is neither expressed nor directly implied in the text. Paul VI indicates, however, two further goals: first ‗better mutual knowledge', which was only implied in *Nostra Aetate* and, more importantly, better knowledge of God. In pointing out these aims of interreligious dialogue, Paul VI manifested an idea that only twenty-five years after Vatican II would be found in an official document, *Dialogue and Proclamation* 41, which affirms that interreligious dialogue finds its value in a deeper conversion to God on the part of all those involved.[241]

Finally, the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate* had been a historical event, representing a ‗revolution' in the teaching of the Church. Given the circumstances nothing more could have been expected, however ten years later Paul VI added to the realism already contained in *Nostra Aetate* by stressing reciprocity as a requirement for successful Jewish-Christian relations.[242] This idea has been strongly emphasised by John Paul II and even more by Benedict XVI in reference to interreligious relations in general, but it was Paul VI who understood its urgency at a time when interreligious dialogue was still in its infancy.

One more aspect needs to be mentioned for a more complete view of Paul VI's engagement with Judaism. He shares the same caution as *Nostra Aetate* with regard to Israel as a political reality. It has already been recalled that the mere possibility that the Declaration could be interpreted as recognition of the State of Israel almost resulted in the elimination of the issue from the Council's agenda. Care to prevent any political interpretation became the necessary condition for the continued existence of the document. Such effort to separate neatly politics from theology was possible only at the theoretical level. In fact, as pontiff,

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[240] Nostra Aetate 2.
[241] Dialogue and Proclamation, 428.
[242] Paul VI, *Discours au Comité International de Liaison entre l'Église Catholique et le Judaïsme mondial*, 10/01/1975, 97.

Paul VI found himself confronted with the reality of politics and had to address it. This he did, although with much caution. How could it be possible, for example, to go to Jerusalem and not address the president of the State of Israel, which had after all been an independent state for over fifteen years? It is significant that in his teaching, albeit with his usual caution, Pope Paul gives signs of a certain acknowledgement of the importance of the land for contemporary Jews, albeit bringing the discourse back to the spiritual level. So it was that, in the 1974 end of year address to the cardinals and the Roman Curia, he spoke of Jerusalem as the symbol of peace for all the people of the Holy Land and the Middle East, on account of the religious importance that it bears for Christians, Jews and Muslims.[243]

Paul VI referred to these very words a few weeks later, in the conclusion of his address to the Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee (10 January 1975), as illustrative of the ‗perspective of understanding and friendship' from which he extends his best wishes to the Jews there present and also to the entire Jewish people.[244]

Even more significant was Paul VI's indirect contribution to the Church's engagement with the Jewish people, which took different forms.

The first indirect contribution has already been mentioned, and was his firm support, during the discussion at the Council, for the draft of the document that would become *Nostra Aetate*. In October 1964, despite the large support it had received among the Council Fathers, the draft of the declaration became the object of another crisis. In a communiqué published after the third session of the Council (14 September – 21 November 1964), Patriarch Maximos stated that the success of the document was due to Jewish influence on the Council. Probably under political pressure, the Secretary, Cardinal Cicognani, informed the Secretariat for Christian Unity, which was still responsible for the schema *De Iudeis*, that the document would be now examined by the theological commission in order to be abbreviated. On that

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[243] Paul VI, *Discorso al Sacro Collegio Cardinalizio e alla Curia Romana*, 22/12/1974, *AAS* 67(1975),53.

[244] Paul VI, *Discours au Comité International de Liaison entre l'Église Catholique et le Judaïsme mondial*, 10/01/1975, 97.

occasion, and supported by others, Cardinal Bea appealed directly to Paul VI, who intervened directly not just in favour of keeping the document as autonomous but also in favour of its expansion into a statement about all non-Christian religions.[245] According to Delmaire, in this way a path was prepared which has recently been taken up by Jewish-Christian dialogue: the universal testimony of the religions in the face of the evolution of the atheistic world.[246]

The journey to the Holy Land and to Jerusalem was a powerful prophetic gesture in many respects. In relation to the ongoing Council discussion on Judaism, it was perceived as a clear endorsement of the commitment of the pope and of the Catholic Church to Christian-Jewish dialogue.

Delmaire believes that ‗the great work of the pontificate was the setting up of numerous instances of regional dialogue… which render the process irreversible.'[247] The most prominent developments took place in the USA, France, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Canada.[248] While these developments took place, the role of Paul VI's Vatican was that of an ‗interested observer' and a ‗discreet supporter.' One development in the UK was the lifting of the prohibition on Catholic participation in Christian-Jewish gatherings that had been given by the archbishop of Westminster 1954 at Rome's orders.[249] It is evident then that Paul VI does not regard *Nostra Aetate* as the definitive word on Jewish-Christian relations but sees it as the most authoritative starting point entrusted by the Council to all Catholics for further development.[250]

During the papacy of Paul VI, Jewish-Christian relations were gradually given increasing prominence in the Catholic Church. From 1963-1964 the responsibility had been entrusted to Cardinal Bea and to the Secretariat for Christian Unity that he headed at the time.

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[245] Oesterreicher, ―Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 81-86. Delmaire, ―Une ouverture prudente," 825.
[246] Delmaire, ―Une ouverture prudente" 825.
[247] Ibid.
[248] For details: ibid., 825-828.
[249] Ibid., 826.
[250] Ibid.

In 1970 the Holy See approved the establishment of the International Liaison Committee between the Catholic Church and Judaism, which contributed greatly to the development of the Catholic Church in this respect. The success of the committee must have contributed to Paul VI's decision to establish, on 22 October 1974, the Commission for the Religious Relations with the Jews, under the leadership of Fr Cornelis Rijk, as a semi-independent body attached to the Secretariat for Christian Unity.[251]

Another milestone in Catholic engagement with Judaism was the promulgation, at the beginning of 1975, of the "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*," (signed on 1 December 1974), prepared by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews as a development of *Nostra Aetate* 4.[252] The document takes as its starting points both Church teaching and praxis, namely the teaching of *Nostra Aetate* 4 and the "many steps" in Catholic-Jewish engagement that have taken place "in various countries", and insists on the need for Christians to learn "by what essential traits the Jews define themselves," officially emphasising the importance of contemporary Judaism.[253]

Finally, although more of a political rather than a spiritual nature, Paul VI's great interest in the question of the Middle East and the status of Jerusalem was another factor that contributed to giving more prominence to the Jewish people in the life of the Catholic Church.[254] Noticeably, Paul VI received various representatives of Israel over the years: the President of the World Jewish Congress Nahum Goldman on 6 January 1969,[255] Prime

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[251] Cornelis Rijk (d. 1979) was instrumental to establishing the Commission for the Relationship with Judaism and largely responsible for coordinating the work for the "Guidelines and Orientations" (1975).

[252] Commissio pro Religiosis Necessitudinibus cum Hebraismo Fovendis, *Orientations et Suggestions Pour L'application de la Déclaration Conciliaire «Nostra Aetate» N. 4,* 1/12/1974, *AAS* 67(1975*)*,73-79. For a comparison between *Nostra Aetate* 4 and the *Guidelines* see Jacqueline Des Rochettes, "Evolution of Vocabulary: A Sign Of Hope?," *SIDIC* 8 (1975/3), 21-24. For a critical appraisal of *Nostra Aetate* and the *Guidelines* see Henry Siegman, "Ten Years and Two Documents: Their Significance," *SIDIC* 8 (1975/3), 4-12. Rabbi Siegman was a member of the Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee and was present when Paul VI addressed the Committee on 10/01/1975.

[253] Commissio pro Religiosis Necessitudinibus cum Hebraismo Fovendis, *Orientations et Suggestions,* 73.

[254] See Iacopo Rivetti, "Lo stato di Israele nel Magistero di Paolo VI" in idem, *Il magistero papale sui problemi israeliani*, unpublished thesis, University of Florence, 1996.

[255] *The Gettysburg Times*, 06/01/1969, 1.

Minister Golda Meir on 15 January 1973, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Moshe Dayan on 12 January 1978.[256]

Delmaire has concluded, vis-à-vis Paul VI and Catholic-Jewish relations, that although his knowledge of contemporary Judaism was limited and despite the fact that the development of the Church with regard to Judaism during the pontificate does not always bear the mark of Paul VI, his role was crucial.[257] Not only did Paul VI fully embrace the initiative of the Council, but he emphasised that „Nostra Aetate constituted a point of departure." Thanks to him the advancement of Jewish-Christian dialogue has been able to take place freely.[258]

### *b) Paul VI and Catholic engagement with Islam*

Although the number of Paul VI's magisterial pronouncements *on* Islam and Christian-Muslim engagement is scant and the number of occasions on which he spoke *to* Muslims is only slightly larger, Paul VI was most probably the first pope to include the words „Islam" and „Muslims" in his official speeches, and almost certainly the first to address Muslims directly.[259] Paul VI addressed Muslims both as individuals, as for example the king of Jordan, on arrival in Jerusalem on 4 January 1964 for his pilgrimage to the Holy Land;[260] or the Grand Mufti of Istanbul, on 25 July 1967, during the apostolic journey to Istanbul, Ephesus and

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[256] Paul VI, *Address to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel*, *AAS* 70(1978),166-167.

[257] Delmaire, "Une ouverture prudente," 834.

[258] Ibid.

[259] For commentaries on several of the major addresses of Paul VI to Muslims and on Islam, see: Maurice Borrmans, "Le pape Paul et les musulmans," *Islamochristiana* 4 (1978), 1-10; and Michel Lelong, "Le Pontificat de Paul VI et L'Islam," in *Paul VI et la modernité dans l'Église*, (Rome: École française de Rome, 1994), 837-849; and Pietro Rossano, "Documents de l'Eglise sur les Musulmans," *Islamochristiana* 8 (1992), 13-23. Andrew Unsworth has shown that while the terms Islam and Muslims were not used before, allusions to them can be found in Pius XII's magisterium. (Andrew Unsworth, "Louis Massignon, the Holy See and the Ecclesial Transition from *Immortale Dei* to *Nostra Aetate*: a Brief History of the development of Catholic Church Teaching on Muslims and the Religion of Islam, " *Aram* 20 (2008), 308-309.

[260] Paul VI, *Address to the King of Jordan*, Holy Land, 4/01/1964, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1964/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19640104_jordania_en.html.

Izmir;[261] and as groups, for example the representatives of Islam during the papal visit to Uganda;[262] or the representatives from Saudi Arabia that he received in the Vatican in 1974.[263]

However, fuller understanding of Paul VI's profound interest in Muslims and Christian-Muslim engagement must first of all also take into account aspects of his personal formation, like his friendship and intellectual connection with a pioneer of the study of Islam like Louis Massignon.[264] Giambattista Montini, later Paul VI, was very close to the French scholar and was influenced by his understanding of Islam in relation to Christianity.[265] Scholars agree that this was corroborated by Montini's membership of the *Badaliya*, the movement of prayer of „substitution', of Christians who, together with Massignon, prayed for and „on behalf' of Muslims.'[266] Neal Robinson has defined Paul VI as a lover of Islam („Islamophile') who was a member of the Badaliya and whom Massignon had long treated as a confidant.'[267]

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[261] Paul VI, *Discours au chef des musulmans*, Istanbul, 25/07/1967, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1967/july/documents/hf_pvi_spe_19670725_comunita-musulmana_fr.html.

[262] Paul VI, *Discourse to the Dignitaries and Representatives of Islam*, 1/08/1969, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1969/august/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19690801_comunita-islamiche_en.html

[263] Paul VI, *Discourse aux dignitaires de l'Arabie Saoudite*, Vatican, 25/10/1974, *AAS* 66(1974),629-630.

[264] On Louis Massignon's vision of Islam, its relationship with Christianity and his influence on Catholic thought and teaching on the subject see the extensive work by Anthony O'Mahony, in particular: Anthony O'Mahony, "The Influence of the Life and Thought of Louis Masssignon on the Catholic Church's Relations with Islam," *Downside Review*, Vol. 126, no. 444, (2008), 169-192; "Catholic Theological Perspectives on Islam at the Second Vatican Council.," *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1016 (July 2007), 385–398; "Louis Massignon, the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and the Christian-Mulsim Pilgrimage at Vieux-Marché, Brittany," in *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*, eds. Craig G. Bartholomew and Fred Hughes (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 126–148; "The Vatican, the Catholic Church, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations Since Vatican II," in *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East: Studies for the Synod for the Middle East*, eds. Anthony O'Mahony and John Flannery (London: Melisende, 2010), 291–315; Anthony O'Mahony, "Louis Massignon as Priest: Eastern Christianity and Islam," *Sobornost* 29, no. 1 (2007), 6–41. See also: Christian S. Krokus, "Louis Massignon's Influence on the Teaching of Vatican II on Muslims and Islam," *Islam & Christian-Muslim Relations* 23, no. 3 (July 2012),329–345.

[265] Unsworth, "Louis Massignon," 309-310.

[266] Maurice Borrmans, "Le pape Paul et les musulmans," *Islamochristiana* 4 (1978), 1-10. The friendship between Massignon and Montini is documented in various sources: see O'Mahony, "The Influence." On the *Badaliya*, see Mary Louise Gude, *Louis Massignon: The Crucible of Compassion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 124; Christian Troll, "Islam and Christianity interacting in the Life of an Outstanding Scholar of Islam: the Case of Luis Massignon (1883-1962)" *Islam and the Modern Age* 15 (1984), 163-164; and Paolo Dall'Oglio, "Louis Massignon and *Badaliya*," *ARAM* 20 (2008),329-336. Agnes Wilkins, "Louis Massignon, Thomas Merton and Mary Kahil," *Aram* 20 (2008), 355-373.

[267] Neal Robinson, "Massignon, Vatican II and Islam as an Abrahamic Religion," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 2, no. 2 (1991), 182–205, 194.

According to O'Mahony, although the Council Fathers did not adopt many aspects of Massignon's theological understanding of Islam, the latter's influence is still very strong among Christians who engage with Islam at the theological level.[268] Massignon created the language and identified the themes of the Church's engagement with Islam. He devoted most of his life to understanding Islam, as it were, "from within' and "was haunted by the desire' to share his vision of Islam. He did so at four levels: scholarly work, the sodality of prayer of the Badaliya, his apostolate among Christians and his contacts with Catholic hierarchy.[269] With regard to the latter, Massignon actively sought to establish "human relationships with the highest authorities of the Catholic hierarchy.' O'Mahony points out that despite the fact that following "some more or less well-intentioned denunciations' Massignon had to clarify his ideas before the ecclesiastical authorities, and although he might have appeared as "one of the less reassuring sons of the Church' because of his critical attitude towards both theologians and ecclesiastics, he was ultimately a "humble son who bowed to the Church.'[270] Aware of being a pioneer in a new domain, he desired to be in communion with the Church. In particular he asked Pius XI, Pius XII and John XXIII to bless his initiative of the *Badaliya*. He seemed close to Pius XII, who received him in private audience on at least three occasions. He was even closer to Paul VI in a friendship that dated back to the time when the latter was Pius XII's Secretary of State and which, according to O'Mahony, was "far beyond the stage of formalities.'[271] When Montini became pope the friendship with Massignon acquired an even more significant ecclesial dimension and it must have contributed to shaping the pope's attitude so that, as O'Mahony points out "all personalities from the Muslim world or related to it who were received by the pope came back surprised to feel the interest and profound goodwill of Paul VI regarding the Muslim world and its problems.[272]

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[268] O'Mahony, "The Influence," 169.
[269] Ibid., 177.
[270] Ibid., 179-180
[271] Ibid., 180.
[272] Ibid., 183.

Robert Casper, who was at the Council as *peritus* and, together with George Anawati, largely responsible for the drafting of the texts on Islam that were to become part of the Council's teaching, has witnessed that it was Paul VI who gave direct instructions that a statement on Islam be included in the documents of the Council.[273] According to Unsworth, Massignon must be credited for having overturned, at least at the official level, a well-established negative view of Islam which was clearly reflected in papal teaching from Leo XIII through to the first decades of the twentieth century.[274] Although there is no evidence that Paul VI was responsible for its content,[275] Unsworth and Krokus argue (mainly relying on Caspar, Anawati and O'Mahony) that Massignon's thought influenced Vatican II teaching on Islam and Muslim-Christians relations through Paul VI and other friends and disciples.[276] This was possible, argues Unsworth, because, although Massignon died at the very beginning of the Council, "by the time of his death, among those Catholics involved in his field, his vision had been of such influence on opinion that, in more or less all essentials, it had become the consensus view,' to such an extent that by the time of its conclusion "the Council too had adopted his vision.'[277]

The "sodality of prayer' called *Badaliya*, established by Massignon in 1936 together with Mary Kahil, played a very important role in the dissemination of his vision and spirituality vis-a-vis Islam and Muslims. Paul VI was among the members of the *Badaliya* in Rome when he was private secretary to Cardinal Pacelli and then his Substitute Secretary of State when the latter became Pope Pius XII. According to Unsworth, Montini played an important background role in the "subtle yet important developments already occurring during the pontificates of Pius XI and Pius XII, at an informal level, which perhaps prepared

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[273] Robert Caspar, "Islam According to Vatican II," *Encounter* 21 (January 1976), 1–7; O'Mahony, "The Influence," 183.
[274] Unsworth, "Louis Massignon," 301-303.
[275] Krokus, "Louis Massignon's Influence," 335.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Unsworth, "Louis Massignon," 303.

the way for the Holy See's final reception of Massignon's ideas.'[278] Membership in the *Badaliya* would explain Unsworth's affirmation that Montini '_was profoundly influenced not only by Massignon's learning but also by his piety.'[279]

According to Unsworth, Paul VI's positive attitude towards Islam was largely due to his association with Louis Massignon via his belonging of *Badaliya*.[280] The echo of Massignon's thought is found in at least two of Paul VI's documents: the apostolic letter *Spiritus Paraclitus* (1964) and the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964). These documents, which were published during but – insists Unsworth – independently of the Council, contain '_a subtle indication that Paul VI was prepared to make measured but nevertheless unequivocal judgement about those who believed in the one true God.'[281] In particular, in *Spiritus Paraclit*us, Paul VI refers to Muslims when recalling his pilgrimage to Holy Land that had taken place about three months earlier. The pope says that when he was enthusiastically and warmly welcomed by '_a vast crowd of people of all kinds',

> We came to the stirring realisation of how ardent must be Our zeal, and with what burning charity – stretching out even beyond the confines of the Christian religion - it is urgent that our thoughts should be directed equally to all souls and all peoples who worship and venerate the One God. For therein lies our hope of promoting true humanity, mutual love, and untroubled social peace.[282]

In *Ecclesiam Suam*, in the passage regarding the circle of the followers of non-Christian Religions, Paul VI identifies Muslims by name among the followers of monotheism and affirms that they deserve admiration on account of their religious practices that are '_*vera et probanda*,' true and to be approved.[283]

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[278] Ibid., 306-309.
[279] Ibid., 306.
[280] Caspar, 'Islam According to Vatican II," 2; Unsworth, '—Louis Massignon," 309.
[281] Unsworth, '—Louis Massignon," 311.
[282] Paul VI, *Spiritus Paracliti*, 30/04/1964, *AAS* 56(1964),354. This is Unsworth's translation of the Latin original. See idem, '—Louis Massignon," 312.
[283] Unsworth's translation renders it as follows, '_Then there are those who, it is said, worship God according to a monotheistic form of religion, especially the Muhammeddans who adhere strictly to this way. For this reason their true and demonstrable piety merits our admiration.' (Unsworth, '—Louis Massignon," 313).

Albeit he tends to be somehow over-enthusiastic in his judgement, Unsworth suggests that Massignon's contribution to Vatican II was

> a positive vision of Islam and a methodology with which to approach Islam, that is, a 'decision to study Islam from within and so to understand it on its own terms'.[284]

This happened indirectly, and Krokus speaks of 'three concentric circles' of people connected to Massignon who became the carriers of his ideas to the Council. The first circle, of those closest to him, alongside Robert Caspar, George Anawati and Joseph Descuffi (Archbishop of Smyrna, whose intervention at the Council provided an important source for the text of *Nostra Aetate* 3) also includes Pope Paul VI.[285] In this Krocus confirms that Paul VI may have found in Massignon an important point of reference with regard to his papal teaching on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations.

Equally significant was the support given by Paul VI to Catholic-Muslim engagement indirectly, through the creation, for example, on 22 October 1974, of the Commission for Relations with Muslims, as a semi-independent organ under the auspices of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, which he had established in 1964. Similar support was extended to the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI), founded in Tunis in 1926, which was transferred to Rome in 1964.[286] A number of initiatives to foster Christian-Muslim dialogue took place during Paul VI's pontificate, promoted by the Secretariat for Non-Christians and the Commission for the Relationships with the Muslims in particular. The first Christian-Muslim meeting sponsored by the Secretariat took place in Khartoum in January 1968. Relations with Al-Azhar University in Cairo were established in 1970. The Secretariat

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[284] Ibid., 316. The author quotes from Gude, *Louis Massignon,* ix.

[285] Krokus, "Louis Massignon's Influence," 334-339.

[286] Interview with Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, *Zenit,* 17/11/2006. Fr Ayuso is a Comboni missionary and former rector of PISAI. See also: Gianluca Biccini, "Un incontro sempre più fecondo con il mondo musulmano," *L'Osservatore Romano,* 01/08/2009.

soon became involved in the Christian-Muslim initiatives of the World Council of Churches.[287]

Most significantly, four years after the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, the Secretariat for non Christians published the *Guidelines for a Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, prepared on behalf of the Secretariat by Joseph Cuoq and Luis Gardet.[288] This publication was evidently an effort to develop and articulate more extensively and concretely the teaching of Vatican II on Islam and Catholic relations with Muslims. In the following decade or so, the Secretariat continued to promote Catholic engagement with Islam, before publishing new guidelines in 1981: *Orientations pour un dialogue entre Chrétiens et Musulmans*, prepared by Maurice Borrmans on behalf of the Secretariat.[289] Although they were published two and a half years after Paul VI's death, the *Orientations* were the result of reflection and experiments in Catholic-Muslim dialogue that had taken place under his pontificate.[290]

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[287] Douglas Pratt, "The Vatican in Dialogue with Islam: inclusion and engagement," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 21, no. 3 (July 2010), 250-251.

[288] Secretariatus pro non-Christianis, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Muslims and Christians* (Rome: Ancora, 1969). Joseph Cuoq (1917-1986) French Catholic priest and member of the *Société des missionnaires d'Afrique* worked for the Commission for Relations with Islam, founded after Vatican II. Cuoq's work was inspired by *Nostra Aetate* 3 and characterised by scientific rigour and attention to the other through engagement with ancient Arabic sources. He was particularly interested in the Islamisation of Black Africa, especially of Ethiopia and Sudan. See his *Les Musulmans en Afrique* (Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1975); *Histoire de l'islamisation de l'Afrique de l'Ouest des origines à la fin du XVIe siècle* (Paris, Geuthner, 1984); *L'Eglise d'Afrique du Nord, du deuxième au douzième siècle* (Paris, Le centurion, 1984). Jean Déjeux, R. Joseph Cuoq, *Hommes et Destins: Dictionnaire Biographique d'Outre-Mer*, Vol. 9, Paris: Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, 1975, 106-108.

Louis Gardet (real name André Brottier, 1904-1986), Catholic priest, philosopher, theologian, historian and expert on Islam, disciple of Louis Massignon and Jacques Maritain, wrote extensively on Islam and on mysticism in different religions. In 1933, seventeen years after Charles de Foucauld's death he was among the founders of the Little Brothers of Jesus. Islamologists Youakim Moubarac, Jacques Jomier and Denise Masson were among his disciples. His main works are: with George Anawati, introduction by Louis Massignon, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane* (Paris:Vrin, 1948); *Expériences mystiques en terres non chrétiennes* (Paris: Alsatia, 1953); *L''Islam, Religion et Communauté* (Paris: Bruges, 1967); *Connaître l'islam* (Paris:Fayard, 1958). See Maurice Borrmans, *Louis Gardet: philosophe chrétien des cultures et témoin du dialogue islamo-chrétien, 1904-1986*. (Paris, Cerf, 2010); idem, *Prophètes du dialogue islamo-chrétien: Louis Massignon, Jean-Muhammad Abd-el-Jalil, Louis Gardet, Georges C. Anawati.* (Paris: Cerf, 2009).

[289] Maurice Borrmans, *Orientations pour un dialogue entre chrétiens et musulmans*, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1981. The English translation by R. Marston Speigh was published in 1990 by Paulist Press, Mahwah. For a commentary see John Renard, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Review of Six Post-Vatican II, Church-Related Documents," in Leonard Swidler ed., *Muslims in dialogue: the evolution of a dialogue* (Lewiston, NY, Mellen Press, 1992), 182-201.

[290] For an account of the activity of the Secretariat see Maurice Borrmans, "The Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Last Ten Years," *Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin*, 74 (1978), 1-52.

Two further important factors should be taken into account in assessing Paul VI's significance for Catholic-Muslim dialogue. First, the fact that during his pontificate the Holy See established diplomatic relations with a significant number of countries with a Muslim majority or where Islam is a major religion. According to Michel Lelong, Pope Paul „constantly desired and effectively established" these official relations, and reports eighteen instances.[291] Second, his personal encounters with Muslims: for example, the representatives of Islam and the Arabic world that he received in the Vatican, and also the encounters with Muslims that he included in the program of his apostolic journeys to the Holy Land, Turkey, India, Uganda and South-East Asia.[292]

For an assessment of Paul VI's words *on* Islam and *to* Muslims, two aspects may usefully be examined: first, the mutual relationship between his teaching and that of Vatican II; second, whether he contributes any original additions to or at least any creative interpretations of *Lumen Gentium* 16 and *Nostra Aetate* 3. As far as the first question is concerned, Paul VI considers the teaching of Vatican II on Islam and on dialogue with Islam as foundational. He constantly refers to it, and in most cases, especially on solemn and formal occasions, he quotes verbatim, primarily from *Nostra Aetate* 3. This is understandable given that the teaching of Vatican II is the only solemn Magisterium that he has at his disposal in a field, interfaith relations, that is a very recent expansion of the mainstream Catholic horizon. Generally papal advancement of Church teaching is done by building on previous tradition in order to ensure „creative" continuity. In the case of Paul VI and Islam – and interreligious dialogue in general – he has at his disposal only a tradition that, albeit not proceding

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[291] Lelong, „Le Pontificat de Paul VI et L'Islam," 847.

[292] For example: Paul VI, *Address to Hashim Khalil, Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq*, 19/12/1966, *AAS* 59(1967),45; *Discorso a Huveyda Mayatepek, Ambassciatore della Republica Turca*, 19/01/1967, *AAS* 59(1967),141-142; *Discours aux Pierre Devès, Premier Ambassador de la Republique du Senegal*, 26/01/1967, *AAS* 59(1967),149-150. Paul VI's addresses delivered during these journeys can be found in AAS: pilgrimage to the Holy Land (4-6/01/1964), *AAS* 56(1964),158-182; journey to India (2-5 December), *AAS* 57(1965),113- 140; to Turkey (25-26/07/1967), *AAS* 59(1967),833-852; to Uganda (31 July-2/08/1969), *AAS* 61(1969),568-591; to South-East Asia and Oceania (25 November-5/12/1970), *AAS* 62(1970),10-83. Lelong, „Le Pontificat de Paul VI," 847.

chronologically, is foundational in character because it is the pronouncement of an ecumenical council. On the other hand, a comparison of the texts seems to suggest that in turn Paul VI may also have influenced the teaching of Vatican II on interreligious dialogue, especially through his ecclesiology, that is to say his understanding of dialogue as a constitutive element of the Church. The various circles of dialogue he presented to explain the dialogical nature of the Church in *Ecclesiam Suam* (6 August 1964), are reflected in *Nostra Aetate* (28 October 1965) and also underlie *Gaudium et Spes* (7 December 1965).[293]

There are several themes of Vatican II teaching on interreligious dialogue that recur in Paul VI's teaching. One is the shared monotheism of Christianity and Islam (*Lumen Gentium* 16, *Nostra Aetate* 3). Paul VI's *Ecclesiam Suam* mentions „those worshipers who adhere to other monotheistic systems of religion, especially the Moslem religion."[294] A year later the monotheistic belief of Islam would be articulated in more detail in *Nostra Aetate*, which then became the starting point of Paul VI's teaching on Islam. For example, two thirds of his short but very important address to the Grand Mufti of Istanbul in July 1967, during the apostolic trip to Turkey, consists of one direct quote and two indirect references to *Nostra Aetate* 3; the direct quote in question is employed precisely to describe Islamic monotheism:

> … Muslims, „who worship the God who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men and women," as the recent Council has so well expressed, … (*Nostra Aetate* 3).[295]

Secondly, Paul VI often professes the Church's sincere esteem for Muslims (*Nostra Aetate* 3), on the basis of the common faith in God: in *Ecclesiam Suam* he wrote that „we do well to admire these people for all that is good and true in their worship of God."[296] Similarly the speech to the Grand Mufti of Istanbul begins with an affirmation of his and the Church's

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[293] *Ecclesiam Suam* is quoted in *Gaudium et Spes*, Chapter 1, n. 16; Chapter 2, n. 1; Chapter 4, n. 1. Also in *Dignitatits Humanae* 11, n. 14.
[294] Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, *AAS* 56(1966*),*654 (par. 107 in the English translation).
[295] Paul VI, *Discours au chef des musulmans*, Istanbul, 25/07/1967.
[296] Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 107.

esteem for Muslims (_Nous tenons à vous dire Notre estime pour les musulmans‘).[297] Two further examples can be found respectively in the Apostolic Letter *Africae Terrarum* (_We wish to express our esteem for all the followers of Islam who live in Africa.‘)[298] and in the address to the representatives of Islam in Uganda (_You thus enable Us to manifest here Our high respect for the faith you profess‘).[299]

Another idea that recurs in both Vatican II and Paul VI‘s Magisterium on Islam is the Church‘s desire to cooperate with Muslims for the establishment of peace and justice.[300] In his address to the king of Jordan, on 4 January 1964, he prayed that _all men of good will, … living together in harmony… may help one another in love and justice and attain universal peace.‘[301] Although he did not mention them explicitly, he was clearly referring to Muslims and Christians in Jordan. Similarly, in *Africae Terrarum*, Paul VI wished that there should be harmonious common action between Christians and Muslims for the recognition and the defence of human rights.[302]

In his teaching on Islam Paul VI makes creative use of *Nostra Aetate*, mostly by making explicit points that in the Declaration are either implicit or mentioned but not further developed. For example, in the speech delivered on the occasion of his meeting with representatives of Islam during his journey to Uganda, on 1 August 1969, Paul VI articulated the relationship between Christians and Muslims in terms that went beyond those described in *Nostra Aetate*. He affirmed his _hope that what we hold in common may serve to unite Christians and Muslims… in true brotherhood,‘ and his wishes that their encounter _be the

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[297] Paul VI, *Discours au chef des musulmans*, Istanbul, 25 July1967.

[298] Paul VI, *Africae Terrarum* (5), 29/10/1967, *AAS* 59(1967*),*1073-1097. My translation.

[299] Paul VI, *Discourse to the Dignitaries and Representatives of Islam*, 1/08/1969, in Francesco Gioia ed., *Interreligious Dialogue: the Official Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963-1995)* (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 1997), 164-165.

[300] These terms are present in *A Common Word*, the first Muslim response to the Head of Catholic Church and other Christian Leaders, representing a large number of Islamic personalities and communities worldwide. (Muslim Leaders, ―A Common Word Between Us and You,‖ *Origins* 37, no. 20 (2007), 309–316).

[301] Paul VI, *Address to the King of Jordan*, Holy Land, 4/01/1964.

[302] Paul VI, *Africae Terrarum* 5.

first step towards that unity for which God calls us all to strive.'[303] The idea of unity between Christians and Muslims is an important original development, which will incidentally become very important in Benedict XVI's understanding of Christian-Muslim relations. Unity among Christians was a major concern of Paul VI, to the extent that he made it a priority of his pontificate and that it resulted into a full blown commitment of the Catholic Church to the restoration of fractures within Christianity which had occurred across the centuries. Christian unity is a key theological concept in Paul VI's ecclesiology and one which he is unlikely to use casually. If this is true, then when Paul VI employs such language to define the relationship between Christians and Muslims, it must to carry a theological and spiritual connotation, pointing far beyond the mere level of cordial relationships between the two. According to Pietro Rossano, underlying the teaching of *Nostra Aetate* 3 is the idea of a _spiritual connection' between the believers of the two faiths, which can only have theological roots, that is to say the shared faith in the Creator, from which a specific theological anthropology derives as a necessary corollary.[304] If this is correct, then in this case Paul VI's teaching on Islam constitutes an advancement in that it makes explicit an aspect that was only implied in the teaching of Vatican II, in which the idea of brotherhood applies to humanity (*Gaudium et Spes*), to ecumenical relationships (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) and above all to the members of the Catholic Church (*Lumen Gentium* uses it exclusively in this sense), but not to interreligious relations.[305]

Another example of Paul VI's creative use of Vatican II is found in the Istanbul address of 25 July 1967 already mentioned. On that occasion Paul VI stated that, _all those who adore

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[303] Paul VI, *Address to the Dignitaries and Representatives of Islam*, Uganda, 1/08/1969. On Vatican-Jordan diplomatic relations see Joseph L. Ryan, –The Holy See and Jordan," in *The Vatican, Islam, and the Middle East*, by Kail C Ellis ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 163–188.

[304] Pietro Rossano, –Documents de l'Eglise sur les Musulmans," *Islamochristiana* 8 (1992), 14.

[305] *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 21/11/1964, *AAS* 57(1965*),*90-112; *Lumen Gentium*, 21/11/1964, *AAS* 57(1965*),*5-71; *Gaudium et Spes*,7/12 /1965, *AAS* 58(1966*),*1025-1115.

the God one and unique are called to establish an order of justice and peace on earth.' [306] This is also a further development of Vatican II. *Nostra Aetate* 3 had exhorted Christians and Muslims „to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom."[307] Paul VI took this invitation further: the promotion of justice, moral welfare, peace and freedom cannot be dependent on the good will of people, but must be concretised through the „establishment of a new world order;' it must become part of social-political realities. More significantly, what in *Nostra Aeate* was an invitation by the Council, Paul VI describes as a vocation („sont appelés'), and as expression of God's will for Christians and Muslims; it is a direct consequence of their common faith in God. According to Christian Troll, Paul VI sees this shared responsibility as founded on a „shared perspective on the human person' that Christianity and Islam have as a corollary to their faith in God. [308]

Third, in the address to the delegation from Saudi Arabia whom he received in the Vatican on 25 October 1974, Paul VI reflected on the encounters between Muslims and Catholics that had been taking place since the Council and the establishment of the Secretariat for non-Christians. In particular the encounter in question, all the more remarkable considering that Saudi Arabia is one of the seven countries that do not have diplomatic relations with the Holy See, „shows that Muslims and Christians can come to understand each other better and to love each other better."[309] While mutual understanding is one of the key notions in *Nostra Aetate* 3, the document does not speak of Christian-Muslim relations (nor of interreligious relations) in terms of mutual love, Paul VI does so by building on the theme of the unity of the human family, which is the starting point of the *Declaration*.[310] The mutual visits and the dialogues of the past years are also important because „little by little they make

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[306] „Tous ceux qui adorent le Dieu Un et Unique sont appelés à établir un ordre de justice et de paix sur la terre." Paul VI, *Discours au Chef des Musulmans*, Istanbul, 25/07/1967.

[307] *Nostra Aetate* 3

[308] Christian Troll, *Dialogue and Difference* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2009), 157.

[309] „Tout ceci Nous porte à souligner l'intérêt de votre séjour romain. Il montre en effet que musulmans et chrétiens arrivent à se mieux comprendre et à se mieux aimer.' Paul VI, *Discourse aux dignitaires de l'Arabie Saoudite*, Vatican, 25/10/1974, *AAS* 66(1974),629-630.

[310] *Nostra Aetate* 1

spiritual forces converge' (the spiritual forces of Christianity and Islam) for the good of all men and women, believers or not, at a time in which, in response to _pervasive and oppressive materialism,' it is necessary _to give witness to God, the very great and very compassionate, whose loving presence surrounds us constantly.'[311]

Finally, another original development is that while *Nostra Aetate* spoke of the esteem and respect of the Catholic Church for Muslims, Paul VI explicitly extended the esteem and respect to their faith as well. He did so for example in his discourse to the Islamic dignitaries in Uganda, when he praised the faith of the Muslim martyrs of Africa.[312]

In conclusion, when, echoing *Nostra Aetate,* Paul VI speaks of esteem and respect for, and cooperation with Muslims, he does so against the background of a fundamental spiritual unity that is not the fruit of human endeavour but is rooted in God, who reveals himself to Man – although in different ways, which however Paul VI would never see as equally valid – to the believers of a particular kind of monotheism, which includes Muslims (and Jews) alongside Christians. In this Paul VI seems to be a direct referent for Benedict XVI's articulation of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations.

Paul VI's contribution to the question of Christian-Muslim dialogue is fundamental. It was his pontificate that saw to the implementation of *Lumen Gentium* 16 and *Nostra Aetate* 3. Vatican II was a crucial starting point, but its teaching still had to be translated into practice and above all to open avenues for future developments of Catholic engagement with Muslims. Paul VI created the conditions of possibility for the future developments that occurred during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

However, Paul VI also faced the urgent challenge of preventing erroneous interpretations of what Vatican II intended to teach which were not in keeping with Catholic and Christian tradition. Paul had a huge responsibility: to open things up carefully while

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[311] Paul VI, *Discourse aux dignitaires de l''Arabie Saoudite*, Vatican, 25/10/1974, *AAS* 66(1974),630.
[312] Paul VI, *Address to the Dignitaries and Representatives of Islam*, Uganda, 1August 1969; Christian Troll, *Dialogue and Difference*, 158.

preserving fidelity. The way in which the Church engages today in dialogue with Islam, and indeed all religions, depends heavily on the decisions, the words and silences, and the actions of the first modern pope. Over forty years of Catholic interreligious engagement have largely confirmed his instincts.

## D. JOHN PAUL II

### 1. 'The world is my parish': the itinerant ministry of John Paul II

The _itinerant style' that marked, although in different measure, both Paul VI and John Paul II is, according to Avery Dulles, a defining characteristic of the modern papacy: _John Paul II is, like Paul VI, pre-eminently a pope of Vatican II... Like Paul VI, John Paul II sees himself as a pilgrim pope.'[313] There is widespread agreement that perhaps the most characteristic aspect of John Paul II's pontificate was his international presence.[314] If with Paul VI the papacy entered the world scene in an unprecedented way, it was John Paul II that made the world more markedly the space of his own papal ministry, bringing the Catholic Church into the web of international relationships at different levels: politics, ecumenism, interreligious relations. John Paul II established his presence on the world scene in various ways, among which the apostolic journey was prominent. With John Paul II the apostolic journey, which with Paul VI had become a very powerful symbol of the universal scope of the pope's mission, becomes effectively an _ordinary', (in the technical sense of being employed on a habitual basis), means for the exercise of his pastoral ministry. In more than a hundred journeys, John Paul II visited one hundred and twenty-nine countries, transforming the papacy into a _semi-itinerant institution.'[315] This established the pope as a habitual actor on the international scene. His international presence serves the prophetic purpose of reminding the international community of its obligation to _shape its life according to binding ethical rules' because of the _transcendent dimension linking man to God.'[316] The Church of

[313] Avery Dulles, "The Papacy for a Global Church," *America*, Vol. 183, no. 2 (15-22/07/2000), 2-11. Jo Renee Formicola, *John Paul II Prophetic Politician* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002).

[314] Ugo Colombo Sacco, *John Paul II and World Politics. Twenty Years of a search for a new approach* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 15.

[315] Ibid., 18. John Paul II was denied permission to visit only by China, North Korea, Russia and Vietnam. Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy,* 198.

[316] Sacco, *John Paul II and World Politics*, 18.

Paul VI and of John Paul II engages in the political arena because it is its duty to be a point of reference for humanity by witnessing to the Truth.[317]

Through his travels, John Paul II manifested his understanding of the Catholic Church as a global reality, which is at ease and confident in its relationships to the modern world. John Paul II was convinced that the purpose of the Church is to serve humanity, for which keeping open the dialogue with all possible sectors of society was a necessary condition.[318]

John Paul II constructed his papacy on the legacy of Paul VI. He ‗shared Paul VI's interest in the world outside the Vatican, viewing the papacy as a player in international affairs. He recognised the Church's role and responsibility in the world beyond Europe and was determined to make the world his parish.'[319] A global church must itself be international. The process of internationalisation of the structures of the Church continued consistently during John Paul II's pontificate: for example in 1994 the College of Cardinals had one hundred and twenty members, with only twenty Italians.[320]

## 2. The Pope, the Church and politics: diplomacy at the service of the person

The political significance of John Paul II's pontificate is undeniable.[321] Particularly important was the role he played in the ending of the Cold War, the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.[322] Not only did he continue the *Ostpolitik* of Paul VI, but he also was personally involved in it, most notably in relation to Poland, which played a key role in the demise of Soviet power in Europe.[323] However, this

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[317] Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy*, 190. Also, Christine de Montclos, *Les voyages de Jean-Paul II: dimensions sociales et politiques* (Paris: Centurion, 1990).

[318] Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy*, 184-185.

[319] Ibid., 184.

[320] Ibid, 194.

[321] Ibid., 181-201; Pollard, ―The Papacy," 44-46.

[322] Marie Gayte, ―The Vatican and the Reagan Administration: a Cold War Alliance?," *Catholic Historical Review* 97, no. 4 (October 2011), 713–736.

[323] Michael Sutton, ―John Paul II's Idea of Europe," *Religion, State and Society* 25, no. 1 (March 1, 1997),17–29; Philippe Chenaux, *L''Église catholique et le communisme en Europe, (1917-1989), de Lénine à Jean-Paul II* (Paris: Cerf, 2009).

did not prevent him from engaging the West with an equally critical attitude towards what was in dissonance with a vision of the human person and of society shaped by Christian faith. John Paul II held his place on the international scene, emphasising the prophetic role of the Church.

The dialogue between the Church and the world had been a major focus of the Second Vatican Council, and the object of one of its four most authoritative documents, *Gaudium et Spes*. Paul VI had started to put the teaching of the Council into practice and enabled the Catholic Church and the world's political institutions to acknowledge each other as potential partners in dialogue. With John Paul II this dialogue was accepted as normal practice.

Diplomatic relations were a priority of John Paul II's pontificate. He saw diplomacy as a special channel though which the Church can enter into dialogue with political institutions with regard to the great contemporary questions affecting humanity.[324] The Holy See's commitment to diplomatic relations derives from the mission of the Church, that is to say the service of the 'common good of humanity'.[325] Although the Church's mission privileges the spiritual over the material, John Paul II was convinced that the Church has the duty to offer society its two thousand years of 'experience in journeying with humanity,' manifested in many different concrete forms.[326] Through diplomatic relations the Church is able to communicate its ethical and spiritual values, which 'coincide with the demands of the dignity of the human person and its rights.'[327]

Diplomacy therefore takes its value from a specific notion of the human person, with inherent dignity and inalienable rights.[328] At the most immediate level, diplomacy is for John Paul II 'the art of promoting, defending and restoring peace,' but ultimately the role of the

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[324] André Dupuy, *Pope John Paul II*, 23.

[325] John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See* (6), 12/01/1979, *AAS* 71 (1979),356.

[326] Dupuy, *Pope John Paul II*, 24.

[327] Ibid., 24-25

[328] Raymond Cohen, "Israel and the Holy See Negotiate: A Case Study in Diplomacy across Religions," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 5 (2010), 213-234.

diplomat is the defence of human dignity and rights, as the only guarantee of authentic and lasting peace.[329] In John Paul II's notion of the human person, freedom is the central characteristic. While this idea is also shared by other anthropologies, John Paul II teaches that freedom is authentic when three conditions are realised: it is related to the truth, bound to moral values and oriented to the common good. These conditions enable human freedom to limit itself in order not to violate the dignity and the rights of other human beings.[330] Only authentic freedom is a fundamental human right and religious freedom is the first of the human rights, as it enables the person to live their relationship with God, from whom their value derives. With regard to religious freedom John Paul II has built upon the teaching of John XXIII (especially the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*), of Vatican II (*Dignitatis Humanae* and *Gaudium et Spes*) and of Paul VI, but he has also taken it forward.[331]

According to André Dupuy, because John Paul II has seen himself as a „defender of man and a servant of humanity," he has placed the rights of the human person at the centre of his ministry, and especially of his engagement with the international community. This conviction constitutes a strong theological and existential justification for the Holy See's diplomatic engagement, whose purpose is „the even deeper humanisation of the human family and history."[332]

Addressing the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See only four days after his election, John Paul II affirmed that the existence of diplomatic relations with certain countries did not necessarily imply the Holy See's approval of certain ideologies or endorsement of certain practices. He thus removed any obstacles to the establishment of relations with states or institutions that were previously considered unsuitable partners or simply as enemies of the Catholic Church. John Paul II opened up a space where encounter and discussion are

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[329] Dupuy, *Pope John Paul II*, 26.
[330] Ibid., 29.
[331] Bryan Hehir, „Dignitatis Humanae in the Pontificate of John Paul II," in *Religious Liberty: Paul VI and Dignitatis Humanae*, Istituto Paolo VI, ed. John T. Ford (Brescia, Edizioni Studium, 1995), 169–183.
[332] John Paul II, *Address to the Extraordinary Missions*, 23/10/1978.

possible, without necessarily having to agree on the principles. Thus diplomatic relations are an expression of the Church's desire to „sustain dialogue".[333] By the end of his pontificate, the Holy See had diplomatic relationships with more than one hundred and seventy countries, three times as many as during the Second World War.[334] This development transformed the pope and the Holy See into factors that could no longer be ignored in international affairs, as clearly shown for example by the Holy See's role of mediation between Argentina and Chile during the Beagle Channel crisis in 1979.[335]

According to Formicola, the advancement of transcendent values is so important to John Paul II that his „geopolitical activities reflect a public willingness to criticise repressive political leaders and unjust social structures with alternative moral responses."[336] He has employed two approaches for transformation, religious reconciliation and religious engagement, in order to „pursue a world vision inspired by Christianity."[337]

On the global scene, John Paul II sees himself and the Church as responsible to speak and work on behalf of humanity, in defence of human rights, particularly the right to religious freedom and to a dignified and human standard of life, which is possible only with the establishment of social justice. For this reason his official teaching is often addressed not only to the Catholic faithful but also to the broader human family.[338] Concern for humanity's welfare is only part of a broader concern for humanity's integral salvation, material and above all spiritual. John Paul II considers himself – the pope – as being responsible not just for the Catholic Church but for all men and women. Therefore he claims the right to address

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[333] Sacco, *John Paul II and World Politics*, 16.

[334] Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy*, 198.

[335] Gilbert Apollis, „La médiation internationale du Pape Jean-Paul dans l'affaire du canal de Beagle," in Joël-Benoît D'Onorio ed., *La Saint-Siège dans les relations internationals* (Paris: CERF, 1989), 323-361.

[336] Jo Renee Formicola, *John Paul II, Prophetic Politician* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 146-147.

[337] Ibid., 147.

[338] For example, the encyclicals *Evangelium Vitae*, 25/03/1995, *AAS* 87(1995*)*,401-552; *Centesimus Annus*, 1/05/1991, *AAS* 83(1991),793-867; *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 30/12/1987, *AAS* 80(1988*)*,513-586; *Laborem Exercens*, 14/09/1981, *AAS* 73(1981*)*,577-647; *Redemptor Hominis*, 4/03/1979, *AAS* 71(1979*)*,257-324 are formally addressed to the members of the Catholic Church „and all people of good will".

every person of good will and every human institution that exists for the protection of the human person, be it nation states or the United Nations.[339]

## 3. John Paul II's ecclesiology

Establishing the Church firmly on the international scene, so that it could fulfil its mission of service to humanity, was only one aspect of John Paul II's undertakings. It was also necessary to strengthen the Church's sense of her identity and mission, to make it equal to the task. This was particularly urgent at the time that John Paul II became pope. According to Tracey Rowland, John Paul II inherited a Church _disoriented and confused'. Rowland argues that Vatican II had launched the ideal of *aggiornamento* but the task of providing its theoretical foundations was not a major focus of conciliar reflection. The lack of such foundations and therefore of a clear understanding of *aggiornamento* was the cause of the internal ecclesial turmoil which Paul VI had to face during the second part of his pontificate, during which incidentally the pope no longer embarked on apostolic journeys but focussed primarily on internal matters. A certain portion of the Church had understood the Council's call for the Church to be relevant to the modern world as requiring the rejection of what was _pre-conciliar', often bending the logic of the Gospel to the logic of current culture. John Paul II sought to recreate the framework for an authentic interpretation of the Council with his emphasis on spiritual renewal and on the need to continue the rediscovery of the sources of the Tradition.[340] A Council, he suggested, emerges always from specific historical circumstances but above all from the _subsoil of the Church's history, right from the beginning,' and therefore is never a rupture with the past but a deepening of elements already

[339] Roman A. Melnyk, *Vatican Diplomacy at the United Nations: a History of Catholic Global Engagement* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 2009).

[340] Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger"s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 28-31

present in the Church's tradition.[341] The Church has the duty therefore to challenge the current culture on the basis of its tradition: in this consists its prophetic ministry.

John Paul II surprised many who could not easily reconcile his open-minded freedom in reaching so generously beyond the Church's boundaries, with his rigorous restating of the traditional position of the Church on liturgical, doctrinal and moral matters. However, it was precisely the clear sense of the Church's identity and faithful acceptance of Tradition that gave John Paul II the freedom to cross boundaries.

In *Sources of Renewal*, the then archbishop of Krakow offered his reflection on the Council's ecclesiological vision. The image of Church that emerges is that of communion, which will remain the motive underlying his future pontifical ministry.[342] According to James Voiss, John Paul II articulates his ecclesiology of communion by emphasising three dimensions: its theological foundations; the necessity of the structures and dynamics of ecclesial life; and the church's mission.[343] According to John Paul II, the theological basis of the ecclesiology of Vatican II is _God's own way of being as a communion of persons', which imposes on the Church the necessity that its life be a reflection of God's own self-giving love. Christ gave the church the Eucharist and a hierarchical structure in order to preserve and nourish communion, providing the church with stable structures to keep her faithful to the gospel throughout the centuries. For John Paul II, two dynamics of ecclesial life are essential to communion: obedience and dialogue. On the one hand obedience of the faithful to the voice of religious authority within the church is vital to preserve its unity; on the other hand, authority must be obedient to the voice of the Spirit who can speak also with the voices of those not called to the service of authority in the Church; this happens through dialogue.

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[341] John Paul II, *Address to the Cardinals and the Roman Curia*, 22/12/1992, *AAS* 85(1993),1012-1019.

[342] James Voiss, –Understanding John Paul II's Vision of the Church," in *The Vision of John Paul II: Assessing His Thought and Influence*, ed. Gerard Mannion (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 62–77.

[343] Ibid., 63.

According to Voiss, for JP II

> The idea of dialogue is deeply rooted in the content of faith… Dialogue is integral to the dynamic engagement of each individual with God. For this reason it must also operate within the *communio* of the Church… It is by dialogue within the church that differences in understanding can be overcome and unity in faith can be strengthened.[344]

Thirdly, *communio* is at once the source and the result of the Church's mission, which consists in bearing witness to the life of the Trinity as the ultimate purpose of human fulfilment. Moreover, it is also part of this mission, "to promote that unity-in-communion of the human race" that reflects the life of the Triune God and is revealed by Christ as God's Reign.[345] Based on the idea of different degrees of belonging/connection to the Church taught by the Council in *Lumen Gentium* 16-17, John Paul II's ecclesiology of communion, with all due distinctions, extends beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church, and includes other Christians, other believers and the whole of humanity. This is the reason why ecumenical and interreligious dialogue were major foci of John Paul II's attention and features of his ministry.

## 4. John Paul II and ecumenism

Ecumenism was a priority of John Paul II's ministry, as shown both in his teaching and by highly significant actions.[346] The Catholic Church had experienced a very important ecumenical reawakening at Vatican II, which was marked and fostered by the decree on Christian unity, *Unitatis redintegratio.*[347] The document had been drafted by the Secretariat for Christian Unity, established by Pope John XXIII on 5 June 1960 as one of the preparatory

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[344] Ibid., 67, with reference to Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II), *Sources of Renewal: the Implementation of the Second Vatican Council*, tr. S. Falla. (London: Collins, 1980), 28.

[345] Voiss, "Understanding John Paul II's Vision of the Church," 67.

[346] Avery Robert Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 155-166.

[347] Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio. Decree on Ecumenism*, 21/11/1964, *AAS* 57(1965), 90-112. John Paul II et al., *Searching for Christian Unity* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2007). Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, "*Unitatis Redintegratio* Forty Years after the Council," *Gregorianum* 88, no. 2 (2007), 312–328, and William Henn, "At the Heart of *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Unity in Diversity," *Gregorianum* 88, no. 2 (2007), 329–351.

commissions for the Council, under the leadership of Cardinal Augustin Bea. The *schema* was approved after long discussions and several amendments and eventually promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 21 November 1964. True to that spirit of openness and outreach which John XXXIII wanted to be the characteristic of Vatican II, *Unitatis redintegratio* promoted relations with other Christians and their communities to a more prominent position in the life of the Catholic faithful. Later, ecumenism had been a major focus of Paul VI's programme of implementation of the teaching of the Council. However, according to Raymond Helmick, during the final years of his pontificate, interest in ecumenism diminished among Catholics.[348] This was partially due to the fact that various Christian Churches moved in directions different to Catholic teaching especially in relation to social and sexual issues, and particularly with regard to abortion.[349] His successor sought to reignite the ecumenical spirit within the Catholic Church.

John Paul's II pontificate was marked by very significant ecumenical actions. Besides receiving leaders and representatives of other Churches at the Vatican, ecumenical encounters have constantly been an important aspect of his apostolic visits.[350] John Paul II's Polish background had probably equipped him more for dialogue with the Jewish people rather than with non-Catholic Christians, however, he showed great interest in and capacity for building bridges toward unity. The first major ecumenical gesture of his pontificate occurred in 1979 when, instead of sending his representative to Istanbul for the visit to the Ecumenical Patriarch on the feast of St Andrew that had become customary since the Council, he decided to go in person. It was a clear sign that Christian unity was truly a priority of the Catholic Church under his leadership.[351]

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[348] Raymond G. Helmick, "John Paul II and Ecumenism," in *The Vision of John Paul II: Assessing His Thought and Influence*, ed. Gerard Mannion (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2008), 215.

[349] Helmick, "John Paul II and Ecumenism," 215.

[350] Nasrallah Pierre Sfeir, "Ecumenism in the Pontificate of John Paul II," *L'Osservatore Romano*, English weekly edition, 10/12/2003, 10. Cardinal Nasrallah Pierre Sfeir is the former Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites (7/05/1986 – 26/02/2011).

[351] Helmick, "John Paul II and Ecumenism," 219.

The special Jubilee Year of 1983 convoked by John Paul II on the occasion of the 1950 anniversary of the death of Christ was very significant from the ecumenical point of view. That year also marked the 500 anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther and John Paul II took this as an opportunity to engage in dialogue with the Lutheran Church. He wrote to the president of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, praising Luther's deep religious feelings, and calling for a "more correct understanding of the Reformation."[352] On 11 December of the same year, he attended and preached at an ecumenical service at the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Rome.[353] He had, incidentally, encountered Lutheran leaders and communities during his apostolic journeys to Germany in 1980, and would meet Lutherans again in June 1989 during the visit to Norway, Iceland, Finland, Denmark and Sweden. These encounters paved the way for the signing of the joint *Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, presented on 25 June 1998, by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation, which was a very significant achievement despite circumstances that cast some shadow on the rapprochement.[354]

During the 1983 Jubilee Year, John Paul II received a significant number of visits from Eastern Christian leaders, including the Armenian Catholicos of Cilicia (Kareki Sarissian, on 16 April), The Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch (Ignatius IV Hakim, on 13 May), the Catholicos of the Syrian Orthodox Church of India (Moran Mar Basileus Marthopma Matheos I, 6 June) and the Metropolitan of Chalcedon (Melitos, 30 June), representing the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios for the solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul.[355] The

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[352] John Paul II, Botschaft an Kard. Johannes Willebrands, Präsident Des Sekretariats Für Die Einheit Der Christen, 31/10/1983, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/1983/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19831031_card-willebrands_ge.html

[353] John Paul II, *Discorso durante l'incontro ecumenico con la comunità evangelico-luterana di Roma*, 11/12/1983, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1983/december/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19831211_incontro-ecumenico_it.html

[354] The Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,* 31/10/1999. Previously, on 25/06/1998, the "Response of the Catholic Church to the Joint Declaration," highlighted the need for clarification about certain points of the Declaration. The Lutheran Federation saw this as a sign of lack of sincerity on the part of the Catholic Church.

[355] Helmick, "John Paul II and Ecumenism," 219.

relationship with the Eastern Churches was, for John Paul, a priority within ecumenism, as from the theological perspective he could detect better prospects in the journey towards unity.[356] In 1995, the year of publication of the encyclical on ecumenism, John Paul II also published the apostolic letter *Orientale Lumen*, on the centenary of Leo XIII's *Orientalium Dignitas*.[357] In *Orientale Lumen*, John Paul II reasserted the dignity of the Eastern Christian tradition as a gift to the entire Church, and regretted the separation between Western and Eastern Christians as having "deprived the world of a joint witness that could perhaps have avoided so many tragedies and even changed the course of history."[358]

Two years after the Jubilee, on 22-25 April 1985, the pope convoked a gathering of the ecumenical commissions of several national bishops conferences, to reflect on the progress of ecumenism two decades after Vatican II. In his final address to the delegates he stated that the purpose of ecumenism is "the full communion of Christians in one apostolic faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship at the service of a truly common witness."[359] Two months later ecumenism was also given a major focus in his address to the College of Cardinals, where he offered important principles for Catholic ecumenical engagement.[360]

The relationship between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion improved considerably during the pontificate of John Paul II. According to Mary Cecily Boulding, since Vatican II there has been a theological revolution vis-à-vis ecumenism that has allowed for the improvement of Catholic-Anglican relations. She observes that such development has occurred mostly through the work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission

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[356] Dulles, The Splendor of Faith, 163.

[357] John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Orientale Lumen*, 02/05/1995, *AAS* 87(1995*),*745-774; Leo XIII, *Apostolic Letter Orientalium Dignitas Ecclesiarum*, 30/11/1894, *ASS* 27(1894-95*),*257-264 which begins with this statement: "The Churches of the East are worthy of the glory and reverence that they hold throughout the whole of Christendom in virtue of those extremely ancient, singular memorials that they have bequeathed to us."

[358] John Paul II, *Orientale Lumen*, no. 28

[359] John Paul II, *Discorso ai delegati delle commissioni ecumeniche nazionali delle conferenze episcopali*, 27/04/1985, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1985/april/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19850427_commissioni-ecumeniche_it.html

[360] John Paul II, *Discorso ai Padri Cardinali e alla Curia Romana*, 28/06/1985, *AAS* 77(1985*),*1148-1159. Helmick, "John Paul II and Ecumenism," 221.

(ARCIC), from its establishment in 1970 to the present. Although the Commission was established as a consequence of the *Common Declaration* signed by Pope Paul VI and Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey (1966), most of its achievements have taken place during the pontificate of John Paul II, who was also the first pope to visit England since the Reformation.[361] There have been difficulties in the relationship due to issues of theology and practice, like the ordination of women; and in 2003 John Paul II even suspended official talks with the Anglican Church, following the consecration of Anglican Bishop Gene Robinson, a man in a homosexual relationship. However, as Boulding argues, John Paul II advanced Catholic-Anglican relationships to a previously unthinkable degree.[362]

John Paul II's concern for good relations and unity with other Christian Churches featured in many of his speeches, catecheses and messages, and eventually had its climax in the encyclical *Ut Unumm Sint*, his ecumenical masterpiece.[363]

The above mentioned address of John Paul II to the Roman Curia in June 1985 is particularly important as it contains the theological principle underlying Pope John Paul II's understanding of and approach to ecumenism: Christian unity is the work of the Holy Spirit and not the fruit of human negotiations or agreements. Unity is a divine gift that was already given at Pentecost, therefore the purpose of ecumenism is not to _build' it but to _re-compose' the communion of Christians.[364]

According to John Paul II, this task is possible because Christ prayed for it; it is therefore also an essential dimension of the mission of the church, a _permanent and essential priority in the calling of all Christians.' Even more so as divisions among Christians are an obstacle to the _effectiveness of Christian witness.'[365]

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[361] Mary Cecily Boulding, —Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations since Vatican II," *Downside Review*, 121 (2003), 26-27.

[362] Ibid., 27, 32-34.

[363] John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 25/05/1995, *AAS* 87(1995*),*921-982.

[364] John Paul II, *Discorso ai Padri Cardinali e alla Curia Romana*, 28/06/1985, 1149-1150; Helmick, —John Paul II and Ecumenism," 221.

[365] Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*, 156-157

According to Dulles, John Paul II's theology of ecumenism is consistent with the pope's favourite ecclesiological model: the church as *communio*. *Communio* does not mean _uniformity or absorption' but _shared life in the one holy catholic and apostolic church, expressed by a common celebration of the Eucharist.'[366] This is much more than human fellowship because it is a gift of the Spirit, given through baptism. The implication is that wherever there is Christian faith or sacramental life, communion is already present in some degree. It may be incomplete but is nonetheless real. After all, within the Catholic Church itself different degrees of communion are also possible, for example in the case of faithful who live in situations that prevent them from receiving the Eucharist. For John Paul II, among those who believe in Christ and are baptised in his name, including those who do not belong to the Catholic Church, communion is real and profound.[367]

In *Ut Unum Sint*, John Paul II also spoke of the place of the Roman pontiff within ecumenical relatioships, acknowledging that what was meant to be an instrument of communion has turned across the centuries into a cause of division and conflict. In the encyclical he went beyond mere acknowledgement as far as to ask non-Catholics leaders and their theologians to suggest ways in which the Petrine ministry could be restored to its intended purpose, i.e. to serve the unity of all Christians.[368]

John Paul II has built on the ecumenical foundations laid by Vatican II and the legacy of Paul VI; however he has also taken significant steps forward, seeking opportunities to establish cordial relationships with other Churches, including those which for centuries had been seen as enemies of the Catholic Church. Even more significantly, he further strengthened the theological foundations underlying concrete ecumenical actions and gestures, by means of courageous statements aimed at giving more clarity to Church teaching on ecumenism.

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[366] John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* 78, 968.
[367] Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*, 158.
[368] John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint,*nos. 95-96, 977-978.

Ecumenism is a duty that binds all Christians not just Catholics, because it is rooted in the will of Christ for the Church, eminently expressed in his prayer at the Last Supper: „May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.‘ (John 17:21)

As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, John Paul II teaches that, because of its theological foundations, which lie beyond the sphere of human reckonings, the work of restoring unity among Christians must be pursued at all times and everywhere. He thus removed any residual doubts among Catholics that ecumenism in fact meant a watering down of Catholicism. According to Dulles, however, John Paul II has laid down guidelines that can be followed by other Christians as well.[369]

John Paul II strengthened the theological foundations of ecumenism by extending his ecclesiology of communion beyond the Catholic Church, albeit with the necessary distinctions, so as to include all Christians and their communities.[370] This seems to be an instinct of John Paul II that can also be detected, on a different plane, in his engagement with the followers of other faiths and their communities, as well as to humanity as a whole and modern culture in general.

## 5. John Paul II and interreligious dialogue

In the field of interreligious relations, John Paul II has built on Paul VI‘s pioneering legacy and has taken it forward to an extent that has made history. According to Christopher Gross, John Paul II „extended his hand to other traditions and invited them to dialogue, in a period where interreligious dialogue and interfaith cooperation was in its infancy.‘[371] During

[369] Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*, 166.

[370] For example the development of ecclesial communion between the Roman Catholic and the Syriac Churches. See Sebastian Brock, „The Syriac Churches and Dialogue with the Catholic Church," *Heythrop Journal* 45, no. 4 (October 2004), 466–476.

[371] Christopher Gross, „Beyond Tolerance: Benedict XVI‘s Fresh Approach to Interreligious Dialogue," Boston College, 31/03/2007, paper delivered at the conference on *New Directions in*

his pontificate interreligious dialogue became a priority of the Catholic Church, and not just specialists but also ordinary Catholics became more familiar with the necessity to relate correctly to non-Christian believers.[372] He encouraged the Church to engage in constructive relationships with the followers of other religions, through his teachings as well as the personal attitudes that accompanied his actions. Both personally and through the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (as the Secretariat for non-Christians was renamed in 1988), John Paul II fostered friendly dialogue with the followers of other religions characterised by respect and esteem. Equally important were the pope's numerous encounters with other believers, of which the Day of Prayer for Peace held in Assisi in 1986 has become the icon.[373] His visits to the Synagogue of Rome on 13 April 1986 and to the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus on 6 May 2001 have made history, sending a clear message both to Catholics and other believers about the value of interfaith dialogue. His offer of friendship has elicited positive responses on the part of many followers of other religions, manifested in many ways, including the remarkable interreligious presence at his funeral celebrations in 2005.

John Paul II's teaching on interreligious relations is firmly grounded on Vatican II, particularly *Nostra Aetate*. However he also added his personal contribution.[374] According to Peter Phan, John Paul II's interreligious engagement is underpinned by a theology of religions _deeply rooted in Christology and ecclesiology.'[375] Its fundamental principles are, first, that Christ is the unique and universal Saviour and, second, that the Church exists in

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*Comparative Theology, Interreligious Dialogue, Theology of Religions and Missiology*, Boston College 30/03-01/04/2007, available at http://escholarship.bc.edu./engaging_cp/8.

[372] Byron L. Sherwin and Harold Kasimow, eds., *John Paul II and interreligious dialogue* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999).

[373] John Paul II, *Address on the Occasion of the Solemn Prayer for Peace in Assisi*, 27/10/1986, *AAS* 78(1986*)*,865-871. Jean-Dominique Durand, —lEsprit d'Assise et le dialogue interreligieux," in idem, *Cultures religieuses, Eglises et Europe* (Paris, Parole et Silence, 2008), 19-36; —Lo spirito di Assisi tra profezia e dialogo interreligioso," *Studium, November-December* 2006, 809-819.

[374] Michael L. Fitzgerald, —*Nostra Aetate*, a Key to Interreligious Dialogue," *Gregorianum* 87 (2006), 700–713; —Interreligious Relations Today: The Remarkable Relevance of *Nostra Aetate*," *Pro Dialogo* 119, no. 2 (2005) 182–193.

[375] Peter Phan, —John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue Reality and Promise," in Mannion, *The Vision of John Paul II*, 242.

order to proclaim Christ as such, and that this task does not contradict the Church's duty of interreligious dialogue but rather motivates it.[376]

For John Paul II, interreligious dialogue belongs to the spiritual realm as well as to the human dimension and is a spiritual discipline, which requires virtues as well as skills. As a consequence he greatly values interreligious engagement in the form of exchange of religious experience.[377]

According to Jacque Dupuis, John Paul II's greatest contribution to a theology of interreligious dialogue consists in the particular emphasis he lays on the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of non-Christians.[378] This idea is present in his first encyclical letter, *Redemptor Hominis* on Jesus Christ "the Redeemer of humanity' and in his encyclical on the Holy Spirit, *Dominus et Vivificantem*, "Lord and giver of life'.[379] When in *Redemptor Hominis*, John Paul II states that at times the "firm belief' of non-Christian puts to shame the weak faith of some Christians, he describes such "firm belief' as an effect of the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body'[380]. If the faith of non-Christians is a fruit of the Spirit of Christ, then the attitude of the Christians who proclaim their faith must be inspired by profound

> esteem for "what is in man' (John 2:26), for what man has himself worked out in the depths of his spirit concerning the most profound and important problems. It is a question of respecting everything that has been brought about in him by the Spirit, which "blows where it wills' (John 3:8).[381]

In *Dominum et Vivificantem*, John Paul II develops the idea of *Gaudium et Spes* 22, namely that the Holy Spirit unites people to the Paschal Mystery "in ways known to God,'

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[376] Phan, "John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue," 246-251.

[377] Ibid. The contributions to the PISAI, *Colloquium on Holiness in Islam and Christianity* published in *Islamochristiana* 11 (1985).

[378] Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 173-179; Michael L. Fitzgerald, "Pope John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue," *L"Osservatore Romano*, 25/05/2005, English weekly edition, 8.

[379] John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 4/03/1979, *AAS* 71(1979*),*257-324; *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 18/05/1986, *AAS* 78(1986*),*809-900.

[380] "[F]irma persuasio... quae et ipsa procedit a Spiritu veritatis, extra fines aspectabiles Corporis mystici operante.' John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 6, *AAS* 71(1979*),*257.

[381] Ibid., 12, *AAS* 71(1979*),*279.

pointing out that the same Holy Spirit that has been working in the Church since the time of Christ, was at work in fact even before him in view of his Incarnation and Resurrection; and is similarly at work today outside the visible boundaries of the Church.[382]

John Paul II considers prayer as the manifestation of the work of the Spirit. The same Spirit inspires prayer in every human being, whatever their religious belonging. In fact

> wherever the human spirit opens itself in prayer to this Unknown God, an echo will be heard of the same Spirit who, knowing the limits and weakness of the human person, himself prays in us and on our behalf, ‗expressing our plea in a way that could never be put into words' (Romans 8:26).[383]

For this reason interreligious dialogue is an obligation for all Christians.[384] John Paul II spoke of prayer in his address to the the Roman Curia on 22 December 1986, in which he offered an interpretation of the World Day of Prayer for Peace that had taken place on 27 October 1986. He stated that the event had been a concrete application of the teaching of Vatican II, and theologically founded on the common origin and destiny of all humanity.[385] He spoke explicitly of ‗the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the religious life of the members of other religious traditions', especially manifested by prayer. Recalling the text of Romans 8:26, he affirmed that ‗all authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in every human heart.' The Assisi meeting was therefore a manifestation of ‗the unity that comes from the fact that every man and woman are able to pray: that is to submit totally to God and recognise themselves as poor in front of him.'[386]

Interreligious dialogue also features in John Paul II's missionary encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio,* on the permanent validity of the missionary mandate, where its place within the broader mission of the Church in the world is explained.[387] Earlier in the same

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[382] John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, no. 53, *AAS* 78(1986*),*874-875.
[383] John Paul II, *Message to the People of Asia*, Manila, 21/02/1981, 4, *AAS* 73(1981*),*393.
[384] Ibid., 393-394.
[385] John Paul II, *Discorso alla Curia Romana per gli auguri di Natale*, 22/12/1986, *AAS* 79(1987),1089.
[386] Ibid.
[387] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, encyclical letter on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate, 7/12/1990, nos. 55-57, *AAS* 83 (1990*),*302-305.

document, John Paul II affirmed that the Holy Spirit is at work not just in individuals but also in the religious traditions to which they belong.[388] While the document avoided the question of the salvific value of the religions, it did however provide the foundation for a later development by the International Theological Commission. In the 1997 document, *Christianity and the World Religions*, the Commission stated (with the necessary caveats[389]) that on the basis of the recognition of the fact that the Spirit of Christ is present in the religions,

> one cannot exclude the possibility that they exercise as such a certain salvific function; that is, despite their ambiguity, they help men achieve their ultimate end…. It would be difficult to think that what the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of men taken as individuals would have salvific value and not think that what the Holy Spirit works in the religions and cultures would not have such value. The recent magisterium does not seem to authorize such a drastic distinction.[390]

During the pontificate of John Paul II, the activity of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue increased exponentially. Most significantly, the Pontifical Council produced two very important documents that further clarified the place of interreligious dialogue within the life and mission of the Church: *Dialogue and Mission* (1984) and *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991).[391] *Dialogue and Proclamation* is in fact a development of *Dialogue ad Mission*, resulting from several years of study and reflection by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in cooperation with the Congregation for the Evangelisation of the Peoples (its co-publisher) and in dialogue with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.[392] Although *Dialogue and Proclamation* was published five months

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[388] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. RM 28, *AAS* 83 (1990*),*273-274.

[389] ‗In the religions the same Spirit who guides the Church is at work. But the universal presence of the Spirit cannot be compared to his special presence in the Church of Christ. Although one cannot exclude the salvific value of the religions, this does not mean that everything in them is salvific.' International Theological Commission, *Christianity and the World Religions*, 1997, 85. English translation by Michael Ledwith in *Origins* 27 (14 August 1997), 149-166.

[390] International Theological Commission, *Christianity and the World Religions* 84.

[391] Secretariat for non-Christians, *Riflessioni e Orientamenti su Dialogo e Missione (Dialogue and Mission)*, 10/06/1984, *AAS* 76(1984*),*816-828; *Dialogue and Procalamtion* (19/05/1991). Michael Fitzgerald, ―25 Years of Dialogue: the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue," *Islamochristiana*, 15 (1989), 109-120.

[392] For a detailed commentary on the development and content of *Dialogue and Proclamation*, Jacques Dupuis, ‗A Theological Commentary: *Dialogue and Proclamation*,' William R. Burrows, *Redemption and Dialogue* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), 119-158.

after *Redemptioris Missio* (on 19 May 1991), it was already being drafted when the latter was published (on 7 December 1990). It is therefore legitimate to assume that the two documents might have influenced each other with regard to interreligious dialogue and, if this is the case, should be read together in order to appreciate more fully the advances that took place in this area under the leadership of John Paul II.

### *a) John Paul II and Judaism*

There is widespread consensus among both Christian and Jewish authors that the pontificate of John Paul II was a milestone and a real turning point in the history of Jewish-Christian relations. John Paul II took up the revolutionary change of *Nostra Aetate* and the advances in Jewish-Christian relations achieved during the pontificate of Paul VI, and brought them to an unprecedented level, to a point of non-return.

John Paul II's teaching and practice vis-à-vis the Jewish people and their faith were strongly influenced by his personal experience of friendship with Jews since childhood, as well as by his philosophical and theological formation. His lifelong friendship with childhood classmate Jerzy Kluger was for him a constant point of refence and source of inspiration in his relationship with the Jewish people.[393] John Paul II spoke about Judaism, the Jews and Jewish-Christian relations on many occasions, especially at his many encounters with Jews during his apostolic journeys. However, an analysis of some particularly important addresses can give a useful sketch of his thought.[394]

Eugene Fisher has identified the main features of John Paul II's teaching on Judaism and Jewish Christian relations.[395]

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[393] David G. Dalin, "John Paul II and the Jews," in idem and Matthew Levering, eds.,, *John Paul II and the Jewish People: A Christian-Jewish Dialogue* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 15-18. Kluger, who died on 31/12/2011, was present when John Paul II visited the Synagogue of Rome in 1986 and Yad Vashem in 2000. Gian Franco Svidercoschi, *Letter to a Jewish Friend: The Simple and Extraordinary Story of Pope John Paul II and His Jewish School Friend* (New York: Crossroads, 1995).

[394] A complete collection of John Paul II's teaching on Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations, until 1995 can be found in John Paul II, *Spiritual Pilgrimage Texts on Jews and Judaism 1979-1995*, Eugene Fisher and Leon Klenicki eds. (New York: Crossroad, 1995).

[395] Fisher, "Pope John Paul II's Pilgrimage of Reconciliation," xx-xxxix.

The first major trait is the uniqueness of the bond between Christian and Jewish communities of faith. John Paul II applies to Jews and Judaism the language of brotherhood that popes have traditionally employed only in reference to relationships among Christians: more specifically among Catholics and, since Vatican II, also with regard to non-Catholics. Given the theological implications of the terminology, is it very unlikely that John Paul II applied it to Jews accidentally. On the contrary, in referring to Jews as brothers, he meant that the Christian-Jewish relation is not marginal, but inherent in Christianity. He affirmed that Christians and Jews are ‗closely related at the very level of their respective religious identities'.[396] The bond is therefore of a spiritual nature, it is ‗a sacred one deriving from the mysterious will of God.'[397] Because it is at the heart of its own identity that the Church encounters the Jewish faith and its community (as taught in *Nostra Aetate* 4), the relationship between Christians and Jews is unique, i.e. different from the relationship between Christianity and any other religion.[398] And because the Jewish faith is somehow inherent in the Christian faith, Christian-Jewish dialogue can almost be seen as a dialogue ‗within our Church.'[399] John Paul II explained the connection by drawing a parallel with the relationship between the two parts of the Christian Scripture: the Jewish-Christian relationship is not between a present and a past reality, but between two ongoing realities, and is a relationship of ‗mutual enlightenment and explanation', exactly as the one between the ‗Old' and the ‗New' Testaments.[400]

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[396] John Paul II, *Address to the Representatives of the Jewish World Organizations*, 12/03/1979, *AAS* 71(1979),435-438.

[397] John Paul II, *Address to the Representatives of the International Liaison Committee between the Catholic Church and the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations*, 28/10/1985, *AAS* 78(1986),409-411.

[398] John Paul II, *Discorso in occasione dell" incontro con la comunità ebraica nella sinagoga della città di Roma*, 13/04/1986, *AAS* 78(1986),1117-1123.

[399] John Paul II, *Address to the Representatives of the Jewish Community*, Mainz, 17/11/1980, *AAS* 73(1981*),*78-82. (German original; English translation in John Paul II, *Spiritual Pilgrimage,* 15. In the address John Paul II refers to the German Bishops' Conference *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church with Judaism* (Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, *Erklärung Über das Verhältnis der Kirche zum Judentum,* 28/04/1980).

[400] John Paul II, *Address to the Representatives of the Jewish Community*, Mainz, 17/11/1980, in idem, *Spiritual Pilgrimage*, 15.

The second major affirmation of John Paul II is that not only the Jewish faith of the past is important for Christians but also present-day Judaism, as a _living heritage'.[401] The careful assessment of this heritage _in itself and with due awareness of the faith and religious life of the Jewish people as they are professed and practiced still today, can greatly help us to understand better certain aspects of the life of the Church.'[402]

Thirdly, John Paul II affirms explicitly the permanent validity of the divine covenant with the Jewish People. He interprets the conciliar statement that _the Jews remain most dear to God' (*Nostra Aetate* 4), in the sense that Israel's status as God's chosen people is intact, without affecting the Church's identity as People of God. Both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Jewish community retain their divinely conferred value.[403] John Paul II emphasised the present tense in Romans 11:29, where Paul affirms that the Jews _have' the adoption as sons, the Covenants, the Law, the worship and the Promises.[404] Fisher identifies a pattern in John Paul II's theology of Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations whereby theological dichotomies are replaced by a _both/and approach' that points to the deeper mystery of God.[405]

A further point in John Paul II's teaching on the Jewish people is an outright condemnation of anti-Semitism as _opposed to the very spirit of Christianity.'[406] He has explicitly condemned Nazism for its systematic extermination of the Jews, as well as of other people, during the Second World War. During his visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death

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[401] Ibid., 14.

[402] John Paul II, *Address to the Delegates to the Meeting of Representatives of Episcopal Conferences and Other Experts in Jewish-Christian Relations*, 06/03/1982, in idem, *Spiritual Pilgrimage*, 19.

[403] John Paul II, *Address to the Representatives of the Jewish Community*, Mainz, 17/11/1980, 15.

[404] John Paul II, *Address to the Delegates to the Meeting of Representatives of Episcopal Conferences and Other Experts in Jewish-Christian Relations*, 19. For Jewish perspectives on Paul, see David Neuhaus, —A la rencontre de Paul. Connaître Paul aujourd'hui: un changement de paradigme?" *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, Vol. 90, no. 3 (2002), 353-376.

[405] Eugene Fisher, –Pope John Paul II's Pilgrimage of Reconciliation," xxvi.

[406] John Paul II, *Address to the Representatives* of the Jewish World Organizations, 12/03/1979, *AAS* 71(1979),435-437.

camp, he called all Catholics to remember the Shoah.[407] The Jewish witness given during the Shoah is for the Church and for humanity a ‗saving warning' and the continuation of the Jewish prophetic mission in the contemporary world, i.e. ‗the particular vocation… to be a light to the nations.'[408]

Lastly, even before the Fundamental Agreement and the establishment of full diplomatic relation, John Paul II had already *de facto* acknowledged the State of Israel and the importance of the Land for the Jewish people. In the Apostolic Letter *Redemptionis Anno* (1984) he expressed a supportive attitude, affirming the right of the Jewish people who are in Israel, ‗who preserve in that land such precious testimonies of their history and faith,' to the ‗desired security and the due tranquillity that is the prerogative of every nation.'[409] The implications were articulated in theological terms in the document published the following year by the Holy See, *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Cathechesis in the Roman Catholic Church.*[410] The document distinguished and clarified the notions of People, Land and State and gave a positive reading of the Jewish Diaspora in terms of Jewish witness to the world, as opposed to the old canard of the ‗wandering Jew' whereby the Jews' permanent lack of their own land was God's punishment for having killed Jesus.[411] The Jewish people have an ongoing mission within God's plan of salvation.[412] In fact, for John Paul II, Christians and Jews have a joint mission, consisting in

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[407] John Paul II, *Homily at the Brzezinka Concentration Camp,* Auschwitz, 07/06/1979, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790607_polonia-brzezinka_en.html.

[408] Ibid.; Fisher, ―Pope John Paul II's Pilgrimage of Reconciliation," xxviii-xxix.

[409] John Paul II, *Redemptionis Anno,* 20/04/1984, *AAS* 76(1984*),*625-628. Incidentally, the same passage also mentions the Palestinians: ‗The Palestinian people, which is rooted in the land and for decades has lived in dispersion, has the natural right, out of justice, to find a homeland and be able to live in peace and tranquility with the other peoples in the region.', 628. My translation.

[410] Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Notes on the correct way to present the Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*, 1985. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19820306_jews-judaism_en.html

[411] Fisher, ―Pope John Paul II's Pilgrimage of Reconciliation," xxxiii-xxxiv.

[412] Ibid.

giving common witness to the Reign of God in the world. They are called to be a ‗blessing for the world' through a joint commitment to peace and justice among all peoples.[413]

John Paul II has often expressed his concerns and hopes for the situation of Jerusalem, considered the Holy City by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, but where reconciliation and peace are far from a reality.[414] It would be a blessing, he stated, if Jerusalem were to become ‗a special place of encounter and prayer for peoples, a sign and instrument of peace and reconciliation.' Fisher observes that John Paul II's definition of Jerusalem in these terms is very significant, given that in Catholic doctrine ‗sign and instrument' is the definition of sacrament, through which God's salvation becomes accessible.[415] In the light of these considerations, Fishers sees the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel as an event of theological significance.[416]

John Paul II's teaching on Jews and Judaism was strongly supported by and made public through very significant gestures. His pilgrimage to Auschwitz-Birkenau in July 1979, only a few months after his election; his historic visit to the Synagogue of Rome on 13 April 1986, the public request for forgiveness for the Church's sins against the Jews on 2000, during the Jubilee Year and his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, including Yad-Vashem and the Western Wall, transformed the imagination and mutual perceptions of many Christians and Jews alike.[417]

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[413] John Paul II, *Address to the Representatives of the Jewish Community*, Mainz, 17/11/1980, 16.

[414] John Paul II, *Redemptionis Anno,* 20/04/1984, *AAS* 76(1984*),*625-628. On the theological-political significance of Jerusalem see Anthony O'Mahony, ―Christian Presence in Modern Jerusalem: Religion and Politics in the Holy Land," *Evangelical Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (July 2006), 257–272; idem, ed., *The Christian Communities of Jerusalem and the Holy Land: Studies in History, Religion and Politics* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003); idem, ed., *Christianity and Jerusalem* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2009). See also Alain Marchadour and David Neuhaus, *The Land, the Bible, and History: Toward the Land That I Will Show You*, (Fordham University Press, 2007).

[415] John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See*, 11/01/1992, *AAS* (1993),67.

[416] Fisher, ―Pope John Paul II's Pilgrimage of Reconciliation," xxxiii-xxxiv.

[417] On the impact of John Paul II Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, see the comments of Rabbi David Rosen in his *Address at the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops*, 13/10/2010, http://www.zenit.org/article-30645?l=english; Yehezkel Landau, ―Pope John Paul II's Holy Land Pilgrimage: a Jewish Appraisal," in *The Political Papacy: John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Their Influence*, ed. Chester L. Gillis (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2006), 125–138. See also the work of David Neuhaus on Jewish-Christian relations from a Hebrew Christian perspective: David Neuhaus, ―Moments of Crisis and

There were controversies as well: the beatification of the Jewish philosopher Edith Stein who was killed at Auschwitz after her conversion to Christianity, and the establishment of a Carmelite monastery in the Auschwitz compound, triggered angry reactions on the part of many Jews who saw these events as attempts at appropriating the *Shoah* for Christianity. The meetings of John Paul II with Kurt Waldheim (on 23 June 1988), former Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization and President of Austria whose reputation was tarnished by past connections with the Nazis during the War, and of the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, Yasir Arafat (on 15 February 2000), triggered similar reactions as they were interpreted by many as endorsing violence against Israel and the *Shoah*.[418] These however, fade in the face of the humble yet firm affirmation of the permanent validity of Judaism and esteem for the Jewish people consistently given by John Paul II in words and actions.

### *b) John Paul II and Islam*

Besides Judaism, Islam was the second major focus of John Paul II's interreligious engagement. According to Christian Troll, the heart of John Paul II's approach to Islam and Muslims was his „respect for the authenticity of Muslim religious experience," and that he wanted Catholics not only to be able to offer their witness of faith to Muslims but also to be prepared to be spiritually challenged by their religious experience.[419]

Across John Paul II's teaching on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations it is possible to identify certain recurrent themes. On the whole they represent a vision of Islam in line with the perspective of Vatican II, but with emphases that are typical of the pope.

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Grace: Jewish-Catholic Relations in 2009," *One in Christ* 43, no. 2 (December 2009), 6–24; „Contemporary Jewish Israeli Views on Christianity and Christians," in *Christianity and Jerusalem*, ed. Anthony O'Mahony (Leominster: Gracewing, 2010), 1–30; „Achievements and Challenges in Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Forty Years after *Nostra Aetate*," *Downside Review* 125, no. 439 (2007), 111-130.

[418] Fisher, „Pope John Paul II's Pilgrimage of Reconciliation," xxxv-xxxvii. For an extremely critical reading of John Paul II's relationships with the Jewish People see Sergio Minerbi, „John Paul II and the Jews: An Evaluation," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 18:1-2 (Spring 2006), online at http://jcpa.org/article/pope-john-paul-ii-and-the-jews-an-evaluation/

[419] Troll, *Dialogue and Difference*, 158.

The first idea is that both Christians and Muslims are children of Abraham in faith. John Paul II clarified through his teaching aspects of the Christian-Muslim relationship that the Council had not explained in detail: most notably the connection of the faith of Muslims to Abraham.[420] *Nostra Aetate*'s description of Muslims includes the statement that "they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God."[421] When speaking of Islam and the Muslims John Paul II often refers to Abraham, echoing *Nostra Aetate* 3 and *Lumen Gentium* 16. However, according to Troll, having often "drawn a parallel between the Islamic self-identification as descendant of Abraham and that of Christians', John Paul II has been more explicit than the conciliar documents.[422] Early in the pontificate, during his visit to Turkey, John Paul II addressed the Catholic Community in Ankara and described Muslims as sharing the same faith of Abraham as Christians. After recalling the relevant teaching of *Nostra Aetate* and his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, he added that

> [f]aith in God, professed by the spiritual descendants of Abraham - Christians, Muslims and Jews – when it is lived sincerely, when it penetrates life, is a certain foundation of the dignity, brotherhood and freedom of men and a principle of uprightness for moral conduct and life in society.[423]

The affirmation of the possibility that the faith of Muslims may have moral effects implies the recognition of some objective value.[424] For John Paul II, Muslims and Christians

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[420] Ibid., 159.

[421] *Nostra Aetate* 3. On the significance of Abraham for Muslim identity and on the different theological status of Abraham in Christianity and Islam, see Robert Caspar, "Abraham in Christianity and Islam," *SIDIC* 15, no. 2 (1982), 11–16; Anthony O'Mahony, "Catholic Theological Perspectives on Islam at the Second Vatican Council," *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1016 (July 2007), 388–392; "Our Common Fidelity to Abraham Is What Divides': Christians and Islam in the Life and Thought of Louis Massignon," in *Catholics in Interreligious Dialogue: Studies in Monasticism, Theology and Spirituality*, ed. Anthony O'Mahony and Peter Bowe (Gracewing Publishing, 2006), 151–190; Neal Robinson, "Massignon, Vatican II and Islam as an Abrahamic Religion," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 2, no. 2 (1991), 182–205.

[422] Troll, *Dialogue and Difference*, 31.

[423] John Paul II, *Address to the Catholic Community of Ankara*, 29/11/1979, *AAS* 71(1979),1585-1589, 1587. English translation in Gioia, *Interreligious Dialogue*, 220-221.

[424] Troll, *Dialogue and Difference*, 159. Troll refers to Thomas Michel, "Christianity and Islam: Reflections on Recent Teachings of the Church" *Encounter* 112 (1985), 1-22.

are ‗brothers and sisters in the faith of Abraham;'[425] and Islam ‗deserves special attention' among the religions on account of its monotheism and of ‗its link to the faith of Abraham, whom St Paul described as the ‗father… of our [Christian] faith' (Cf Rm 4:16).'[426] John Paul II spoke of Christianity, Islam and Judaism as ‗Abrahamic religions'.[427] Unsworth believes that a correct translation from the Latin original of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 47, where Jews and Muslims are mentioned, would indicate that Muslims as well are among ‗those who share the inheritance of Abraham,' while current English translations tend to apply the phrase exclusively to the followers of Judaism.[428]

With John Paul II the category of ‗Abrahamic religion' to describe Islam alongside Christianity and Judaism became part of the common vocabulary of Catholic-Muslim relations. According to Michel, because of its soteriological implications, this is not an insignificant development: namely, if Abraham was saved through his faith (according to Pauline theology), and the faith of Muslims has an objective connection with that of Abraham, the question arises whether it is possible to exclude that, as Abraham's children in faith, and heirs of the promises made to him, Muslims are not saved in a way analogous to the Jews.[429] Whether the argument is valid or not, Michel highlights the fact that the category of ‗Abrahamic faith' remains controversial, despite the fact that John Paul II was quite comfortable with it.[430]

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[425] John Paul II, *Address to the participants in the Symposium on "Holiness in Christianity and Islam,"* Rome 9/05/1985, in Gioia, *Interreligious Dialogue*, 283-284.

[426] John Paul II, *Address to the Faithful in General Audience*, Rome 5/06/1985, English translation in Gioia, *Interreligious Dialogue*, 287.

[427] John Paul II, *Greeting to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, Sheikh Akram Sabri*, 26/03/2000, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/travels/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20000326_grand-mufti_en.html.

[428] Andrew Unsworth, ―John Paul II, Islam and the Christian-Muslim Encounter," in Anthony O'Mahony, Wulstan Peterburs and Muhammad Ali Shomali, eds., *A Catholic Shi'a Engagement: Faith and Reason in Theory and Practice* (London Melisende, 2006), 277.

[429] Michel, ―Christianity and Islam," 13, quoted in Troll, *Dialogue and Difference*, 159.

[430] On the differences between Christian and Muslim understanding of Abraham and their theological implications, Anthony O'Mahony, ―Our Common faith in Abraham is what divides us: Christianity and Islam in the Life and Thought of Louis Massignon," *Catholics in Interreligious Dialogue*, 151-190.

The second recurrent idea in John Paul's teaching on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations is that there is between Christians and Muslims a "fellowship" based on shared faith in and worship of God.[431] Their common sharing in Abraham's unconditional faith in God constitutes the foundation of a special relationship between Christians and Muslims, which John Paul II describes in terms of fellowship, brotherhood, and family ties and he often addresses Muslims as brothers and sisters, and with words of respect, esteem and love.[432]

Third, Christians and Muslims are called to collaboration on the basis of shared values. John Paul II speaks of a "vocation" common to Christians and Muslims, consisting of a series of concrete elements: better mutual knowledge; peaceful coexistence; acceptance of differences; overcoming prejudices; mutual spiritual and moral witness and enrichment; cooperation in establishing reconciliation; cooperation for the betterment of the disadvantaged.[433] The theme recurs in almost all John Paul II's pronouncements on Islam. However, frequent emphasis on cooperation based on shared ethical principles may also be an indicator of the difficulty of engaging in dialogue with Islam at the theological level, due to fundamental doctrinal incompatibilities. Incidentally, it seems that in recent years, Benedict XVI has encouraged Catholic-Muslim in this ethical direction.

A fourth theme, within the domain of shared values, is the priority of human rights and religious freedom. John Paul II articulates the shared ethics and calls for collaboration between Christians and Muslims around the pivot of human rights, deriving from the shared belief in God as Creator. He is especially concerned with religious freedom, and does not

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[431] John Paul II stated: "Worship given to the one, living, subsistent, merciful, and almighty Creator of heaven and earth is common to Islam and herself, and that it is a great link uniting all Christians and Muslims." See. John Paul II, *Address to the leaders of the Muslim Community in Kenya*, 7/05/1980, in Gioia, *Interreligious Dialogue*, 226-227.

[432] "I deliberately address you as brothers: ... because we are members of the same human family... We are especially brothers in God, who created us and whom we are trying to reach, in our own ways, through faith, prayer and worship, through the keeping of his law and through submission to his designs." See John Paul II, *Address to the representatives of the Muslim Community in Davao, Philippines*, 20/02/1981, in Gioia, *Interreligious Dialogue*, 235.

[433] Troll, *Dialoge and Difference*, 32. John Paul II, *Address to Representatives of the Muslims of Belgium*, 19/05/1985, in Gioia, Interreligious Dialogue, 284-285; *Address to the Young Muslims of Morocco Gathered at Casablanca*, in ibid., 297-305.

hesitate to denounce situations in which minorities are not granted their religious rights within the political environment in which they live, as for example he did in his remarks on the opening of the mosque in Rome (1995). His concern vis-à-vis religious freedom is for Christians living under Islamic rule, as well as for the respect of the dignity and the social well-being of Muslim communities in Europe and the West.[434]

John Paul II's teaching confirms and reinforces the positive Catholic perspective on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations inaugurated by Vatican II and pursued by Paul VI. However, it must be noticed that his earlier statements have a more theological character than later ones: probably a sign of a theological impasse with regard to Catholic dialogue with Islam. This would also justify a residual reticence, in line with Vatican II, with regard to certain aspect of Islam: John Paul II never mentioned Ishmael, through whom Muslims claim Abrahamic descent; he did mention Muhammad and the Qur'ān but always sparingly, and on several occasions he addressed Muslims and spoke of Islam without using the terms. [435] As already observed, Catholic discourse on Islam and Muslim-Christian relations during the pontificate of John Paul II tends generally to focus more on cooperation than on theological dialogue. Nevertheless John Paul II's teaching on Islam is of remarkable openness as he draws on and develops the framework of *Nostra Aetate*. He manifested this with powerful symbolic gestures of respect, esteem and love for Muslims. Often his gestures were controversial and _questionable', according to Samir. Such was the case of his two meetings with Yasir Arafat already mentioned, in Palestine in March 2000 and in the Vatican on 29 October 2001. John Paul II puzzled many, especially among Christians, when he was presented with the book of the Qur'an and according to the testimony of Raphael Bidawid, the then Chaldean Catholic Patriarch of Babylon, kissed it during the visit of a delegation

[434] Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi, –John Paul II and Islam," in Byron L. Sherwin and Harold Kasimow, eds., *John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 192, 200.

[435] John Paul II, *Address to the participants in the Symposium on Holiness in Christianity and Islam*, Rome 9/05/1985, in Gioia, *Interreligious Dialogue*, 283.

from Iraq on 14 May 1999.[436] Even more remarkable historically was John Paul II's visit to the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus (6 May 2001), as he was the first pope to enter a Muslim place of worship.[437] He even supported the building of the mosque in Rome, suggesting that the land should be donated by the municipality.[438] These actions were powerful because they expressed his sincere respect for the faith of those Muslims who struggle to submit sincerely to God's will.[439] The merit of John Paul II was to show at once awareness of the differences between Christianity and Islam and sincere respect and love for Muslims, their faith and their religion: consistent with his general pastoral approach, he showed that the two need not necessarily be seen as contradictory. If it is true that dialogue at the theological level did not advance much during his pontificate, it is a fact that he established bridges between the Catholic Church and Muslim communities worldwide that are still in place and without which the developments in Catholic-Muslim dialogue that took place under Benedict XVI would not have been at all possible.

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[436] "Iraqi Catholic Leader Decries Allied Bombing," 01/06/1999, *Catholic World News*, http://www.catholicculture.org/news/features/index.cfm?recnum=10415.

[437] John Paul II, *Address at the Meeting with the Muslim Leaders at the Omayyad Great Mosque,* Damascus, 6/05/2001. This very important address highlights the achievements of Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the previous three decades as well as the challenges ahead.

[438] Samir Khalil Samir, "John Paul II and the Muslims (Part III)," *Asianews* 4/05/2011, http://www.asianews.it/news-en/John-Paul-II-and-the-Muslims-(Part-III)-21465.html.

[439] These words are used in *Nostra Aetate* 3 for Abraham.

## E. CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the determining factor of John Paul II's engagement with the followers of other religions and their communities is ecclesiology. The need for and commitment to interreligious dialogue arises not as a response to the need to address religious pluralism, but is a calling that emerges naturally from a deeper understanding of the Church's identity. This idea, which is already expressed in *Nostra Aetate* and developed further in Paul VI's teaching, is unambiguously reaffirmed and clarified in detail in the teaching and pastoral ministry of John Paul II. Modern popes believe in dialogue as a necessary expression of the essence of the Church, which is called to engage with humanity for its salvation. Benedict XVI follows in the same line.

The examination of the way from the beginning of the twentieth century the popes relate to the reality outside the church provides the ecclesial-historical context of interreligious dialogue as we understand it today.

It has been observed in this chapter that the pioneering initiatives of Benedict XV, Pius XI and Pius XII, the _instincts' of John XXIII, and finally the _modern papacy' inaugurated by Paul VI and more clearly defined John Paul II, all reveal a papacy that claims, with increasing confidence, the right for the Church to speak at the table of world decision, as the defender of humanity. This papacy sees itself more and more as a constitutive element of a Church that is aware of existing to serve humanity and seeks to engage in dialogue with all _forces' that influence the destiny of humanity.

Albeit in different ways and degrees, these pope have in common the fact that by adopting a new style of engagement of the papacy on the world scene, with international and often national politics, the world of culture and of religion, these popes seek to establish a new style of presence of the Church among humanity.

The following section seeks to demonstrate that Benedict XVI belongs within this development of the papacy – and that his Church of Pope Benedict XVI continues to grow in the same direction – by examining his theological vision and especially his theology of the Church and of the papacy within it.

# IV. PART TWO
# POPE BENEDICT'S THEOLOGICAL VISION

## A. CONSTANTS OF RATZINGER'S THEOLOGICAL VISION

Benedict XVI has been the first pope for centuries who is also a theologian. His vision of reality is always explicitly theologically founded as well as being pastorally oriented. The religions and interreligious dialogue are an integral part of that broader vision of reality in the light of God's plan and as such must be appreciated.

In order to identify the place of the religions and of interreligious dialogue within Ratzinger's theological horizon, it is essential to reflect on how he understands theology, its nature and purpose, and his notion of Church, its essence and mission. Although these two aspects seem to be major foci in his theological reflection, Ratzinger has written extensively on a vast range of issues, rendering any attempt at a synthesis a major task.[1] However, James Corkery suggests that it is possible to identify four constants in Ratzinger's writing that are the fundamental premises and underlying motifs of his entire theological reflection.[2]

The first is the question of Christianity vis-à-vis the truth. Ratzinger misses no opportunity to reaffirm that "Christianity is true", thus identifying the God of biblical faith with the absolute truth of the philosophers. Christianity is unique because biblical revelation (the source of faith) and rationality (the foundation of philosophy) converge in it, making it an absolute novelty in the history of the religion of humanity. For Ratzinger, the encounter between biblical revelation (both in Judaism and Christianity) and reason is not accidental but

[1] See especially Carl E. Olson, "The Theological Genius of Joseph Ratzinger. An Interview with Fr D. Vincent Twomey," online at http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2007/vtwomey_interview_jun07.asp; Vincent Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI: The Conscience of Our Age* (San Francisco Ignatius, 2007); Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger"sFaith*, 144-155; Aidan Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict XVI. An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger* (London: Burns & Oates, 2007, first edn. 1988), 237-240.

[2] James Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger"sTheological Ideas. Wise Cautions and Legitimate Hopes* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2009), 28-36.

is the fulfilment of a tension that is intrinsic to biblical faith. This is what has put Christianity on a different plane to that of the other religions.[3] This first theological trait explains Ratzinger's great emphasis on the question of the truth with regard to all aspects of Christian faith and life, including the question, both theoretical and practical, of the Christian approach to other religions and interreligious dialogue. The Regensburg lecture of 12 September 2006 is, for example, to be interpreted precisely from this perspective.[4] Consequently, the question of the truth is probably the most important factor in Ratzinger's understanding of the goal of interreligious dialogue, as well as of the style in which a Christian should engage in it.

A second trait of Ratzinger's thought is the way he understands the relationship between divine and human dimensions. Primacy always belongs to being over doing: *logos* comes before *ethos* in the sense that actions are expressions of what the person is. God is the source of all existence and meaning, which is revealed by the Logos, the meaning of human existence is not something we can give ourselves, but is received, given. Human existence therefore is authentically realised when human freedom is exercised in harmony with that meaning, disclosed in biblical revelation which has in Jesus Christ its point of culmination. Christ is the ideal human being, the model of authentic human existence. The divine is unambiguously the foundation of the human: the invisible of the visible, the spiritual of the material. The human person depends on God for its own being, and when it stands in right relationship with God it is not crushed but elevated and perfected. This second trait is clearly the premise for Ratzinger's opposition to existentialism, idealism, materialism and positivism. It is not a negation of the reality and the goodness of the human, but a profound awareness that the human cut off from divine meaning ceases to be authentically human.[5]

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[3] Ibid., 30-31.

[4] The Regensurg address has been interpreted by some as a lecture on Islam and on Christian-Muslim relations; see for example Ralph M. Coury, ―ASyllabus of Errors: Pope Benedict XVI on Islam at Regensburg," *Race & Class* 50, no. 3 (January 2009), 30–61. Such readings are incorrect because Islam and Cristian-Mulsim relations do not constitute the main focus of the reflection, but are touched on as examples in the application of the main thesis, i.e. the relationship between faith and reason, to a particular aspect of the contemporary context.

[5] Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger"s Theological Ideas*, 31-33.

A third trait again concerns the relationship between the divine and the human, grace and nature, Christ and person, Kingdom and history. Ratzinger's theology resonates with Augustine's view of human reality, constantly considering the *fallen-ness* of the human being, and its need for God's transformative action. Ratzinger is not pessimistic with regard to the person, however he is realistic as to the tragic effects of sin on human original goodness, which calls for the redemptive action of God in Christ. Grace does more that simply add something to nature; it transforms fallen nature, bringing it back to its original state of created goodness. It is the pattern of death and resurrection of the paschal mystery. God's redemptive action consists of enabling the human to participate in the Paschal mystery and truly die and rise again in Christ, as resurrected humanity. This is also the relationship between the Kingdom of God and history.[6]

The second and third traits of Ratzinger's theology resonate with section 22 of *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, which Ratzinger praises greatly, because it brings Christ right to the centre of the encounter between Church and world, and as the centre of human history, which is therefore made contiguous with salvation history.[7]

Ratzinger's fourth theological feature is the centrality of love in Christian faith and existence, when it is _correctly understood', that is love that is accompanied by faith in Christ who _draws us beyond the deficiencies of our own love' by standing in for these through the _representative excess of his abundant love.'[8] Many were surprised that Benedict XVI's first encyclical was dedicated to the theme of love; it is not so surprising if considered in connection with this trait of his thought.

It will be useful to keep these major features of Ratzinger's theology in mind in order to understand his notion of theology and particularly his ecclesiology.

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[6] Ibid., 33-34.
[7] Ibid., 34. On Ratzinger and *Gaudium et Spes*, see also Rowland, *Ratzinger"s Faith,* 30-47.
[8] Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger"s Theological Ideas*, 34-35.

## B. THE NOTION AND MISSION OF THEOLOGY

### 1. The nature and purpose of theology

In Christian, especially Catholic tradition, the title Father of the Church identifies „the Christian preachers, writers and theologians of the postcanonical period.“[9] The Church Fathers „contributed decisively to the shape of Christian belief, and by and large enjoyed a reputation for sanctity..., their opinions have always carried considerable weight in the church.“[10] The first definition of what a Father represents is given by Vincent de Lerin (died c. 445) in the context of the early Church‘s response to the problem of heresy. Vincent explains that, when it is the teaching of a general council on a particular matter that is the object of controversy,

> Then he must collate and consult and interrogate the opinions of the ancients, of those, namely, who, though living in various times and places, yet continuing in the communion and faith of the one Catholic Church, stand forth acknowledged and approved authorities: and whatsoever he shall ascertain to have been held, written, taught, not by one or two of these only, but by all, equally, with one consent, openly, frequently, persistently, that he must understand that he himself also is to believe without any doubt or hesitation.[11]

The author emphasises that antiquity, consensus and communion with the Church are the defining aspects of the teaching of „the ancient‘ teachers, i.e. the Fathers of the Church. Boniface Ramsey has identified some eight characteristics that belonged, albeit in various degrees and forms, to the Fathers of the Church. These are: 1) a „passionate rather than an abstract approach to truth,‘ with a corresponding „intolerance‘ for opposing positions; 2) extensive use of rethoric; 3) a tendency to overdevelop a point; 4) extensive use of images and especially scriptural images; 5) a „popular appeal, and the use of popular language‘; 6) a synthetic approach, whereby the Christian mystery is treated as an whole; 7) „reverence for antiquity, tradition and the established order‘ not only in the sacred but also in profane

[9] Boniface Ramsey, „Fathers of the Church,“ in Joseph Komonchak et al. eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1990), 386.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Vincent of Lerins, *The Commonitory* III-8, in *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian*, ed. Philip Schaff et al., vol. 11, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers II, 1895.

realms, with some consequent suspicion towards novelty; 8) a „sense of the mystery of reality, and especially of the mystery of God, while resisting probing and intrusion.‘ These are the characteristics of what Ramsy describes as an „atmosphere‘ in which the Fathers operated and the „patristic spirit‘, behind their theological formulations.[12] Ramsey also points out that the majority of the Fathers, either as bishops or other ordained ministers, „exercised a degree of pastoral responsibility.‘[13]

Much of Benedict XVI resonates with these characteristics to the extent that he can be understood as a modern Church Father on account of the unique way in which his roles as theologian and as minister of the Church are integrated. When in 1981 Joseph Ratzinger accepted John Paul II‘s decision to appoint him as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he requested and obtained from the pope permission to continue his activity as theologian; which incidentally he continued even after becoming pope. This biographical detail signals his conviction that pastoral service and theological activity must go hand in hand. With this in mind, it is not surprising that, as Pope Benedict XVI, he insisted that his Christological work published between 2007 and 2012 was the work of the theologian and not papal teaching, although at least in its reception by Catholics the distinction is a very fine one and likely to go unnoticed.[14]

An exploration of his writings on theology, shows that the convergence of theology and pastoral ministry in Ratzinger is not accidental, but the result of a decision based on his understanding of theology as ecclesial ministry, that is to say as a specific form of service within the Church. Theology serves the Christian faith, and because the transmission of the faith is the ultimate reason-d‘être of the Church, theology serves the Church precisely by

[12] Ramsey, „Fathers of the Church,“ 390.
[13] Ibid., 387.
[14] Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Vol. 1 (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007), xxiii.

pursuing its aim.[15] He has consequently been reshaping the notion of papacy through his teaching and actions in several ways, from the way he uses the weekly general audiences as moments of catechesis to his resignation as pope

From the Christian perspective the specific task of theology is twofold. First, it is to keep God within the horizon of human thought so as to remind reason of its origin and end. This means that theology seeks to fathom the ultimate *ground of reality*, God, in order to understand it more deeply and to disclose to humanity the path to follow in pursuit of its fulfilment. Second, theology seeks to keep the faith bound to human rationality, as faith would otherwise be exposed to the risk of becoming irrational, as Benedict XVI has often pointed out.[16] When faith is permitted to draw, from its principles, conclusions that are inconsistent with human rationality, it degenerates into something inhuman, becoming a completely distorted version of itself, therefore contradicting God's will.

This means that theology is the space of fruitful encounter between living faith and reason, where the message of faith can be authentically expressed in such a way that is understandable to and can be communicated to every person as the answer to their deepest questions of the heart.

Raztinger situates theology at the level of Christian existence, beyond its purely intellectual dimension. It serves the truth by assisting the person in finding his or her fulfilment in the truth. It is useful to explore Ratzinger's notion of theology precisely because it unveils much about his understanding of the foundations, the nature, the identity and the mission of the Church. In fact it shows the essential role of the Church for Christian faith.

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[15] Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei, *Donum Fidei. Instructio de Ecclesiali Theologi Vocatione*, 24/05/1990, *AAS* 82(1990*),*1550-1570. See also John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 14/09/1998, *AAS* 91(1999*),* 5-88.

[16] Lecture delivered at the University of Regensburg on 12/09/2006: Benedict XVI, "Faith, Reason and the University. Memories and Reflections," in *AAS* 98(2006*),*728-739.

This emerges even more clearly from Ratzinger's Eucharistic ecclesiology and is very important because it is in ecclesiology that Ratzinger situates interreligious dialogue.[17]

For Ratzinger it is essential that theology be properly defined, so that it is not reduced to either philosophy of religion or religious studies. For this reason a notion of theology as 'a methodically ordered reflection on the question of religion, of men's relationship with God' is insufficient, because this kind of inquiry 'can offer man no counsel', in the sense that it can satisfy intellectual reasoning but is unable to help people make their relationship the foundation of their lives.[18] By contrast theology must be able to do so, hence it must be able to transcend the merely academic and enter the realm of the meaning of human existence.

The starting point of authentic theological inquiry is an answer that is given from outside, 'revealed' by God. From there theology proceeds in the same way as philosophical inquiry but its purpose and nature are determined by its unique starting point.

From the methodological point of view theology and philosophy coincide, however they differ with regard to the direction of thought. In philosophical enquiry, thought begins with the question of meaning and seeks through argumentation to arrive at an answer that was hitherto unknown. In theology, while keeping the answer in view, thought aims at making it understandable to reason, unveiling its relevance to the question of meaning. Theology seeks to enable reason to perceive the given of revelation as the answer to its questioning about the ultimate meaning of reality.[19] The purpose of theology is to ensure that the person accepts the answer of faith not as an external imposition, acceptance of which would demand the suspension of judgement, but as the response to its internal need for meaning. The distinctive direction of thought in theology is summarised in Augustine's description of the dynamism of theology as '*credo ut intelligam*', 'I believe in order to understand'. For Augustine, thought's quest for 'the path to the right way of living' that leads to the true fulfilment of existence

[17] On Eucharistic ecclesiology, see Paul McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1995).
[18] Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2002), 30
[19] Ibid., 31.

begins with the act of faith, that is to say the decision to make faith the foundation of one's life.[20]

The purpose of theology is not to find God, but to understand how God is the answer to human search for meaning and to articulate the consequences of having found God for human existence in its pursuit of happiness. The 'given in advance', insists Ratzinger, is the precondition of theology; without it there is no theology at all. This implies that the condition of possibility of theology is a certain *auctoritas,* extrinsic to reason, which is not found but given and therefore not subjective but objective. This fundamental *auctoritas* that makes theology possible is the Word of God, revelation, and to perceive its meaning, is 'the ultimate basis for theology.'[21]

This Word of God is accessible primarily in the text of Scripture, which Ratzinger defines as the 'essential authority of theology'.[22] Scripture is constituted as authority for theology by its character of divine inspiration, by which God enters human reality and transcending 'purely human authorship' makes it capable of conveying the divine Word.[23] Nevertheless the Word is always characterised by a 'surplus beyond what could go into the book.' In order to be received as Word of God, the text of Scripture needs to be 'heard' within the environment in which it is kept alive and can be found. This environment is the living community of faith, the Church. Scripture and Church stand in a relationship of interdependence, which Ratzinger describes by saying that 'this society is the essential condition for the origin and the growth of the biblical Word' while 'this Word gives this society its identity and its community.'[24]

Because the Church is intrinsically connected to the Word, Ratzinger can speak of the 'interwoven relationship between Church and Bible, between People of God and Word of

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 31-32.
[22] Ibid., 32.
[23] Ibid., 32-33.
[24] Ibid., 33.

God.‘[25] The connection of Word, Scripture and Church constitutes the latter as the other form of *auctoritas* for theology. Theology needs the Church because without it, according to Ratzinger, Scripture ceases to be contemporary to us and is reduced to literature, ceasing to be the appropriate basis for theology. Should this happen, theology _would decline into literary history… the philosophy of religion and religious studies in general.‘[26]

Ratzinger points out that the sacramental life of the early Church was the _original sphere of existence‘ of the Christian profession of faith. The canon of Scripture as well as the fundamental formulations of the faith (Creeds) came into being from within the lived experience of the Christian community. Faith and Church are irrevocably interwoven: the Church, and the teaching authority within it in particular, has the duty of protecting the integrity of Scripture, ensuring that it does not become disposable within changing historical circumstances, that its interpretation is not affected by _the conflict of hypotheses‘ and its clear meaning is preserved.

The mutual relationship of Church and Word means that there is a _secret relationship‘ between teaching authority and Scripture, in the sense that if on the one hand Scripture is normative for the Magisterium (setting its limits and standards, preventing it from becoming arbitrary), the Magisterium, the *viva vox* of the faith, ensures that Scripture is not manipulated.[27]

Church Magisterium is not opposed to thought, in fact its task is to ensure that the _given answer‘, on which theological reflection is based, is not silenced but listened to and so allowed to make room for truth to enter human existence and bring meaning to it. In this sense, the Magisterium is actually the condition of possibility for theology in the proper sense, ensuring that _the answer may thus be heard without which we cannot live aright.‘[28]

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[25] Ibid., 33
[26] Ibid., 34.
[27] Ibid., 35-36.
[28] Ibid., 37.

### *a) The intrinsic relationship between theology and faith*

Ratzinger insists that theology is not based on opinion, but on certainty. This is what theology has in common with science.[29] From the methodological point of view, theology functions as a science, however it differs significantly from modern empirical science because the two are based on different kinds of certainty. The certainty of theology is not that of empirical evidence but the certainty of faith, which is akin to the certainty of love.[30] This kind of certainty holds together two aspects, the ‗already' and the ‗not yet.' Because, like love, faith is not empirically measurable, it may easily be confined to the realm of the uncertain, however for Christians faith is not synonymous with ‗uncertainty' but rather constitutes the firm foundation on which they base their lives; hence the certainty of faith is ‗in many respects of a higher degree that that of science.'[31]

Understanding the true nature of theology requires the recognition that different kinds of certainty are possible, which are equally legitimate starting points for intellectual inquiry.[32]

If theology is based on the certainty of faith, then the anthropological structure of the faith – that is to say faith as it is lived out by the person – can throw light on the nature of theology.[33] The act of faith is complex because it involves other human faculties alongside the intellect. Ratzinger refers to Aquinas analysis to illustrate that the act of faith is the synergy of thought and assent.[34] Aquinas – following Augustine – defines believing as thinking with assent, and the coexistence of the two aspects is what faith has in common with science. However, in the act of faith the correlation between them is quite different. While in science assent is the outcome of thought, in the act of faith assent is commanded by an act of will that sets and keeps thinking in motion.[35] Therefore the act of believing (faith) is by its nature open

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[29] Ibid., 19.
[30] Ibid., 20.
[31] Ibid, 19.
[32] Ibid., 21.
[33] Ibid., 21
[34] J. A. West, ―Aquinas on Intellect, Will, and Faith," *Aporia* Vol. 13 number 1(2003), 1-13.
[35] Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 21-23.

to theology. For Aquinas, the will that commands assent corresponds to the biblical notion of the „heart", a faculty that precedes thought and predisposes the intellect towards the object of knowledge.[36] When the „heart" is touched by God, thought is able to give assent to revelation. This shows that believing, the act of faith, is not only an act of understanding, nor is it merely an act of the will, nor simply an act of feeling, but „an act in which the spiritual powers of man are at work together."[37] The heart „lights the way for the understanding and draws with it into assent," on a journey towards the truth that is also a „pilgrimage of thought."[38] The act of faith is an act of union with God, in which truth, saving truth, begins to be seen.[39] From this perspective, theology is the never-completed activity of thought that remains on a journey towards the truth, which has been initiated by God touching the heart. Because it has not obtained assent in its own way, but this has been brought about from outside, then reason will seek to achieve it in its own natural way, this is why it continues to question and to strive to understand the truth, even though this is already given.[40] This is the nature of theology.[41]

The task of theology is to harness the „restlessness of thought" which can never fully grasp what is already given in God's Word, so that it becomes productive by „guiding us into walking on the way of thought towards God."[42]

Theology is comfortable with remaining „on the way", because it is certain about its destination, and its focus is not finding the truth but identifying the path towards it.

### *b) Theology and the missionary dynamism of faith*

Truth is the content of Christian faith. For this reason it extends „beyond the domain of symbolical knowledge and enters the realm of historical and philosophical reason."[43] Due to

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[36] Ibid., 23
[37] Ibid., 24
[38] Ibid., 25.
[39] Ibid., 24
[40] Ibid., 25-26.
[41] Ibid., 25.
[42] Ibid., 28.
[43] Joseph Ratzinger, „Questions about the Structure of Theology," in idem, *Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987), 36.

truth being its ultimate referent, Christian faith seeks to engage with reason in order to make it an _instrument of conversion,' that is to say instrumental to the act of faith. This means that inherent in Christian faith is a missionary element, which consists in seeking to _lead out of the past and guide to new knowledge.'[44] For this reason it is not surprising that since the early times of the Church the missionary thrust of the confessors of the Christian faith was accompanied by the emergence of theology, i.e. the struggle to articulate the faith in ways understandable to reason. Theology emerged because Christian faith felt more at ease with philosophy than with the surrounding religions, from which in fact it distanced itself. Ratzinger explains that

> It is characteristic of Christian faith to seek to reveal true knowledge, which, as such, is also immediately meaningful to reason. That is why it pertains to the nature of the faith to develop theology.[45]

Early Christian criticism of the religions pointed out that the myths _led people to worship as real what could be, at best, only a symbol.' The Christian faith conversely led people to the *Logos* (truth, meaning) of reality and therefore to the truth of themselves; this is the actual content of salvation.[46]

The testimony of the early Church shows that at the heart of theology is love, its ultimate foundation. Love explains the missionary character of Christian faith. Christian mission is motivated by Christian love, which actively seeks the good of the other, by trying to respond to their needs, so that they may enjoy their human dignity to the full. Material needs are important, nevertheless the greatest single need is the need for meaning, for the Truth. Therefore the ultimate expression of Christian love is to offer the gift of the faith.

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[44] Ibid., 326-327.

[45] Ibid., 327

[46] Ibid., 326-327. On the criticism of religion see also Joseph Ratzinger, "Faith, Philosophy and Theology," *Communio* 11 (1984), 350-364. On the question of faith and rationality in Ratzinger see Pablo Blanco Sarto, "Logos and Dia-Logos: Faith, Reason, (and Love) According to Joseph Ratzinger," *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 3 (2010), 499–509. See also commentaries on *The Regensburg Lecture*: James V. Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2007), 41-68; Thomas G. Guarino, "The God of Philosophy and of the Bible: Theological Reflections on Regensburg," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought & Culture* 10, no. 4 (2007), 120–130, and Daniel Maher, "Pope Benedict XVI on Faith and Reason.," *Nova et Vetera (English Edition)* 7, no. 3 (July 2009), 625–652.

Christian faith loves to the full when it seeks to enable the person to encounter the only truth that can satisfy their deepest thirst for meaning: God.[47] In this sense the raison d'être of theology is service to the highest form of Christian love, which is at once love of Truth (God) and of the other (neighbour). Its purpose is to assist the Church in the effective communication of the faith to all.

### *c) Theology and the synergy of faith and reason*

Ratzinger observes that from the beginning Christianity bonded with philosophy as they both face the question of death. The question of death is ultimately the question about the meaning of life, of the origin and end of reality, which are the fundamental questions of philosophy.[48] The early connection between Christian faith and philosophy took place because of the structure of faith itself. For this reason, the early Christian thinkers, who knew from Revelation that Christ is the *Logos* of all reality, saw Christianity as true philosophy.[49] The identification between Christianity and philosophy, as in the case of Justin Martyr, however, took place with a specific kind of philosophy. In fact as, historically, the character of philosophy developed and changed, Christian thought – theology – distanced itself from it. Later the distinction, initially articulated by Aquinas, became outright opposition in the modern era.[50]

According to Ratzinger, the modern opposition of philosophy and theology has affected both. On the one hand, philosophy has increasingly defined itself against theology, by objecting that it invalidates the correct process of thought because it claims to know already the answer, and so anticipating what should instead be the result of thinking. On its part, however, theology has with increasing strength rejected philosophy as something that

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[47] See Joseph Ratzinger, ―Faith, Philosophy and Theology," *Communio* 11 (1984), 360-361. It was republished in Joseph Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995), 13-29.

[48] Ratzinger, ―Faith, Philosophy and Theology," 350-351.

[49] Ibid., 352.

[50] Ibid., 352-353.

corrupts it. Although this tendency was already present in antiquity, in Tertullian for example, it was with Luther that it became prominent especially in Protestant theology, as a consequence of its emphasis on the notion of faith as pure trust, which is seen as being contradicted by any effort of reason to find proofs regarding God.

Ratzinger argues that the opposition between theology and philosophy is detrimental to both as it prevents them from being authentically themselves. Because ‗both faith and philosophy are oriented towards the fundamental questions about man,' it is necessary that theology and philosophy rediscover their bond in order to function properly.[51] According to Ratzinger

> the faith must be open to philosophical debate, starting with the question of God. When it abandons its claim to reasonableness in its fundamental expressions, it does not become a purer form of belief but betrays one of its fundamental characteristics. The same is true for philosophy if it wishes to be true to its own task: it must respond to the demands of faith about the ultimate questions of the nature of death and the meaning of life.[52]

The retrieval of the connection is especially important for theology in its task of making the content of faith intelligible and therefore desirable. It is not enough that faith has already been given the answer to the question of the ultimate meaning. That answer must be received, as an answer, by reason, in order to become effective. Unless this occurs, faith does not truly ‗have' the answer, and can only obtain it ‗if it tries to move the answer into an intelligible relationship to the original question,' which was asked by reason.[53] In other words the ‗given' of Revelation demands an active and not merely passive reception which is in the form of ‗a kind of listening and cooperative thinking that is encouraged by questioning.'[54] For this reason ‗theology in its reflection on the word of revelation simply cannot avoid using the methodology of philosophy.'[55]

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[51] Ibid., 358.
[52] Ibid., 360
[53] Ibid., 358
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 355-356.

It is significant that in antiquity both the Christian faith and philosophy were opposed to *gnosis*.[56] With its being constantly open to questioning, philosophy could not satisfy the expectations of the Gnostics, who pursued a kind of definitive knowledge similar to that pursued by modern science. This is further proof that faith has always been on the side of philosophy on account of its being constantly open to a truth that is beyond immediate grasp. According to Ratzinger, theology is true to itself when it defends philosophy from the threat of gnosis. Faith needs philosophy, because it needs people who ask questions and seek the truth. In fact the obstacle to theology is not philosophical thinking, but rather the „closed-mindedness which refuses to question further and considers truth to be unobtainable or not even worth searching for."[57]

The relationship between theology and philosophy reflects the relationship between faith and reason. Ratzinger has consistently insisted on the fact that their separation ultimately results in the distortion of both faith and of reason. This was also the central point of his 2006 lecture at the University of Regensburg, which was not about Islam, but about the consequences for humanity, and for both faith and reason when the two are separated.

### *d) Theology and the interpretation of Scripture*

In his presentation of the study by the Pontifical Biblical Commission entitled „The interpretation of Scripture in the Church" (1993), Ratzinger stated that „the study of the Bible is… the soul of theology."[58] The statement encapsulates his thought about the question of the identity of theology examined so far. The unavoidable implication is that without proper interpretation of the Scripture there can be no authentic theology. The question of exegesis

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[56] See Pheme Perkins, „Gnosticism," in ed. Joseph Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane, *New Dictionary of Theology* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1990), 421-423.

[57] Ratzinger, „Faith, Philosophy and Theology," 363.

[58] Joseph Ratzinger, „Preface," published on 21/09/1993, to the document prepared by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 18/03/1994, in James Leslie Houlden ed., *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1995), 3.

then is of crucial importance for theology, because it is fundamental to the understanding of the faith. Correct exegesis of Scripture seeks to understand the meaning of the text,

> in which the human word and God's word work together in the singularity of historical events and the eternity of the everlasting Word, which is contemporary in every age. The biblical word comes from a real past. It comes not only from the past, however, but at the same time from the eternity of God and it leads us into God's eternity, but again along the way through time, to which the past, the present and the future belong.'[59]

Scripture is not only the foundation of theology but also its prototype.

Raztinger observes that, on the basis of Aristotle's distinction between *theologia* (theology) and *theologike* (study of theology), Pseudo-Dionysus considers the Scripture as the true theology. He represents what the ancients saw as theology, that is to say _the discourse of God rendered in human words.' This concept was later embraced by Bonaventure, who affirmed that properly speaking the one true subject of theology is God, and therefore only Scripture is theology in the proper sense. By implication because the human authors speak God's word, they are theologians, _*theologoi"* by the Word that through them enters history. A further implication is that the Bible represents then the _model of all theology' and that _the bearers' of the Bible become _the norm of the theologian, who accomplishes his task to the extent that he makes God himself his subject,' that is to say by speaking on God's behalf and in response to God's word. This places theology in direct dependence on biblical interpretation and makes exegesis not only the foundation of but also the model of theology.[60]

The lecture delivered by Ratzinger on 27 January 1988 at Saint Peter's Church in New York, is a lucid articulation of the methodology that is to be applied in biblical exegesis if this is to be truly foundational for theology; in fact, if exegeis itself is to be theology.[61] The first part of the lecture represents a critique of the historical-critical approach when this becomes

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[59] Ibid., 4-5.

[60] Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 321.

[61] Joseph Ratzinger, –Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today" (New York, 27/01/1988), online at http://www.ewtn.com/library/Theology/RATZBIBL.HTM

the exclusive way of reading the Scripture. Ratzinger's thesis is that a self-critique of the method is necessary in order to allow its great potential to emerge and its dangers to be overcome, towards a deeper understanding of Scripture free from the biases of the various philosophical assumptions that have underpinned the various theories that the method has produced over almost a century. The negative effects are historically evident: on the whole the approach has excluded the uninitiated from the Scriptures, and by focussing only on the human element has confined the word to the past, making it lose its contemporaneity, i.e. its relevance to the faith of contemporary Christians. In the second part of the lecture Ratzinger proposes the basic elements for a new constructive synthesis between the beneficial aspects of the historical-critical method and the insights and richness of patristic and medieval biblical interpretation as the adequate foundation for theology.

Authentic interpretation requires that Scripture be approached not with any ready-made philosophies, but with a certain _*sym-pathia*", the _readiness to learn something new, to allow oneself to be taken along a new road' by the Scripture itself. Concretely, this means that the exegete must not exclude a priori certain possibilities: first, that _God could speak in human words in the world,' second, _that God himself could enter into and work in human history'; third _that the truly original may occur in history,' something that is not simply the result of progress or evolution; fourth, that humanity has _the ability to be responsive beyond the categories of pure reason, and to reach beyond ourselves towards the open and endless truth of being.'[62] The task of the exegete is in fact twofold: the first step is certainly to understand the text in its original context, however a second step must follow, which consists in considering the texts _in the light of the total movement of history and in the light of history's central event, Jesus Christ.'[63] A broadening of the horizon is necessary, that is to say the realisation that the exegete _does not stand is some neutral area above or outside history and the Church.' On the contrary, _if it wishes to be theology,' exegesis must accept that the

[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

required form of „*sym-pathia*‘ is in fact the faith of the Church, „without which the Bible remains a closed book.‘[64]

In the foreword to the first volume of his *Jesus of Nazareth*, to illustrate the methodology he embraced in compiling his own biblical Christology, Ratzinger speaks of what he believes to be an essential dimension of biblical interpretation that needs to complement the historical-critical approach, namely canonical exegesis.[65] As pope, he also spoke of canonical exegesis in his allocution to the Synod of the Bishops on the Word of God, on 14 October 2008.[66] Canonical exegesis reflects the fundamental principle of theological exegesis mentioned in *Dei Verbum* 12, according to which in order to understand its true meaning it is necessary to interpret the Scripture in the same spirit in which it was written.[67]

At the practical level, this means that exegesis must respect the unity of Scripture, that is to say, the Bible is to be studied as a unified whole, and not as a compilation of unconnected texts.[68] The unity of Scripture however is not a historical but a theological datum, which implies the understanding that „it was a process of constant rereading that forged the words transmitted in the Bible into Scripture,‘ whereby older texts read in new situations yielded new meaning in continuity with the old ones.[69]

Canonical exegesis is able to move historical-critical biblical interpretation towards „becoming theology in the proper sense.‘[70] For this to occur it is necessary that the exegete takes faith as the starting point, which implies openness to „something greater‘ beyond the letter of Scripture while retaining serious historical engagement with the text.[71] In the Synod

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[64] Ibid.
[65] Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Vol. 1, xviii.
[66] Benedict XVI, *Address to the 14 General Congregation of the Synod of Bishops,* 14/10/2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20081014_sinodo_en.html
[67] See Robert Murray, „Vatican II and the Bible," *Downside Review* 120 (2003), 14-25.
[68] Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Vol. 1, xviii.
[69] Ibid., xviii-xix.
[70] Ibid., xix.
[71] Ibid.

address, Benedict spoke of two further practical rules of interpretation, also mentioned in *Dei Verbum* 12, adding that exegesis must take into consideration the ‗living tradition of the entire Church' and that it must ‗observe the analogy of faith.'[72] Together with canonical exegesis these two rules constitute a ‗second methodological level necessary for the correct interpretation of the words that are simultaneously human words and divine words.'[73]

Benedict XVI finds that while the first level of interpretation – academic ‗scientific' exegesis – is being attended to at very high standards, the second level, which he calls the ‗hermeneutics of faith,' is almost absent, and this has consequences in the life of the Church for the reason already mentioned.[74] For Pope Benedict the hermeneutics of faith requires the prayerful reading of the Bible that characterises *lectio divina*. According to Scott Hahn, Benedict XVI's theology should move us towards a ‗more prayerful and contemplative approach that is more like an intimate dialogue with the Lord who meets us and speaks to us in the sacred text.'[75] When biblical exegesis is able to combine these two levels of interpretation, attending to the Scripture as at once both human and divine, then its authentic meaning is disclosed. This is authentically theology and can only happen in the environment where faith is kept alive, which is the Church.

### *e) The intrinsic connection between theology and Church*

In Christianity, according to the Bible, the act of faith is ‗an act of union' with God who is ‗the ground of all things,' through Christ. Because the ‗ground of all things' is present in the living community of faith, ‗incorporation into the Church' belongs to the very structure of faith.[76]

In his investigation of the anthropological element in theology, Ratzinger finds that it is a certain kind of experience that provides the foundation for the Christian act of faith. He

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[72] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Synod of Bishops*, 14/10/2008.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid. On Benedict XVI's hermeneutics of faith see Scott Hann, *Covenant and Communion* (London: Darton, 2009), 41-62.
[75] Ibid., 88-89.
[76] Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 328

observes that Christian experience relies on ‗the extent and richness of the experience already accumulated throughout history by the world of faith.'[77] The locus of accumulated experience is the Church, and the individual believer has access to it in three ways. First, by participating in the communal life and liturgical worship of the Church, the believer experiences the Church as a community, as a living space where ‗faith can be experienced as a force that sustains him both in his daily routine and in the crises of his existence.'[78] Secondly, in the Church the person has the opportunity to grow in faith and in so doing he or she becomes a ‗light for others;' this being the sign of a faith that is becoming more authentic and mature. Third, the Church provides access to Christian experience by enabling the individual to ‗enter' the lives of the saints, who are ‗the living personifications of faith actually experienced and tested.'[79] On account of their actual experience of the transcendent, the saints are ‗places' where ‗faith as experience has been… stored, anthropologically seasoned and brought near to our lives,' and therefore is available to us.[80]

This community both ‗proclaims and lives a particular creed,' so that Church and faith are inseparably interwoven.[81] On the one hand, faith is the condition of possibility of the Church, which is the community of those who believe in Christ; on the other hand it is through the Church in which it is embodied that faith becomes concrete. This means that Christian faith is necessarily personal and communal at the same time. It is true that the act of believing is always personal, however by the same act of faith the person enters this ‗communal form of faith'. Authentic Christian faith requires the harmonious co-existence of both dimensions, because the full grasp of the faith, that is to say one not limited to its intellectual dimension, is not possible unless it is encountered in its living environment (the

[77] Ibid., 351-352.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., 329.

Church); and only when the faith is experienced fully is it able to touch the person's existence in all its aspects.

The intrinsic connection between Church and faith has obvious consequences for theology. The basis of theology is faith, and because the latter can never be separated from its living environment, theology cannot be independent of the Church but it is bound to take its voice into account and be guided by it. In this sense the Church is a constitutive element of theology and, Ratzinger insists, a theology for which the Church is no longer relevant is not "theology in the proper sense of the word."[82]

In this regard Ratzinger has referred to the Lutheran theologian and biblical scholar Heinrich Schlier (1900-1978), a student of Rudolf Bultman, who became a Catholic in 1953 when his life was profoundly changed by his realisation that "it is unlikely that any sensible Christian would contest that the care of the Word of God is entrusted to the Church."[83] Schlier's realisation means the recognition that as the custodian of Scripture, the Church is the primary authority of its interpretation. This implies that "theology either exists in the church and from the church, or it does not exist at all."[84] According to Ratzinger, when the intrinsic connection between theology and Church is lost, the consequences are negative:

> "If the Church and her authority constitute a factor alien to scientific scholarship, then both theology and the Church are in danger. In fact, a Church without theology impoverishes and blinds, while a churchless theology melts away into caprice."[85]

Therefore the question of the intrinsic connection between Church and theology must be given proper attention "for the sake of the rectitude of theology and ultimately for our faith itself."[86]

Two aspects are especially important with regard to the Church-theology relationship. First, the primary subject of theology is the Church and not the individual thinker. This idea

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[82] Ibid., 323.
[83] Heinrich Schlier, quoted in Joseph Ratzinger, "Spiritual Basis and Ecclesial Identity of Theology," in idem *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 45.
[84] Ratzinger, "Spiritual Basis," 45.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.

was initially formulated by Romano Guardini.[87] Faith requires conversion: the decision to allow oneself to be affected by the Word of God. The act of conversion is always personal and ecclesial at the same time; it is the encounter with Christ, who precedes us; and this encounter is possible in the Church, in which "the one who became flesh has remained flesh."[88] Ratzinger explains that in Galatians 2:20 ("It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me") Paul describes the Christian experience of conversion as a two-dimensional reality. It "revolutionises everything" in the subject, but it is at the same time also an "objectivising" event, in the sense that the subject is drawn to transcend itself and to make space for a new subject that takes over. Conversion is more than the change of certain options and attitudes, it is a death-event consisting in the "exchange of the old subject for another." This exchange can never be attained unless it is brought about from outside by God's initiative in Christ. There is therefore a passive element in the experience of conversion that calls for an "external structure" where Christ can be encountered, i.e. the Church. Through conversion the individual subject self is replaced by the "new subject," consisting in the self united to Christ.

The Church is not an abstract reality but a "living subject possessing a concrete content," and the root of her concreteness is the "binding Word of faith." As a consequence the Church is not alien to theology, but is rather the "ground" and the condition of possibility of theology.[89]

Another implication of the connection between Church and theology concerns the relationship between theology and the Magisterium. Because the purpose of the Church is the proclamation of the faith, this is also the normative criterion of theology. The Magisterium (teaching office) exists precisely to ensure that the Church continues to be the rule of

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[87] Ibid., 61, n. 23; Romano Guardini, *Anselm von Canterbury und das Wesen der Theologie* (1923). Emery de Gaál, "St. Anselm of Canterbury and Romano Guardini," *The Saint Anselm Journal* 2.1 (2004), 30-41. On Guardini and Vatican II, see Robert A. Krieg, *Romano Guardini: A Precursor of Vatican II* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).

[88] Ratzinger, "Spiritual Basis," 60.

[89] Ibid., 61.

theology. Consequently, dogma – the definition of the faith – is correctly understood not as an obstacle to theological inquiry but as the ‚generative power' and ‚energy source' that ‚discloses to theology its grand perspectives.'[90] Theology respects its inherent connection with the Church when it relates to the Magisterium and dogma in constructive synergy. Theology is true when it humbly allows the rule of faith to inspire its direction and define its boundaries, without relinquishing its questioning spirit. Only when this happens it can legitimately speak in the name of the Church and is ‚invested with a power, which is simultaneously a responsibility.'[91] On the contrary, theologians would abuse the trust that the faithful put in the Church should they use the name of the Church in order to convey ideas that are theirs and not in line with the common faith that keeps the Church in existence.

On its part ecclesiastical authority has the duty to intervene otherwise it ‚actively serves this misappropriation of power when, by giving it free reign, it makes its own prestige available where it has absolutely no right to do so.'[92] When the Church's authority intervenes to recall theologians to the deposit of the faith, it does so out of duty rather than as an exercise of power. In this sense it is possible to understand Ratzinger the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith more sympathetically when he has had to implement disciplinary measures where engagement with theologians over discordance with Catholic teaching has not been successful.[93]

If theology is the endeavour of rationality that seeks to understand faith, and faith is based on the Word of God, then the latter must be the starting point of theological inquiry. However, the notion of theology depends on how Word of God is understood. If it is strictly identified with the book of Scripture, then theology results in biblical exegesis. However, another understanding of theology is possible if it is accepted that the Word of God is present

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[90] Ibid., 62-63.
[91] Ibid., 68.
[92] Ibid., 68-69
[93] Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger"s Theological Ideas,* 74-80 (Liberation Theology/Gutierrez); 81-92 (Theological Dissent).

in the entirety of the Scriptures, but it also exists beyond the text, in the community of faith. In this case the letter of Scripture speaks the Word of God when it is received within the community where faith is kept alive. According to this understanding of Word of God, theology reflects on Scripture within the life of the Church. Concretely this means in constructive conversation with the Tradition and in harmony with the Church's interpretation of Scripture. Theology then trusts the Church as the primary interpreter of the Word and the Magisterium as the organ within the Church whose purpose is to preserve the correct interpretation of Scripture in the light of the _objective' faith.

Clearly for Ratzinger this is authentic theology and theological work is a very important and specific form of ecclesial service. It implies awareness on the part of the individual theologians that the primary _subject that pursues theology is the Catholic community as a whole, the entire Church.'[94] If this is overlooked, often the result is not healthy theological pluralism but _subjectivism and individualism that has little to do with the bases of common tradition.'[95] Ratzinger wants a real conversation among theologians, but this has to take place in the context of theology as ecclesial ministry.[96] The concept of theological work as ecclesial service implies that the proper task of the theologian is not to be _original' but to _deepen the common deposit of the faith' and by doing so, to assist the Church in understanding and in proclaiming the faith, not _to create it.'[97]

In this regard, there is a direct connection between theology and catechesis, and confusion in theology has grave consequences for catechesis. More concretely, when theology stops _thinking with the church', and approaches the sources – the Scripture – not in their entirety but selectively, according to ideological criteria, then catechesis is unable to present the faith in its harmonious integrity, and becomes rather the medium to convey

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[94] Joseph Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: an exclusive interview on the state of the Church,* Salvator Attanasio and Vittorio Messori trs. (Leominster: Fowler, 1985), 71.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei, *Donum Fidei*. *Instructio de Ecclesiali Theologi Vocatione*, 24/05/1990.

[97] Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 71.

„reflections and flashes of insight deriving from partial, subjective anthropological experiences."[98] One example of a problematic selective approach to Scripture can be found in certain aspects of liberation theology that Ratzinger as a theologian has strongly challenged and as the Prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in the 1980s has chastised.[99] On the contrary catechesis is able to offer an „all-embracing formation in the faith" when it is structured around its fourfold traditional permanent nucleus: the Credo, the Our Father, the Decalogue, the Sacraments. Theology serves the faith when it seeks to serve this kind of formation on the basis of Scripture and Tradition.

If theology is understood as ecclesial service, then Magisterium and dogma can be correctly understood: not as „intolerable straitjacket" and „walls" hindering theological reflections, but as service to the truth and as „windows that open up upon the infinite."[100]

### *f) Conclusion: theology and faith*

The principle underlying Ratzinger's notion of theology is its intrinsic connection to faith. Because theology belongs to the very structure of Christian faith, it is therefore a necessary expression of it. Authentic Christian faith generates theology as the outcome of its

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[98] Ibid., 72.

[99] In the 1980s, the Holy See's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued two instructions to point out the incompatibility of certain forms of liberation theology with Catholic teaching: Congregation Pro Doctrina Fidei, *Libertatis nuntius. Instructio de quibusdam rationibus «Theologiae Liberationis»*, 06/08/1984, *AAS* 76(1984*),*876-909; and Congregation Pro Doctrina Fidei, *Libertatis conscientia. Instructio de libertate christiana et liberatione*, 22/03/1986, *AAS* 79(1987*),*554-599. In 1985 the Congregation published a *Notification on the book by Father Leonardo Boff, O.F.M "Church: Charism and Power. Essay on militant Ecclesiology,"* 11 March, 1985, *AAS* 77(1985*),*756-762. Ratzinger explained his personal view on liberation theology in a private document initially meant for a strictly theological audience, later published in Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 174-186. See. also ibid., 186-190; Joseph Ratzinger, "Freedom and Liberation: the Anthropological Vision of the Instruction *Libertatis Conscientia*," *Communio* 14, no. 1 (1987), 55-72; and also Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger"s Theological Ideas*, 74-80. On liberation theology in general, see: Aidan Nichols, "Liberation Theology and the Holy See: A Question of Method," *New Blackfriars* 65, no. 773 (1984), 452-458; Aidan Nichols, "The Rise and Fall of Liberation Theology? An Evaluative Chronicle," *New Blackfriars* 72, no. 853 (1991), 408-423; and Aidan Nichols, "The Story of Praxis: Liberation Theology's Philosophical Handmaid," *Religion in Communist Lands* 17, no. 1 (1989), 45-58. For an attempt to show a „broad compatibility" between liberation theology and Catholic Social thought, see Michael Kirwan SJ, "Liberation Theology and Catholic Social Teaching.," *New Blackfriars* 93, no. 1044 (March 2012), 246–258.

[100] Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 72.

inner life-giving dynamism because this missionary dynamism requires the effort to make the content of faith understandable and relevant to others.

This is also the purpose of Christian engagement with followers of other religions., not aimed at convincing them through rational arguments to become Christians, but to make Christian faith understandable to them, and therefore to enable them to engage with it in one way or the other. Interreligious dialogue is a matter of faith, and therefore theology belongs to its inner structure, giving the engagement a specific direction in terms of content and methodology.

As a consequence, there can be no authentic Christian interreligious engagement if the theological dimension is excluded from it. In fact the Magisterium has granted theology its legitimate place in interreligious dialogue in the articulation of its four essential forms, alongside the dimension of experience (*Dialogue and Proclamation* 42).

The category of ecclesial service to the faith, which characterises both Ratzinger's understanding of pastoral ministry and theology, is at the heart of Ratzinger's understanding of the Petrine ministry. For Ratzinger praxis (including pastoral action) is always built on the principles of faith which are found in Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium, and which theology is called to make understandable and relevant to contemporary men and women, within and outside the Church.

## 2. Theology, Tradition and Magisterium

Tradition is an essential aspect of Ratzinger's theological method because it is an essential element of the Church.[101] Ratzinger observes that after Abelard moved theology from the monastery to the classroom and up until the twentieth century, it was clear that theology could be studied only in the context of a corresponding spiritual praxis and of a

[101] On the meaning of tradition in Catholic theology, see Yves Congar, *La Tradition et La Vie de l'Église*, (Paris: Fayard, 1963); Yves Congar, *La Tradition et Les Traditions* (Paris: Fayard, 1960); *Journal D'un Theologien (1946-1956),* ed. Étienne Fouilloux (Paris: Cerf, 2000).

readiness to understand it,' and „as a requirement that must be lived.' It was not separated from the practice of faith. [102] Only after World War II and the Second Vatican Council, the notion emerged of theology as a purely academic discipline.[103] Ratzinger however is convinced that authentic theology can be pursued only by someone who has not only an intellectual but also an existential relationship with the object of the enquiry, that is to say God as known through the biblical revelation that culminates in Christ. In this sense, only the true Christian can be a (Christian) theologian, because „just as we cannot learn to swim without water, so we cannot learn theology without the spiritual praxis in which it lives.'[104]

Faith is then a necessary component of theology. Such faith is received through the Church's action of „passing on' (*traditio*) the foundational experience through the generations. The value of Tradition is founded on the concept of revelation, strongly supported by Ratzinger, contained in the dogmatic constitution of the Second Vatican Council on divine revelation.[105] According to *Dei Verbum,* revelation is not simply communication of words, of a content that is to be grasped by the intellect, but is God's offer of a relationship made through the Sacred Scripture and finally in the person of Christ, his life and his teaching. Revelation is God's initiative to establish a dialogue with humanity that has the power to transform the life of the receiver.[106]

By describing the proclamation of the *kerygma* as part of God's giving activity, *Dei Verbum 7* thus provides the starting point to redefine Tradition, which is not to be understood as a promulgated law, but as God's self-communication.[107] Tradition is precisely the continuation of God's salvific dialogue with humanity effected by means of the Church. Modern culture, influenced by the Enlightenment, tends to perceive tradition in general as a

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[102] Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 322. Joseph A. Komonchak, „Theology and Culture at Mid- century: the Example of Henri de Lubac," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990), 579-602.
[103] Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 322.
[104] Ibid.
[105] *Dei Verbum* 2-6.
[106] Rowland, *Ratzinger"s Faith,* 49-53.
[107] ibid., 51.

burden of the past imposed on the present and therefore as hindering the person's fulfilment. This negative notion affects the way Christian Tradition is perceived and often dismissed if not rejected, even by Christians. By dismissing or rejecting Tradition, however, the Christian becomes like „a traveller in space who himself destroys the possibility of ground control, of contact with earth."[108] In this context the role of the Church is to function as ground control, enabling the space traveller to continue the exploration in space without being cut off from humanity. In this sense, according to Ratzinger, connection to the Tradition is the condition of possibility for authentic theology, that is to say a theology that is born from and grows within the experience of faith.

The subject (agent) of Tradition is the Church. However because not all that exists in the Church is always an authentic expression of Tradition, a „criterion for the indispensable criticism of tradition" is needed. [109] Such a criterion is Scripture, not in isolation but read within the community of faith. Therefore theology's natural environment is the Church, where the Scripture becomes Revelation and where the faith is transmitted through Tradition.[110]

## 3. The influence of the Church Fathers on Benedict XVI's theology

In Catholic theology, the title „modern Church Father" has been attributed to the French theologian Henri de Lubac.[111] This category can be applied to Ratzinger as well on account of his notion of theology and of his theological method, which is modelled on the theology of the Church Fathers. In particular, like them, Ratzinger considers Church, Tradition and

[108] Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 90. Rowland, Ratzinger's Faith, 55.
[109] Rowland, Ratzinger's Faith, 55.
[110] According to Nichols the Catholic faith was a defining element of Bavarian identity, and being a Bavarian, the sense of Church was greatly important in Ratzinger's formative years. (*The Thought of Benedict XVI*, 1-16).
[111] See Killian McDonnell, „The Ratzinger-Kasper Debate: the Universal Church and the Local Churches," *Theological Studies* 63 (2002), 245. See also Paul McPartlan, „A Modern Father of the Church.' The Trials and Triumphs of Henri de Lubac," in idem, *Sacrament of Salvation,* 45-60.

Scripture as the essentials of theology. This awareness allows for a deeper appreciation of Ratzinger's theological thought.

In Ratzinger's view the Church Fathers are essential to contemporary theology on account of the fundamental role they played in shaping the Tradition. In *Principles of Catholic Theology*, where he writes extensively on the subject, Ratzinger identifies two major trends in twentieth century Catholic thought. The *ressourcement* movement began at the end of the First World War and pursued a return to the sources, which „were no longer to be seen through the eye of Scholastic philosophy but were to be read in themselves, in their own original form and breadth."[112] The thought of theologians like Odo Casel, Hugo Rahner, Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou „was close to the Scriptures because it was close to the Fathers."[113]

Soon however, the idea of *ressourcement* gave way to that of *aggiornamento*. Extreme concern with the present moment made the past appear distant and irrelevant and pushed theology to make its content „current and effective." As a consequence of this spirit, the Church Fathers were relegated to the background and lost their relevance for contemporary theology.[114] This contributed to a reinterpretation of the notion of Tradition, which lost connection with its roots and was redefined a-historically, so that now Tradition was anything that had been held true by the Church for a certain period of time. For Ratzinger this is a distorted understanding, which can be corrected only by recovering the Church Fathers.

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[112] Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 133-134. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds., *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[113] Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 134. Odo Casel (1886- 1948), German Bendictine of the Monastery of Maria Laach, important liturgical and intellectual centre of German Catholicism in the twentieth century, was one of the pioneers of the European liturgical movement. His idea of participation was the direct source of the Vatican II notion of the real participation of the faithful in the liturgy. According to Benedict XVI German Jesuit Hugo Rahner (1900-1968) gretly contributed to contemporary Catholic teaching by showing the interconnection between Mary and the Church, reflected in the teaching of Vatican II. French Jesuit theologian and historian Jean Daniélou (1905–1974) began his work on the Church Fathers after his doctorate in theology in 1942. In 1944, with Henri de Lubac, he founded the *Sources Chrétiennes* collection. The significance of the religions was one of the major focuses of his theological reflection. He served as *peritus* at the Second Vatican Council and was made a cardinal by Pope Paul VI in 1969.

[114] Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 134.

Ratzinger points out that the Fathers were the theological teachers of the undivided Church,[115] whose theology was truly ecumenical, because „they were »Fathers" not only of a part but also of the whole.'[116] The importance of the Fathers for contemporary theology derives from their crucial contribution to the synthesis of the Christian faith itself. Theirs was the first post-biblical theological response to the Christian revelation, and so the two belong together. The Fathers' response to the Word had formative significance for the future of Christian faith, of which it therefore irreversibly became an integral part.[117] Ratzinger explains the significance of the Fathers' „proto-response' to Scripture by recalling four fundamental facts:

First, the Canon of Holy Scripture has its origin in the Church of the Fathers. They were the theologians who facilitated the ecclesial discernment by which certain writings were recognised as *canon* while others were rejected. Therefore acceptance of the canon also implies „accepting the basic decisions' that defined it.[118]

Second, the Church of the Fathers also produced the *symbola* [Creeds] of Christian faith accepted by undivided Christianity. This means that as long as the „Church confesses her Lord in the words of the *symbolum*, she is always reminded of those who first made this confession and... likewise formulated the renunciation of a faith that was false.'[119] The Fathers of the Church then provided not only the criteria of authenticity for the canon of the Scripture but also for the Christian faith.

Third, the Church of the Fathers also created the „fundamental forms of the Christian liturgical service', which emerged as the Scripture was read and the confession of the faith

[115] Ibid., 140-142.
[116] Ibid., 147.
[117] Ibid., 147-148.
[118] Ibid., 149.
[119] Ibid., 150.

made by the assembly gathered in the name of the Risen Lord. Those norms remain as the fundamental point of reference for any liturgical renewal.[120]

Finally, the Fathers of the Church achieved the rapprochement of faith and reason by understanding faith as *philosophia* and by „placing it under the rubric of *credo ut intelligam.*"[121] In so doing they created theology as we understand it today. Therefore „by its very existence theology will always be indebted to the Fathers and will have cause to return again and again to these masters.‘[122]

In the Church Fathers Ratzinger finds all the constitutive elements of authentic theology: the Scripture as the starting point of intellectual reasoning in harmony with the faith of the Church as the living environment of the Word.

Ratzinger described his theological work as guided by a fundamental intention: he wishes to „think in communion with the faith of the Church‘. On the one hand this is possible only if the Scripture is the starting point and the object of theology. Its aim is to understand the Word of God that is spoken ever anew in the Bible, therefore exegesis is at the heart of theology, and is itself theology. On the other hand, to think with the Church concretely means thinking in communion with „the great thinkers of the Faith,‘ who are not exclusively but above all the Church Fathers. The effort to build his theology on these two foundations, says Ratzinger, gives his theology a „biblical character‘ and the „stamp of the Fathers, especially Augustine.‘[123]

Aidan Nichols‘ synthesis of Ratzinger‘s thought shows that Augustine and Bonaventure are the two major patristic influences on Ratzinger‘s thought, as they were respectively the objects of his doctoral thesis and his subsequent research for his qualification as university professor.[124] Nevertheless his patristic horizon is much broader. It is significant that as pope,

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[120] Ibid., 150-151.
[121] Ibid., 151.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Joseph Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, ed. Peter Seewald, tr. Adrian Walker (Ignatius Press, 1997), 66.
[124] Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 17-44.

he chose to present the Church Fathers as the main topics of his weekly catecheses delivered at the Wednesday audiences, for over a year, between 7 March 2007 and 25 June 2008.[125]

Although he has never referred to himself as a Church Father, this category can be very helpful in understanding Ratzinger's theological method and thought. For the Fathers the connection between Christ and Church implies that all discourse on God (theology) is always at the same time discourse on the Church (ecclesiology). Theology is always born of the concreteness of the Church because, with the Incarnation, God has chosen to be encountered in the person of Christ; and after the Ascension, Christ can actually be encountered only in the concreteness of the Body he has established for himself, the Church. Similarly, for Ratzinger, theology and ecclesiology are one, and a correct understanding of the God of Jesus Christ and a correct notion of Church are inseparable because God and Church are intrinsically connected.

## 4. Benedict XVI and mid-twentieth century theology

### *a) Söhngen, Guardini and von Balthasar*

The thinking in communion with the Church that characterises Ratzinger's notion of theology is not restricted to the Church Fathers, although they occupy a unique place. His theological writings as well as papal teaching witness to his engagement with subsequent theological thought up to the present day. As a matter of fact it was through contemporary theologians that Ratzinger discovered patristic theology, which then became the model for his own. According to Emery De Gaál, Ratzinger was influenced in particular by four twentieth

[125] Pope Benedict XVI, *The Church Fathers from Clement of Rome to Augustine* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2008); *Church Fathers and Teachers from Leo the Great to Peter Lombard* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2010).

century figures namely: Gottlieb Söhngen, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Romano Guardini and Henri de Lubac.[126]

Gottlieb Clemens Söhngen (1892-1971) was Ratzinger‘s teacher of Fundamental Theology during his formative years at the University of Munich, where he was a student from 1947 and then a teacher until 1959. Aidan Nichols has shown that the academic environment of Munich was so important in the shaping of Ratzinger‘s thought that the theological work of Joseph Ratzinger is a ‗microcosm of the Munich inheritance.‘[127] It is at the University of Munich that Ratzinger discovered the importance of history in theology for the sake of continuity in the tradition. [128]

According to De Gaál, Söhngen is the one who influenced Ratzinger‘s theology most. He was Ratzinger‘s mentor for both of his major works of that period: his doctoral thesis on the *People and the House of God in Augustine's Doctrine of the Church*, completed in 1953, and his work on the theology of history of St Bonaventure, which gained him the *habilitation*, the qualification as a university professor.[129] Söhngen saw theology not only as science but also as wisdom, requiring of the theologian an attitude of self-emptying of one‘s ambition and will. Ratzinger shares his idea that theology as academic discipline is not superior to the wisdom that is found in simple piety.[130] Söhngen insisted on the importance of engaging with primary texts, from Plato and Aristotle to Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Bonaventure and Thomas, in order to retrieve the original thought of their ancient authors. This aspect is a fundamental characteristic of Ratzinger‘s thought as well. From Söhngen Ratzinger acquired a critical attitude towards the neo-scholasticism that dominated Catholic theology in those years.

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[126] Emery de Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 33-44.

[127] Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 14.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Joseph Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche* [*The People and House of God as Presented in Augustine's Doctrine of the Church*] (Munich: Zink, 1954); *Die Geschichtstheologie des heiligen Bonaventura* [*The Historical Theology of Saint Bonaventure*] (Munich: Schnell, 1959).

[130] Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, 33-44.

Joseph Ratzinger was in his twenties when Romano Guardini (1885-1968) was lecturer on the Christian worldview in Munich, where he worked from 1949 until the end of his professional life. Ratzinger himself studied in Munich from 1947 to 1951. Ratzinger has often referred to Guardini as one of his great masters and one of the points of reference in the development of his own theology.[131] According to Silvano Zucal, the parallels between Ratzinger and Guardini are remarkable, not only at the level of thought but also from the biographical point of view.[132] Zucal believes that Guardini had a strong impact on Ratzinger's intellectual perspective and points out a number of fundamental convergences between the two theologians.

First, they were both concerned with rediscovering what is essential in Christianity. To this effect Guardini published his *The Essence of Christianity* in 1938, while for the same purpose Ratzinger wrote *Introduction to Christianity* in 1968, which some consider his most important work.[133]

A second preoccupation that Guardini and Ratzinger share is the meaning and destiny of Church. For Guardini the Church is an essential dimension of his being Christian. When, after having lost his faith, the young philosopher rediscovered it, he decided to live fully in the Church, because he felt that without the Church there is no concrete Christian faith.[134] Ratzinger has manifested the same conviction on many occasions, declaring that he is in the Church for the same reasons that he is a Christian: "I am in the Church for the same reasons that I am Christian: because one cannot believe on one's own.... One can only be Christian in the Church, not beside her."[135] In this regard, Ratzinger wrote of Guardini that he

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[131] Ibid.

[132] Silvano Zucal, "Ratzinger e Guardini, Un incontro decisivo," *Vita e Pensiero* 91 no. 4 (2008), 79-88; idem "The Intellectual Relationship between Joseph Ratzinger and Romano Guardini," *L'Osservatore Romano*, English weekly edition, 10/12/2008, 8.

[133] Zucal, "The Intellectual Relationship," 8.

[134] Ibid.

[135] As quoted in Zucal, "Ratzinger e Guardini." Zucal refers to Joseph Ratzinger, *Perché Siamo Ancora Nella Chiesa*, M. Faggioli and F. Schuller eds., tr. V. Rossi (Milan: Rizzoli, 2008), 153-154. See also Joseph Ratzinger, "Why I am Still in the Church," in Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger, *Two Say Why* (London: Search Press, 1973), 65-91.

> was convinced that only thinking in harmony with the Church leads to freedom, and, above all, makes theology possible. This approach is of new relevance, and should be taken into consideration in the deepest way possible, as a requirement of modern theology.[136]

This is also Ratzinger's conviction. Another concern shared by both Guardini and Ratzinger is the question of Europe and its future: both have voiced their fear that because of a tendency to repudiate its past, and therefore its Christian roots, Europe risks losing its true identity.[137] Ratzinger has most notably expressed this idea with regard to the controversy around the absence of any reference to Christianity in the European Constitution.[138]

The liturgy is possibly the most important point of encounter between Guardini and Ratzinger. In 1918 Guardini published *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, in which he pointed out that, at the time, although it had been fully preserved, Christian liturgy had become so encrusted with non-essential elements that its spirit was no longer accessible to the majority of the faithful. For them the liturgy no longer succeeded in mediating the religious experience it was supposed to convey. In 2000 Ratzinger published his book with the same title. In the preface he compares his and Guardini's *Spirit of the Liturgy* and points out that, albeit in different historical contexts, they are both motivated by the same concern, namely to call for a liturgy that is able to preserve the tradition and be at the same time meaningful to the faithful. The different historical context also means different challenges and while Guardini was concerned with removing the encrustations, Ratzinger is concerned that – especially after Vatican II and what he judges as certain illegitimate interpretations of the Council with regard to the liturgy – in removing the encrustations it is necessary to ensure that the essential elements of the liturgy handed down by the tradition not be lost only to be replaced by something that is pure human construction determined by the ideological fashions of the times.[139]

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[136] Ratzinger as quoted in Zucal, "Ratzinger e Guardini," 8; Ratzinger, *Perché Siamo Ancora Nella Chiesa*, 290-291.

[137] See O'Mahony, "The Vatican and Europe".

[138] Joseph Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow: Addressing the Fundamental Issues* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007).

[139] Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000).

Another element of convergence between Guardini and Ratzinger has to do with the structure of thought. Zucal has pointed out that Ratzinger himself has described Guardini's understanding of the structure of thought as characterised by the fundamental relationship between thought and being and therefore thought and Truth. This derives from the fact that the truth of Man is essentially conformity, or "obedience", to being, which is fundamentally conformity to the being of God. As a consequence Guardini affirmed the primacy of being over praxis, or *logos* over *ethos*, which is also one of the characteristics of Ratzinger's theology.[140] Only if ethos is guided by logos, i.e. by the Truth, can it truly correspond to God's will and be authentically Christian life.

It would be a misrepresentation to understand the primacy of *logos* over *ethos* as a depreciation of praxis in favour of speculative theology, as this would contradict Guardini's decisive emphasis on the historical. In fact he was very concerned with praxis, especially in the political realm, however he insisted that that praxis must be firmly grounded in being – Truth. Zucal explains that according to Ratzinger, Guardini called for the correlation of conscience and truth in politics and especially during his last years, having experienced "Hitler's bloody tyranny," he was led to "issue dramatic warnings about the destruction of politics through the annihilation of conscience."[141] This could be avoided through the search for a "proper interpretation" of the world "according to the man that acts politically on the basis of faith."[142] In other words, proper politics is the result of the engagement with the life of society in the light of faith.[143]

For Guardini the Christian truth is the person of Christ, and therefore obedience of thought to being means ultimately the obedience of thought to Christ, the "concrete-living."[144]

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[140] Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger"s Theological Ideas*, 31-33.
[141] Zucal, "The Intellectual Relationship".
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid. See Ratzinger, *Perché Siamo Ancora Nella Chiesa*, 261.

Reason can attain the truth only if it accepts to be guided by faith. Ratzinger's insistence on this idea has been examined in the discussion on his notion of theology.

Ratzinger's theology was also enriched by his association with Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988).[145] In his autobiography, Ratzinger said that his first encounter with the Swiss theologian was

> _the beginning of a lifelong friendship I can only be thankful for. Never again have I found anyone with such a comprehensive theological and humanistic education as Balthasar and de Lubac, and I cannot even begin to say how much I owe to my encounter with them.'[146]

The highest point of their cooperation was probably the founding of the theological journal *Communio* in 1972 together with Henri de Lubac and other like-minded important theological voices of the time. Ratzinger's appreciation of von Balthasar is found in two documents: his homily at the latter's funeral in 1988, and his message – in 2005, as Pope Benedict XVI – to the participants in an international convention held on the hundredth anniversary of von Balthasar's birth.[147]

According to Ratzinger, von Balthasar made the Incarnation the primary object of his reflection and saw the Paschal Mystery as the _most expressive form of this descent of God into human history', in which God's Trinitarian love is fully revealed in order to offer Man the possibility to experience life in communion with God. Von Balthasar saw in the coming of Christ the _offer of the ultimate truth, that is to say the definitive answer to the questions that everyone asks himself about the meaning of life.'[148]

Pope Benedict identifies the characteristics of von Balthasar's notion of theology. First, he saw theology as an ecclesial matter and _was a theologian who placed his research at the

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[145] Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger"s Theological Ideas*, 38-39; and Rowland, *Ratzinger"s Faith*, 8, 21, 45, 103 and 107.

[146] Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998), 143.

[147] Joseph Ratzinger, "Homily at the Funeral Liturgy for Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Communio* 15, no. 4 (1988), 512-16. See the message to the participants in the international convention for the centenary of von Balthasar's birth: Benedict XVI, *Centesimo recurrente anniversario a natali die theologi Ioannis Urs von Balthasar*, 6/10/2005, *AAS* 97(October 2005*),*960-962.

[148] Benedict XVI, *Centesimo recurrente anniversario*, 961.

service of the Church, because he was convinced that theology could be defined only in terms of ecclesiality.'[149]

Secondly, for von Balthasar theology _must be joined with spirituality; indeed, only in this way could it be profound and effective.'[150] The scientific rigour of research is not forfeited when theological inquiry proceeds in

> _a religious spirit of listening to the Word of God, when it is alive with the life of the Church and shares in the strength of her Magisterium.' On the contrary it is spirituality that _provides theology with the correct method.'[151]

A third important aspect of von Balthasar's thought is that theology requires conversion, understood as a _change of heart' that is necessary if the mind is to free itself from _the limits that prevent it from drawing near to the mystery, enabling the eyes to fix their gaze upon the face of Christ.'[152] Theology therefore can only develop with prayer that acknowledges the presence of God and relies on him in obedience and humility.

Lastly, by developing theology in contemplation, von Balthasar _discovered consistent action for Christian witness in the world.'[153] This is the natural outcome of authentic theology: to support the faith and direct the life of the Christian in the world.

The influence of von Balthasar's thought on Ratzinger's understanding of theology and of the role of the theologians is evident.[154]

### *b) Henri de Lubac*

Henri de Lubac is possibly the most significant influence on Ratzinger's theology. Ratzinger was exposed to the thought of the French Jesuit theologian both directly and indirectly. His theology professor in Münich, Alfred Läpple, who gave the young student

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[149] Ibid. My translations.

[150] Ibid. Benedict XVI directly quotes von Balthasar on the theological style of the Church Fathers combining scientific rigour and deep spiritual experience. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *The Word Made Flesh: Explorations in Theology*, Vol. I (San Fancisco: Ignatius 1989), 207-208.

[151] Benedict XVI, *Centesimo recurrente*, 962.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid., 962.

[154] The convergence of thought between Ratzinger and von Balthasar is apparent in von Balthasar and Ratzinger, *Two Say Why*.

Ratzinger a copy of *Catholicisme*, introduced him to de Lubac's work.[155] De Lubac played an important role in Ratzinger's study through the mediation of Söhngen and also through his association with von Balthasar, whose doctoral studies de Lubac had supervised. Finally Ratzinger met de Lubac directly because of their cooperation as members of the International Theological Commission and the founding of the theological journal *Communio*.

According to Aidan Nichols, the most evident aspect of de Lubac's influence on Ratzinger's thought is ecclesiology.[156] Emery de Gaál, has also stressed the influence of de Lubac's notion of Church on Ratzinger's theology. He believes that through de Lubac's vision Ratzinger began to grasp the "profound unity of faith, the Eucharist and the Church in a new sacramental-mystical perspective."[157] For de Lubac Christian faith and the Church clearly exist not for themselves but for the salvation of the world by being instrumental in the realisation of the unity of humanity. De Lubac found that early Christian testimony conceived of Christian hope "aimed at the eternal perfection of all humankind."[158] The common destiny of all men and women is to become the one people of God, which the Church already is.[159] Already in the second century, the Church was called "catholic" in recognition of its commission and ability to bring humanity to the unity that belongs to the very essence of the *ecclesia*. The Church is therefore a sacrament for humanity, that is to say that it is called to be the "basis for genuine unity among humankind."[160]

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[155] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme: Les Aspects Sociaux Du Dogme* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1938). Ratzinger, *Milestones*; Gianni Valente and Pierluca Azzaro, "That New Beginning That Bloomed Among the Ruins. Interview with Alfred Läpple," *30 Days*, 2006, http://www.30giorni.it/articoli_id_10125_l3.htm.

[156] Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 31, 97, 103, 174, mentions de Lubac in the context of Ratzinger's ecclesiological thought. See also Thomas Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI. An Introduction to his Theological Vision* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), 103 (de Lubac is also mentioned on pages 16, 20, 34, 56, as a model and inspiration for Ratzinger).

[157] Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, 38.

[158] Ibid., 37.

[159] Note the full title of the English edition of *Catholicisme*: Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, tr. Lancelot C. Sheppard and Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988).

[160] Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, 37.

For de Lubac, the unity of humankind can only be grounded in the one mystical body of Christ, the Church, understood in its historical concreteness, as „the Christian believing and living humanity as fraternity in the historic here and now."[161] De Lubac's correlation between the Church and the salvation of humanity construed in terms of „becoming one', is key in order to understand Ratzinger's theology of interreligious dialogue within his comprehensive theological vision. The starting point for Ratzinger's theological approach to the question of the religions is essentially ecclesiological and soteriological in the broad sense, that is to say not in the sense of enquiring directly about the salvific value of religions.

Tracey Rowland has pointed out that Ratzinger found in de Lubac's *Corpus Mysticum* „a new understanding of the unity of the Church and the Eucharist," which helped him better understand Augustine's ecclesiology.[162]

**(1) De Lubac's prominent role in mid-twentieth century theology**

Both as theologian and as Pope Benedict XVI, Ratzinger has asserted his commitment to Vatican II, and his thought and teaching are fully appreciated when considered in the light of the Council's theology and Magisterium. For him, however, Vatican II was not merely a starting point but primarily a point of arrival in the life of the Church and the development of theology, in continuity with the past, which constitutes the proper springboard of renewal for the future. Conversely he strongly rejects any interpretation of Vatican II as a kind of „re-foundation' of the Church as if what had happened before was all a big mistake.[163] It is precisely because of his profound awareness of the state of Catholic theology and of the Church before Vatican II that Ratzinger can truly appreciate its enormous significance. With regard to the pre-Vatican II context, Komonchak has observed that for a century and a half before the Council, „Roman Catholicism was served and legitimated by a domesticated

[161] Ibid., 37-38.
[162] Rowland, *Ratzinger"s Faith*, 3, 13-14.
[163] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia for the Christmas Greetings*, 22/12/2005, *AAS* 98(2006),45-52.

theology' under the strictest control ever experienced in history by theologians and above all in a state of 'exile from the modern cultural world.' [164] By this Komonchak means the fact that theology had been reduced to an internal matter for an elite within the Catholic subculture, and had lost its relevance in the wider socio-political sphere. He believes that Vatican II is to be understood as a challenge to this reductive reality of theology.

Many of the ideas of Vatican II had emerged from the theological movement that has been labelled *nouvelle theologie*, mainly by its opponents, precisely because it challenged the assumptions and the methods of the then established form of Catholic theology.[165] Vatican II therefore cannot be – in Komonchak's opinion – understood without a sufficient understanding of the controversy over the 'new theology', and as consequence neither can Ratzinger's thought.[166]

For Komonchak the theologian and the particular work that best represent the *nouvelle theologie*, are Henri de Lubac and his *Surnaturel*, published in 1946.[167] *Surnaturel* is a historical exploration of how the relationship between the natural and supernatural dimensions had been understood in the history of Catholic theology. *Surnaturel* reflects the aim of de Lubac's entire theological project, which was to show how at some point in modern history, Catholic theology had become a 'separated theology,' detached from the historical reality outside the Church, and hence unable to provide guidance in the socio-political forum. Being in a state of 'cultural alienation', theology became apologetics in the very basic sense of 'defence' against the external world, and lost its history-shaping potential, becoming

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[164] Joseph A. Komonchak, "Theology and Culture at mid-Century, The example of Henri de Lubac," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990), 579-602.

[165] For an introduction, see Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie - New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (London: Continuum, 2010); Aidan Nichols, "Thomism and the *nouvelle théologie,*" *The Thomist* 64 (2000), 1-19.

[166] Komonchak, "Theology and Culture," 580-581.

[167] Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1946). See the proceedings of the symposium "Surnaturel, une controverse au cœur du thomisme au XXe siècle," sponsored by the École de Théologie, Toulouse, on 26-27/05/2000, published in the special issue of *Revue Thomiste* 2001/1-2. See also Georges Chantraine, "Surnaturel et Destinée Humaine Dans La Pensée Occidentale Selon Henri de Lubac," *Revue Des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 85, no. 2 (2001), 299–312.

unable to contribute constructively to the building of society according to God's will and the salvation of humanity. This was the result of a loss of identity, in the face of which de Lubac firmly encouraged the recovery of Catholic thought in the fullest and proper sense by a recovery of the whole Tradition.

The reductive change of identity of theology occurred when a sharp separation came about between the sacred and the profane in modern thought. It was in very large measure due to the insistence on a clear-cut separation between nature and super-nature. Although it was intended to protect the supernatural from being subordinated to the natural, it confined the supernatural into a remote realm, neutralising it. This had been predominantly the work of philosophy, but theology had unwittingly become an accomplice by accepting to operate on the basis of the same assumption.[168]

The particular theology de Lubac and the other 'new theologians' were challenging to conversion was basically neo-scholasticism, which according to de Lubac did not authentically represent Aquinas' intentions, but distorted versions of his thought. In this sense, de Lubac never accepted being called a 'new theologian', because for him the 'new theologians' were actually those neo-scholastics who practised a theology that was no longer Catholic in the full sense.[169]

De Lubac realised that patristic and medieval theology was strongly characterised by the idea of man made in the image of God, and therefore the assumption that human nature was essentially 'desire for the vision of God'. For the fathers and the medieval thinkers there was only one 'order' or reality, that is to say

> this concrete world in which God has made us for Himself, in which our 'nature' had been created for, and is therefore intelligible only in view of, its divinizing destiny. [170]

[168] Komonchak, "Theology and Culture," 586.
[169] Ibid., 602.
[170] Ibid., 585.

If it is true that Aquinas' use of Aristotle provided the 'opening for future thinkers to remove human nature from the realm of the supernatural, it was only in the sixteenth century – according to de Lubac – that the patristic vision started to dissolve. What in Aquinas was a distinction, in the nineteenth century became a 'disjunction between the orders' of nature and grace. The change amounted to a shift from symbolic to dialectic theology, that is to say

> 'the shift in the notion of theology from that spiritual understanding of the faith characteristic of the Fathers… to the 'Christian rationalism' foreshadowed in Berengarius, carried on in Abelard and Anselm, vainly resisted by Bonaventure, but triumphant in St Thomas.'[171]

Consequently the Fathers' symbolic inclusions became 'dialectical antitheses' and nature was pitted against grace. De Lubac did not advocate a return to patristic and medieval theology by a rejection of subsequent theological development, which he thought had been necessary in order to respond to the challenges of the times. However *Surnaturel* insists that the symbolic approach of the Fathers must be rediscovered in order to retrieve the authentic notion and clarity with regard to the mission of theology for the salvation of humanity.

In *Catholicisme*, the first of de Lubac's works read by Ratzinger, the author recurs to the Tradition in order to unpack the true meaning of catholicity and its implications. That the Church is catholic means 'precisely that it addresses *all* aspects of human life, including the social and the historical.'[172] The mystery of Christ and of the Church cannot be fully grasped without this awareness. This vision inspired the theology of the Fathers as well as that of the great figures of subsequent Tradition. De Lubac embarked on a journey to retrieve Tradition in order to 'recover a Christianity intellectually rich and spiritually powerful enough' to reject 'the marginal role with which too many theologians had become content' and to be 'eager to

[171] Ibid, 589.
[172] Ibid., 592.

exercise a redemptive role in all of human life.'[173] The recovery of Tradition will enable contemporary theologians to be

> more concerned to live by the mystery than anxiously to defend it with formulas or to impose its shell; and the world, impelled by its instinct for life, will follow them.[174]

**(2) Ratzinger and de Lubac**

Ratzinger's notion of the identity and mission of theology clearly, resonates with De Lubac's broad, inclusive theological vision, and is influenced by it especially with regard to his notion of Church and its relationship with humanity for the latter's salvation. This relationship constitutes for Ratzinger the framework in which Christian engagement with the followers of other religions is to be understood.

In the foreword to the 1988 edition of *Catholicisme*, Ratzinger states that the encounter with that book became an 'essential milestone' on his theological journey.'[175] In *Catholicisme*, writes Ratzinger,

> de Lubac does not treat merely isolated questions. He makes visible to us in a new way the fundamental intuition of Christian Faith so that from this inner core all the particular elements appear in a new light. He shows how the idea of community and universality, rooted in the Trinitarian concept of God, permeates and shapes all the individual elements of Faith's content.[176]

According to Ratzinger, in de Lubac's theology, 'the idea of the Catholic, the all-embracing, the inner unity of I and Thou and We' is not just one idea among others, but is the 'key that opens the door to the proper understanding of the whole.'[177]

From the methodological point of view Ratzinger points out that de Lubac does not express 'his own private opinions, which would fade as they blossomed, but lets the Fathers of our Faith speak so that we hear the voice of the origin in all its freshness and astonishing

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[173] Ibid., 593.

[174] Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, tr. Edith M. Riley (London: Sheed & Ward, 1949), 44, 49. Quoted in Komonchak, 'Theology and Culture," 601.

[175] Joseph Ratzinger, 'Foreword," Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism. Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 11.

[176] Ratzinger, "Foreword," 11.

[177] Ibid.

relevance.‘[178] De Lubac shows that to the extent to which theology _returns to its centre and draws from its deepest sources,‘ the more relevant it becomes to the contemporary context.

The genius of de Lubac is apparent in the fact that turning to the sources is not an escape from the present. In fact he engages at the same time in a vibrant dialogue _with what is said by our most modern contemporaries.‘ He listens to them _not as an outsider, but as one who is deeply sympathetic. Their questions are his own‘.[179] De Lubac reads the Bible and the Fathers while keeping in mind _the problems that we wrestle with‘, and because he asks real questions, he finds real answers‘. In his theological thinking, _the Fathers become our contemporaries.‘[180]

De Lubac _fascinated theologians in the fifties everywhere and his fundamental insights quickly became the common patrimony of theological reflection.‘[181] Unfortunately the spread of his ideas _has led to their being considerably simplified and flattened.‘ One aspect in particular, namely the social dimension, which for de Lubac is _rooted in deepest mystery‘, has often been reduced _to the merely sociological‘ with the result that _the unique Christian contribution to the right understanding of history and community has disappeared from sight. Instead of a leaven for the age, or its salt, we are often simply its echo.‘[182]

According to Ratzinger, the strength of de Lubac‘s work is that it _really reaches the depths of our faith.‘ For this reason it is still very relevant today and _can be a guide for Catholic Faith.‘[183]

### *c) Conclusion*

The thought of these four theologians contributed very significantly to shaping Ratzinger‘s notion of theology and theological method. What they have in common is a keen

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[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid., 12.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.

sense that history is essential in the development of authentic theology. Historical awareness requires the effort of taking into account the development of Christian thought in the life of the Church, with a special attention to the origins, with regard to both reflection on and practice of the faith (which includes the liturgy). The Church Fathers were theologians because they were ministers, pastors of communities, entrusted with the task of supporting and accompanying them on the journey of faith.

This historical emphasis implies that authentic theology cannot be a merely speculative exercise, but takes into account the reality of the faith as it is lived, in order to support that faith. Theology is practical, not by jettisoning or downplaying serious intellectual engagement, but by keeping it ever connected to the history of Christian thought and practice and concretely to the sources of the faith, which are not only the Scriptures but Tradition as well. Because the Truth concerns the entire human reality, not just the realm of reason, it must be investigated by a reason that is supported by the faith that is encapsulated in the Scripture and the Creeds, and manifested by God‘s people in the liturgy and in simple devotion.

## C. BENEDICT XVI'S ECCLESIOLOGICAL VISION

### 1. Eucharistic Ecclesiology as Ecclesiology of Communion

According to David Schindler, chief editor of *Communio*, the journal co-founded by Ratzinger in 1972, ecclesiology has always been central to Ratzinger's theological concerns.[184] Ratzinger's ecclesiological development began early in his career, with his doctoral dissertation on the *Church as People and House of God in Augustine"s doctrine of the Church* (1954).[185] Later as a young theologian he contributed significantly to the ecclesiological reflection of the Second Vatican Council.

Ratzinger is indebted to Augustine for his understanding of Church. As Augustine moved from a more metaphysical theology towards a more historical understanding of Christianity, he increasingly saw the Church as its concrete historical form. The influence of the African Fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian and Optatus of Melvis, reinforced this idea, namely that the historical Church is authentically the Church of Christ.[186] For these Fathers it is an incontrovertible fact that Christianity exists not merely in the individual person who turns to the faith, but in the visible community of the believers, and that one becomes a Christian not just by a _change of philosophy' but by immersion into the concrete historical life of the Church.

For this reason Christianity is at once both a question of faith and love, *caritas*; the latter being a fundamental characteristic of the assembly of the believers who are made one in Christ. Because it is a *communio* of love effected by God, rather than a *congregatio* resulting from human initiative, the Church constitutes the locus of the real presence of the Risen Christ and thus in the Church the invisible and the visible, holiness and humanity, are united.

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[184] –David Schindler on Cardinal Ratzinger's Ecclesiology," *Zenit* 1/05/2005, http://www.zenit.org/article-12896?l=english.

[185] Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus*. See idem, –Milestones," 97-102; Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict XVI*, 17-33.

[186] Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict* XVI, 34-41.

Ratzinger welcomed the emphasis that the 1985 Special Synod of the Bishops placed on the Church as *communio*. Although it does not appear in the documents of Vatican II, if it is understood correctly, the term *communio* can serve as a synthesis of the essential aspects of the Council's ecclesiology.[187] The essential elements of *communio* are found in the biblical text of 1John 1:3, which can therefore provide the foundation for its correct understanding:

> That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete. (1John 1:3)

The text makes four points: the content of the proclamation by the Apostles and by the Church is the living experience of encounter with Christ; the proclamation brings people into the fellowship-communion of the Church; communion with the Church is fellowship-communion, participation, in the Trinitarian life; which is the fullness of joy.

At the heart of the Church therefore is the encounter with Christ that is the object of the proclamation. In this encounter *communio* is established between the disciple and God (vertical dimension). At the same time communion is established among those who share in the same experience of personal communion with God through Christ. Although secondary to the vertical dimension, this horizontal communion-participation is an essential element of the salvific process. For Ratzinger this is very important in order to safeguard the concept of *communio* against "horizontalist" interpretations (i.e. community as the result of human activity), which would distort its correct understanding, as happened to the conciliar concept of "People of God" in the years after the Council when the notion of "people" was at times understood not in the biblical sense but in the light of Communist political ideology.

In virtue of the principle of *successio-traditio*, the bishops are the guarantors of proclamation and of *communio* and therefore of the unity of the Church. From this perspective Ratzinger understands the ministry of the pope as "a particular form of Episcopal

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[187] Joseph Ratzinger, "The Ecclesiology of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*," in idem, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Fath*, 130.

ministry connected in a special way with the responsibility for the unity of the whole Church.'[188]

In the second chapter of Acts of the Apostles, which describe what Ratzinger calls the _interior beginnings of the Church' effected by the Holy Spirit, it appears clearly that the proclamation is for the benefit of all humanity. As a consequence *communio* is also oriented towards and is to be offered to all humanity with no exclusion. This universal orientation of communion must be reflected in the Church's ministry at all levels and especially in the ministry of Peter's successor.

According to the First Letter to the Corinthians, the concept of communion is enacted in the Eucharist, the *koinonia* with the Body and the Blood of the Lord that creates *koinonia* among those who partake of it:

> The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation (*koinonia*) in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation (*koinonia*) in the body of Christ? Because there is one Bread, we who are many are one body. (1Cor 10:16-17)

This concrete unity that is the Church has its source and apex in the Eucharist. Aidan Nichols has pointed out that, inspired by De Lubac, Ratzinger was one of the first Catholic theologians to produce a systematic elaboration of a Eucharistic ecclesiology.[189] Eucharistic ecclesiology is based on the concept of Church as the Body of Christ. After the First World War, a new awareness emerged in the Catholic Church; that the Church is not merely an

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[188] Ibid., 144.

[189] Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 31; 96–99. The development of Eucharistic ecclesiology in twentieth century Catholic thought was influenced by the theological reflection of Nicholai Afanasiev (1893-1966), Russian Orthodox theologian associated with the Institute de Théologie Orthodoxe Saint-Serge in Paris. Through a thorough examination of the Scriptural and patristic data, Afanasiev retrieved what he thought was the orginal understanding of the Church as the Eucharistic assembly of those who by baptism have been given the Holy Spirit and made one in Christ. As a consequence, every aspect of the Church can be authentically understood in the light of the Eucharist. Afanasiev was part of the ecumenical *ressourcement* group of scholars which included Jean Daniélou, Yves Congar, Oscar Cullman and Henri de Lubac among others and was invited to the Second Vatican Council as official ecumenical observer. He is credited in the Acts of the Council for contributing to the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium*. See Michael Plekin, "Introduction," in Nicholas Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy* Spirit, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), ix-xx; also Aidan Nichols, *Theology in the Russian Diaspora: Church, Fathers, Eucharist in Nikolai Afanasiev*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; Aidan Nichols, "The Appeal to the Fathers in the Ecclesiology of Nikolai Afanasev," *Heythrop Journal,* 33. 2 (1992), 125-145; 247-266.

organisation, and external structure, but above all an interior, spiritual reality; „it is the organism of the Holy Spirit, something alive, that embraces us all from within.“[190] In this sense „the Church grows from the inside outwards..., it takes shape in the life of prayer, in the life of the sacraments; in the fundamental attitudes of faith, hope and love.“[191] The concept of Body of Christ implies the communitarian dimension of the Church: „Christ has built himself a body,“ and a person can embrace him by becoming a member of his Body because „Christ exists not purely ideally but only in his body. This means with the others, with the community that has persisted through the ages and that is this body of his.“[192] Another characteristic of the concept of Body of Christ is the dynamic dimension of development: as the body of a person remains itself during his or her life by constantly renewing itself, so does the Church; as a consequence, the history of the Church constantly becomes part of its very being.[193] The idea of the Body of Christ is present in the writing of St Paul and of the Church Fathers, where it is inseparably connected with the notion of Eucharist. Consequently, to conceive of the Church as Body of Christ means understanding it through the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the Church‘s foundational event because at the Last Supper Jesus fulfilled the covenant of Sinai, effecting the ultimate „community of blood and life between God and Man.“[194] From that moment those who participate in the Eucharist are bound together in virtue of their communion with Christ, and their communion extends through the ages.

It is through his Body that other men and women throughout history are called to and can enter in communion with Christ. In order for this to be possible, the „interior“ reality of the Church requires the external structure and ministry, which acquire validity exclusively in

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[190] Joseph Ratzinger, „The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council,“ in idem, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology* (Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1988), 3.
[191] Ratzinger, „The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council,“ 5.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.

their being in the service of the mission of the Church: to serve God and to serve humanity for the transformation of the world.[195]

The Church exists in order „to become God's dwelling place in the world," therefore its task is to make his presence visible by pursuing a life of „holiness" in the sense of „conformity to God." From the perspective of Ratzinger's Eucharistic ecclesiology, the Church is the means chosen by God to establish and maintain God's relationship with humanity. By choosing it and entrusting it with a mission, despite its limitations and even its sinfulness, God makes the Church essential to his plan of salvation.[196]

As an important consequence of this Eucharistic ecclesiology, Ratzinger sees Christian unity as belonging to the essence of the authentic Church. He is convinced that only a Church that is united, or at least journeying towards unity, will be able to fulfil its God-given mission. It is by being a „sacrament of unity", i.e. a sign and instrument of unity, that the Church remains faithful to its true nature and fulfils its role in salvation history. In his papal ministry Benedict XVI shows that this theological idea has become praxis in his ecumenical engagement, which he explicitly set as a priority from the beginning of his pontificate.[197]

## 2. The heart of Ratzinger's ecclesiology: the unity of the Church and the salvation of humanity

In the light of Ratzinger's Eucharistic/communion ecclesiology, the concept of unity represents the most important aspect of the Church's visible dimension. If the Church is to be authentically the Church of Christ, it must reflect „horizontally" the vertical unity established by God with humanity through Christ and his Body. This requires the Church to be one, or at least moving towards unity, at the visible level.

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[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Benedict XVI, *First Message at the End of the Eucharistic Concelebration with the Members of the College of Cardinals*, 20/04/2005, *AAS* 97 (2005),697-698.

Unity then acquires soteriological significance in the sense that salvation consists in becoming one with God by becoming one with Christ, through communion with his Body, the Church, which is truly God's intended instrument of salvation insofar as it consciously strives to remain and/or to become one.

### *a) The meaning of Christian brotherhood*

Ratzinger's discussion on the idea of brotherhood is helpful in order to understand his notion of unity and its ecclesiological bearings. He finds that according to the testimony of the New Testament, from very early times the Christian community understood itself as brotherhood. This was a development of the Old Testament, where the term brother is predominantly applied to the coreligionist, someone who shares in the same faith as Israel. Brotherhood is then defined not in terms of blood ties but of shared divine election. Brothers are such on account of their _belonging in the unity' of God's Chosen People. As a consequence, the notion of brotherhood carries within it the idea of separation from outsiders, those who are not chosen, i.e. the *goyyim* (the Hebrew general term for non-Israelites, translated in Greek as *ethnē*, i.e. nation, race or people). Nevertheless, intrinsic in the faith of Israel is a crucial balancing element, which consists in the belief that the God who chooses Israel, i.e. Israel's national God, is at the same time the universal God, the God of all humanity.

This has for Israel clear ethical consequences towards outsiders who, in virtue of having the same God as their God, have demands on those who are part of the Chosen People. This balancing element prevents Israel's self-awareness as divinely chosen from resulting in an exclusive attitude towards the rest of humanity, at least in principle. In those cases in which Israel's sense of separation from humanity does result in too rigid an identification with Israel, this is constantly challenged by the notion of the universal God, the God of all.[198] The Old Testament constantly challenges the seemingly obvious assumption that the election of

[198] Joseph Ratzinger, *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 7-8.

one means the rejection of the other. Ratzinger finds the rooting of this complex notion of brotherhood in the two covenants described in Genesis: the covenant with Adam, which was renewed with Noah, the father of restored humanity after the Flood, and the covenant with Abraham and Moses, by which Israel is constituted as God's People, chosen albeit not exclusively. The biblical foundation of the election ensures that "duality could never degenerate into dualism."[199] The immediate consequence is that Israelites have an ethical responsibility not only towards each other but also towards humanity, as is clearly laid out in the laws regarding strangers in Exodus (22:20; 23:9) Deuteronomy (14:29) Leviticus (19:33f; 19:10; 23:22) and Numbers (9:14; 15:14ff; 35:15).

There are, as Ratzinger defines them, two "zones of brotherhood" in the faith of Israel, a direct one and an indirect one; and both place demands on the members of the Chosen People.[200] According to Ratzinger, this duality that is never permitted to become dualism is better understood in the light of a pattern he identifies in the Old Testament, which reveals what he calls a "theology of the two brothers." Certain exemplary couples of brothers stand at crucial points of salvation history, whereby one is chosen and the other is rejected: Cain and Abel, Cain and Seth, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob. Ratzinger observes however, that in the Old Testament dynamic of election-rejection, "even the partners of Israel who were expelled from the election could yet be understood in a wider sense as "brothers", that even the one who was rejected remained a "brother.""[201] Rejection does not result in the loss of "brotherhood".

The Christian faith, in the New Testament and with the Fathers, inherits and develops the Old Testament notion of brotherhood, except that the universal dimension is more strongly emphasised.[202] The idea remains that there exist a core of humanity that is the representative of the entire humanity in its relationship with God. This core is now the

[199] Ibid., 11.
[200] Ibid., 10-11.
[201] Ibid., 11.
[202] Ibid., 21-40.

community of the believers in Christ, i.e. the Church, which plays a role of mediation in the salvific relationship.

Ratzinger identifies four main aspects of Christian brotherhood, which are crucial to understanding the Church's role in God's universal salvific plan.

The first aspect is that Christian brotherhood is based on the belief that Jesus is the Christ. The Christian faith holds that only Christ can be rightfully called Son of God, being the „epitome of the true Israel."[203] The ultimate aim of the Incarnation is „to make what is his (own) available to all," that is his divine sonship. [204] By becoming a disciple, which is tantamount to becoming united with Christ, the believer becomes a child of God by participation in Christ's sonship. Consequently, all believers become „brothers' (and sisters) in virtue of their common participation in Christ's sonship. In the light of Eucharistic ecclesiology, the three ideas of communion with Christ, incorporation in his Body and becoming the Christian brotherhood are different expressions of one single event. This is not only a sacramental but also an ethical process by which, called to „break up his own merely private ego and merge into the unity of the body of Christ," the believer becomes Christ-like by letting go of his or her ego.[205]

Ratzinger's second point is that within the Christian brotherhood all barriers are removed. Paul defines the community of believers as the new creation in Christ (2Corinthians 5:16-17), in which the contradictions of the old creation are overcome and „the great unbridgeable difference which had divided the world now loses its meaning – the difference between Israel and the heathen, between pure and impure, between elect and non-elect."[206] According to Paul, Christ's work is essentially reconciliation (cf. Ephesians 2:12-17), to the

[203] Ibid., 48.
[204] Ibid., 49.
[205] Ibid., 55.
[206] Ibid., 57.

extent that the ‗mystery of Christ is the mystery of the removal of barriers:' religious and social (Galatians 3:27-28), and national (Colossians 3:10-11).[207]

Third, Christian brotherhood is of necessity defined by boundaries, which somehow inevitably constitute a barrier of separation from outsiders. An examination of the New Testament usage of ‗brother' yields the conclusion that ‗only the limited application of the idea of brotherhood is Christian'.[208] According to Jesus' *ipsissima verba*, brotherhood rests on the unity of the common acceptance of God's will, which is the essence of discipleship (cf. Mark 3:31-35). It is true that Matthew 25:31-46 is the one case in which ‗brother' refers to all humanity, when Jesus speaks of all men and women as his *adelphoi;* however the outsiders are ‗brothers' of Jesus Christ but not of the believers.

Jesus' words contain a twofold notion of brotherhood in relation to himself: that of the disciples and that of all men and women. At the horizontal level, that is to say that of relationship among people, according to the New Testament a Christian is a brother of the fellow Christian but not of the non-Christian. The clearly defined boundaries of the Christian brotherhood are determined by the conscious decision to become disciples, which is to be one with Christ and members of his Body, the Church. From this perspective then the celebration of the Eucharist is the ‗sacrament of brotherhood.'[209] The visible enactment of the brotherhood in the liturgy and in the life of the community is so important that on having to address the unprecedented situation of those who have become disciples of Jesus but do not practice, Paul coins a new term, ‗pseudo-*adelphoi*', i.e. quasi-brothers.

Lastly, the clear demarcation of brotherhood does not nevertheless translate into sectarian isolation but constitutes the concrete condition of possibility of true universalism. Without the recognition that there actually exists a portion of humanity that stands outside the

[207] Ibid., 58.
[208] Ibid., 67.
[209] Ibid., 68.

brotherhood, the latter would not be able to turn towards it and take responsibility for it. According to Ratzinger,

> [t]he separating off of the Christian brotherhood is not the creation of some esoteric circle, but is intended to serve the whole. The Christian brotherly community does not stand against but for the whole.[210]

Because the ‗real goal' of Christ's work is the salvation of the whole, of humanity, this must by necessity be reflected in the work of his Body.[211] Therefore far from allowing for exclusion, the clear definition of Christian identity allows and calls for true universalism, that is to say taking full responsibility for the salvation of all ‗outsiders', all humanity.

In Ratzinger's understanding, the Christian idea of brotherhood does not imply in any way a shedding of the responsibility of the disciple towards the ‗non-brothers' but in fact it calls for it. Most importantly it calls for such responsibility to be expressed through differentiated approaches, which take into account and are shaped according to the specific identity of the other and their relation to the Body of Christ, rather than in a general and undifferentiated way, which would be a pure abstraction. A differentiated approach is consistent with the logic of the Incarnation. In this sense Ratzinger suggests a perspective that is useful to appreciate theologically two aspects of Catholic teaching on the Church's relationships. The first is the importance of the various circles of dialogue defined by Paul VI in *Ecclesiam Suam* and adopted by the subsequent Magisterium from Vatican II onwards.[212] The second aspect is the Catholic Church's insistence on the distinction between the tasks of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. Being theologically founded, this distinction is evident in the teaching of Benedict XVI. Incidentally, he goes even further as he distinguishes different levels, and therefore ways, of engagement with non-Christian humanity: engagement with people who have no religious belief is different from engagement

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[210] Ibid., 75.
[211] Ibid., 75.
[212] Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 6/08/1964, *AAS* 56(1964*),*609-659 Paul VI distinguishes the dialogue with entire humanity (650), including non believers; followers of Judaism, Islam and other religions (654); other Christians (655) and among Catholics (657). This basic structure is found especially in *Lumen Gentium* 13-17; *Nostra Aetate* 2-4.

with followers of other faiths; and even in the latter case, Christian engagement in dialogue requires specific goals and methods that are appropriate to the different religious persuasions. Ultimately a theologically-founded understanding that the universal responsibility of the Church for humanity is not _uniform' but _differentiated' constitutes a stronger foundation for an appropriate, and therefore effective, engagement with the different realities that make up the world.

Ultimately the question of Christian brotherhood is the question of Christian identity, and Ratzinger, in line with Church teaching, is adamant that authentic engagement with the other requires clarity about one's identity: the latter is a necessary condition of possibility for the former.

The idea of Church as brotherhood, understood from the perspective of Christian faith, has concrete implications in three directions: within the Catholic Church; towards the non-Catholic Christians and finally towards those who are not Christians, which is not only the followers on the great religious traditions. In this sense the Christian idea of _separation of the few', which is embedded in the notion of Christian brotherhood, constitutes a theological foundation for ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, alongside the engagement with the culture of the secular world, which Pope Benedict XVI has also identified as a priority for the Church.

At the internal level, from a Catholic perspective, the responsibility of the disciples consists in taking up the challenge of _removing all barriers' by which Christianity challenges all _actual differentiations' within the Church that contradict its true nature, _compelling us to purify them ever anew from within and fill them with the same spirit of brotherhood that made us _all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28).[213] In principle, according to Ratzinger the internal _differentiation' of roles between the hierarchy and the faithful does not contradict

[213] Ratzinger, *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, 63.

the ‗removal of barriers' because even though the ordained minister is called to be a ‗father', he does not cease to be a disciple on the way, and therefore a brother.

Concretely at this first level, the Church is called to address existing and potential internal divisions by striving in any possible way to preserve the unity of the Body of Christ. This has been a priority during Pope Benedict's pontificate.

With regard to non-Catholic Christians, the responsibility of the ‗brothers' consists in taking seriously the challenge of ecumenism.[214] This intermediate level of responsibility does not find an immediate equivalent in the New Testament duality of insider-outsider, as it is the result of later historical events.

Ratzinger supports a positive view of present day non-Catholics, on the basis that their situation is very different from that at the time the schisms took place from which other Churches were born. According to Ratzinger, the category of heresy is no longer applicable to present-day Protestants because they do not find themselves outside the Catholic communion as a result of a free personal decision, which is implied in the notion of heresy. It is also true that historically Protestantism has played an important role in the propagation and establishment the Christian faith.

Catholic thought needs new and more appropriate categories with regard to present day non-Catholic Christians. As these cannot be found directly either in Christian Scripture or in the Tradition, Ratzinger suggests that in discernment with regard to ‗new' situations, which did not exist in early times, the guiding criterion is to rely on the spirit of the New Testament and of the Father. This principle is also applicable to the question of interreligious dialogue.

With regard to ecumenism, Ratzinger distinguishes between the dogmatic dimension and the level of human relationships. At the dogmatic level, the question of non-Catholic

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[214] As theologian Ratzinger has written extensively on ecumenism. See for example the entire part II of *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 192-311; also part II of *Church, Ecumenism and Politics,* 67-138. See also Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict XVI*, 191-197, and Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, 189-197. As pope he often spoke on the topic, one important example is the *Address at the Ecumenical Meeting*, Cologne, 19/08/2005, *AAS* 97(2005*),*909-915.

Christians leads to the question of the unique role – from a Catholic perspective of course – of the Catholic Church within Christianity. This claim of uniqueness derives from the idea of Church as total sacrament, whose function is to be the visible expression of the invisible reality of God within humanity. This, according to Ratzinger, demands the exclusive univocal correspondence between divine will and human reality and therefore excludes the possibility of more Churches sharing simultaneously the function of *re-praesentatio* of the work of Christ. Such function is in fact reserved for the Catholic Church. It is extremely important to note, however, that uniqueness of representation does not imply exclusive correspondence between the Catholic Church and divine grace. In fact, says Ratzinger,

> there is a difference between the symbolic presentation of the new order of grace before the world and the presence or absence of grace in man's soul… There is grace outside the sacraments and outside the visible Church: the dialogue of God with man is conducted by him in total freedom.[215]

This dialogue however requires a principal _focus' that concretely _anchors' humanity to God's salvific work.

At the level of human relationships, however, Ratzinger believes that although it is not possible, nor would it be helpful, to deny that technically a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian belong to different brotherhoods, it is at least possible, on account of the common faith in Christ, to conceive of these brotherhoods as _sister Churches.'[216] This constitutes a development beyond the New Testament and Tradition, which reserve the term exclusively for different local communities of the *catholica*. For Ratzinger it is clear that in virtue of the common faith, Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church are

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[215] Ratzinger, *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, 89-90.

[216] Ibid., 91. With regard to the question of _sister churches', see H. Legrand, —La théologie des Églises Soeurs: réflexions ecclésiologiques autour de la declaration de Balamand," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et theologiques* 88 (2004), 461-496. The document –Uniatism, method of union of the past, and the present search for full communion," known as the *Balamand Declaration*, is a joint statement by the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church issued on 23/06/1993 at the VII plenary session held in Balamand, Lebanon 17–24/06/1993.

_brothers', albeit _separated.'[217] In this sense the term _separated brothers' is for him not to be understood as derogatory, but positively as signifying that despite all theological and historical divergences we are still one in the one Christ who brings us together in his brotherhood.

Ratzinger's argument implies the notion that different degrees of unity are possible, and that a lesser degree of unity does not imply that unity is less real.[218] There is in fact an element of real unity in ecumenical engagement itself. For Ratzinger the unity of all Christians is eschatological _in the true sense of the term', that is to say _already present and yet within time never perfected.'[219] To be on the way towards Christ, which is essential to every Christian community, means being on the way towards unity. In this sense ecumenism, understood as the common effort to arrive at _sharing a common faith' is in itself a modality of unity, albeit not fully realised.[220]

For Ratzinger ecumenism, as the struggle for the full realisation of the unity that is already given in Christ, is not a choice, because it has to do with the full realisation of the Church's identity and, as a consequence, with the effectiveness of its mission in the world, for humanity. This places an obligation on all Christians to make all possible efforts to advance as far as possible on the way of unity, so that the one brother that has been Chosen, may be truly a brother and therefore able to take care of the _wayward' one.[221]

Finally the Church's responsibility towards non-Christians is concretely exercised in three ways: through mission, i.e. the direct proclamation of the Christian message; through agape, the enactment of Christian charity towards all; and through suffering, by making itself the neighbour of all and sharing in their sufferings, in the Christian hope of these being

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[217] Ibid.
[218] Ratzinger, —On the Ecumenical Situation," in idem *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 262.
[219] Ibid., 268.
[220] Ibid., 268-269
[221] Ratzinger, *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, 81.

overcome by the establishment of the Kingdom. Ratzinger refers to mission, agape and suffering, as the ‗obligations' of the Christian towards the non-Christian.[222]

Mission must be carried out openly and confidently says Ratzinger, but with ‗holy discretion.' This is the ability to proclaim the Word at the right time, when the conditions for its being heard are in place.[223] This implies the dialogical attitude of careful listening to the reality of the other. The second obligation, agape, takes two forms: first, in the mutual relationship among Christians, which should have ‗an attractive and exemplary force, constituting an effective act of mission;' second, acts of disinterested love, following the example of Christ who ‗loved those who neither knew nor loved him (cf. Rom 5:6)… without asking for thanks or response'.[224] Lastly, in suffering for others the Church ‗achieves its highest mission – the exchange of fate with the wayward brother, and thus the restoration to full sonship and full brotherhood.'[225] This aspect is very important as it frees the Church from the sense of failure that might emerge when despite having heard the proclamation of the Christian faith, the ‗outsider' does not decide to become a member of the Christian brotherhood by embracing the faith. In this case by simply *being-with*, the Church fulfils its role of responsibility towards humanity.

### *b) Universal salvation as 'the unity of the nations'*

Unity is in Ratzinger's thought a soteriological concept not only at the ecclesial (preserving the unity of the Catholic Church) and ecumenical level (striving towards the unity

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[222] Ibid., 81-84.
[223] Ibid., 82.
[224] Ibid., 82-83.
[225] Ibid., 84. In Joseph Ratzinger, ―Substitution," *Encyclopédie de la foi* (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 273 he wrote: ‗The idea of substitution is one of the primitive facts of the biblical testimony, the rediscovery of which in today's world can help Christianity to renew and deepen in a decisive way the conception it has of itself.' The notion of substitution is the basis for Massignon's *Badaliya*. Maurice Borrmans, ―Essai d'une ‗Badaliya nouvelle'," in Louis Massignon, *Badaliya: au nom de l'autre, 1947-1962* (Paris: Cerf, 2011), 329-347.

with „separated‘ brothers), but also with regard to universal salvation, which he articulates in terms of the unity of humanity[226].

An attentive reading of Luke 2:14, *„Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests"*, reveals a clash between two worlds. On the one hand is Rome‘s promise of universal *pax*, established and maintained by human power embodied in the emperor; on the other hand stands the universal peace that is God‘s gift bestowed on humanity in Jesus Christ.[227] The Christian vision of peace referred to in Luke‘s gospel stands on the foundations of the biblical faith of Israel, according to which the idea of the unity of the world and of humanity was firmly rooted in the confession of faith in the One God and the belief that the whole of history was rooted in one man, Adam, and in one common ancestor, Noah. In Adam, the first human being, created in the image and likeness of God, and in the Noahic covenant, the Old Testament faith holds together two realities, that is to say God‘s oneness and the single origin of the human race. These two aspects constitute the foundations of the unity of humanity, under the unconditional care of the Creator.[228]

Ratzinger points out that according to the biblical vision the fragmentation of humanity signified by the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) is not God‘s will but punishment for human sinfulness. God‘s will, on the contrary, is the reunification of humanity, which is symbolised by the future gathering of the nations in Jerusalem, in the presence of the One God and in common worship of him. This unity cannot be the fruit of human achievement, but it is God‘s doing, in contrast with the idea that unity can be built politically. Ratzinger notes that the New Testament further highlights the contrast between the two visions through the doctrine of the two Adams, which implies the idea that humanity as it has existed until Christ was never perfect, definitive, because it bore the „mark of its

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[226] See Antonio Russo: „L‘idée de solidarité dans Catholicisme (1938)," *Revue Théologique de Louvain* 44, no. 1 (2013), 55-81.

[227] Joseph Ratzinger, *L"unitá delle nazioni. Una visione dei Padri della Chiesa*, (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2009), 23-24.

[228] Ibid., 24-25.

defective origin‘ which is transcended once and for all through the Christ-event that represents the beginning of a new humanity.[229] This second, definitive humanity does not yet comprise the whole world but exists in the world, and is the community of believers: the Church is the new humanity and the promise of the new cosmos.[230] Augustine‘s doctrine of the two cities, which represent respectively the first and the new humanities co-existing in the world, is grounded on the doctrine of the two Adams.

Ratzinger turns to Origen and Augustine for a patristic assessment of the _nations‘ and observes that Origen saw their existence negatively, as a sign of the continuing influence of Satan over humanity, which calls for the work of Christ, understood in terms of reconciliation. Deuteronomy 32:8 is the staring point of Origen‘s idea that after the fragmentation of humanity each nation had been left under the power an angel.[231] In Origen‘s view these supernatural rulers, the _archontes‘, are ultimately demons. Israel however is different from any other nation because it is governed directly by God and therefore has a specific mission in the context of the nations. For Origen, the seventy Israelites who have gone down to Egypt, i.e. the world, (Exodus 1:6) represent the true Israel, sent to rescue humanity from the rule of the archontes and national fragmentation and bring it back to the unity of the human family under God‘s rule.[232] For Origen Israel‘s mission is fulfilled in the Church, which is the new Fatherland of Christians and represents true humanity.[233] Origen‘s view of national identity, however, is not totally negative, as it can have a preparatory function towards salvation in Christ. Origen‘s aim is to oppose the _subordination of the sacred and holy to the political and national element.‘[234]

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[229] Ibid., 26-27.
[230] Ibid., 28-29.
[231] _When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples, according to the number of the sons of Israel.‘ (Or _sons of God‘, according to the Septuagint, the Masoretic Text and the Dead Sea Scrolls)
[232] Ratzinger, *L''unitá delle nazioni*, 57.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid., 71.

Although Augustine, writing in a different historical context, has a much less negative view of politics and national identity than Origen, he agrees that, although it is highly commendable for the citizen to devote himself to the good of the nation (in his case the Roman Empire), the believer is to „employ all his energy for the eternal goal that had become visible and accessible to him in Jesus Christ."[235] The true fatherland is the Heavenly City, compared to which all other states have merely relative value. For Augustine, however, the reunification of humanity is already taking place in the historical Church from Pentecost, which he opposes to Babel. In Augustine's view, explains Ratzinger, to become Christian means „to go from dispersion into unity, from the Babel tower into the Room of Pentecost, from the many peoples of humanity into the one single new people."[236] According to Ratzinger, the aim of the doctrine of the two cities is not to eliminate the distinction between the church and the state, but to „make present the new force of the belief in the unity of humanity in the body of Christ, as a transforming element, the full form of which will be established by God, once present history reaches its end."[237]

In other words, the Church has a sacramental significance for the salvation of the world, which is construed in terms of the reunification of humanity. The City of God is the Church, i.e. the „sacramental-eschatological' reality that „lives in this world as a sign of the future world."[238] In other words, the Church as it exists in the world, with its finitude and limitations, constitutes the prefiguration and anticipation of God's kingdom that will come to fulfilment at the end of time.

### *c) A personal focus of unity for the Church and humanity*

The concept of representation is key to understanding Ratzinger's notion of the relationship of the Church to humanity. He explains that

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[235] Ibid., 96. My translations.
[236] Ibid., 109.
[237] Ibid., 111.
[238] Ibid, 113.

> Just as it is the essential nature of the sacraments to show forth by signs the hidden mystery of God, to proclaim publicly in the visible world the share of God in the drama of human history... so it is with the great total sacrament that is the Church herself: she is a sign of God in the world, and her task is the visible and public witness to the divine saving will before the face of history.[239]

At one level, as a sign, the Church serves as it were as a reminder and a summons, by being the *representatio* of the eschatological destiny to which humanity is called by God. At another level, that of instrument, the Church is to *re-present*, i.e. to be continuously offering humanity, by means of its way of being, Christ's saving action to all men and women, in order to make salvation accessible to them.

This mediation has a concrete historical character that derives from God's methodology, that is to say the Incarnation. In this sense, says Ratzinger,

> [t]he objective presentation of the saving act of Jesus can be performed by the one Church only, that is, according to Catholic belief, the Catholic Church which is gathered *around the successor of Peter*.[240]

Ratzinger points to a further level of concreteness of the Church's mediating function. Because the Church is a corporate and therefore a complex reality, it needs a concrete focus of unity, a focus of "personal responsibility."[241] Within the Church-Sacrament, this "personal focus" or *representation* is Peter's successor, who functions therefore as a sacrament of unity for the Church, for all Christians and humanity.

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[239] Ratzinger, *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, 89.

[240] Ibid.

[241] John McDade, "Von Balthasar and the Office of Peter in the Church," *The Way* 44, no. 4 (2005), 104, quotes Pascal when commenting on von Balthasar's understanding of the necessity for the Church to have a focus of unity: "Multiplicity which is not reduced to unity is confusion. Unity which does not depend on multiplicity is tyranny."

## 3. The Petrine Office as instrument of communion for the Church and humanity

Ratzinger's understanding of Church provides the ground for his vision of ministry, which is ecclesiological. Because ministry is an essential structure of the Church and the pope represents its most concrete embodiment, the function of the Petrine office and its historical forms are determined by how the identity and mission of the Church are understood. There are strong resonances between Ratzinger's and von Balthasar's notions of the Petrine Office. In *Der Antiromische Affekt* (1974) von Balthasar argued that a certain „deep-seated anti-Roman attitude within the Catholic Church" (i.e. against the principle of papal authority) has a theological basis, and only a correct understanding of the Church as a multidimensional reality consisting of the harmonious and balanced interaction of various *principles* (Marian holiness, Petrine authority, Johannine love, Jamesian tradition and Law and Pauline universalism and inculturation) can provide the basis to undertand the Petrine office as an essential and irreplaceable structure of the Church, which cannot be distorted or eliminated without at the same time distorting the nature and mission of Church itself.[242] Von Balthasar's confirms Ratzinger's view of the ecclesiological significance of the Petrine office.

In order to discuss papal primacy Ratzinger addresses two related questions. First, whether the Petrine ministry is of divine origin as opposed to being a later creation of the Church; and second, whether the claim is legitimate that the Petrine primacy has passed on to the Roman pontiff.

### *a) The biblical foundations of the primacy*

In answer to the first question, Ratzinger's detailed treatment of the New Testament data vis-à-vis the role of Peter among the Twelve and the community of Jesus' followers can be found in a paper published in 1991, in which he concludes that the New Testament shows with great clarity that Jesus invested Peter with a role of primacy within the community of his

[242] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Der Antirömische Affekt* (Freiburg: Herder, 1974); McDade, "Von Balthasar and the Office of Peter," 97-114.

followers. This is particularly evident in Jesus' conferring a new name on Peter as narrated in Matthew 16:16-19.[243]

First of all, Peter's new name is in itself especially meaningful. Ratzinger observes that the Aramaic word *Kefas,* the rock, must be a symbolic name. This can be deduced from the fact that while first names are not translated, *Kefas* soon becomes *Petros* in the Greek tradition of the Gospel. In this sense, Jesus' conferral of the new name on Simon son of Jonah, is more akin to the conferral of a title symbolising a function.

Ratzinger suggests that the meaning of *the Rock* can be adequately understood in the light of the Hebrew Scriptures and of rabbinic theology, which constitute Jesus' proper linguistic and theological context. Referring to Joachim Jeremias' exegesis of Matthew 16:16-19, Ratzinger recalls a rabbinical text in which, before creation, when foreseeing that the history of the world would be disfigured by human sinfulness, God asks himself: "How can I create the world when these godless men will arise to vex me?' However, God also foresees the birth of Abraham and there he finds the answer to his question: "Behold, I have found a rock upon which I can build and found the world.' According to this text, God calls Abraham "a rock' and sees in his faith the guarantee of the goodness of Creation. The image of the holy rock referred to Abraham appears also in Isaiah 51:1-2:

> Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was only one man, and I blessed him and made him many.

This means that on account of his faith Abraham becomes "the rock that holds back chaos… and thus sustains creation.'[244] The parallel with Simon is apparent: he who is "the first to confess Jesus as the Christ and the first witness of the resurrection now becomes in

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[243] Joseph Ratzinger, "The Primacy of Peter and the Unity of the Church," in idem, *Called to Communion* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), 47-74.

[244] Ibid., 56.

virtue of his Abrahamic faith… the rock that stands against the impure tide of unbelief and its destruction of man.'[245]

Ratzinger believes that the whole theology of the commission *logion* (Matthew 16:16-19) is already contained in Jesus' act of naming Peter the Rock.[246] And although he is convinced that a theology of primacy cannot be built on a single biblical text in isolation, the commission *logion* is nevertheless particularly significant. For better understanding, he considers the verses of the commissioning (vv. 16-18) in its broader context (vv. 13-27).

Peter makes his confession ("You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God', v. 17) in answer to Jesus' question about his identity; and because the question was addressed to the Twelve (v.13), then Peter appears as answering on their behalf as well. In response, Jesus observes that Peter's confession does not stem from "flesh and blood', i.e. from his human resources, but is the fruit of revelation from the Father. Because it is based on this confession of faith, then Peter's primacy is purely God's gift, which Peter has not earned and cannot claim as his right.[247]

This idea is reinforced by a comparison with v. 23 where Peter, by contrast, does speak out of his "flesh and blood' ("Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"'). In so doing he becomes a *skandalon*, a stumbling block in Jesus' mission. It is humble trust in God that makes the difference between *rock* and *stumbling block*. Peter – with his faith – is the foundation rather than a *skandalon*, insofar as he speaks and acts on the basis of God's word and not out of his mere human reality. [248]

This is theologically significant as the New Testament reveals a tension that is inherent in Peter's primacy: that between rock and *skandalon*. For Ratzinger this tension is integral to Peter's mission and is passed on to his successors as well. The scene described in Matthew

[245] Ibid.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid., 61.
[248] Ibid.

16:17-18 portrays the tension between God's gift and human capacity, which "in some sense anticipates the whole drama of papal history."[249] Two situations recur in history: that of a papacy that "remains the foundation of the Church in virtue of a power that does not derive from herself", and that of individual popes who at times "have again and again become a scandal because of what they themselves are as men, because they want to precede, not follow, Christ, because they believe that they must determine by their own logic the path that only Christ himself can decide: "You do not think God's thoughts but man's." (Mt 16:23)."[250] These two situations relate to two irreconcilable logics.

Matthew 16:18 ("And the gates of the underworld can never overpower it") echoes Jeremiah 1:18-19:

> "Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land – against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord.

Ratzinger considers Peter Weiser's commentary on this passage applicable to Matthew 16:18 as well. These texts signify that

> God demands the entire courage and unreserved trust in his prodigious power when he promises the seemingly impossible: he will make this soft man into a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall, that Jeremiah will stand alone like a living wall of God against the whole land and those who wield power in it… it is not the inviolability of the "consecrated" man of God that will protect him against harm… but only the proximity of God, who rescues him, so that his foes will not be able to prevail against him (Mt 16:18).[251]

However, there is a difference between Jeremiah and Peter, namely that while Jeremiah received God's promise for his personal mission, Peter receives it on behalf of the whole Church, on account of Jesus' promise to be with her until the end of time.[252]

Finally Peter receives the "power to bind and loose" ("I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you

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[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid.
[251] A. Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1966), quoted in Ratzinger, "The primacy of Peter," 62.
[252] Ibid., 62-63.

loose on earth will be loosed in heaven‘). This verse has a parallel in Isaiah 22:22-23, a passage that refers to Eliakim as the descendant of David:

> I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I will drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will become a seat of honour for the house of his father.

In the light of the Old Testament, Jesus‘ declaration means that Peter receives the power to open the doors of the Kingdom, in contrast to the scribes and Pharisees who prevent people from accessing it (Matthew 23:13). The symbol of the keys is described in terms of power of binding and loosing. Ratzinger points out that in rabbinic literature this signifies the authority to make doctrinal decisions and the right of imposing or lifting the ban, i.e. the total exclusion of the person from the Jewish community (*herem* in Hebrew).[253]

In the light of John 20:23, Peter‘s power of binding and loosing acquires even deeper meaning. When the Risen Christ appears to the Apostles, he declares: „Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you…. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone‘s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.‘ The power of binding and loosing is the power of forgiving and not forgiving. „The keys to the Kingdom of Heaven – writes Ratzinger – are the words of forgiveness.“[254] The primacy of Peter is founded on God‘s forgiveness, which is entrusted to both Peter and the Church through him, to be dispensed on God‘s behalf. Jesus‘ declaration implies that Peter‘s decisions will have validity before God („on earth‘ and „in heaven‘).

### *b) Traditio-Successio as the ground of papal primacy*

The fact that the Apostle Peter enjoyed a position of „primacy‘ in the early community, among the Twelve and among the Three Pillars (Peter, John and James), does not automatically justify Roman primacy. For this reason, Ratzinger addresses the second

[253] Ibid., 62-63.
[254] Ibid., 64-65.

question, i.e. whether Roman primacy is the continuation of Peter's. To this purpose he reflects on the meaning of Tradition and Succession and their mutual relation. [255]

The question of primacy necessarily implies its relationship with the college of bishops. With regard to Church teaching on primacy, as early as 1962 (during the Second Vatican Council), Ratzinger observed that in teaching on primacy and the episcopate, the First Vatican Council (1868-1870) acknowledged both the papacy and the episcopate as fundamental structures of the Church, both of divine right.[256] As a consequence, the bishops were "not simply the executive organs of the pope's power', but "as much part and parcel of the divinely appointed structure of the Church as he.'[257] Although, on account of its emphasis on papal infallibility (*Pastor Aeternus*, 1870), it may seem that the First Vatican Council affirmed the absolute power of the papacy over the bishops, in fact the Church of Vatican I was aware that the pope's office had boundaries and could not bypass the competence of particular bishops in their dioceses.[258] As evidence of this, Ratzinger recalls a document issued 1875 by the German episcopate in response to a circular letter of the German Imperial Chancellor about the coming papal election.[259] This document articulated the legitimate

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[255] Ibid., 65-72. Also Joseph Ratzinger, "Primacy, Episcopate and Apostolic Succession," in Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy* (London: Nelson, 1962), 37-61.

[256] On the First Vatican Council and papal primacy see: Klaus Schatz, *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present*, trs. John A. Otto and Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 155-165; Margaret O'Gara, "Three Successive Steps Toward Understanding Papal Primacy in Vatican I," *The Jurist - Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 64 (2004), 208-223; and eadem, *Triumph in Defeat: Infallibility, Vatican I, and the French Minority Bishops* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988).

[257] Ratzinger, "Primacy, Episcopate and Apostolic Succession," 40.

[258] First Vatican Council, *Pastor Aeternus,* 18/07/1870, *Acta Sanctae Sedis (ASS)* 6(1870-71),40-55. On the papacy of Pius IX (1846-1876), see Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (New Haven, CT; Yale University Press, 2006), 286-304.

[259] See the Collective Statement of the German Episcopate *concerning the Circular of the German Imperial Chancellor in respect of the Coming Papal Elections*, 1875. The following excerpt from the document is especially relevant to our discussion: "It is in virtue of the same divine institution upon which the Papacy rests that the episcopate also exists. It, too, has its rights and duties, because of the ordinance of God himself, and the Pope has neither the right nor the power to change them. Thus it is a complete misunderstanding of the Vatican decrees [e.g. *Aeterni Patris*] to believe that because of them 'episcopal jurisdiction has been absorbed into the papal,' that the Pope has "in principle taken the place of each individual bishop,' that the bishops are now "no more than tools of the Pope, his officials, without responsibility of their own.' According to the constant teaching of the Catholic Church, expressly declared at the [First] Vatican Council itself, the bishops are not mere tools of the Pope, nor papal officials without responsibility of their own, but, "under appointment of the Holy Spirit, they succeeded in the place of the

autonomy of the bishops vis-à-vis the pope and was endorsed by Pope Pius IX.[260] Ratzinger writes that Olivier Rousseau has summarised the content of the document in seven points:

> 1. The pope cannot arrogate to himself the episcopal rights, nor substitute his power for that of bishops; 2. the episcopal jurisdiction has not been absorbed in the papal jurisdiction; 3. the pope was not given the fullness of the bishops' powers by the decrees of the Vatican Council; 4. he has not virtually taken the place of each individual bishop; 5. he cannot put himself in the place of a bishop in each single instance, vis-à-vis governments; 6. the bishops have not become instruments of the pope; 7. they are not officials of a foreign sovereign in their relations with their own governments.[261]

Although Ratzinger's argument relies on patristic sources, it begins with an important biblical remark. With regard to the Word of God, the New Testament contains a certain 'pattern' that constitutes the foundation of theological notions of Tradition and Succession. Such 'pattern' is the 'threefold knot', the interrelation of Word, witness and Christ-Holy Spirit. In the New Testament the Word of God is always bound up with a living testimony, which is always personal, in the sense that it is given by individuals, but is never separate from the community. The witness of these community members is made possible by the accompanying action of the Holy Spirit that guarantees the connection between their witness and that of the One Witness, the Christ.[262] This pattern constituted the basis of the value of Tradition for the Church and Christian faith.

According to Ratzinger, the question of the relationship between the primacy and the episcopate is to be understood from the perspective of the theological notions of Succession

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apostles, and feed and rule individually as true shepherds, the particular flock assigned to them." In Joseph Neuner and Jacques Dupuis eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 2001), 322, para. 841.

[260] Ratzinger, "Primacy, Episcopate and Apostolic Succession," 40-41.

[261] Ibid. Ratzinger refers to Olivier Rousseau, "La vraie Valeur de l'Episcopat dans l'Eglise d'apres d'importants documents de 1875," *Irenikon* 29 (1956), 121-150. Olivier Rousseau (1898-1984) was a Benedictine monk of the Priory of Chevetogne, Belgium. Together with other members of Chevetogne, he was involved in the initial stages of the liturgical movement and in ecumenical dialogue, which was the focus of *Irenikon*, their quarterly review, of which Rousseau was director. From 25 to 29/09/1961 the *Journées Oecuméniques* were held at Chevetogne, the proceedings of which were published in Olivier Rousseau, ed., *L''infaillibilité de l'Eglise: Journées Oecuméniques de Chevetogne, 25-27 Septembre 1961*, Collection Irénikon (Chevetogne: Éditions de Chevetogne, 1963).

[262] Ratzinger, "The Primacy of Peter," 65-68.

and Tradition, which emerged in the early Church.[263] In response to the Gnostics' claim that they possessed the tradition of the Apostles the Church opposed the concept of *diadoche"*, which initially indicated both *successio* and *traditio*.[264] The counterclaim was that the authentic teaching of the apostles of Christ was to be found in the living faith of those communities in which the apostles themselves lived or had received letters from them. The present leaders of these communities, "whose spiritual lineage could be traced back to the apostles," were the guarantors of the apostolic teaching, and as such their task was to ensure that it be faithfully handed down. In this sense they were the successors of the apostles. The apostolic teaching embedded in their communities and entrusted to them became the criterion to determine the "apostolic authenticity' of Christian faith.[265]

In the theology of the early Church *successio-traditio* (*diadoche"-paradosis*) represented the real connection between the living faith and the authority of the Church embodied in the episcopal succession. Therefore apostolic Tradition and apostolic Succession constitute one single reality: Tradition being the content of Succession and Succession being the external form of Tradition.[266]

The canon of the New Testament and the Creeds took their definitive shape in this context of Tradition guaranteed by Succession. In this sense Tradition-Succession is prior to the New Testament because faith is born of the Word that is heard rather than read, and therefore the word that is proclaimed in obedience to Jesus' commission to his disciples.[267] The continued faithful proclamation of the Word of the Lord is the raison d'être of apostolic succession. The mission of the Church requires a "succession of preachers… a personal

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[263] See Paul McPartlan, *A Service of Love: Papal Primacy, the Eucharist, and Church Unity* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2013).
[264] Ratzinger, "Primacy, Episcopate and Apostolic Succession," 46.
[265] Ibid., 46-48.
[266] Ibid., 50-52
[267] Ibid., 53.

continuity reaching back to the apostles. Precisely for the sake of the word… a living voice, a living succession is necessary.‘[268]

Ratzinger believes that in the framework of apostolic succession and particularly in the light of the distinction that the early Church made between apostolic sees and non-apostolic sees, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome is correctly understood as the continuation of the Petrine office of primacy. The outcome of Ratzinger‘s study can be summarised in four points.

First, in the early Church the term „apostolic see‘ is employed in a very specific sense, in order to distinguish certain „sees‘ that stood in a „special, verifiable, historical relation with the apostles.‘[269] These were the sees of Antioch, Alexandria and Rome.

Second, not every bishop therefore was the head of an apostolic see. In fact the majority of bishops and their sees received their apostolicity through their being in communion with an apostolic see.

Third, Rome enjoyed a role of primacy among the apostolic sees, in the sense that its relation to the other apostolic sees was analogous to the relation of the other apostolic sees to non-apostolic sees, and communion with Rome was the criterion of their catholicity.[270]

Fourth, the early Church‘s theology of succession-tradition was neither an „episcopal theology‘ nor a „papal theology‘. In fact „it was dual, distinguishing the episcopate from the apostolic sees – the latter supremely embodied in the see of Rome.‘[271] If apostolic succession is the concrete external form of the Word, then from the very beginning Rome represents

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[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid., 56.
[270] Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, *Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church. Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority*, Ravenna, 13/10/2007: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20071013_documento-ravenna_en.html. The statement is also known as the *Ravenna Document*. For a Catholic commentary see Paul McPartlan, „The Ravenna Agreed Statement and Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue," *The Jurist* 69 (2009), 749–765. See also Vittorio Peri, *Lo scambio fraterno tra le Chiese: Componenti storiche della comunione* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria editrice vaticana, 1993).
[271] Ibid., 58.

‗that extreme concreteness into which God came when he assumed not merely a human nature, but the flesh of man – the flesh of the Church.'[272]

Incidentally, it is important to be aware that the Roman claim of primacy is altogether different from the claim of the patriarchal sees. Ratzinger believes that confusion on this issue is the source of the division between Rome and Constantinople. The difference is that while the patriarchal claim is administrative in its origin, arising from a geographic-political plane, the Roman claim originates within the theological notion of the apostolic sees.[273] The fact that Benedict XVI dropped the title of Patriarch of West in 2006 highlights the fundamentally distinct character of the Roman primacy.[274]

In conclusion, the apostolic sees and the Roman see in particular are the embodiment of the principle of apostolic succession, which derives from the very nature of the Church as ‗living presence of the divine Word' which is

> made concrete in those people (the bishops) whose basic function is to hold fast to the word, who are the personal embodiment of Tradition and to this extent are in the apostolic line of ‗succession.' Conspicuous among the lines of succession of the apostles is the line of the apostolic sees, which ultimately is concentrated in the See of Peter and Paul. For this reason the See of Rome remains as ‗the touchstone of apostolic succession.[275]

However it cannot be ‗the touchstone of apostolic succession' if isolated from the network of the other sees. If on the one hand communion with Rome guarantees the bishops authentic catholicity and fullness of apostolicity, on the other hand, ‗the episcopal see of Rome itself does not stand in isolation, devoid of relationships.'[276] Precisely because ‗it

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[272] Ibid.

[273] Ratzinger, ―Primacy, Episcopate and Apostolic Succession," 58-59.

[274] *Annuario Pontificio* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006). Although the official communiqué by Walter Kasper stated that the decision did not amount to new claims on the part of the pope, it nevertheless caused some concern among Orthodox that it meant a statement of the Pope's jurisdiction over the universal Church. Pontifical Council for the Unity of Christians, *Nota de suppression tituli „Patriarca d'Occidente" as Papam relati*, 22/03/2006, *AAS* 98(2006),364-365; Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, ―Announcement of the Chief Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Regarding the Denouncement by Pope Benedict XVI of Rome of the Title ‗Patriarch of the West'," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 51, no. 1–4 (2006), 357–360; Hervé Legrand, ―Il ministero del papa," *Il Regno-Documenti* 43, no. 13 (1998), 449-455; and Hervé Legrand, ―Il papa patriarca in occidente: attualità di un titolo inattuale," *Nicolaus* 34 (2007),19-42.

[275] Ratzinger, ―Primacy, Episcopate and Apostolic Succession," 59.

[276] Ibid., 59-60.

creates their catholicity for other sees,' Rome needs catholicity, it needs 'their catholic testimony… in order to remain true.'[277] Both papacy and episcopate are therefore 'simultaneously included in the notion of catholicity properly understood.'[278] They are both essential structures of the faith that lives in the Church.

### *c) The papal primacy in the service of unity*

In the light of the great emphasis Ratzinger places on *koinonia* (reciprocity, 'communion,' 'community' and 'participation', primarily with God and consequently among believers and communities) as essential principle of the faith and therefore as constitutive of the Church, the primacy of Peter that continues in the office of the Bishop of Rome exists in the service of unity.[279] At one level, this derives from the principle of *traditio-successio*, in which the Petrine primacy is rooted. Service of unity means that, as Peter's successor, the Bishop of Rome is to be principle of unity and its guarantor both synchronically (communion among the communities) and diachronically (communion with those who have shared in the one faith before us).

Papal primacy however is one of the two structures of communion in the Church, collegiality being the other. Because they are both of divine right there can be no contradiction between primacy and collegiality. In fact for Vatican II, collegiality presupposes primacy.

According to Ratzinger, the structure of collegiality corresponds to what he calls the 'we-structure' of Christian faith.[280] The personal act of faith, i.e. turning to God, is always ecclesial because it is at the same time a turning to the community of the baptised. In this sense the act of faith is simultaneously personal and ecclesial, and therefore faith has both an

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[277] Ibid., 60.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Joseph Ratzinger, "The Primacy of the Pope and the Unity of the People of God," in idem Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987, 36-50. On the use of *koinonia* in the New Testament see Peter Neuner, "The Church as Koinonia: a Central Theme of Vatican II," tr. Philip Endean, *The Way* 30, no. 3 (1990), 176–187.
[280] Ratzinger, "The Primacy of the Pope and the Unity of the People of God," 36-38.

_I-structure‘ and a _we-structure‘. This is evident in Scripture: the Old Testament shows that God deals with his people as a people, as a community; and when Jesus calls the Twelve and establishes them as the representative cell of the community of his disciples, he signifies that the community of his disciples is the New Israel resulting from the expansion of the First Israel so as to include all humanity in God‘s offer of salvation. At the theological level, the foundation of the _we-structure of the faith‘ – and therefore of collegiality – is the Trinity, the fact that God himself is a _we‘. At the level of Church structures, collegiality is visible in the communion of the bishops in the episcopal college.

At the same time however Christian faith has a profoundly personal dimension.[281] Both the Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament attest that God‘s call is always personal and requires a personal response and a personal commitment to witness. A personal response is required even when the call is addressed to many, and the witness deriving from the response is real because it is personal. At the ecclesial level this corresponds to the fact that historically, as Ratzinger observes, _in the Church there has never been an anonymous leadership of the Christian community.‘[282] In the New Testament the leadership of Christian communities associates to specific individuals who are identified by name, so that the _we-structure‘ of the faith of the community is embodied in the person of the bishop. At the level of universal Church, the community of communities, personal responsibility for the community is embodied in the pope.[283] As a matter of faith, the intrinsic and harmonious connection between the ‘I-‘ and ‘we-‘ structures of Christian faith is reflected not only in the liturgy (when the common faith is confessed personally by each individual with the words _I believe‘) but also in the structure of the Church. In conclusion, because the foundation of the Church is the profession of faith in Christ, collegiality represents the communion that results from sharing in the one faith. However, because the profession of faith can only be made

[281] Ibid., 39-42.
[282] Ibid., 40.
[283] Ibid., 40-41.

personally, i.e. by a subject who takes responsibility, the pope represents the concrete instance of this personal responsibility for the universal communion.[284]

According to Matthew's gospel (16:17-18), Simon the Apostle makes the profession of faith not only for himself but also on behalf of the Twelve. In response Jesus makes him the foundation of the Church: as the individual who in his profession of faith takes responsibility for himself and for all the disciples, not by his own resources but by the work of God. In this sense Peter becomes the guarantor of the unity rooted in the one profession of faith. In receiving the new name from Jesus, writes Ratzinger, "Peter is lifted up out of what is merely his own' and in the new name, "which transcends the historical individual, Peter becomes the institution that goes through history… yet in such a way that the institution can exist only as a person and in particular as personal responsibility.'[285]

Ratzinger defines primacy as "martyrological,' because it is based on the personal witness ensuing from the personal act of taking responsibility for the faith. True Christian witness is shaped after that of Christ himself, who is exalted by the Father only after undergoing *kenosis*, i.e. the complete emptying of himself as the ultimate expression of God's love for humanity (cf. Philippians 2:1-11). Papal primacy means also primacy in witness, hence primacy in the imitation of Christ, i.e. the Cross. With reference to Reginald Pole's writings, Ratzinger concludes that the Vicar of Christ can be such only if he follows the example of the Lord.[286] Because in the person of Christ Cross and authority coincide, the primacy of Peter is a primacy (authority) of loving service to the Church, of total commitment, and implies readiness to give up one's life for the sake of the sheep, following the example of the Good Shepherd.

The core of the Petrine ministry therefore consists in remaining bound up to God's will and, by so doing, in being bound up with the "we-' of the Church. Thus personal

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[284] Ibid., 41-42.
[285] Ibid., 42.
[286] Ibid., 46.

responsibility serves unity; and primacy and collegiality are inseparable. The function of the papacy is to serve the communion and it will do so „the more effectively, the more true it remains to its roots in the theology of the cross.“[287]

Within the Church, which is the universal sacrament of salvation (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 48), the pope is to be as it were the „sacrament of unity“: i.e. a sign of unity, which is Christ‘s gift to his disciples, and an instrument of unity, which is also their task.

Papal responsibility for unity is to be exercised at various levels. First, within the Catholic Church where, although already formally established, unity needs continuous care in order to be preserved and grow into the perfect love of Christ.

Second, at the ecumenical level, i.e. in relation to other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities, the pope is called to a continuous effort to give visible and concrete expression to the invisible unity that is already given in mystery through the common incorporation into Christ in Baptism. According to Ratzinger, the pope can have „a unifying function extending beyond the communion of the Roman Catholic Church“, because he remains „in the view of the whole world a point of reference with regard to the responsibility borne and expressed for the Word of faith.“[288] He constitutes a „challenge to greater fidelity to the Word“ for which he is personally responsible, and a challenge „to struggle for unity and to take responsibility for the lack of unity.“[289]

Finally, in virtue of the Church‘s mission to bring the Word to the ends of the earth, the pope has the responsibility to call all men and women to be one, through solidarity, on the basis of our common humanity based on the fact that God is the common origin and end of all. At this level of engagement with all men and women, it is possible to understand the nature and significance of the mission of the pope vis-à-vis interreligious dialogue.

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[287] Ibid., 49.
[288] Ibid.,
[289] Ibid.

### *d) Images of the Petrine Office*

On two occasions, Ratzinger has expounded on the nature and the mission of the pope starting from images and symbols. The first is a meditation on the Chair Altar of St Peter‘s in Rome, first published in German in 1991.[290] The second is his homily as Pope Benedict XVI, at the mass of inauguration of his pontificate (24 April 2005), when he explained the meaning of the pallium and the Fisherman‘s ring, the symbols used for the investiture of the new Pontiff.[291]

#### (1) The Chair Altar of St Peter’s Basilica in Rome

Ratzinger‘s meditation begins with a description, and then reflects on the various elements of the composition of the Chair Altar: the window, the cathedra and the Church Fathers supporting it.

> „Anyone who, after wandering through the massive nave of Saint Peter's Basilica, at last arrives at the final altar in the apse would probably expect here a triumphal depiction of Saint Peter, around whose tomb the Church is built. But nothing of the kind is the case. The figure of the Apostle does not appear among the sculptures of this altar. Instead, we stand before an empty throne that almost seems to float but is supported by the four figures of the great Church teachers of the West and the East. The muted light over the throne emanates from the window surrounded by floating angels, who conduct the rays of light downward.“[292]

In the light of what has been said so far, it is not surprising that the meditation on primacy should begin with its raison d‘être, which is the Church and its mission. In the composition, the window represents the Church, which God has established to be the point of contact between God and the world, where his divine light and life encounter the world and give it light and life. It is a reminder that the Church does not exist for herself but exclusively for a twofold service to God and to the world, because „through the window of her faith God

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[290] Joseph Ratzinger, „Primacy in Love. The Chair Altar of St. Peter‘s in Rome” in idem, *Images of Hope: meditations on major feasts*, John Rock and Graham Harrison trs. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1997), 29-35.

[291] Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Mass for the Inauguration of his Pontificate*, 24/04/2005, *AAS* 97(2005),707-712.

[292] Ratzinger, „Primacy in Love,” 29.

enters this world and awakens in it the desire for what is greater.‘[293] The task of the Church is _to open up‘ to God a world that tends to close in on itself.

The empty cathedra, represents the abiding presence of Peter, the Apostle _who as a teacher remains present in his successors‘.[294] Ratzinger calls it the _throne of truth, which in that hour of Cesarea became his and his successor‘s charge.‘[295] Peter‘s teaching role stands on the assurance that Jesus gave him at the Last Supper, when he prayed for him that he may _strengthen his brethren‘ (Luke 22:32). By his teaching, Peter is to be the supporting rock of their faith, the faith of the apostles and of their successors, who in turn will have the responsibility to protect and nourish the faith of all the baptised in Christ. For this reason Ignatius of Antioch defines Peter‘s primacy as the _primacy of love.‘[296] It is a Eucharistic primacy, patterned after the Lord‘s total self-gift in which the faithful can participate through the celebration of the Eucharist. It is primacy of the Cross, from which Jesus gathers all believers and indeed all humanity to himself, and by which they become one in his Body. The Chair of Peter represents the task entrusted to Peter and his successors, to bring about the unity of the Church and of humanity by being the means through which Jesus‘ promise continues to be fulfilled.[297] The Chair of Peter also reminds that love and order, when correctly understood, are not opposites but belong together: true order is the guarantor of true love.[298]

The _throne of serving‘ is supported by the figures of four Church Fathers: Chrysostom and Athanasius representing the Eastern tradition, and Ambrose and Augustine, who stand for the Latin tradition.[299] Together they represent the entirety of Tradition and the faith of the one

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[293] Ibid., 31.
[294] Ibid., 31.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Ibid., 32.
[298] Ibid., 32-33.
[299] Ibid., 33.

undivided Church, built on the revealed Word. The image is a statement that true love stands on faith, which comes from the Word of God.[300]

In contemplating the composition, Ratzinger suggests two converging interpretations. Starting from below, that is to say, from the human point of view, the composition tells that faith based on the Word of God generates authentic love, through which we encounter the Love of God. Starting from above, from God, the composition tells that God's light comes down on humanity to awaken faith and love and bring humanity into communion with God. The Church therefore exists as mediation in this twofold dynamic, and within it the primacy exists to ensure that the Church remains faithful to its mission. In this sense the task of primacy is ultimately communion.

**(2) The Pallium and the Fisherman's Ring**

The pallium and the Fisherman's ring given to the successor of Peter symbolise his mission.[301] As it is placed on the shoulders of the newly elected pope, the pallium has a twofold meaning. First, it symbolises the yoke of Christ, i.e. God's will, which the pope accepts to carry. Commenting on this, pope Benedict says that this yoke, _to know what God wants', is the source of our joy because it _does not alienate us, it purifies us… and so it leads us to ourselves;' in doing God's will we serve also _the salvation of the whole world, of all history.'[302]

The second meaning is related to the first: being made of wool, the pallium represents the lost sheep that the Shepherd finds and carries back home on his shoulders (Luke 15:5). _The human race… – says Benedict – is the sheep lost in the desert.'[303] However, Christ does not abandon humanity but carries all of us on his shoulders. Despite his human weakness and limitations the pope is to be as it were a sacrament of the Good Shepherd, and must take up

[300] Ibid., 33-34.
[301] Benedict XVI, *Homily*, 24/04/2005.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Ibid.

the mission of leading people out of their deserts: „the desert of poverty, … of hunger and thirst, … of abandonment, of loneliness, of destroyed love,‘ the „emptiness of souls no longer aware of their dignity of the goal of human life.‘[304]

The lamb also symbolises the humility of God, who himself became the Lamb (John 1:29.36) and stood on the side of the lambs. By giving his life for the lambs (John 10:11), Christ showed how the true shepherd should behave: through love patterned after the love of Christ. The pallium is the symbol of the pope as the shepherd whose task is to feed the sheep, as Jesus told Peter (John 21:15-17). To feed Christ‘s sheep, explains Pope Benedict, means loving those for whom Christ suffers and dies, and therefore means readiness to suffer. For Pope Benedict to love the sheep means above all „giving the sheep what is truly good, the nourishment of God‘s truth, of God‘s word, the nourishment of his presence, which he gives in the Blessed Sacrament.‘[305]

In order to explain the meaning of the Fisherman‘s ring, Benedict XVI recalls that Jesus appointed Peter as the shepherd of his flock immediately after the miraculous catch (John 21:11) when, after a fruitless night of work, on Jesus‘ instructions, the disciples had caught one-hundred and fifty-three large fish. The episode parallels the first miraculous catch that took place three years earlier, after which Jesus had entrusted Peter with his mission: „From now on it is men that you will catch‘ (Luke 5:1-11). The Fisherman‘s ring is a reminder of the mission entrusted to Peter and his successors, that „as we follow Christ in this mission to be fishers of men, we must bring men and women out of the sea‘ of alienation and to the „land of life, towards the light of God.‘[306] In other words: „we exist in order to show God to men and women,‘ because „only where God is seen does life truly begin.‘[307]

Lastly, for Benedict XVI, „both the image of the shepherd and of the fisherman issue an explicit call to unity: „I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must lead them too, and

[304] Ibid.
[305] Ibid., 710.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Ibid., 711.

they will hear my voice and there will be one flock, one shepherd' (John 10:16).' The story of the second miraculous catch ends with the joyful statement that although the fish were so many, _the net was not torn' (John 21:11). In this regard Pope Benedict adds the confession that _alas, beloved Lord, with sorrow we must now acknowledge that it has indeed been torn', because Christians are divided, and prays for God's help in papal responsibility: _Lord grant that we may be one flock and one shepherd! Do not allow your net to be torn. Help us to be a servant of unity!'[308]

### *e) Conclusion*

On the basis of the patristic testimony that attributes to the Roman See the same authority as that conferred by Jesus on Peter at Cesarea, Ratzinger understands the papacy as an essential structure of the Church. While historically the Petrine Office has been exercised in various forms, these must be distinguished from the essential structure of primacy, which cannot be changed because is of divine right.[309]

Because the Church is the visible embodiment of the faith and because the witness of faith always requires a personal responsibility, as Peter's successor the bishop of Rome is the ultimate embodiment of such responsibility, for the faith of the entire Church. However Roman primacy is therefore exercised correctly when it is consistent with the biblical understanding of primacy. Peter is made the rock by God on account of his profession of faith; as long as he remains in obedience to the Lord's commands, he is rock, otherwise he becomes stumbling block in Jesus' mission. More concretely, the primacy of the pope is exercised correctly only when it remains in the service of the mission of the Church, to be instrumental to the gathering of all people into unity, which is the work of Christ who said: _when I will be lifted up, I will draw all people to myself' (John 12:32).

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[308] Ibid., 712.

[309] Joseph Ratzinger, *The Question of Truth lies at the Centre of Theology*, (Symposium on the Primacy of the successor of Peter), 2/12/1996, *L'Osservatore Romano,* English weekly edition, 01/01/1997.

Throughout his pontificate as Benedict XVI, Ratzinger‘s teaching and ministry was consistent with this idea of papacy. His sense of responsibility towards the Church and the world, especially with regard to the task of unity, was the underlying motive of his teaching and actions, including his resignation from the papal office on account of his feeling no longer equal, both physically and mentally, to the huge task of being the shepherd of Christ‘s sheep. In a relatively short pontificate, Pope Benedict has greatly contributed to the recovery of an image of papacy modelled on the biblical and patristic understanding. Without doubt his successors will be able to continue from where he has left off, and present the Church and the world with a papal office evermore in keeping with the original commission entrusted to Peter by Christ the Lord.

## D. CONCLUSION

The study of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's notion of theology ultimately leads to ecclesiology as the context in which his understanding of interreligious dialogue is rooted and acquires significance.

Ratzinger strongly emphasises that faith is the constitutive element of theology [a point heralded by Henri de Lubac who saw in contemporary Atheism and its political offshoots the origins in the separation between theology and belief. We can affirm here is the continuing influence of the thought of de Lubac throughout the life and work of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI], which arises precisely from the missionary dynamism embedded in Christian faith that seeks to communicate its message. Effective communication of the faith requires making it understandable to human reason, so that its content may be received as answer to the human quest for meaning, i.e. for the truth. This implies that, although distinct, faith and reason belong together as neither can be truly itself without the other. Thus theology and philosophy need each other in order to remain faithful to the truth, which is their reason d'être. Theology however relates to the truth in a way different from philosophy. In fact, while philosophy endeavours to find the answer to the question of the truth, theology begins with an answer that is already given, and then follows the path of philosophy to make the answer understandable to reason. As the content of faith is revealed, theology draws it existence from the Scripture. In fact, in line with the patristic tradition, for Ratzinger only Scripture is theology in the proper sense and the biblical authors are the true theologians, who lend their voice to God and re-express the Word that they have heard. Scripture is then the norm and prototype of theology. Scripture however provides the foundation of Christian faith only when it is received as Word of God, that is to say when it is proclaimed and heard within the Church, the community of the believers, where faith is kept alive through time and space.

The immediate consequence of the intrinsic relationship between theology and faith is the intrinsic relationship between Church and theology, which Ratzinger considers vital for

the latter. Authentic theology is possible only within the Church, as ecclesial service to the faith. Concretely theology depends on Tradition and Magisterium, through which the faith of the Church is preserved and manifested.

In this sense, Ratzinger‘s understanding of theology and theological method mirror those of the Church Fathers, which he has encountered – as this chapter has shown – both directly through his studies as well as indirectly, through his theological teachers who were all inspired by the ‗ancient teachers‘ of the faith. Such theologians contributed significantly to Ratzinger's idea that, after Scripture, the Fathers are normative for theology, as they direct the Church back to the sources in order to find the way forward through the challenges of the present historical context.[310] They are able to do so because their theology is based on careful interpretation of the Scripture and lives within ecclesial communion. To say that Ratzinger, like de Lubac, can be understood as a Church Father, does not mean claiming for him the authority of the ancient teachers, but to affirm that he has profoundly understood the theological posture of the Fathers and has made it his own.[311]

Ratzinger‘s theological vision is always ecclesiological. Within the framework of his Eucharistic ecclesiology the idea of unity emerges as a key ecclesiological and theological category. The unity of the Church, for which Jesus prayed, sets the Church‘s task in the world. The Body of Christ must be one because it is constituted by Christ as the sign and the sacrament of the unity of humankind: prefiguring the end to which all men and women are called and as the means for achieving their unity, that is to say salvation. In this line, because

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[310] See Cristian Badilita and Charles Kannengiesser, eds., *Les Pères de l'Eglise dans le monde d'aujourd'hui: actes du colloque international* (Paris; Bucarest: Beauchesne; Curtea Veche, 2006).

[311] According to Bernard Meunier the term ‗Church Fathers‘ dates back to the patristic period itself. It is rooted in Scripture but around the middle of the fourth century, and especially in Athanasius of Alexandria, it takes on a new meaning in a specific context, the Council of Nicaea. Those who took part in this first ecumenical council were to be the ‗fathers‘ of the faith defined by the creedal definition drawn up there. The Fathers are therefore first and foremost the council fathers. The expression was then extended to cover the other ecumenical councils, or in certain cases isolated authors; however, it is not as individuals that the Fathers are authoritative, but as a communion, whose particular function is to define the faith (Bernard Meunier, ―Genèse de la notion de «Pères de l‘Eglise» aux IVe et Ve siècles,‖ *Revue Des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 93, no. 2 (2009), 315-331). The return to the Church Fathers as modern religious-theological category has also been felt in other contexts; see Silvia Scatena, Jon Sobrino and Luiz Carlos Susin eds., *Fathers of the Church in Latin America*, *Concilum* 5 (2009).

the Petrine Office represents the ‗personal embodiment' of the Church's ‗corporate' responsibility deriving from its faith, the papacy exists as the ‗personal' embodiment of the Church as sign and instrument of the unity of humanity. This understanding determines the mission of the Church in all its different aspects, including the interreligious engagement, which in this sense acquires ecclesiological and soteriological significance.

This theological-ecclesiological vision provides the context in which Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's notion of interreligious dialogue can be truly appreciated.

# V. PART THREE
# BENEDICT XVI, THE RELIGIONS AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The ecclesial-historical context of the modern papacy, with its new style of engagement with humanity, and the theological vision of Ratzinger/Benedict provide the framework to appreciate his understanding of interreligious dialogue.

In this regard two aspects need to be given attention: his theology of religions and his teaching on interreligious dialogue. With regard to the first, his theological assessment of the non-Christian religions dates back to the early years of his theological career, when he was teaching fundamental theology. In those years he was also present at the Council, while the question of the relations of the Church with the non-Christian believers was being debated. While the scarcity in later writings on this topic seem to indicate that no major developments have taken place in Ratzinger‘s theology of religions, he certainly had to deal significantly with the question of religions, albeit from a different point of view, at the time when the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (which he headed) produced *Dominus Iesu*, in response to what he considered to be the danger of relativism in theology of religious pluralism.

Regarding the second aspect, as pope, Benedict XVI has addressed interreligious dialogue extensively, as evidenced by the records of his speeches and his writings. He has spoken about interreligious dialogue in general, and in doing so he has often stated that he values the religions and their followers, and especially the particular dialogues of the Church with Judaism and Islam. His papal teaching seem to indicate a development, i.e. a shift to a more trusting attitude in interreligious dialogue that possibly reflects the increased interaction with non-Christian believers that he experienced as pope.

All these aspects must be taken into account to understand Ratzinger/Benedict XVI‘s notion of interreligious dialogue, and assess whether it contributes to the growth of the Church in this dimension of its life and mission.

# A. THE RELIGIONS AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF BENEDICT XVI'S THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY

## 1. Christianity and the religions

Ratzinger's initial encounter with the religions occurred on the path of his fundamental theological reflection. As he attempted to articulate the Christian faith in order to present it as clearly as possible, Ratzinger at some point focussed on the place of Christianity within the development of the religious history of humanity. It was, he says, when teaching philosophy of religion and history of religions that he encountered the reality of world religions. His enquiry is therefore driven by the question of whether Christianity has a unique place within the history of the religious development of humanity, which includes all expressions of *homo religious* as they have been articulated in the systems of belief and practice commonly called religions. He thus seeks to understand the decisive contribution of Christianity to the religious development of humanity and how it relates to the religions.

This reveals a distinctive characteristic of Benedict XVI, the theologian and pastor that emerges from an examination of his theology, that is to say the remarkable similarity of his theological method with the style of the Church Fathers. The Fathers' central concern was the correct and clear articulation of the faith, especially vis-a-vis the challenge of heretical reductions of the Christian message, aimed at making Christianity understandable to the hearers and enabling them to embrace it. Their attempts to account theologically for the existence of other religious ways emerged basically as a consequence of their „practical" missionary concern. The same is true for Benedict XVI: his focus is the articulation of Christian faith faithful to its sources (Revelation and Tradition).

Another important feature of Ratzinger's theological method that can be useful to understand his approach to the religions, is that he consistently seeks to identify and

engage with the universal behind the particular, the *archetypes*, without losing sight of the particular. Concretely, this means that, vis-a-vis one particular religious tradition, Ratzinger's theological reflection occurs in stages: beginning with the broader context of the non-Christian religions, he then locates the particular religion in that context and then draws his conclusions. If the disadvantage is that he does not formulate a theology of that particular religion, the advantage is that his reflections apply to the broader spectrum of religions as well.

A paper Ratzinger wrote as early as 1964 is, to date, the most comprehensive articulation of his theology of religions. At that time he had left his post as Professor of Fundamental Theology at the University of Bonn and transferred to Munster, and had been working as *peritus* at the Council, where the question of the Church and the religions was being discussed. The paper was re-presented in 2004 basically unaltered, prefaced by a new introduction, showing that his basic theology of religion has remained consistent over several decades.[1] The paper dates back to a time when a very lively debate was ongoing within Catholic theology with regard to the religions. Jacques Dupuis has summed up the positions of the debate in *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, and identified two major clusters: on the one hand what he calls fulfilment theories, represented by theologians like Jean Daniélou and Henri De Lubac, and on the other hand those theologies that acknowledge the hidden presence of the mystery of Christ in the religions, most notably represented by Karl Rahner.[2] Ratzinger manifests his

[1] See Joseph Ratzinger, "The Unity and Diversity of Religions: the Place of Christianity in the History of Religions," in Herbert Vorgrimler ed., *Gott in Welt: Festgabe für Karl Rahner zum 60 Geburtstag* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 287-305. Published in English in Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance Christian Belief and World Religions* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 15-44.

[2] See Jacques Dupuis, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 130-157. See also Jean Daniélou, *The Lord of History: Reflections on the Inner Meaning of History* (London: Longmans, 1958), 107-121; "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," in idem ed., *Introduction to the Great Religions*, (Notre Dame: Fides, 1964), 7-28; *The Advent of Salvation*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1950); *The Holy Pagans of the Old Testament*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957); Henri de Lubac, *The Church Paradox and Mystery,* (Shannon, Ireland: Ecclesia Press, 1969), 68-95 (Chapter 4: "The Pagan Religions and the Fathers of the Church"); "Mysticism and Mystery," in idem *Theological Fragments* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989); 35-69, French original: *Théologies d'Occasion*, (Paris:

disinclination towards Rahner's concept of Christian grace hiddenly operative in the religions and is closer to Daniélou's approach. For Daniélou and others, the religions do have a positive value in the history of salvation, and in God's salvific plan, which consists in their being a preparation for the human spirit to receive the grace that comes with the Judeo-Christian revelation.[3] In this sense they belong to a "prehistory of salvation", not chronologically but in theological terms. Concretely, for Daniélou, although for example the religion of Islam appears after Christianity, and although it is rooted in the content of the Old Testament, it represents a "regression" to a vertical relationship with God, with the loss of the sense of God's action in history, and therefore it is a return to the prehistory of salvation, which is fulfilled in Christ.[4]

Ratzinger prefaces his argument with a methodological premise. He observes that most theologies of religions are "limited", having been constructed on two assumptions that are arbitrary. Incidentally, Ratzinger's later critique includes the threefold classification of theologies of religions into exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism by Alan Race.[5] The first assumption is that, with regard to religious pluralism, the crucial question for Christian theology is that of the salvation of non-Christians (the soteriological dimension). The second arbitrary assumption is a corollary to the first: because religions are looked at from the perspective of whether and how their adherents are saved or not, then they are treated not in themselves, respecting the particularity of

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Desclée, 1984); "Preface," in A. Ravier, *La mystique et les mystiques*, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1965), 7-39; Karl Rahner, "Thoughts on the Possibility of Belief Today," *Theological Investigations,* 5 (1966), 2-22; Karl Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," *Theological Investigations*, 5 (1966), 113-134.

[3] Daniélou, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions."

[4] Ibid.

[5] Joseph Ratzinger, "Variations on the Theme of Faith, Religion and Culture," in idem, *Truth and Tolerance,* 80-85. The "threefold paradigm" of Church of England minister and theologian Alan Race became a significant point of reference for the theology of religions in the last two decades of the twentieth century for Anglican theologians and also among Catholics. See: Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1983); and idem, *Interfaith Encounter: the Twin Tracks of Theology and Dialogue* (London: SCM, 2001). For evaluations of the threefold paradigm from the Catholic perspective see: Michael Barnes, *Religions in Conversation: Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism* (London: SPCK, 1989); and Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

each, but „in bulk", as a homogeneous reality ultimately characterised by the same basic dynamics and properties. A theology of religion that begins and ends with the question of salvation deals not with the real religions but with an abstract generalization, whereby there would be no difference when talking about Sikhism or Islam for example.[6]

Ratzinger considers this as an arbitrary self-limitation of theology and proposes a different way of proceeding, consisting in a „phenomenological investigation" of the spectrum of the known religions in order to identify at least certain basic types of religion („basic alternatives"), and make these the object of „philosophical and theological reflections and verdicts."[7]

At the end of his lengthy phenomenological investigation of the religious history of humanity, Ratzinger identifies three stages of development: the first is the stage of the natural religions, based on the perception of the Transcendent/God in the dynamics of the cosmos and of human life. This stage then develops into the second stage of mythical religions, when the initial experience of the transcendent is articulated in mythical stories. The third stage is inaugurated by a going-beyond the mystical religions and is a complex stage, as it has occurred in three possible ways: through evolution into mystical religion, through the revolution of monotheism and finally through reason/enlightenment.[8] The two forms of development that remain within the category of religion are therefore the mystical and the monotheistic. The monotheism he refers to is the very specific form that is typical of the Judeo-Christian revelation (and of Islam by derivation) and not general belief in one God (of the kind that can be found among the Indian religions).[9]

Ratzinger's comparison between the mystical type and the monotheistic type helps us to understand how Judaism-Christianity-Islam are as a whole to be seen as the „true' development of the religious history of humanity. First, monotheistic development

[6] Ratzinger, „The Unity and Diversity of Religions," 17, 53.
[7] Ibid., 18.
[8] Ibid., 27-28.
[9] Ibid., 34-35.

happens by ‗revolution' and not by ‗evolution'. It is occasioned by the intervention of the Transcendent into history, which establishes a personal relationship with the believer. As a result, the life of the believer is transformed and given a new sense of purpose. The initial ‗cosmic' experience of God through creation and through myth is profoundly reshaped by such intervention. There is continuity but also a radical newness in this kind of monotheism.

The second characteristic of monotheism is that the goal of ultimate unity with God is made possible by God's initiative. The main actor as well as the centre of the relationship is therefore God and not the person, and knowledge of God is not obtained by the person via paths of purification but offered by God. In the monotheistic revolution the person is of course not simply passive, but becomes active as it responds to God's initiative.[10]

Thirdly and most importantly, the goal of religion is, as for the mystical religions, union with God, but it happens in such a way that the interpersonal relationship and the particular identities are preserved: the person and God become one but their unity is that of an irreducible ‗I and thou' relationship, that is to say, it is never the absorption and ultimately the identification of one into the Other, with the consequent loss of personal identity.[11]

Finally, the God that enters into history makes people actors in the history of salvation just as they are: this is why the Bible has no need to hide the dark side of the patriarchs and prophets and the limitations of Jesus' disciples.[12] It means that salvation is always God's gift and accessible to all, not just to the few who have attained some superior level of knowledge or purification. While in mystical religion there is a first-hand religion that belongs to the initiated, and a second-hand religion which is for the

[10] Ibid., 36.
[11] Ibid., 45-47; Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, tr. Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: Clark, 1942).
[12] Ratzinger, ―The Unity and Diversity of Religions," 40-41.

many, so that the latter can access the divine exclusively through the experience of the former, in the monotheistic development "only God deals at first-hand' and all "without exception are dealing at second hand", including those who are appointed leaders of the people.[13]

It is possible to detect the influence of de Lubac underlying Ratzinger's implicit assumption that monotheistic development is more "advanced' than the way of mysticism because it is more in tune with the God's authentic nature, according to Christian Revelation.[14] Alongside Christianity and Judaism, Islam also belongs to the monotheistic development of religion and therefore, albeit with the necessary distinctions and reservations, the relationship between Christianity and Islam is, for example, qualitatively different from the relationship between Christianity and Buddhism or that between Islam and any of the currents of Hinduism.[15] It is a special relationship, from the historical as well as the theological point of view, in the sense that there is a basic convergence between Christianity, Judaism and Islam deriving from the specific nature of God's relationship with the believer characteristic of the monotheistic turn.

When Ratzinger speaks about Judaism and Islam, therefore, he does so with the assumption that there is a fundamental relationship between them and Christianity that is "essential", because they belong to the same basic type of religion. Any distinction, difference, comparison made by Benedict is to be understood against this background. As a distinctive form within the monotheistic turn, Islam too possesses all the above characteristics.

Indeed, Ratzinger acknowledges the positive value of all the religious history of humanity, on account of the common humanity of all. He writes that "we are all part of a

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[13] Ibid., 43-45.

[14] de Lubac, "Preface"; "Mysticism and Mystery."

[15] Michael Barnes, "Expanding Catholicity: the Dialogue with Buddhism," *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1016 (July 1, 2007), 399–409; and Martin Ganeri, "Catholic Encounter with Hindus in the Twentieth Century," *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1016 (July 1, 2007), 410–432.

single history that is in many different fashions on the way towards God,‘ however within this history Christianity holds a unique place, and close to Christianity one necessarily encounters Judaism first, and then Islam.[16]

## 2. The significance and value of interreligious dialogue

Ratzinger spoke of interreligious dialogue in an important address five years before becoming pope, when he presented *Dominus Iesus*, the „Declaration on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church,‘ issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on 6 August 2000.[17] At the press conference on 5 September 2000, he described the ecclesial and theological context that occasioned *Dominus Iesus* and spoke of its significance.[18] Ratzinger carefully distinguished the notion of interreligious dialogue according to the teaching of Vatican II, from an „Ideology of dialogue‘ that has become increasingly widespread among Christians. Consistent with his theological methodology, Ratzinger‘s definition of interreligious dialogue emerges in response to a concrete challenge, that of relativism, and is built on the ecclesial tradition, i.e the Council‘s documents *Nostra Aetate*, *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes*, as well as John Paul II‘s encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*.

Ratzinger describes relativism as „the idea that all religions are for their followers equally valid paths of salvation.‘ This idea is incompatible with Christian faith because of its presuppositions and their consequences. At the heart of relativism is the idea that the Absolute is ultimately unknowable; there is an unbridgeable distance between the truth and human understanding and experience, whereby any revelation of the Absolute – including Jesus Christ – can at most be a model, a reflection of it. Consequently, it cannot

[16] Ratzinger, „The Unity and Diversity of Religions,“ 44.

[17] Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei, *Dominus Iesus. De Iesu Christi atque Ecclesiae unicitate et universalitate salvifica*, 06/08/2000, *AAS* 92(2000*),*742-765.

[18] Joseph Ratzinger, *Contesto e Significato Della Dichiarazione Dominus Iesus*, 5/09/2000, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000905_dominus-iesus-ratzinger_it.html.

be claimed that Jesus Christ is the truth, but only one manifestation of it, which is as imperfect as other revelations and therefore must be complemented by them in order to offer a fuller, but never complete, manifestation of the truth. As the absolute cannot be known in itself, relativism denies the possibility of an absolute truth, and considers any such claim as a fundamentalism, an ‗attack against the modern spirit' and a ‗threat to tolerance and freedom.' Against this background, Christianity must renounce any Christological truth-claims and accept that it needs the revelations of other religions in order to understand God. Obviously, this is incompatible with the essence of Christian faith, that the historical Jesus of Nazareth is the concrete manifestation of the Absolute. Relativism constructs its own notions of truth, freedom, tolerance, and ultimately dialogue, which then means

> placing one's position or faith at the same level as the faith and the convictions of others, so that all is reduced to an exchange of fundamentally equal positions and therefore relative to one another, with the higher goal of achieving the greater degree of cooperation and integration among the different religious persuasions.[19]

This ‗ideology of dialogue' is incompatible with the Catholic understanding of interreligious dialogue as ‗the way to discover the truth' and the process by which

> one discloses to the other the hidden depth of what he or she has apprehended in his or her religious experience, which waits to be fulfilled and purified in encountering the full and definitive revelation of God in Jesus Christ.[20]

While the Catholic idea of interreligious dialogue taught by the Magisterium, does not contradict the need for the Church to preach the Gospel and invite others to communion with Christ by entry into the Church, the relativistic notion of dialogue does.

In line with the Church's teaching, Ratzinger understands interreligious dialogue as originating in a shared quest for the truth that is at the heart of Christianity and indeed of every religion. The ultimate, theological foundation, of interreligious dialogue is the truth of God, which Christians know to be fully manifested in Christ. Every effort to recognise

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[19] Ibid. My translation.
[20] Ibid.

the elements of truth present in other religions (*Nostra Aetate* 2), which Catholics perceive as the work of the Spirit (*Redemptoris Missio* 29), cannot but be taken into consideration in connection with the mystery of Christ. In the light of this mystery it is possible to appreciate the uniqueness of the Church, which is based not on the qualities or achievements of its members, but on the fact that despite its limitations and even sinfulness, the mystery of Christ is present in it, as the Head of his Body.

This is, Ratzinger explains, the only notion of interreligious dialogue that takes other religions seriously by taking seriously the existence of the truth and the efforts of the religions to find it.

In an important theological paper published in 1998 and entitled „Interreligious Dialogue and Jewish-Christian Relations", Ratzinger had formulated three theses about interreligious dialogue in general.[21] First, religions can meet only by 'delving more deeply into the truth," in fact renunciation of the truth „does not elevate man but exposes him to the calculus of utility and robs him of his greatness."[22] As a consequence the interreligious conversation requires reverence to other's belief and willingness to seek the truth, to learn better my own beliefs by understanding the other and 'be furthered on the path of God'.[23] Second, this implies that in the encounter „we cannot and must not dispense with criticism' both of the other's and also of our own tradition which must be 'unceasingly purified by the truth."[24] Lastly, interreligious dialogue is 'not random conversation, but aims at persuasion, at discovering the truth. Otherwise it is worthless." It must not preclude the sincere communication of one's conviction, although mission must be a 'dialogical event', because 'we are not saying something that is completely unknown to the other, but disclosing the hidden depth of what he already touches in his own belief." For

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[21] Joseph Ratzinger, „Interreligious Dialogue and Jewish-Christian relations," *Communio* 25, no. 1 (1998), 29-41.
[22] Ibid., 38.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 39.

this reason, Ratzinger believes that interreligious dialogue „should increasingly become a listening to the Logos, who shows us unity in the midst of our divisions and contradictions."[25]

As pope, Ratzinger has further articulated the notion of interreligious dialogue on several occasions. Three of his addresses are particularly important, not only because they focus directly on the value of religions and interreligious dialogue, but also because they are addressed to people of other faiths. They were delivered respectively at Benedict's meetings with representatives of other religions in Washington on 17 April 2008, in Sydney on 8 July 2008 and in London on 17 September 2010.[26] His papal teaching on interreligious dialogue is marked by two characteristics: first, it is visibly imbued with the spirit and doctrine of *Nostra Aetate*, at times even reflected in his choice of words. Second, it is marked by a positive, generous and creative effort to emphasise the value of religion and religions at levels different from the question of salvation, which has in recent decades often become the main, and at times exclusive, focus of the discussion on the religions and their interaction.

### *a) The essence of interreligious dialogue: the common quest for the truth*

For Benedict XVI the aim of interreligious dialogue is crucial because it defines the nature of dialogue and determines its implications both at the theoretical and pastoral-practical level. Building on Church teaching and developing his previous theological reflection, the Pope explains that the ultimate purpose of interreligious dialogue is the

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[25] Ibid., 40-41.

[26] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Washington DC, 17/04/2008, *AAS* 100(2008*),*327-330; *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Sydney, 18/07/2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/july/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080718_interel_en.html; *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, London, 17/09/2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2010/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100917_altre-religioni_en.html**;** *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Sydney, 18/07/2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/july/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080718_interel_en.html.

common quest for the truth.[27] This constitutes the deepest foundation of interreligious dialogue, which stands at a level even deeper than that of shared values. In fact interreligious dialogue must not stop at the discovery of convergent values, but must go further to explore ‗their ultimate foundation', by listening together attentively to the voice of truth. In this sense it is a process of learning together, in obedience to the truth.[28]

The ultimate goal must always be kept present, even when dialogue is still at earlier stages of development and focuses on what Benedict XVI sees as its intermediate goals: as for example the effort to gain ‗a consensus regarding ways to implement practical strategies for advancing peace.'[29] This does not mean that for Benedict XVI peace-building among peoples is a marginal matter. In fact it is a most urgent ‗duty to which all people must be committed, especially those who profess to belong to religious traditions.'[30] However, peace-building is not the ultimate end of interreligious dialogue. Actually, Benedict XVI insists that the quest for the truth is the foundation of true peace because ‗wherever and whenever men and women are enlightened by the splendour of truth, they naturally set out on the path of peace.'[31] This conviction allows Benedict to state that the efforts of religious people to ‗come together and foster dialogue are a valuable contribution to building peace on solid foundations.'[32]

For Benedict XVI

> our quest for peace goes hand in hand with our search for meaning, for it is in discovering the truth that we find the road to peace. Our effort to bring about reconciliation between peoples springs from, and is directed to, that truth which gives purpose to life. Religion offers peace, but more importantly, it arouses within the human spirit a thirst for truth and hunger for virtue.[33]

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[27] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Washington DC, 17/04/2008, 329.

[28] Ibid., 330.

[29] Ibid., 329.

[30] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Delegates of Other Churches and Ecclesial communities and of Other Religious Traditions*, 25/04/2005, *AAS* 97(2005*),*743.

[31] Benedit XVI, *In Truth Peace. Message for the World Day for Peace*, 1/01/2006, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20051213_xxxix-world-day-peace_en.html.

[32] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Delegates of Other Churches and Ecclesial communities and of Other Religious Traditions*, 25/04/2005, 743.

[33] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Sydney, 18/07/2008.

There are other ‚intermediate goals' to interreligious dialogue, whose significance is not to be underestimated, such as cooperation for the promotion of human life, of integral human development and of religious freedom. However, these belong to interreligious dialogue as necessary implications of the quest for the truth, where the meaning of human existence is found. Thus the promotion of life and religious freedom are forms of the service to the truth that pertains to interreligious dialogue on account of its very nature.[34] Interreligious dialogue is ‚a matter of finding ourselves together on this journey towards the truth, of firm commitment to the dignity of man and of taking responsibility together for the cause of peace against every form of violence that destroys his rights (*violenza distruttrice del diritto*).'[35]

***b) The fundamental conditions of possibility of interreligious dialogue: the universality of human experience and the true nature of religion***

For Pope Benedict interreligious dialogue has an anthropological foundation in the common humanity of all men and women. It is the universal character of human experience, which transcends all geographical boundaries and cultural limitations, making it possible for the followers of religions to engage in dialogue so as to grapple with the mystery of life's joys and sufferings.[36] The value of religion and of the different religions ultimately resides in the essence of the human person, whose origin and destiny are in the Absolute, beyond the sphere of empirical reality. Because finding the ultimate meaning of human existence is the raison d'être of religions, the distinctive quality of all religious persons is that

> in our different ways, are personally engaged in a journey that grants an answer to the most important question of all... concerning the ultimate meaning of our human existence. The quest for the sacred is the search for the one thing necessary, which alone satisfies the longing of the human heart.[37]

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[34] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Washington DC, 17/04/2008, 330.

[35] Benedict XVI, *Allocutio in die reflexionis, colloquii et precationis pro pace et iustitia in terrarum orbe*, Assisi, 27/10/2011, *AAS* 103(2011),762. My translation.

[36] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Sydney, 18/07/2008.

[37] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, London, 17/09/2010.

Thus religions are important because „genuine religious belief points us beyond present utility towards the transcendent.‘ When it is properly understood, religion „brings enlightenment, it purifies our hearts and it inspires noble and generous action, to the benefit of the entire human family.‘[38] Religions have a „special role‘ for two reasons: first, because

> the religious sense planted within the human heart opens men and women to God and leads them to discover that personal fulfilment does not consist in the selfish gratification of ephemeral desires. Rather, it leads us to meet the needs of others and to search for concrete ways to contribute to the common good.[39]

Second, because the „presence and witness [of religious people] in the world points towards the fundamental importance for human life of this spiritual quest in which we are engaged.‘[40]

The religions acquire even greater importance for humanity when people of different faiths speak together. In fact

> the unified voice of religious people urges nations and communities to resolve conflicts through peaceful means and with full regard for human dignity. One of the many ways religion stands at the service of mankind is by offering a vision of the human person that highlights our innate aspiration to live generously, forging bonds of friendship with our neighbours.[41]

In the contemporary world, the value of religion is often unappreciated if not denied, especially in the light of religious fundamentalism and atheist culture. When it is not seen as irrelevant to human life, religion is often viewed as a cause of conflict and violence. In this regard Benedict XVI suggests that nowadays the inability to find God is also partly the responsibility of believers with a „limited or even falsified image of God.‘[42]

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Sydney, 18/07/2008.
[40] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, London, 17/09/2010.
[41] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Sydney, 18/07/2008.
[42] Benedict XVI, *Allocutio in die reflexionis*, Assisi, 27/10/2011, 762.

The inner „struggling and questioning" of non-believers „is in part an appeal to believers to purify their faith, so that God, the true God, becomes accessible."[43]

In this context „a fundamental task of interreligious dialogue" is to reflect on and manifest the true nature of religion, i.e. to show that religion can never be used to motivate violence, but that its purpose is to show that „rightly-lived orientation of man towards God is a force for peace."[44] For Pope Benedict „it is important that all faithful oppose with determination and clarity the exploitation of religion as a pretext to justify violence."[45]

Religions can effectively exercise their service to humanity only if they are granted freedom. When society acknowledges the spiritual dimension of the human reality, it allows the emergence of „an authentic dialogue between religions and cultures," because it encourages „a common journey in brotherhood and solidarity," which makes possible „the integral development of the human being."[46] For Benedict XVI interreligious dialogue is „authentic and sincere" when it is „built on respect for the dignity of every human person."[47]

### *c) Interreligious dialogue and mission*

Contrary to the relativistic argument, a notion of interreligious dialogue constructed on truth does not contradict the missionary proclamation of the Christian faith, because mission flows from the same truth in the sense that „the one who has recognised a great

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., 760-761.

[45] Benedict XVI, *Address to Mr Pekka Ojanen, Ambassador of Finland to the Holy See*, 1/12/2005, *L"Osservatore Romano* no. 6 (2006), 9-10.

[46] Benedict XVI, *Address to Mr Kagefumi Ueno*, *Ambassador of Japan to the Holy See*, 13/11/2006, *L"Osservatore Romano* no. 48 (2006), 4.

[47] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Delegates of Other Churches and Ecclesial communities and of Other Religious Traditions*, 25/04/2005, 743.

truth, discovered a great joy, must pass it on, and absolutely cannot keep it for him/herself.‘[48]

Interreligious dialogue demands from all involved faithfulness to the truth, which requires the exclusion of relativism and syncretism as the condition of possibility for the _sincere respect for others‘ and the _spirit of reconciliation and fraternity‘ that mark true dialogue.[49] Respect for the other, according to Benedict XVI, also means _acceptance of their otherness,‘[50] However, authentic dialogue develops from respect to deeper love for the other. In Benedict‘s words, _it must also be evangelical, in the sense that its fundamental purpose is to help people live in love and ensure that this love is extended in every part of the world.‘[51] Dialogue does not exclude mission because Christian s believe _that the Gospel is a great gift, the gift of great love, of great truth, which we cannot only keep to ourselves alone.‘[52] God‘s gift is to be shared with others in the awareness that _God gives them the necessary freedom and light to find the truth.‘[53]

Then, far from being an imposition, mission is the offering of God‘s gift, _leaving it to his goodness to enlighten people so that the gift of concrete friendship with the God with a human face may be extended.‘[54]

On the basis of what some followers of other faiths have told him, for Benedict XVI _the presence of [Christian] faith in the world is a positive element,‘ whether people convert or not, _it is a point of reference.‘[55] He points out that for Paul the Apostle the universal proclamation of the Gospel, not the conversion of every single person, constituted the condition of possibility of the *parousia*. It is therefore legitimate that _we

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[48] Benedict XVI, *Discorso alla Curia Romana per gli auguri natalizi*, 21/12/2007, *AAS* 100(2008), 30. My translation.

[49] Benedict XVI, *Allocutio ad Corpus Legatorum apud hanc Apostolicam Sedem*, 7/01/2008, *AAS* 100(2008*),*76.

[50] Benedict XVI, *Ad parochos et clerum Urbis*, 7/02/2008, *AAS* 100(2008*),*152.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., 152-153.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid. My translation.

[55] Benedict XVI, *Ad parochos*, 7/02/2008, 153.

indeed desire the conversion of all but allow the Lord to be the one who acts.‘ It is nevertheless crucial that people ‗who wish to convert have the possibility to do so and that the Lord‘s light appears over the world as a reference for everyone and a light that helps, without which the world cannot find itself.‘ The purpose of mission is to offer that possibility.

Both dialogue and mission are a question of truth and love and therefore do not exclude each other but help each other.[56]

Although recent Catholic Magisterium affirms that the contradiction between mission and interreligious dialogue is not real but only apparent, it has been a major problem for theologians in recent decades, who have often found that the theoretical argumentations underlying the teaching require further clarification.[57] It has already been mentioned that for Ratzinger, the contradiction becomes a real theological problem when the perspective of reflection is the question of the salvific value of the religions. His solution to the theological impasse is to articulate the nature of both evangelisation and interreligious dialogue in terms of truth, bringing the two together at the level of their essence.

### *d) Interreligious dialogue as service to humanity*

It has already emerged from the previous discussion that Benedict XVI considers interreligious dialogue as a service to humanity that followers of all religions are called to offer jointly on account of the responsibility deriving from the nature of their own religions. Pope Benedict observes that interreligious dialogue is important not only for

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[56] Ibid.

[57] *Dialogue and Mission*; *Dialogue and Proclamation.* Among the many contributions to the theological discussion see: from the Catholic perspective, Michael Barnes, ―Discernere L‘istinto Cattolico,‖ *Ad Gentes* no. 1 (2001), 9–24. Barnes shows that it is in the very nature of the Catholic faith that mission and interreligious dialogue are connected. From a Protestant perspective, David Morgan Lochead (1936-1999, of the United Church of Canada and professor at the Vancouver School of Theology) argued that if both Gospel proclamation and interreligious dialogue are understood as story-telling, they are not contradictory but in fact belong together: David Lochhead, *The Dialogical Imperative: A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 77-88.

those directly involved in it but also for wider society. In Washington, for example he suggested that this is evident in the positive effects of the „long history of cooperation" among religious communities in the USA on public life. The interreligious engagement allows the followers of different religions to offer a shared witness to and therefore „enrich public life with the spiritual values that motivate their action in the world."[58] Interreligious dialogue „sustains and nourishes the surrounding culture in the present day" because by growing in mutual understanding „we see that we share an esteem for ethical values, discernible to human reason, which are revered by people of goodwill," and by doing so we answer the need of a world that „begs for a common witness to these values.[59]

By engaging in „dialogue and cooperation" (cf. *Nostra Aetate* 2), people of different faiths jointly „inspire all people to ponder the deeper questions of their origin and destiny.[60] In this sense interreligious dialogue truly becomes „a way of serving society at large."[61] Thus interreligious dialogue consists in „building bridges of friendship with the followers of other religions, in order to seek the true good of every person and of society as a whole."[62]

### *e) Interreligious dialogue as imperative for the Church*

Interreligious dialogue properly understood is for Benedict XVI „an irreversible venture for the Catholic Church."[63] However, for the Church and its members who engage in it, the demand for authentic dialogue that stems from fidelity to the truth acquires a very specific content. It means that they must bring to the forum of interreligious dialogue

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[58] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Washington, 17/04/2008, 327.

[59] Ibid., 328.

[60] Ibid., 330.

[61] Ibid., 328.

[62] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Delegates of Other Churches and Ecclesial communities and of Other Religious Traditions*, 25/04/2005, 743.

[63] Benedict XVI, *Address to Mr Pekka Ojanen*, 1/12/2005.

Jesus of Nazareth who came to „reconcile man to God and reveal the underlying reason of all things."[64] Not only is Jesus Christ not left behind, but he is brought into the conversation as the revelation of the truth, which is not a denial of the value of the other's religion.

For Christians, the mystery of Christ is present in interreligious dialogue not only as „content" but also as *causa prima*, i.e. as the motivation of the engagement, as they are „spurred" precisely by the „ardent desire to follow" Christ to „open their minds and hearts in dialogue."[65]

Christian engagement in dialogue with followers of other religions is „motivated by charity." The Church enters the dialogue with the profound conviction that the truth is fully revealed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who „fully discloses the human potential for virtue and goodness, and... liberates us from sin and darkness." [66]

This certainty does not necessarily imply that the Church has nothing to learn from others. In fact it „eagerly seeks opportunities to listen to the spiritual experience of other religions," because it believes that „all religions aim to penetrate the profound meaning of human existence by linking it to an origin or principle outside itself." They seek to „understand the cosmos as coming from and returning to this origin or principle. Christians believe that God has revealed this origin and principle in Jesus."[67]

### *f) Conclusion*

The quest for the truth is the origin and goal of interreligious dialogue in all its forms. As a consequence the common quest for and obedience to the truth determine the attitudes of interreligious dialogue: first, mutual respect, for each other, for each other's religious belief and experience, for the freedom to express one's convictions; second, an

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[64] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Washington, 17/04/2008, 330.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of Other Religions*, Sydney, 18/07/2008.

[67] Ibid.

eager interest in what the other has to contribute on the basis of their religious experience, including their perception of the Absolute; a spirit of reconciliation and fraternal love; and lastly a disposition to work together for the protection and the promotion of human life and freedom, in the awareness that obedience to the truth means being charged with the task of serving humanity by orienting it it towards its transcendent origin and destiny, from which human reality receives it deepest meaning.

Commenting on Catholic teaching and Benedict XVI in particular, Stratford Caldecott distinguishes between „deep" and „shallow" versions of interreligious dialogue. While the latter „glosses over differences for the sake of superficial or pragmatic friendliness," in the former „the follower of one religion approaches the follower of another in full fidelity to his own distinct identity, but with the willingness to seek the truth that transcends, aspects of which can be discovered by the other."[68] Benedict XVI has unambiguously driven the Church, all Christians and people of all faiths to engage courageously in „deep" interreligious dialogue.

[68] Stratford Caldecott, "Benedict XVI and Interreligious Dialogue," *Transformation* 23, no. 4 (October 2006), 203.

## B. BENEDICT XVI, THE JEWS AND JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

### 1. Judaism, a major element of Pope Benedict's theology

An examination of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's thought in relation to interreligious dialogue shows that Judaism occupies a very special place in his theological vision. Although this is an aspect that Benedict XVI shares with John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II, he develops it by a path that is different from theirs in terms of methodology and content. From the methodological point of view, his high appreciation and genuine respect for the Jews and Judaism is more the fruit of theological reflection than of significant encounters. It is via a progressive deepening of the faith through intensive contact with the Scripture and with its first Christian interpreters, the Church Fathers, and on the basis of the Church's teaching, that Benedict XVI develops a clear understanding of the significance of Israel and its faith. This understanding constitutes the springboard for his engagement with the Jewish world. Although it could be natural to assume that having theology as its starting point, Benedict XVI's vision of Christian-Jewish relations could be ‚theoretical', in fact this is not the case. On the contrary both his teaching and actions show that Pope Benedict is clearly aware of the concrete implications that taking the ‚Jewish other' seriously has for the Church, its role in salvation history and its mission in the contemporary world. In terms of content, Benedict XVI has taken the Jewish-Christian dialogue beyond Paul VI and John Paul II in three ways: by deeping its theological foundations; with a renewed recognition of the importance of the notion of the Land and the State of Israel for Jewish-Christian relations; and by a recasting of the discourse of peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land that takes into account its political context. At the theological level, Pope Benedict has contributed by bringing unprecedented clarity to the Catholic understanding of Judaism, Jews and the Church's relationship with them.

On 9 June 2005, less than two months after his election, Pope Benedict XVI met with a delegation of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC).[69] The encounter presented him with the opportunity to reveal his intentions vis-à-vis Christian-Jewish relations. In the homily at his inaugural mass on 24 April 2005, Pope Benedict had already addressed the Jewish people calling them „brothers and sisters to whom we are joined by a great spiritual heritage."[70] However it was in the meeting with the representatives of IJCIC that he spoke of the relationship between Christians and Jews in more detail and laid out key elements of his vision in this particular regard.[71]

First of all, not surprisingly if one considers his understanding of theology and his theological vision, he made a profession of continuity. His commitment to a constructive engagement with the Jews would be in continuity with that of his predecessors and, like theirs, will be based on the Catholic faith as articulated at the Second Vatican Council. Benedict recalled the central teaching of *Nostra Aetate* 4, namely the intimate connection between the faith of Israel and that of the Church on the basis of a shared „spiritual patrimony", acknowledged the progress in Jewish-Catholic relations under John Paul II and expressed his „intention to continue on this path."[72] This was mentioned again within a few months on two other occasions: on 19 August 2005 during his speech at the Synagogue of Cologne and on 26 October 2005 in a letter to Walter Kasper, President of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews on the 40th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*.[73]

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[69] The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) is composed of a number of Jewish organisations and was founded to maintain and develop the relationship between world Jewry and the Pontifical Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews and the World Council of Churches. Its function subsequently developed to involve engagement with other Christian bodies like the World Council of Churches, as well as other religions.

[70] Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Mass of Inauguration*, 708.

[71] Benedict XVI, *Address to a Delegation of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCRC)*, 9/06/2005, *AAS* 97(2005),817-818.

[72] Ibid., 818.

[73] Benedict XVI, *Address*, Synagogue of Cologne, 19/08/2005, *AAS* 97(2005*),*905-909. Benedict XVI, *Letter to the President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews*, Vatican City, 26/10/2005, *AAS* 97 (2005*),*986-987.

Secondly, in the 9 June speech, Pope Benedict expressed his conviction that despite the complexity of Christian-Jewish relations, the ‗spiritual patrimony' they hold in common can guide Christians and Jews, together, ‗towards a future of hope'.[74] On their common journey, he stressed the need for both Christians and Jews to remember the history of conflict that has characterised the relationship and particularly the suffering of the Jewish people (of which the Shoah was the horrible culmination), in order to work together for a better world. Benedict XVI's vision of Jewish-Christian dialogue points with distinctive clarity both to the past – i.e. to the common foundation of the faith of Jews and Christians as well as to the history of conflict – and to the future, i.e. to a destination to be reached together. Within this general framework, a number of elements appear in Benedict XVI's subsequent papal teaching and theological writing, which must be studied for a more detailed and systematic articulation of his thought on Judaism and the Jews. The theological writings include those written both prior to and after his election as pope: for example the scholarly article published in 1998, "Interreligious Dialogue and Jewish-Christian Relations," contains what is perhaps his most systematic reflection on Judaism.[75] The latter was republished alongside three other relevant essays in the book *Many Religions One Covenant* (1998).[76] This group of writings also includes the book interviews with Peter Seewald: *Salt of the Earth (*1997), and *God and the World* (2002) and *Light of the World?* (2010).[77] Also very important is Ratzinger's meditation published in *Osservatore Romano* and entitled ‗The Heritage of Abraham: the Gift of Christmas' (2000).[78] Equally essential is Ratzinger's preface to the document of the

[74] Benedict XVI, *Address to a Delegation of the IJCRC*, 9/06/2005, 818.

[75] Ratzinger, "Interreligious Dialogue and Jewish-Christian relations," 29-41.

[76] Joseph Ratzinger, *Many Religions One Covenant: Israel, the Church and the World*, Graham Harrison tr. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998).

[77] Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*; *God and the World: Believing and Living in Our Time. A conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2002); *Light of the World, a Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2010).

[78] Joseph Ratzinger, "The Heritage of Abraham: The Gift of Christmas," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29/12/2000.

International Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Scriptures* (2001) and finally, important elements are to be found in *Jesus of Nazareth* (2007, 2011, 2012). As pope, Benedict has referred to Judaism, the Jews and Israel on many occasions, not exclusively but mostly on very significant occasions of encounter with Jews: many meetings and audiences with Jewish representatives at the Vatican, including the Israeli ambassadors; the visits to the Synagogues of Cologne (2005), New York (2008) and Rome (2010); to Auschwitz (2006); the pilgrimage to the Holy Land (May 2009).

## 2. Christianity and Judaism: a unique relationship

Benedict XVI's conviction that Christianity and Judaism, and therefore Christians and Jews, are in a unique relationship, is based on two convergent perspectives: one phenomenological and the other theological. With regard to the former, in his early attempt to articulate a theology of religions, the theologian Ratzinger located the Jewish faith in a privileged position within the religious history of humanity, alongside Christianity and, albeit with some necessary distinctions, Islam as well. A corollary to Ratzinger's analysis, in which he identifies the basic difference between „mystical" religions and „monotheistic" religions, is that Christianity – as it belongs to the „prophetic turn", relates to them in qualitatively different ways. Christianity's affinity with Judaism and Islam is greater than its relationship with the mystical religions. In the approach reflected in the structure of *Lumen Gentium* 16 and of *Nostra Aetate*, Ratzinger sees the relationship with Judaism first of all, and then that with Islam, as priorities for Christianity and the Church.[79] It is perhaps not accidental that Benedict's focus in interreligious matters has been primarily on Judaism and Islam.

[79] Ratzinger „Interreligious Dialogue and Jewish-Christian Relations," 29-41; John Pawlikowski, „Pope Benedict XVI on Jews and Judaism: Retreat or Reaffirmation," lecture given at the University of St. Paul, Ottawa, 30/10/2008, http://www.jcrelations.net/en/?item=3089.

Christianity and Judaism constitute the one people of God, and despite differences and disagreements they are theologically bound in God‘s promises. *Nostra Aetate* 4 stated that the roots of Christianity are in Judaism.[80] It was not its aim to provide an exhaustive theology of Judaism, but it did point out the directions further necessary theological reflection would have to take. Benedict has taken up the task set by Vatican II to articulate the theological reflection called for by *Nostra Aetate* 4, thereby carrying forward what the Council started. Consequently Benedict XVI‘s theological reflection of Judaism, on the Jews and on Jewish-Christian relations, remains within the scope of *Nostra Aetate*. This however does not mean mere repetition.

It is helpful to articulate Pope Benedict‘s thought on Judaism and Jewish-Christian dialogue by considering five aspects: The shared heritage of Judaism and Christianity, the relationship between Jesus and the Jews, the relationship between Israel and the Church, the question of the Land and of the State of Israel, and anti-Semitism and the Shoah.[81]

### *a) A shared spiritual heritage*

The Christian-Jewish relationship is unique because of the spiritual foundation common to Judaism and Christianity. Benedict XVI‘s very first statement on Jewish-Christian relationships was the sentence we have already recalled from his inaugural papal homily: „you my brothers and sisters of the Jewish people, to whom we are joined by a great shared spiritual heritage, one rooted in God‘s irrevocable promises.“[82] This is of utmost importance because, as emerges from Pope Benedict‘s teaching on Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations, the major themes are already present in it. The statement

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[80] For a summary and commentary on the teaching of *Nostra Aetate,* René Laurentin and Josef Neuner, *The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions*, (Glen Rock, NJ: Paulist, 1966). On the historical background of Christian-Jewish relations see John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[81] Alain Marchadour and David Neuhaus, *The Land, the Bible, and History: Toward the Land That I Will Show You* (New York: Fordham, 2007); John T. Pawlikowski, ―Land as an Issue in Christian-Jewish Dialogue,” *Cross Currents* 59, no. 2 (June 2009), 197–209.

[82] Benedict XVI, *Homily*, 24/04/2005, 708.

contains two fundamental ideas: that the relationship between Christians and Jews is of _unity', and that such _unity' derives from a _shared spiritual heritage'. The first point is a key concept in Pope Benedict's thought not only with regard to Jewish-Christian relations but also to interreligious dialogue in general. The second theme, the _shared spiritual heritage,' is crucial to Benedict's understanding of Judaism and its connection to Christianity. Benedict has referred to this idea on a number of occasions, although not always using precisely the same words: he speaks of common/shared, heritage/patrimony, and qualifies it as _rich' and _spiritual'; on occasions _heritage/patrimony' is replaced or accompanied by the term _roots'. On one occasion, he used the less positive expression _a not insignificant part of their essential traditions,' although he was here taking up the words used by Dieter Grauman, the speaker to whom he was responding.[83]

In welcoming the members of the American Jewish Committee at the Vatican (16 March 2006) Pope Benedict spoke of _a rich common patrimony' of Jews and Christians, and stated that _In many ways this distinguishes our relationship as unique among the religions of the world' and for this reason, _[t]he Church can never forget that chosen people with whom God entered in a holy covenant.'[84] Christians are in a relationship with Jews that is akin to their relationship with fellow Christians, but are not related in the same way to those outside Christianity and Judaism. This idea resonates with John Paul II's statement that the relationship between Christianity and Judaism is somewhat _internal' to the Church.[85]

Although Benedict places a very strong emphasis on the _shared heritage', he explicitly acknowledges that the idea comes from previous Church teaching, especially

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[83] Benedict XVI, *Address to Representatives of the Jewish Community in Berlin*, 22/09/2011, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110922_jewish-berlin_en.html.

[84] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Members of the American Jewish Committee*, 16/03/2006, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060316_jewish-committee_en.html.

[85] John Paul II, *Address to the Representatives of the Jewish Community*, Mainz, 17/11/1980, in *Spiritual Pilgrimage,* 15.

Vatican II. As early as June 2005, he explained that *Nostra Aetate* „called for greater mutual understanding and esteem between Christians and Jews", „on the basis of this spiritual patrimony".[86] In his address at the Synagogue of Cologne (August 2005), he said that *Nostra Aetate* 4 „recalls the common roots and the immensely rich spiritual heritage that Jews and Christians share."[87] Two months later, Pope Benedict wrote a letter to Cardinal Walter Kasper as President of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People on the fortieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*.[88] In that letter, Benedict identified as one of the merits of *Nostra Aetate*, the fact that the document challenges Christians and Jews to „recognise their shared spiritual roots and to appreciate their rich heritage of faith in the One God."[89] This teaching of Vatican II is fundamental. It started the process of retrieval of the correct relationship by calling for a re-reading of Scripture and history.

The „common heritage" theme, also featured in Benedict' XVI's address at the Synagogue of Rome, which is a fundamental text for his thought on Jewish-Christian dialogue. The Bible itself reminds Jews and Christians of the „common roots, … history, and the rich spiritual patrimony" they share.[90] The shared heritage serves as a source of „many lessons": first, the „solidarity" that links Christians and Jews „at the level of spiritual identity"; this has implications with regard to the Christian reading of the Scripture; second, the significance of the Decalogue for all humanity; third, the mission that Jews and Christians have in common.[91] Benedict has further developed each of these aspects within his teaching.

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[86] Benedict XVI, *Address to a Delegation of the IJCIC*, 9/06/2005, 817.

[87] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 19/08/2005, 906. This was his first visit to a synagogue as Pope.

[88] The Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews was established by Paul VI on 22/10/1974 as a section of the Secretariat for Christian Unity.

[89] Benedict XVI, *Letter to the President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People*, 26/10/2005, 986-987.

[90] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

[91] Ibid. He also said: „Our rich common heritage and our fraternal and more trusting relations call upon us to join in giving an ever harmonious witness and work together."

The common spiritual patrimony, which is the foundation of the dialogue between Christians and Jews, consists of God's call to his people – Jews and Christians, who in response have the "duty... to strive to keep open the space of dialogue."[92] For Benedict XVI Christian-Jewish dialogue is inherent in the vocation of both Jews and Christians. The connection between the shared heritage and the Jewish-Christian conversation reappeared in a speech of Benedict to representatives of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews in March 2009, in which he stated that recognition of the "common rich spiritual patrimony' is what makes dialogues both "necessary and possible."[93]

In 2005 at the Synagogue of Cologne Pope Benedict had explained that "both Jews and Christians recognise Abraham as their father in faith… and they look to the teaching of Moses and of the prophets."[94] Faith in the One God concretely means believing that God "established his covenant with the Chosen people, revealed his commandments and taught hope in the messianic promises which give confidence and comfort in the struggles of life."[95]

For Benedict XVI the notion of "shared heritage' is almost a Christological category, because it is Christ that enables the Church to "participate in the heritage of the Fathers. "[96]

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People*, 12/03/2009, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2009/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090312_rabbinate-israel_en.html

[94] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 906-907.

[95] Benedict XVI, *Letter to the President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People*, 26/10/2005, 987.

[96] Benedict XVI, *Address to Dr Riccardo Di Segni Chief Rabbi of Rome*, 16/01/2006, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060116_rabbino-roma_en.html.

**(1) One single Covenant: the unity of salvation history**

The question of the Covenant has been central to the theological debate on Jewish-Christian relations in the past decades. The point is whether Christians must hold that God's Covenant with the Church is independent of the Covenant with the Jews, and therefore that the two are equivalent ways of relating to God, or it is more correct to hold that God's Covenant is one and includes both Israel and the Church.[97]

The Covenant theme is prominent in Benedict XVI's papal teaching on Jewish-Christian relations. He insists that there is only one Covenant between God and humanity because there is only one salvation history; and as salvation history develops in subsequent stages, the Covenant also grows through corresponding phases. In fact the "double Covenant" position is unacceptable from the Christian point of view.

For Christians, the Incarnation is the culmination of "a long history" through which God has prepared humanity to receive his Son. This "long history" is the story of God's engagement with Abraham and the Jewish People, that continues through the Patriarchs and the Prophets.[98] As Christians are "inheritors of their faith in the one God,"[99] then God's covenant with Israel is a fundamental aspect of the "spiritual patrimony" they share with the Jews.[100]

Pope Benedict's insistence on the oneness of the Covenant and therefore on the continuity between the Jewish and the Christian Covenants, is meant as a corrective to

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[97] John Pawlikowski, "Single or Double Covenant? Contemporary Perspectives," in Zev Garber and Richard Libowitz eds., *Peace, In Deed: Essays in Honor of Harry James Cargas* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 147-162. Pope John Paul II spoke of the Jews as People of the Covenant: *Address at a Symposium on the Roots of Anti-Judaism*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1997/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19971031_com-teologica_en.html

[98] Joseph Ratzinger, "The Heritage of Abraham."

[99] Ibid.

[100] Benedict XV, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2010/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100117_sinagoga_en.html; *Address to Representatives of the Jewish Community in Paris*, 12/09/2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080912_parigi-juive_en.html; *Address to a Delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews*, 12/03/2009; *Address to the Two Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem*, 12/05/2009; *Address to a Delegation of the IJCIC,* 9/06/2005*; Address to a Delegation of the IJCIC*, 30/10/2008, *AAS* 100(2008),794-795.

excessive emphasis on the discontinuity, which in the history of Christianity has often resulted in the misconception that the two are separate if not mutually opposed. Admittedly, the discontinuity is emphasised in the New Testament, particularly in some of Paul's writing, especially in the Second Letter to the Corinthians (chapter 3) and in the Letter to the Galatians (4:21-31).[101] With regard to 2Cor 3:3-18, however, it is crucial to notice that towards the end of the passage Paul speaks of the "veil" that prevents the Jewish people from understanding the true nature of the Law. This veil can be removed by turning to the Lord Jesus Christ and when this happens, there no longer appears to be a contraposition between "Law" and "Spirit", but the Law appears to be itself Spirit, "identical with the new order of life in the Spirit." The new order inaugurated by Christ does not phase out the "old" one, but removes the veil that prevents the believers from seeing the true nature of the "old".[102]

The ninth chapter of Paul's Letter to the Romans is also crucial to understanding the New Testament theology of the continuing Covenant. Paul is keenly aware of "God's pedagogy" that works through a succession of stages (covenants). Ratzinger notes that Paul compares two such stages, the covenant with Abraham and that with Moses, and relates them to the covenant in Christ. The covenant with Abraham – which is essentially God's unconditional promise – is for Paul the "fundamental and abiding" one, while that with Moses – which is *berith*, i.e. "imposition of obligations on the people" – represents a particular instance of the first, especially adapted to the People to whom it is primarily directed, as an intermediate stage towards the realisation of the first. Paul identifies a clear difference between the Mosaic covenant, which can be broken because it is based on the observance of the law, and that of Abraham, which cannot be broken.

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[101] Joseph Ratzinger, "The New Covenant. On the Theology of the Covenant in the New Testament," in idem, *Many Religions One Covenant,* 53.

[102] Ibid., 53-54.

The faith of Israel (which is recorded in the Old Testament) includes two distinct covenant traditions: that of Sinai, which implies the observance of the Torah, and that of the Prophets, particularly Jeremiah, who proclaim the establishment by God of a _new covenant' which people cannot break because its law will no longer be written on stone tablets but on their hearts.[103] The latter tradition constitutes a recovery of the pre-Sinai predicament, the Abrahamic stage of the Covenant, and therefore a re-expansion of the horizon, that was _narrowed down' four-hundred and thirty years later as a necessary stage of God's pedagogy. Both traditions are present in the New Testament, particularly in the various accounts of the Last Supper, in Jesus' words regarding the chalice. In Matthew and Mark's accounts, Jesus says this is _my blood of the covenant_. The reference is to the Sinai covenant, where _God… enters into a mysterious blood relationship' with the People through the enactment of a blood-ritual (cf. Exodus 24:8, _Behold the blood of the covenant.') Observance of God's legal code is the _sacrament' through which _people are incorporated into his mode of being'. [104] By giving _his blood of the covenant', Jesus retrieves and renews – but does not abrogate – the covenant of Sinai, in a way that it is through following him that people are taken into God's life.[105]

Luke and Paul report Jesus as saying _the new covenant in my blood,' with a direct reference to Jeremiah 31:31-34. In this sense the meaning is that in Jesus Christ the _conditional covenant which depended on man's faithful observance of the Law, is replaced by the unconditional covenant in which God binds himself irrevocably.'[106]

New Testament understanding of the covenant in Jesus therefore includes not only the prophetic notion of new covenant, but also the Sinai tradition and retains its validity. This means that with regard to the covenant of Moses _no Christian can revoke it.' To the Old Testament believer, the Law is not simply a burden imposed on them, but

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[103] Ibid., 64.
[104] Ibid, 61.
[105] Ibid, 63.
[106] Ibid., 64.

> the concrete form of grace. For to know God‘s will is grace. And to know God‘s will is to know oneself, to understand the world, to know what our destination is. It means that we are liberated from the darkness of our endless questioning, that the light has come, that light without which we can neither see nor move… For Israel the Law is the visibility of the truth, the visibility of God‘s countenance, and so gives the possibility of right living.[107]

On the occasion of the feast of Pesach of 2008 Benedict XVI used a direct quote from *Nostra Aetate* to tell the Jewish people that the „Church received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God… concluded the Ancient Covenant.“[108] Some months later, addressing the Jews of France, he explained that the covenant with Israel is constitutive of God‘s relationship with Christians and the Church „feels obliged to respect‘ it because the Church is itself „situated within the eternal Covenant of the Almighty.“[109] To believe that Jews and Christians stand within one single Covenant amounts to affirming the ongoing validity of the Covenant with Israel. Pope Benedict has done so on a number of occasions, with and without direct reference to the teaching of *Nostra Aetate*.[110]

Another point of discussion in the debate has been whether it is the Covenant with Abraham or that with Moses that is still binding. One of the arguments is that the covenant still valid is the one with Abraham while that with Moses has been invalidated by the coming of Christ. Benedict XVI has removed any possible ambiguity and acknowledged the ongoing validity of the Mosaic Covenant by referring to contemporary Jews as the „People of the Covenant of Moses,“[111] and by affirming that Jesus‘ Sermon of the Mount „does not abolish the Mosaic Law.“[112]

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[107] Ibid., 69.

[108] Benedict XVI, *Message to the Jewish Community on the Feast of Pesach*, 14/04/2008, *AAS* 100(2008),353-355.

[109] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of the Jewish Community* in Paris, 12/09/2008.

[110] *Nostra Aetate* 4 describes the Jews as „the people with whom God... deigned to enter into an ancient covenant;‘ and states that „to them belong the adoption..., the covenant, etc.‘ See Benedict XVI, *Address to the Chief Rabbis of Israel*, Vatican City, 15/09/2005, *AAS* 97(2005*),*954-955.

[111] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

[112] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of the Jewish Community* in Berlin, 22/09/2011.

According to Benedict XVI, the Covenant is the ‗method' that God uses in order to realise his plan for the salvation of the world.[113] God saves humanity by establishing ‗in the world a mystery of communion that is human and divine, historical and transcendent,' because God wants all people to ‗be part of his life.'[114] Christ is the necessary historical mediation by which God calls and welcomes men and women into his communion in Christ. However, Christ's mediation is preceded by that of the People of Israel and continued by that of the Church. While laying strong emphasis on the oneness of God's salvific action, Benedict is able to recognise the fundamental role of God's Covenant with Israel without detracting from the Christian truth that ‗Salvation is in Jesus' (2Timothy 2:10). The Covenant with Israel is valid because it is this very Covenant that in Christ becomes God's Covenant with humanity, which the Church continues to mediate.[115] For Benedict XVI fulfilment does not mean abolition but transfiguration, in which the essence is left at least partially unchanged. In this sense the ‗long history of the Covenant ‗constitutes an ‗indissoluble bond ‗between Christians and Jews.[116] Far from being a reason for separation, for Pope Benedict the Jewish Covenant is a constitutive factor of the unity between Jews and Christians.

**(2) The faith of Israel, foundation of Christian faith**

An important implication of the ‗shared spiritual patrimony', of which the Covenant with Israel constitutes an essential element, is that Christian faith is based on Jewish faith. In a speech to specialists of Jewish-Christian relations, Benedict has stated that the ‗Church recognises that the beginnings of her faith are found in the historical divine intervention in the life of the Jewish people and that here our unique relationship has its

[113] Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Opening of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops*, 10/10/2010, *AAS* 102(2010),804.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., 804.
[116] Ibid., 806.

foundation.'[117] This is an implicit reference to *Nostra Aetate*, which speaks of the _beginnings of the faith' of the Church that are to be found _already among the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets.'[118] While then the recognition that Christian faith is rooted in Jewish faith is already found in the teaching of the Council, Pope Benedict has taken it a step forward by affirming that the Jewish faith is significant for Christianity not just for the past but is ongoing, because _behind the profession of the Christian faith in the One God one finds the daily profession of faith of the people of Israel: _Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one God' (Deut 6:4)'[119] Hence as long as Christian faith stands, so does the Jewish faith on which it stands.

Jews and Christians _together try to believe the faith of Abraham.'[120] In this regard it is noticeable that Pope Benedict – quietly distancing himself from a contemporary trend that does not hesitate to bundle up Christianity, Judaism and Islam as _Abrahamic religions' without qualifications – does not apply the term _Abrahamic faith' to Islam but employs it consistently to highlight the unique connection between the faith of Israel and that of Christians.[121] The case of Jewish-Christian dialogue is very different from the case of other religions, including Islam despite its Judeo-Christian roots. In fact Benedict identifies the foundation/starting point of the Christian-Muslim engagement at a different level, in the shared belief in the One Creator God, and therefore in shared humanity (as God's creation) and obedient loving submission to his will. This constitutes a profound link between Christianity and Islam, nevertheless the two do not have in common the same _rich spiritual heritage' as the Church and Israel. As a consequence Islam does not

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[117] Benedict XVI, *Address to the delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews*, 12/03/2009.

[118] *Nostra Aetate* 4

[119] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Members of the International Pontifical Theological Commission*, 2/12/2011, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2011/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20111202_comm-teologica_en.html

[120] Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 248.

[121] On the _Abrahamic' motif in Catholic thought see Aaron W. Hughes, *Abrahamic Religions: on the Uses and Abuses of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

occupy the same place as Judaism in the religious history of humanity, and certainly does not belong to the essence of Christianity, while, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, Israel does.[122]

Within the Christian vision, from the Christian perspective, „the inner heart of the Old Testament is directed towards Christ.“[123] If this statement is understood without a supersessionist bias, it can be read also as a statement about the Old Testament, i.e. that the latter is the foundation on which the Christ-event takes place. Ratzinger is eager to stress that the fact of being oriented to Christ does not change the import of the faith of the Old Covenant, which is (literally) foundational for Christianity. For this reason, he can say that in relation to the faith of Israel, Christianity „is not a different religion; it is simply the Old Testament read anew with Christ.“[124]

**(3) The Scripture of Israel as constitutive for Christian faith**

Pope Benedict underlines the direct correspondence between the „continuity of faith“ (between Judaism and Christianity) and the „continuity of the Scriptures.“ The fact that Christians received the part of Scripture that they call the Old Testament „through the people with whom… God concluded the ancient covenant,“ is to be taken seriously into account with regard to the way that Christians relate both to Scripture and to the Jewish people.[125] The continuity of Scripture must be reflected in the continuity of faith and communion with the Jewish People.

Pope Benedict affirms that the message of Jesus Christ is correctly understood only if it is not „separated from the context of the faith and hope“ of Israel.[126] It is within that faith that his ministry takes place and it is to Jewish people that his message is primarily

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[122] Ratzinger, „The Heritage of Abraham.“
[123] Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 150.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Benedict XVI, *Message to the Jewish Community on the Feast of Pesach*, 14/04/2008, 353.
[126] Benedict XVI, *Christ and the Church,* General Audience, 15/03/2006, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20060315_en.html

addressed, because the aim of his mission is to gather Israel and, in the process, include all humanity.[127]

From the Christian point of view, ‗there can be no rupture in salvation history,' and ‗salvation comes from the Jews' (John 4:22). If Jesus' ministry is interpreted as a rupture with the Jewish Covenant, then the Torah and Old Testament are also misunderstood.[128] When, on the contrary, the continuity between the stages of salvation history is respected, the ‗message of hope' contained in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament becomes visible and sheds light on Christ's teaching. Across the centuries Jews and Christians have appropriated this divine ‗message of hope' in different ways, giving birth to two different traditions of interpretation. Because of the profound unity in faith and the ‗shared heritage', bringing ‗into dialogue with one another' these two ways of reading the Old Testament is necessary if Christians and Jews ‗are to understand God's will and his word aright.' '[129]

The continuity of the two faiths is particularly evident in the continuity of their respective foundational events: Pesach and Easter. Benedict XVI developed this theme in his message to the Jewish Community on the feast of Pesach, 14 April 2008 (Just before his Journey to the US, where he visited the Park East Synagogue in New York). He stated that although the Christian celebration of Easter is in many ways different from the Jewish celebration of Pesach, ‗we understand and experience it in continuation with the biblical narrative of the mighty works which the Lord accomplished for his People.'[130] This means that the central mystery of Christianity must be understood in continuity with the meaning of the foundational event of Judaism.

As Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the faith, Ratzinger spoke extensively of the intrinsic unity of the Old Testament and New Testament in the preface

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[127] Ibid.
[128] Benedict XVI, *Address to Representatives of the Jewish Community in Berlin*, 22/09/2011.
[129] Ibid., where he quotes directly from his *Jesus of Nazareth*, Vol. 2, 33.
[130] Benedict XVI, *Message to the Jewish Community on the Feast of Pesach*, 14/04/2008, 353.

to the important 2001 document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*.[131] He referred to the spiritual biography of Augustine of Hippo, pointing out that when Augustine learnt to read the New Testament in relation to the Old, when the latter became „no longer just a document of the religious history of a particular people," then „it revealed instead a Wisdom addressed to all and came from God."[132] The Old Testament was therefore „of fundamental importance not only for Augustine's decision of faith; it was and it is the basis for the faith decision of the Church as a whole."[133]

By contrast, Ratzinger explained, „a Christian rejection of the Old Testament would not only put an end to Christianity itself… but in addition would prevent the fostering of positive relations between Christians and Jews, precisely because they would lack common ground."[134] Against this risk the early Church rejected any attempt to exclude the Hebrew Scriptures from its canon. By condemning Marcionism, which advocated the radical separation of Christianity from the Old Testament, the Church has been consistent in professing that God's revelation contained in the Hebrew Scriptures, which were the only Holy Scriptures of Christians at the time when the writings of the New Testament were being composed and before they were considered as divinely revealed, is fundamental for Christian identity. The separation advocated by Marcion, and later by liberal theology following Adolf von Harnack, undermined the existence of Christianity, which is „founded on the unity of the Testaments;"[135] and by the dissolution of the „inner

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[131] Joseph Ratzinger, "Preface," in Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, (Vatican City: Libreria Edititrice Vaticana, 2002), 5-12.

[132] Ibid., 6.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid., 11.

[135] Ratzinger, *Many Religions One Covenant*, 18. The same idea is also apparent in idem, "The Heritage of Abraham."

relationship that links us to Israel' an alien God would emerge that is 'definitively not the God of Christians.'[136]

Although historically it has also been a cause of division, the fact that the Old Testament is part of the Christian Bible is the expression of a 'deep affinity' between Christianity and Judaism.[137] In this context Benedict XVI's teaching focuses in particular on the significance of the Torah and the Decalogue for Christian faith.

Pope Benedict speaks of the Torah first of all from the perspective of its relation to the Covenant. From this point of view the Torah is the visible sign (which in Christian Tradition is a partial definition of 'sacrament') of the love relationship between God and Israel. It is given by God as the culmination of his loving dialogue with Israel and in the Torah God reveals the truth of human nature and the 'path to true humanism.'[138] Therefore by giving Israel the Torah, God has 'laid down principles to serve as a guide for mankind, principles that are eternally valid.'[139]

Within the Torah the Decalogue holds a special place. For Jews and Christians the Ten Commandments constitute both a 'shared legacy' and a shared commitment, being a 'signpost showing the path leading to a successful life.'[140]

In his speech at the Synagogue of Rome, Benedict XVI articulated what Henrix has called a theology of the Decalogue.[141] He considers the Ten Commandments as permanently and universally valid. They are not only a 'guiding star' of faith and morals for Jews and Christians, but constitute a 'common ethical message' for non-believers and the whole of humanity as well.[142] The permanent and universal validity of the Decalogue

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[136] Ratzinger, *Many Religions One Covenant*, 18.
[137] Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 247.
[138] Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas East* (9), 25/12/2005, *AAS* 98(2006),225-226.
[139] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Visit to the Auschwitz Camp*, 28/05/2006, *AAS* 98(2006),482.
[140] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 19/08/2005, 908.
[141] Hans Herman Henrix, "Pope Benedict and the Jews: a Relationship Under Suspicion," *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 16, no. 4 (October 2010), 553.
[142] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

derives from the fact that the commandments „shed light on good and evil, truth and falsehood, on justice and injustice," and for this reason they match the criteria of „right conscience" for every human person.[143] Consequently, when properly understood the Torah and the Decalogue in particular, far from being „a slavish enactment of rituals and outward observances," appear as a universal path for the realisation of true humanity.[144]

### (4) A shared vision of the human person and of history

A shared theological anthropology and a shared vision of history are also part of the spiritual patrimony that Jews and Christians have in common. With regard to the notion of the human person, the fact that God creates each in God's image bestows on every single man and woman „a transcendent dignity" which is the same for all regardless of „their nation, culture or religion."[145] The dignity of every human being is of divine origin and therefore is permanently above human interpretation and control.

Judaism and Christianity see history as „salvation history", shaped by God's engagement with humanity, unfolding through the stages of the Covenant, the aim of which is to guiding humanity to its fulfilment. God „inhabits" history because he „wants all men to be part of his life."[146]

The particular notion of the human person and of history that derive from their shared heritage, constitute for Jews and Christians the foundation of a shared hope, that is to say the salvation of all humanity.[147] This hope is „centred on the Almighty and his mercy" and in turn becomes the reason for their commitment to the betterment of the conditions of humanity according to God's plan.[148]

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[143] Ibid.
[144] Benedict XVI, *Address to Representatives of the Jewish Community in Berlin*, 22/09/2011.
[145] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 19/08/2005, 907.
[146] Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Opening of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops*, 10/10/2010, 804.
[147] Benedict XVI, *Message to the Jewish Community on the Feast of Pesach*, 14/04/2008, 354.
[148] Ibid; Benedict XVI, *Greetings to the Representatives of the Jewish Community,* Washington, 17/04/2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080417_intro-jews_en.html.

The ‗rich spiritual patrimony/heritage' that Jews and Christians have in common, in all its aspects, determines the very specific nature of their relationship. In line with Catholic teaching but with special emphasis, Pope Benedict insists that their relationship is unique, and articulates it in terms of ‗unity'.

***b) Jesus Christ and the Jews***

Ratzinger observed that at first sight it could seem that while Jews and Christians are united by the Hebrew Scriptures they hold in common, Jesus Christ ultimately divides them.[149] This somewhat oversimplified impression rests on a separation between the First Testament and Jesus Christ that Ratzinger considers as a misconception. In fact a correct understanding of Christian Scripture and Tradition shows that it is precisely through Jesus that the Hebrew Scriptures become Christian Scripture and therefore their opposition disappears. As a matter of fact, Christianity was the result of the process whereby ‗through Jesus of Nazareth the God of Israel becomes the God of the Gentiles' (cf. Ephesians 2:24, ‗he has made the two one').

Ratzinger concludes that ‗Christ simultaneously unites and divides Israel and the Church'. The immediate consequence of this realization is that ‗it is not in our power to overcome this division, but it keeps us together on the way to what is coming and for this reason must not become an enmity.'[150]

Ratzinger identifies two consequences of this irrevocable bond: first, although Judaism cannot acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, it can acknowledge him as fulfilling the prophecies about the servant who will bring God's light to the end of the earth. Second, Christians must acknowledge that in virtue of her being chosen, God has

[149] Ratzinger, ―Interreligious Dialogue and Jewish-Christian Relations," 35.
[150] Ibid., 38.

_entrusted Israel with a distinctive mission in the time of the Gentiles' which consists of testimony to the world.[151]

Ratzinger sees Jesus above all as the fundamental link between Christianity and Judaism: _Jesus was a Jew… on this point we Christians and Jews are bound to one another.'[152]

This has crucial theological consequences, because in the light of the permanent link of Jesus to Judaism and the Jewish people, any notion of fulfilment as abrogation of the Judaism is incompatible with Christian faith. Jesus Christ fulfils Israel and the Jewish faith not by replacing them with something else, which comes from outside, but by _transfiguring' them from within by a process of transformation – similar to that of growth, by which the core of identity is preserved and, in Aristotelian terms, potency becomes actuality. The Mystery of Christ _contains' the Jewish Covenant and Israel. At the Synagogue of Cologne, Pope Benedict made his own John Paul II's statement that _whoever meets Jesus meets Judaism.'[153]

During a meeting with the representatives of the Jewish community in Paris, Benedict XVI insisted on the radical Jewishness of Jesus Christ, which was especially manifested in his prayer, _nourished by the Psalms' and his attendance at temple and synagogue, where _he too listened to the word on the Sabbath.'[154] The faith of Israel is at the heart of Jesus' faith and religious practice.

In fact, as Pope Benedict explains, what Jesus Christ wants from Israel, the people of the Covenant, is _to recognise always the unprecedented greatness and love of God for all humanity.'[155] The core of Jesus' message to Israel is, first, the love of God that is at the

[151] Ibid, 37.
[152] Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 249.
[153] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 19/08/2005, 907.
[154] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of the Jewish Community in Paris*, 12/09/2008.
[155] Ibid.

heart of the Covenant and, second, the rediscovery of the universal character of God's love as a tenet of the faith of Israel, evident in the biblical narrative.[156]

For Ratzinger, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ does not put into question the uniqueness of Israel. The two are not incompatible, rather the mission of Christ is only possible and understood in the light of Israel's election and within the scope of the Jewish Covenant, outside of which it cannot be fully grasped. By recalling Israel to its true nature and mission, Christ confirms that Israel is forever the Chosen People whose mission has ongoing validity. This is a consequence of the fact that the Jewish Covenant is irrevocable: "Israel still has a mission to accomplish' because the Jews "still stand within the faithful covenant of God.'[157] Their task is to "make a gift of their God' to humanity. They have been faithful to their mission, despite the trials of history, holding on to and witnessing to faith in the one God "right up to the present.'[158]

Despite their non-acceptance of Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of Israel, the Jews still retain "a special role in God's plans,' and their mission is "important for the world,'[159] Far from being excluded from salvation they "serve salvation in a particular way.'[160] For Ratzinger it is clear that there are not two alternative ways of salvation, one for Jews and one for Christians, because the history of salvation is one, and the both the mediations of Israel and of the Church belong within it. The Christian is then presented with a paradox: on the one hand the Israelites' non-acceptance of Christ brings them "into conflict with the subsequent acts of God,' but at the same time Christians are sure of God's faithfulness to the Covenant, and therefore Christians understand the role of Israel in faith, "within the

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[156] *Deus Caritas Est* 9.
[157] Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 150.
[158] Ratzinger, "The Heritage of Abraham."
[159] Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 150.
[160] Ibid., 151.

patience of God.'[161] Christians should not pursue the theological solution of the paradox but learn to live with it in faith.

Benedict's conviction that Israel is special to God rests firmly on the teaching of *Nostra Aetate*. A direct quote from the Declaration is at the heart of Pope Benedict's words to the Chief Rabbis of Israel visiting the Vatican: '_God holds the Jews most dear… he does not repent of the gifts he makes or the calls he issues.'[162] The Jews are special to God who '_among the nations chooses Israel and loves her;'[163] they were '_chosen as the elected people;'[164] and the '_special favour of the God of the Covenant has always accompanied them, giving them the strength to overcome trials.'[165] Contrary to the argument that Israel's sufferings confirm that God has rejected them, the fact that the Jews as a people still exist and flourish, having overcome all the trials of history, signifies that they are favoured by God.

For Pope Benedict the necessary corollary to God's special relationship with the Jewish people is that Judaism is qualitatively different from any other religion. The reason is that, unlike other non-Christian religions, the Jewish faith '_is already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant.'[166] Despite his emphasis on the intrinsic continuity between Israel and Christ, Pope Benedict does not overlook the fact that Jesus also represents a rupture, the point of division between Jewish and Christian faith**.** The reason is to be found at the core of his mission, as he challenges Israel to rediscover its yet unfulfilled raison d'être: that Israel is chosen as and taken into a special relationship with God (Covenant) in view of the subsequent expansion of this relationship to all humanity. Israel exists and must continue to exist because it constitutes the core of the

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[161] Ibid.

[162] *Nostra Aetate* 4, quoted in Benedict XVI, *Address to the Chief Rabbis of Israel*, Vatican City, 15/09/2005, 954.

[163] *Deus Caritas Est* 9.

[164] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People*, 12/03/2009.

[165] Benedict XVI, *Address to Dr Riccardo Di Segni*, 16/01/2006.

[166] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

new people of God that potentially embraces all humankind. The ‗divisive' element of Jesus' mission must constantly be viewed within the whole of Jesus' mission, which is essentially reconciliation.[167]

From the point of view of Christ's salvific action, the Church and Israel are one as together they constitute the ‗entire People of God'. The Church is the ‗expanded' Israel of God. Historically, the Church of the origins did not understand itself as in opposition to Israel but as its legitimate continuation.[168] Because the Church is, in McDade's words, a ‗reconfigured Israel,' it is not its replacement.[169]

The purpose of Jesus' mission is to establish the Reign of God to its full extent, i.e. for all humanity. Pope Benedict points out that even though Jesus' ministry is always ‗an appeal to personal conversion,' the constant and ultimate aim of his saving activity was to ‗build the People of God, whom he came to bring together, purify and save.'[170] Jesus ‗truly came to unite dispersed humanity, he truly came to unite the People of God'.[171] These statements are from a catechesis in which Pope Benedict explains the mission of the Church in terms of its intrinsic connection to Christ and to Israel, through Christ. There Benedict XVI uses the term ‗entire People of God' in a universalistic sense (i.e. not restricted to the Jewish people) while at the same time referring to the Jews as the ‗Chosen People,' possibly in an effort to affirm the universality of God's salvific will without detracting from the unique role of Israel within it.[172]

The people of Israel constitute the permanent core of the re-formed People of God, and its ongoing mission is to continue to be such core by its fidelity to the Covenant and by witnessing to the one God through the observance of the Law.

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[167] Ratzinger, *Many Religions, One Covenant*, 22-28.
[168] Ratzinger, "The Heritage of Abraham."
[169] John McDade, "Catholic Christianity and Judaism Since Vatican II.," *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1016 (July 2007), 369-371;, "Christians and Jews: Competitive Siblings or the Israel of God?," *New Blackfriars* 89, no. 1021 (May 2008), 274-275.
[170] Benedict XVI, *Christ and the Church. General Audience*, 15/03/2006.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.

According to Ratzinger, the genealogy contained in the Lucan gospel shows that „Jesus is a man and that his life and death concern all men. The inheritance of Abrahamic faith makes the promised inheritance one that belongs to humanity.“[173]

The relationship between Jesus and the Torah has been a central concern of Benedict XVI, who has extensively reflected on the issue both before and after becoming pope. The correct understanding of this relationship is necessary in order to perceive how God‘s salvific plan unfolds in one single history of salvation, universal in scope and within which both Israel and the Church maintain their specific roles. More specifically, a correct understanding of Jesus‘ relationship to Torah shows that a supersessionist theology of the kind that considers Judaism abrogated by the advent of Christ is unacceptable from a Christian point of view.

Jesus Christ fulfils Israel, not by abolishing the Covenant of Israel but by revealing the universal purpose of Israel‘s election. Fulfilment need not be understood as abolition of the Ancient Covenant, but as its ultimate affirmation by re-orienting it according to its original direction. Jesus fulfils the Law not by denying it but by affirming it.

Because of its divine origin, the radical re-orientation of the Torah can only be effected by God‘s direct intervention.[174] This is where Benedict places the action of Christ within salvation history. In *Jesus of Nazareth* I, Ratzinger/Benedict speaks of the Torah of the Messiah and expounds the idea that Jesus Christ understands and presents himself as the New Torah. Jesus, „a Jew faithful to the Law, also stepped beyond the law and wanted to reinterpret the whole inheritance in the direction of a new, greater fidelity. This is precisely the point of conflict.“[175]

The term „Torah of the Messiah‘ is found in Paul‘s Letter to the Galatians (6:2) in the context of his exhortation to Christians to live „by the Spirit,‘ to fraternal correction,

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[173] Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 249
[174] Ratzinger, „Israel, the Church and the World,“ 38-39.
[175] Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 250

and to carry each other's burdens, according to Christ. Benedict points out that the "Torah of the Messiah" is the content of the Sermon of the Mount in Matthew's gospel (chapters 5-7).[176] Benedict believes that there is more to Paul's term "law of Christ" than a superficial reading would allow: it is not simply "teaching", but a kind of teaching that affects the Torah, the pillar of Jewish faith.

Jesus brings about a "messianic revolution," which consists in "the universalisation of the People of God", expanding Israel so as to "embrace all the people of the world."[177] This happens through the giving of a "new Torah" to Israel. However, new is not to be understood in terms of something completely other to the Torah of Moses, but rather as the renewed understanding of the Torah, which enables its true essence to be seen and to bear fruit in the life of Israel. Benedict points out that Jesus addresses the Sermon of the Mount "to his own people, to Israel" in order to "open them up."[178] By doing so the promise that God will be brought to all nations is fulfilled in the birth of a "great new family of God drawn from Israel and the Gentile."[179]

In his person Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, provides the divine interpretation of Torah that radically re-orients it and by doing so confirms and re-affirms its validity.[180] In its being radically re-orientated, the universal significance of the Torah is released, the Jewish Covenant fulfilled and the vocation of the Jewish people finds it accomplishment. However, it is the fact that Jesus claims authority to reinterpret the Torah, which is God's authority, that causes disturbance and "alarm" among the Jews, because what they see is a man who makes himself equal to God. In engaging in dialogue with Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner, what for the latter is disturbing, for Pope Benedict expresses Jesus' novelty. Neusner's problem with Jesus is precisely that Jesus "adds

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[176] Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth,* Vol. 1 (London, 2007), 101; idem, "The New Covenant," 69-71.
[177] Ibid., 100-101.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid., 99-127.

himself' to the Torah, his 'I', and gives it a new direction, in the sense that full obedience to Torah now consists in following Jesus.[181]

In *Israel, the Church and the World* (1994), Ratzinger reflects on the relationship between Jesus and Israel by commenting on the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Catechism presents the Epiphany, the visit of the Magi described in Matthew's infancy gospel (2:1-12), as encapsulating the meaning of the mission of Jesus Christ.[182] The visit of the Magi represents the coming of the nations to Israel, as promised by God through the Prophets. Therefore Jesus' mission is to 'unite Jews and pagans into a single People of God in which the universalist promises of the Scriptures are fulfilled…'; it 'consists in bringing together the histories of the nations in the community of the history of Abraham, the history of Israel.'[183] Ratzinger points out that the Catechism relates Jesus' mission to his faithfulness to the Law as it sees him as the Servant of God (Isaiah 42:3) who becomes a 'covenant of the people.'[184] From this perspective, the Cross is not a denial of the Law but the consequence of Jesus' faithfulness to Torah and his 'innermost solidarity with Israel.'[185] The Cross is the result of the fact that in Jesus, writes Ratzinger, 'obedience clashes with obedience': Jesus radical obedience to the essence of Torah, which is its universal orientation for the salvation of humanity, clashes with the observance of the commandment that only God is God. The two aspects of Christ's action that we have considered, reconciliation and separation, 'are tied up in a virtually insolvable paradox' culminating in the Cross.[186] In this sense, for Ratzinger, the Cross has only one salvific effect for all, both Israel and the gentiles; not two, 'a saving one and a damning one.'[187] The blood of Christ does not call for revenge against those Jews – not all

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[181] Ibid., 100-101.
[182] Ratzinger, "Israel, the Church and the World," 21-46.
[183] Ibid., 27.
[184] Ibid. 31.
[185] Ibid., 32.
[186] Ibid., 40.
[187] Ibid.

– who were responsible for Jesus' death, but as the Letter to the Hebrew defines it is a very different kind of blood, that speaks a higher language, the language of forgiveness and reconciliation.[188] This excludes the possibility of interpreting Matthew 27:26, "Let his blood be on us and on our children," as a curse on the Jewish people, but rather as an unrecognised prophecy (like Caiaphas' earlier in the narrative) that speaks of God's forgiveness bestowed on them through the death of Christ on the Cross.[189] Thus Ratzinger/Benedict XVI provides content to the statement of *Nostra Aetate* that the Jews as a whole cannot be held responsible for the death of Christ.[190]

Through Jesus "all nations, without the abolition of the special mission of Israel, become brothers and receivers of the promises of the Chosen People; they become People of God with Israel through adherence to the will of God and through acceptance of the Davidic kingdom."[191] Being Israel the channel through which, by Christ's action, all the nations can access God, its role in the process is crucial. From this perspective, Jesus' mission does not invalidate/contradict that of Israel but confirms it, and after the Incarnation Israel's mission retains validity.

### *c) The unity of the Church and the Jewish People*

These considerations have direct implications with regard to the relationship between the Church and the Jewish People, i.e. not only biblical Israel but contemporary Judaism as well. *Nostra Aetate* 4 states that the Church is mindful of the "bond that spiritually ties the People of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock."[192] That "Abraham's stock" is not just the Jews of the past is confirmed by the fact that *Nostra Aetate* 4, besides substantial reference to biblical Israel, also contains multiple references to contemporary Jews: the shared spiritual patrimony (of the past) links the Christians and

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[188] Ibid., 44-45.
[189] Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011), 186-188.
[190] *Nostra Aetate* 4
[191] Ratzinger, "Israel, the Church and the World," in *Many Religions, One Covenant*, 27-28.
[192] *Nostra Aetate* 4

Jews of today; contemporary Jews cannot be held responsible for the death of Jesus Christ; the Church rejects any form of hatred against the Jews, past, present and future.[193]

Speaking to the representatives of the Jewish Community in Paris Benedict XVI made the following statement:

> By her very nature the Catholic Church feels obliged to respect the Covenant made by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Indeed the Church herself is situated within the eternal Covenant of the Almighty, whose plans are immutable, and she respects the children of the Promise, the children of the Covenant, as her beloved brothers and sisters in the faith. She compellingly repeats, through my voice, the words of the great Pope Pius XI, my beloved predecessor: Spiritually, we are Semites.[194]

In his 2000 Christmas meditation, Ratzinger argued that the Church and Israel are inseparable because of their common understanding of God as love. The Johannine definition (_God is love _, 1 John 4:16) _serves as a summary of all salvation history, which initially had Israel as its central figure.‘[195]

Benedict XVI speaks of the _bonds that unite us _, that is Jews and Christians;[196] of _closeness and spiritual fraternity.‘[197] On the basis of the shared heritage, he describes such bonds in terms of _the solidarity which binds the Church to the Jewish people _at the level of their spiritual identity.‘[198] Solidarity (the Latin term *solidum* implies the idea of _being whole_) means more than mutual responsibility. It points to the relationship of parts that form a whole and therefore belong to each other. For Pope Benedict, the Jewish-Christian relationship is _at the level of spiritual identity,‘ and elsewhere he speaks of Christianity‘s _inner affinity with Judaism. _[199] The identity of both Christianity and Judaism is essentially spiritual rather than cultural, therefore to be connected at the

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[193] Ibid.

[194] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of the Jewish Community* in Paris, 12/09/2008.

[195] Ratzinger, –The Heritage of Abraham".

[196] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

[197] Ibid. also other statements by Pope Benedict: _The Catholic Church is close and is a friend to you… you are very dear and beloved brothers to us.‘ (*Address to Dr Riccardo Di Segni*, 16/01/2006. _[T]he Jews, to whom we are tied by an indissoluble bond, the lengthy history of the Covenant.‘ (*Homily at the Opening of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops*, Vatican City, 10/10/2010, 806). He describes the bond as _friendship‘ (*Message to the Jewish Community on the Feast of Pesach*, Vatican City, 14/04/2008, 353-354).

[198] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

[199] Benedict XVI, *Address to Representatives of the Jewish Community in Berlin*, 22/09/2011.

level of spiritual identity means that the two faiths are connected at the level of their essence; hence it does not depend on external, changeable factors.

At Auschwitz, Benedict XVI stated that by means of the Shoah, the destruction of Israel, the Nazis wanted to ‗tear up the root of the Christian faith.'[200] Despite the controversial character of the statement, which could be interpreted as an attempt to ‗Christianise the Shoah', that is to say to claim it as an event of Christian history, the underlying idea seems to be precisely that Judaism and Christianity are in a relationship of ‗unity' at the level of identity.[201]

Such a bond of unity makes it possible for Christians and Jews to celebrate Easter and Pesach together in the sense that they ‗can rejoice together in the deep spiritual ethos of the Passover, a memorial *(zikkaron)* of freedom and redemption.'[202]

A very important implication of the fundamental unity between Christianity and Judaism is that Jews and Christian have a shared vocation. God's self-revelation demands response to God's commitment to his people (both Israel and the Church).[203] God issues a twofold call to his listeners by establishing the Covenant: he demands that his People be faithful to the Covenant and, at the same time, that they become God's instrument to extend to all humanity his invitation to communion with him. The two aspects are intrinsically connected, as it is by their faithfulness to the Covenant – in the form of observance of the Law for Jews and discipleship of Christ for Christians respectively – that Jews and Christians respond to God's call. In this sense ‗a divine mission' is an essential dimension of both Jewish and Christian faith. Benedict XVI insists on the fact that Jews and Christians are entrusted by God with the same twofold mission, to love God

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[200] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Visit to the Auschwitz Camp*, 28/05/2006, 483.

[201] As an example of accusation to the Church of wanting to appropriate the Shoah as a Christian reality, see Carol Rittner and John K Roth, *Memory Offended: The Auschwitz Convent Controversy* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

[202] Benedict XVI, *Message to the Jewish Community on the Feast of Pesach*, 14/04/2008, 353.

[203] Benedict XVI, *Address to Dr Riccardo Di Segni*, 16/01/2006.

and love humanity, which entails a threefold and not just twofold, responsibility: towards God, towards humanity and towards each other.

In Judaism obedience, practiced in the present, to the Torah that was given in the past directs Israel towards the future. According to Ratzinger, Christianity shares with Judaism this basic dynamic, which it expresses somehow in the virtues of faith (obedience to the eternal Word), love (which makes that Word actively present) and hope, which are "contained and sustained in the figure of Christ."[204]

Towards God, Jews and Christians fulfil their mission by remaining faithful to their exclusive relationship with him, which consists in keeping God at the centre of their lives and avoiding any form of idolatry.

With regard to responsibility towards humanity, according to Benedict XVI our common task is to give "an ever more harmonious witness" and to cooperate "for the defence and promotion of human rights and the sacredness of human life, for family values, for social justice and for peace in the world."[205] The task is primarily to give witness to God and to his will in the world.[206] The Scriptures teach Jews and Christians that their purpose is "to remind the world that this God lives… he has revealed himself and continues to work in human history."[207] Witness to the one God is a "precious service that Jews and Christians can and must offer together," aimed at "reawakening in our society openness to the Transcendent dimension."[208] For Benedict XVI the development of society "always includes a spiritual dimension," and God has entrusted both Jews and Christians with the responsibility to assist society in this regard.[209]

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[204] Ratzinger, "Interreligious Dialogue and Jewish-Christian relations," 38.
[205] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.
[206] Benedict XVI, Let*ter to the President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews*, 26/10/2005, 987.
[207] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Yad Vashem Memorial*, Jerusalem, 11/05/2009, *AAS* 101(2009),519.
[208] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.
[209] Benedict XVI, *Address to Representatives of the Jewish Community in Berlin*, 22/09/2011.

The common task therefore also involves witnessing to „his commandments, the sanctity of life, the promotion of human dignity, the rights of the family and the need to build a world of justice, reconciliation and peace for future generations."[210] God calls Jews and Christians to work for the protection and promotion of human dignity in all its aspects. The Decalogue is a call „to respect life and to protect it against every injustice and abuse, recognising the worth of each human person, created in the image and likeness of God."[211] God desires a „new world where justice and peace reign," whose distinctive mark is „that *shalom* which the lawgivers, the prophets and the sages of Israel longed to see."[212] Christians and Jews can contribute significantly to the transformation of society by „Bearing witness together to the supreme value of life against all selfishness."[213] Moral relativism is a serious threat to human dignity, which is a concern of both Jews and Christians. It challenges the two faith communities to point to the „religious foundations that best sustain lasting moral values" but also to „engage people of good will at the level of reason."[214]

The Decalogue also calls „to preserve and to promote the sanctity of the family," understood as the „personal and reciprocal, faithful and definitive „yes" of man and woman," which „makes room for the future, for the authentic humanity of each, and makes them open, at the same time, to the gift of new life."[215] Pope Benedict stresses that the family is the fundamental context in which men and women learn and practice virtues,

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[210] Benedict XVI, *Letter to the President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews*, 26/10/2005, 987.

[211] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

[212] Ibid., Benedict said: „May the Lord sustain us in serving the great cause of promoting the sacredness of human life and defending the human dignity of every person, so that justice and peace may flourish in the world." (*Address to the Chief Rabbis of Israel*, 15/09/2005, 955).

[213] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

[214] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Courtesy visit to the Two Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem*, Jerusalem, 12/05/2009, *AAS* 101(2009),523.

[215] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

therefore witness to the sanctity of the family is a ‗precious service' that Jews and Christians are to provide for the realisation of ‗a world with a more human face.'[216]

The world of *shalom*, the world with a ‗more human face', is the reflection of the Kingdom of God, which Jews and Christians are called to proclaim and witness by practicing justice and mercy, and to work and pray for in hope.[217]

For Pope Benedict it is crucial that this mission is carried out together, as a joint response to God's call, because when Jews and Christians ‗succeed in uniting our hearts and our hands in response to the Lord's call, his light comes closer and shines on all the peoples of the world.'[218] It has to be a ‗harmonious witness.'[219]

With regard to responsibility towards each other, preserving the bond of unity is an integral aspect of the mission that Jews and Christians share. In other words, the success of their mission depends on the ‗communion' of faith and response to God in which it is carried out. This resonates remarkably with the condition for the success of the disciples' witness, for which Jesus prayed at the Last Supper: ‗that they may be one…. so that the world may believe' (John 17:21).

In this sense mutual responsibility is inherent in the shared divine vocation. Jews and Christians fulfil it by nourishing and growing in their mutual relationship. This means that it is their duty ‗in response to God's call, to strive to keep open the space for dialogue, for reciprocal respect, for growth in friendship.'[220] This is important ‗for a common witness in the face of the challenges of our time, which invite us to cooperate for the good of humanity.'[221]

The good of humanity is a central concern of Benedict XVI. The call to work for the good of humanity stems directly from faith in God, and for this reason it is a vocation

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[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 908.
[220] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.
[221] Ibid. Benedict XVI, *Address to Dr Riccardo Di Segni*, 16/01/2006.

that Jews and Christians have in common with Muslims as well, on account of their faith in the Creator God, as emerges from Benedict's teaching on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations.[222]

### *d) The Land and the State of Israel*

Although Benedict XVI's papal statements on the Land and State of Israel are few, two of his addresses are especially significant in this regard. One is the speech to the ambassador of Israel to the Holy See, Mordechay Lewy, at the beginning of his mission in 2008.[223] The other is the Pope's address at the opening of the special assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of the Bishops in 2010.[224]

Three elements are particularly significant in the first speech. First, in offering his congratulations on the 60 anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel, Benedict XVI stated that:

> The Holy See joins you in giving thanks to the Lord that the aspirations of the Jewish people for a home in the land of their fathers have been fulfilled, and hopes soon to see a time of even greater rejoicing when a just peace finally resolves the conflict with the Palestinians.[225]

In this statement, the pope connected the State of Israel to the biblical notion of the ‗Land', acknowledging that the establishment of the former is in part the fulfilment of the age long aspiration of the Jewish People to have a home in the land of their fathers. In doing so Benedict XVI made a connection between the political and the religious dimension; this is something new that does not reflect the Holy See's practice of dealing with the two aspects of dialogue with the Jews separately: namely the Commission for

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[222] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Members of the American Jewish Committee*, Vatican City, 16/03/2006, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060316_jewish-committee_en.html

[223] Benedict XVI, *Address to His Excellency Mr Mordechay Lewy Ambassador of Israel to the Holy See*, Vatican, 12/05/2008, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English weekly edition, no. 22 (2008), 8.

[224] Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Opening of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops*, 10/10/2010. The post-synodal exhortation: Benedict XVI, *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, Beirut, 14/09/2012, *AAS* 104(2012*)*,752-796. See O'Mahony and Flannery, eds., *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East.*

[225] Benedict XVI, *Address to His Excellency Mr Mordechay Lewy*.

Religious Relations with the Jews and the Secretariat of State. Benedict acknowledges a certain theological significance of the State of Israel.

The second aspect is that the ‗Judeo-Christian heritage' (previously mentioned by the ambassador in his address to the pope) should inspire the Holy See and the State of Israel ‗to take the lead in promoting many forms of social and humanitarian action throughout the world.'[226] The emphasis laid on the Judeo-Christian heritage, in the light of the importance that this notion has for Benedict XVI, implies that in the Church's relationship with the Jews the distinction between politics and religion cannot be absolutely clear-cut. Pope Benedict explains that, ‗the links between Israel and the Holy See have deeper resonances than those which arise formally from the juridical dimension of our relations.'[227]

The third element is Pope Benedict's statement that ‗The Holy See recognises Israel's legitimate need for security and self-defence and strongly condemns all forms of anti-Semitism.'[228] In doing so he removed any doubt with regard to the Holy See's recognition of the State of Israel. After all, it must be recalled that as Prefect of the Congregation for the doctrine of the Faith, the then Cardinal Ratzinger contributed greatly to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Israel. However, Benedict also demands that the State of Israel give serious attention to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for various reasons.

First, because the Holy See ‗also maintains that all peoples have a right to be given equal opportunities to flourish.'[229] In this sense Benedict asks that the Palestinians be granted the ‗freedom necessary to go about their legitimate business, including travel to

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[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.

places of worship, so that they too can enjoy greater peace and security.‘[230] In short, it is a duty of the State of Israel to protect the rights of the Palestinian community.

Second, Christians (many of whom are Palestinians) have long enjoyed good relationships with both Jews and Muslims in the Holy Land and their presence can ‗ontribute significantly to healing the divisions between the two communities.‘ The ongoing tensions between Jews and Palestinians are in part the cause of their difficulties.[231] Therefore the resolution of the conflict is also necessary for the welfare of Christians in the country.

Lastly, the conflict must end because when there is peace in the Holy Land, Israel will truly be ‗ight of the nations… a shining example of conflict resolution for the rest of the world to follow.‘[232]

While progressing in understanding the importance of Land and State for the Jewish People, the Vatican and Benedict XVI in particular also explicitly support the aspirations of the Palestinian people for equal recognition. In fact, Benedict explicitly espoused a two-state solution position when he spoke of ‗two independent sovereign states, side by side.‘[233] Immediately after the United Nations‘ vote by which the Palestinian Authority was given the status of ‗Non-Member Observer State‘, the Holy See issued a communiqué reaffirming its and Benedict‘s position by interpreting the decision as a positive but still unsufficient step towards a definitive solution to the conflict, respectful of the rights of both Israelis and Palestinians.[234]

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[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Holy See, ―Communiqué Regarding the UN Vote on Palestinian Authority,‖ *Zenit*, 30/11/2012. On Christians in the Palestinian context see: Drew Christiansen, ―The Intifada and Palestinian Christian Identity,‖ in *Christianity and Jerusalem*, Anthony O‘Mahony, ed. (Leominster: Gracewing, 2010), 44–68; and Leonard Marsh, ―The Theological Thought of Michel Sabbah in the Context of the Challenge to the Christian Presence,‖ in O‘Mahony and Flannery, *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, 253-261.

The fact that there has been a special assembly of the Synod of bishops exclusively dedicated to the situation of the Middle East shows that this is a major concern for Pope Benedict. At the opening of the Synod for the Middle East, Benedict XVI formulated a _theology of the Holy Land' based on the relationship between the universal character of salvation and the particularity of the mediations through which God intends to bring about the salvation of humanity. The mediation, he explains, is that of _the people of Israel, which goes on to become that of Jesus Christ and the Church.'[235] The mediation of Israel implies the theological notion of the land. The _land of freedom and peace' to which the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob wants to lead his people cannot be reduced to a geographical space but has a theological significance: _this land is not of this world' but beyond history.[236] However _God wants to build it with men, for men and in men, beginning with the coordinates of space and time in which they live and which He gave them.'[237] The Middle East _makes up part of those coordinates' and has a theological significance in that it is _the cradle of a universal design of salvation in love'; it is the land where the most significant events of salvation history have taken place, from the calling of Abraham through to the establishment of the Church. The Middle East demands the Church's special attention because it is the _cradle' of that design of salvation that is the very reason for the Church's existence.

Pope Benedict's theological interpretation of the notion of the Land, prevents it from becoming an absolute that could easily be used ideologically to justify a right to disregard the dignity of other human beings and nations. At the same time Benedict XVI acknowledged the great significance that that particular Land has in God's universal plan

[235] Benedict XVI, *Address to His Excellency Mr Mordechay Lewy*.
[236] Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Opening of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops*, 10/10/2010, 804.
[237] Ibid.

of salvation. Therefore the Land does not become a mere abstraction, and still retains its value as a concrete sign of God's faithfulness to humanity.[238]

### *e) Memory of the Shoah and condemnation of anti-Semitism*

Especially during the first five years of his pontificate, Benedict XVI was on various occasions reproached for not admitting explicitly the responsibility of the Church in the Nazi plan to exterminate European Jewry, which culminated in the Shoah. It is true that the first explicit acknowledgment was only made in his speech at the Synagogue of Rome (2010), however implicit admission of responsibility can be found in earlier teaching as well as in his writings before becoming pope.

For Benedict it is clear that the Shoah was _inspired by a neo-pagan racist ideology,' and not by Christianity, however he recognised that it was the tragic culmination of a complex and often painful history of Jewish-Christian relationships.[239] This first mention of the Shoah in a papal document by Benedict is in the letter to Cardinal Kasper for the fortieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*. In the letter, written during his first year as pontiff, Benedict speaks of the anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* as an opportunity to thank God for

> the witness of all those who, despite a complex and often painful history, and especially after the tragic experience of the Shoah, which was inspired by a neo-pagan racist ideology, worked courageously to foster reconciliation and improved understanding between Christians and Jews.[240]

In the light of the concluding sentence (_…worked courageously to foster reconciliation and improved understanding between Christians and Jews.'), it can be

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[238] Philip A Cunningham, —A Catholic Theology of the Land?: The State of the Question," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 8 (2013), 1-15.

[239] Benedict XVI, *Letter to the President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews*, 26/10/2005, 986. Benedict also wrote: —In the Twentieth Century, the darkest period of German and European history, an insane racist ideology, born of neo-paganism, gave rise to an attempt, planned and systematically carried out by the regime, to exterminate European Jewry." (*Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 906.)

[240] Benedict XVI, *Letter to the President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews*, 26/10/2005, 986.

assumed that the ‗complex and often painful history' Benedict XVI refers to is the history of Jewish-Christian relations. The ‗tragic experience of the Shoah' is presented as having happened within that history. Although Benedict XVI does not mention it explicitly, he does see a connection between the long history of Jewish-Christian conflict and the Shoah, as its culmination.

Being the Church's response to the Shoah, *Nostra Aetate* laid the ‗foundations for a renewed relationship between the Jewish People and the Church.'[241] This implies that the Shoah was related to the ‗old' relationship of mutual suspicion and enmity.

The explicit acknowledgement of some degree of responsibility for the Shoah on the part of Christians came in the historic speech of Benedict XVI at the Synagogue of Rome (2010). On that occasion, with reference to previous Church teaching, especially by John Paul II[242] and by various Bishops' Conferences most notably in Germany,[243] Pope Benedict, pointed out that ‗the Church has not failed to deplore the failings of her sons and daughters, begging forgiveness for all that could in any way have contributed to the scourge of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism.'[244] Then, quoting the prayer that John Paul II placed in the Western Wall in 2000, he too asked for forgiveness.[245]

Before becoming pope, he spoke on the issue openly on various occasions, so that in 2008 John Pawlikowski (former president of the International Council of Christians

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[241] Ibid.

[242] During his visit on 26/03/2000, Pope John Paul II offered an apology to Jews on behalf of the Church by placing a prayer at the Western Wall. The prayer read: ‗We are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those in the course of history who have caused the children of God to suffer, and asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant'. On 16/03/1998 the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People published the document *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, which acknowledged the responsibility of Catholics in the Shoah, and called Catholics to acknowledge Christian anti-Judaism in history, to repent and ‗to renew the awareness of the Hebrew roots of their faith.'

[243] Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, *Erklärung der deutschen Bischöfe aus Anlass des 60. Jahrestages der Befreiung des Vernichtungslagers Auschwitz*, 27/01/2005, in *Dokumente zur Versöhnungsarbeit der Katholischen Kirche in Deutschland*, 107-112**,** available at http://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/veroeffentlichungen/arbeitshilfen/AH_227.pdf)

[244] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

[245] Ibid.

and Jews)[246] wrote that he wished that Pope Benedict would be as clear on the topic as he had been earlier as a theologian. In *Salt of the Earth*, after pointing out that the Shoah was committed by the Nazis, who were anti-Christian and who saw Christianity itself as a ‗Jewish attempt to seize power,' Ratzinger stated that this ‗does not change the fact that baptised people were responsible for it,' and that ‗Christian anti-Semitism had prepared the soil to a certain degree. That is undeniable.'[247]

In *The Heritage of Abraham* (2000) his judgement was even more straightforward, as he admitted that during history the tensions between Christians and Jews ‗have led to deplorable acts of violence,' and that it is undeniable that ‗a certain insufficient resistance' on the part of Christians against the Nazi persecution of the Jewish people was due to ‗an inherited anti-Judaism' present in their hearts.[248]

For Pope Benedict the Shoah has great theological significance. He interprets it as an attack on God himself, explaining that the intention behind the Third Reich's plan ‗to crush the entire the Jewish people' was to ‗kill the God who called Abraham, who spoke on Sinai and laid down principles to serve as a guide for mankind.'[249] God was the real obstacle to the realisation of Nazi ideology, and therefore ‗God had to die and power had to belong to man alone.'[250]

The theological significance of the Shoah derives from the theological significance of the Jewish People. It is because by their very existence the Jewish People make God present in the world and in history that they have to be ‗wiped out' so that God may be banished from human history and humans have the power.

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[246] The International Council for Christians is composed of thirty-eight national Jewish-Christian organisations. Founded in 1974 to foster good relationship between Jews and Christians, in recent years members of the ICCJ have increasingly being involved in dialogue with Muslims as well.

[247] Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 251

[248] Ratzinger, ―The Heritage of Abraham."

[249] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Visit to the Auschwitz Camp*, 28/05/2006, 482. Also quoted in his speech at the Synagogue of Rome, 17/01/2010.

[250] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Visit to the Auschwitz Camp*, 28/05/2006, 483.

The Shoah was also an act of contempt _for the sacredness of human life.‘[251] The cry of its victims, says Pope Benedict,

> still echoes in our hearts. It is a cry raised against every act of injustice and violence. It is a perpetual reproach against the spilling of innocent blood. It is the cry of Abel rising from the earth to the Almighty.[252]

The victims of the Shoah _re-present‘ all men and women who suffer because of violence and injustice; they are a perpetual _reproach‘, a reminder that violence and injustice are against God‘s will.[253] It is important to remember the Shoah and its _memory… must serve to ensure that similar horrors do not repeat themselves ever again.‘[254] Memory means _educating… the young generations in respect and reciprocal acceptance.‘[255]

The Nazi rejection of the God of Abraham, that is the God of Jews and Christians, was rooted in the very same _racist myth‘ on which the _Nazi reign of terror‘ was based.[256] For Pope Benedict when Man rejects God, then all respect for human dignity collapses; the _refusal to heed this one God always makes people heedless of human dignity as well.‘[257] The images of the concentration camps at the end of the war showed _what man is capable of when he rejects God.‘[258]

If _inherited anti-Judaism‘ was the reason why Christians did not resist with sufficient force the persecution of the Jews that culminated in the Shoah, then the Shoah must be for Christians a constant call to reject any form of anti-Semitism. Anti-Judaism is

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[251] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 906. Benedict called the *Shoah* an _act of contempt for humanity‘ during his apostolic journey to Germany: see Benedict XVI, *Address to Representatives of the Jewish Community in Berlin*, 22/09/2011.

[252] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Yad Vashem Memorial*, Jerusalem, 11/05/2009, *AAS* 101 (2009),519.

[253] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Visit to the Auschwitz Camp*, 28/05/2006.

[254] Benedict XVI, *Angelus*, 9/11/2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/angelus/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20081109_en.html.

[255] Ibid.

[256] Benedict XVI, *Address to Representatives of the Jewish Community in Berlin*, 22/09/2011.

[257] Ibid.

[258] Ibid.

not identical but can easily become anti-Semitism.[259] For Pope Benedict in response to the Shoah Christians must ensure that its memory translates into commitment at all levels, „against every form of anti-Semitism and discrimination."[260]

Although Christians find in basic respect for the sacredness of human life and dignity sufficient reason to reject anti-Semitism, one further motive is their unique relationship with the Jews. Because Jews and Christians are one, the one People of the Covenant, the Church opposes „every form of anti-Semitism, which can never be theologically justified, because „to be anti-Semitic means being anti-Christian."[261]

Contemporary demonstrations of anti-Semitism are a cause of grief and serious concern for Pope Benedict.[262] Vatican II, Paul VI and John Paul II issued an unambiguous condemnation of anti-Semitism.[263] Benedict XVI has firmly reiterated it.[264]

## 3. The dialogue between Christians and Jews in the light of the of unity of Judaism and Christianity

Benedict XVI has often and openly reiterated his view that the Jewish People retain a precise place in salvation history, with a specific and irreplaceable mission, that to „communicate to the whole human family knowledge and fidelity to the one, unique and true God."[265] Christians share in the same mission and their mission does not invalidate that of the Jews. The unity of Jews and Christians means that they must live their mutual

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[259] Janis E Leibig, „John and „the Jews': Theological Anti-Semitism in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 20, no. 2 (Spring 1983), 209-234.

[260] Benedict XVI, *Angelus*, Vatican, 9/11/2008.

[261] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of the Jewish Community*, Paris, 12/09/2008. Benedict made explicit reference to Henri de Lubac et al., *Israël et La Foi Chrétienne.* (Fribourg: Éditions de la Librairie de l'Université, 1942).

[262] Benedict XVI, *Address to Dr Riccardo Di Segni*, 16/01/2006.

[263] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 907; *Address to a Delegation of the IJCIC*, 9/06/2005, *AAS* 97(2005*),*817.

[264] Benedict XVI, *Address to His Excellency Mr Mordechay Lewy*, 12/05/2008; *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Concerning the Remission of Excommunication of the Four Bishops Consecrated by Archbishop Lefèbvre*, 10/03/2009, *AAS* 101(2009),270-276.

[265] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People*, 12/03/2009.

relationship in the spirit of ‗interior belonging together,' and on the basis of an ‗inner affinity with one another.'[266]

### *a) Christian mission to the Jews*

The essence of the Church is to proclaim Jesus Christ and invite humanity to be saved by entering into communion with Christ through the Church. As part of humanity, the Jewish people cannot be altogether excluded from the missionary mandate of the Church.[267] However, on account of the unique relationship between Christians and Jews and on account of the permanent validity of the mission of the Jews, the Christian mission to the Jews cannot be the same as the Church's mission to the nations.

Vis-à-vis the Gentiles, the Church's task is to make Jesus Christ known to them and invite them to become his disciples by entering the communion of the Church through baptism. The raison d'être of the Church's mission is the salvation of the Gentiles by their inclusion in God's communion. This does not apply to the Jewish people, in virtue of the fact that they already stand in a covenantal relationship with the God of Jesus Christ. In other words, the salvation of the Jews is not an issue.

In the second volume of his Christology Pope Benedict treats the question of the salvation of the Jews by commenting on the New Testament theme of the ‗times of the Gentiles,' which is found in Paul's Letter to the Romans (11:25). Paul argues that the Jews will be saved once the full number of the Gentiles has entered the Church. With a direct quote from a letter of Bernard of Clairvaux to Pope Eugene III, Benedict XVI

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[266] Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 247-48. Benedict said that Jews and Christians ‗must belong together.' (―Israel, the Church and the World," 22).

[267] See: Gavin G. D'Costa, ―What Does the Catholic Church Teach About Mission to the Jewish People?," *Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (September 2012), 590–613. Edward Kessler, ―A Jewish Response to Gavin D'Costa," *Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (September 2012), 614–628. John T. Pawlikowski, ―A Catholic Response to Gavin D'Costa," *Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (September 2012), 629–640.

states that for the salvation of the Jews as a people „a determined point in time has been fixed, which cannot be anticipated.“[268]

Further on, quoting the commentary on St. Bernard‘s letter by Hildegard Brem (b. 1951), biblical scholar and abbess of Mariastern-Gwiggen in Austria, Benedict concludes that in the light of Romans 11:25 „the Church must not concern herself with the conversion of the Jews,‘ but should rather look at them as a „living homily‘ as they are a reminder of Christ‘s sufferings.[269] Here the two points are connected: first, it is not the purpose of Christian mission to convert the Jews, because their salvation is in God‘s hands; second, the Jews retain an important role vis-à-vis the world and Christianity, as a reminder of God.[270]

Pope Benedict suggests that the mission of the Church to the Jews consists not in a direct invitation to faith in Christ by entry into the Church, but rather in being a reminder for Israel of its divine universal election and vocation.

This does not exclude the possibility of a Jew converting to Christianity.[271] Pope Benedict believes that it is legitimate for Christians to hope that the Jews may recognise Jesus as their Messiah, but „that does not mean that we have to force Christ upon them.‘ It means rather that Christians „should share in the patience of God.‘[272] Their missionary responsibility toward the Jews turns into a call to faithfulness to Christians themselves, as „We also have to try to live our life together with Christ in such a way that it no longer stands in opposition to them but facilitates their own approach to it. It is in fact our belief

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[268] Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 44-45; Joël Regnard, „Le Sens de La Permanence Du Peuple Juif Pour Saint Bernard,” *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 67 (2005), 102–111.

[269] Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth,* Vol. 2, 45.

[270] Ibid., 46.

[271] On the Hebrew-Catholic community of Jerusalem see Leon Menzies Racionzer, „Hebrew Catholicism in Modern Israel,” in *Christianity and Jerusalem*, ed. Anthony O‘Mahony (Leominster: Gracewing, 2010), 31–43; Anthony O‘Mahony, „The Latins of the East: The Vatican, Jerusalem and Palestinian Christians” in idem ed., *The Christian Communities of Jerusalem and the Holy Land:*, 90–114; and David Neuhaus, „Jewish-Israeli Attitudes Towards Christianity and Christian,” in *World Christianity: Politics, Theology, Dialogues*, eds. Anthony O‘Mahony and Michael Kirwan (London: Melisende, 2004), 347–371.

[272] Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 150.

as Christians that Christ is the Messiah of Israel.'[273] However, the salvation of the Jews is in God's hands, as well as "when and how the reuniting of Jews and Gentiles, the reunification of God's people, will be achieved."[274]

### *b) The parameters of Jewish-Christian Dialogue*

Benedict XVI's view of the dialogue between Jews and Christians derives directly from his understanding of the Jewish-Christian bond. The goal, the content and the style of Jewish-Christian dialogue do not depend primarily on external elements (historical circumstances or socio-political factors), but reflect the unique relationship of unity between the two faith communities.

The unique relationship that exists between Christians and Jews at the level of spiritual identity, situates the Christian dialogue with the Jews "on a different level than that in which we engage with other religions."[275] This is because Judaism "is not merely another religion to us, but is the foundation of our faith."[276] Incidentally Jewish-Christian dialogue is unique even in comparison with Christian engagement with Muslims, whose faith is remarkably close to ours. In fact, although Muslims see themselves as descendants of Abraham and have inherited from Jews and Christians the belief in Abraham's God, they "follow a different path, and so dialogue with them calls for different parameters."[277] Jewish-Christian dialogue is a unique dialogue based on a unique relationship, and has therefore its unique parameters: that is to say its foundation, aims, achievement, content, structures and style. Benedict XVI's teachings provide details on each of these aspects.

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[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Ratzinger, "The Heritage of Abraham"
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.

### (1) The foundation of Jewish-Christian dialogue

The undisputed starting point for Catholic dialogue with the Jews is the teaching of Vatican II contained in the fourth section the Declaration Nostra Aetate.[278] Pope Benedict constantly mentions the Declaration as a document that has made history in interreligious relations and whose import is still crucial in our days. *Nostra Aetate* has „opened up new prospects for Jewish-Christian relations in terms of dialogue and solidarity"[279]; it has „offered the basis for sincere theological dialogue" with the Jews.[280] For Catholics the teaching of Vatican II is a „clear landmark to which constant reference is made in our attitude and our relations with the Jewish people. "[281] The implication is that the correct and most appropriate way for Catholic Church to advance in the Jewish-Christian engagement is to work from within the parameters set by *Nostra Aetate*. The Declaration's permanent relevance consists in the fact that, while not giving the answers, it posed the fundamental questions and therefore outlined the horizon of future Jewish-Christian engagement.

### (2) The aims of the Jewish-Christian conversation.

On various occasions, Pope Benedict has identified the aims of Jewish-Christian dialogue, which can be grouped around five major and closely interconnected imperatives.

Firstly, the aim of Jewish-Christian dialogue is the „genuine and lasting reconciliation" between Jews and Christians, as taught by Vatican II.[282] This includes the task of continuing „to enrich and deepen the bonds of friendship which have

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[278] See David M. Neuhaus, "Engaging the Jewish People. Fifty Years after Noastra Aetate," in *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: a Comprehensive Study*, ed. Karl Josef Becker and Ilaria Morali (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010), 395–413.

[279] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 906.

[280] Benedict XVI, *Letter to the President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People*, 26/10/2005, 986.

[281] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

[282] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Courtesy visit to the Two Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem*, 12/05/2009, 523.

developed,'[283] which amounts to taking forward the process inaugurated by *Nostra Aetate*. In 'Israel, the Church and the World' Ratzinger pointed out that in line with the teaching of Vatican II and in recognition of the significance of the Shoah – epitomised by Auschwitz – the reconciliation of Jews and Christians has been included in the Catechism of the Catholic Church thereby becoming an 'object of faith.'[284]

The second point, is that the dialogue between Jews and Christian aims at deepening their mutual understanding and respect.[285] This step is necessary in order to deepen the bond between them and therefore move towards reconciliation.

The third goal of Jewish-Christian dialogue, and particularly of the conversation based on Scripture, is to 'strengthen our common hope in God,' in the context of a society that is becoming increasingly secularised and gives less and less space to God in the public sphere.'[286] This is essential to the shared mission of Jews and Christians because 'Without this hope, society loses its humanity.'[287]

Lastly, Jewish-Christian dialogue aims at offering a shared witness in the world both to God and to those values that reflect God's will for humanity. Pope Benedict XVI hopes that at the level of theological dialogue, as well in their daily contacts and cooperation, Jews and Christians will offer a credible and 'compelling shared witness to the One God and his commandments, the sanctity of life, the promotion of human dignity, the rights of the family and the need to build a world of justice, reconciliation and peace for future generations.'[288]

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[283] Benedict XVI, *Letter to the President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People*, 26/10/2005, 987.

[284] Ratzinger, "Israel, the Church and the World," 25. On Jewish-Christian dialogue and reconciliation see also idem, "The Heritage of Abraham".

[285] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Courtesy visit to the Two Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem*, 12/05/2009, 523.

[286] Benedict XVI, *Address to Representatives of the Jewish Community in Berlin*, 22/09/2011.

[287] Ibid.

[288] Benedict XVI, *Letter to the President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People*," 26/10/2005, 987.

### (3) Achievements and desired outcomes in Jewish-Christian dialogue

Benedict acknowledges that the dialogue between Jews and Christians since Vatican II has already yielded fruits of great importance. These successes must not be considered as final, but call for further progress.

The most important outcome has probably been better awareness of the foundations that are common to Judaism and Christianity. Second, increased knowledge of these common foundations has brought about better awareness of and respect for the differences between the two faiths.

In the third place, Benedict hopes that the dialogue may „continue to generate ideas" on forms of cooperation through which Christians and Jews could „heighten society's appreciation of the distinctive contribution of our religious and ethical traditions," bringing religion to a more prominent place in public life.[289]

Fourth, on the basis of what has been achieved – while „drawing our inspiration from the Holy Scriptures" – Christians and Jews can „confidently look forward to even stronger cooperation between our communities – together with all people of good will – in decrying hatred and oppression throughout the world."[290]

Another fruit of Jewish-Christian dialogue is the fact that Jews and Christians are able to work together for reconciliation, for justice, for respect for human dignity and for true peace.[291] At this level, one desired outcome of the dialogue between Jews and Christians is „peace and harmony in the Holy Land," among Christians, Jews and Muslims.[292]

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[289] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Courtesy visit to the Two Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem*, 12/05/2009, 523.

[290] Ibid.

[291] Benedict XVI, *Address to a Delegation of the IJCIC*, 9/06/2005, 818.

[292] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People*, 12/03/2009.

### (4) The content of Jewish–Christian dialogue

The specific relationship between the Jewish and the Christian faiths is also decisive in determining what the Jewish-Christian conversation should be about. Pope Benedict identifies some concrete points for joint study, reflection and discussion.

The first aspect requiring ongoing reflection is the ‗common basis' of Judaism and Christianity. The theological dialogue between the Chief Rabbinate and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews has focussed on ‗the common values which stand at the basis of our respective religious traditions.'[293] These aspects are crucial for all Jewish-Christian dialogue: ‗the sanctity of life, family values, social justice and ethical conduct, the importance of the Word of God expressed in Holy Scriptures for society and education, the relationship between religious and civil authority and the freedom of religion and conscience.'[294] These are Pope Benedict's ‗themes of dialogue.'[295]

Second, Jews and Christians in dialogue also engage in a theological evaluation of the relationship between the Jewish and Christian faiths.[296]

History is another crucial focus of the Jewish-Christian dialogue. Benedict XVI believes that Jews and Christians must engage in conversation in order to achieve a ‗shared interpretation of disputed historical questions.'[297] This is necessary for further improvement of the relationship. For Pope Benedict, remembering the past is a moral imperative and a source of purification for both Jews and Christians. It is also a precondition for the fulfilment of their common God-given mission in history.

In the joint engagement with history, the Shoah holds the most prominent place, because of the ‗profound historical, moral and theological questions' it raises.[298]

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[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Also Benedict XVI, *Address during the Courtesy visit to the Two Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem*, Jerusalem, 12/05/2009, 522-523.
[296] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 908.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Benedict XVI, *Address to a Delegation of the IJCIC*, 9/06/2005, 818.

Last but not least, Jewish-Christian dialogue must focus on biblical and theological studies and biblical interpretation. Benedict XVI considers joint study of the common Holy Scripture as a fundamental aspect of the Jewish-Christian conversation. Alongside „fraternal dialogues," *Nostra Aetate* recommended biblical and theological studies, and these remain for Pope Benedict a crucial starting point for mutual understanding and respect between Jews and Christians.[299] Since the publication of the 2001 Document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Pope Benedict has insisted on the ongoing validity of the Jewish tradition of interpretation of the Scripture from the beginning of rabbinic Judaism until the present day. The Christian and the Jewish traditions of interpretations are to be brought into conversation, and this is not just a matter for academics, but of necessity for both Christians and Jews, „if we are to understand God's will and his word aright."[300] The *Jewish Annotated New Testament* directed by Jewish scholars Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler is an example of this dialogue of shared biblical interpretation: its aim is to highlight the Jewish roots of the New Testament, allowing Jewish customs to enlighten its message, as well as to point out the connection between the New Testament, early Christian Literature, and later rabbinic literature, with both Christians and Jews benefiting from a better understanding of each other's faith.[301]

In *Salt of the Earth*, Ratzinger makes two points that are relevant to the discussion and are particularly important for the Christian side of the conversation. It is important to be aware of the different perspectives from which Jews and Christians read the Old Testament. While Christians read it in the light of Christ, the Jews read it in the light of the Messiah that is to come. However, the two perspectives are not incompatible because

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[299] *Nostra Aetate* 4. Benedict XVI, *Address during the Courtesy visit to the Two Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem*, 12/05/2009, 523.

[300] Benedict XVI, *Address to Representatives of the Jewish Community in Berlin*, 22/09/2011. He quoted his *Jesus of Nazareth*, Vol. 2, 33-34.

[301] Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

their respective faiths „point in the same direction."[302] The second aspect regards the need for Christians to „relearn' to read the Old Testament correctly. This is necessary because, although Church teaching has never repudiated the Old Testament, admittedly at a practical level, Ratzinger detects „widespread disregard' for it among Christians. This situation, which needs to be addressed, is a consequence of the history of biblical interpretation: when, in the modern era Christians „abandoned the allegorical interpretation with which the Fathers had Christianised the Old Testament,' the Hebrew Scripture became almost „foreign territory."[303]

### (5) The structures of the Jewish-Catholic dialogue

In terms of concrete opportunities, Benedict XVI has expressed appreciation for three situations that have been instrumental in the advancement of the Catholic dialogue with the Jews.

The first is the personal ministry of the popes – his own and that of his predecessors since Vatican II. He has expressly mentioned his meetings as pope with the representatives of various Jewish communities and institutions both religious and civil, his visits to Jewish communities and synagogues and his visit to Israel during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, as opportunities for fostering Catholic-Jewish dialogue.[304] For instance, Benedict sees the friendship between the pope and the Chief Rabbis of Israel as „an example of trust in dialogue for Jews and Christians throughout the world."[305]

At a second level, he acknowledges the important engagement of the Holy See, especially through the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, and particularly the crucial documents that have been published after *Nostra Aetate*.[306]

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[302] Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 248.
[303] Ibid., 247-248.
[304] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.
[305] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Courtesy visit to the Two Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem*, 12/05/2009, 523.
[306] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Rome*, 17/01/2010.

The third forum is that of bilateral institutions; Benedict XVI mentions two in particular: the International Committee for Catholic-Jewish Relations and, in more recent years, the Mixed Commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and of the Holy See, whose work is a sign of a shared will to continue an open and sincere dialogue.[307]

**(6) The quality and style of Jewish-Christian dialogue**

Benedict XVI insists that Jewish-Christian dialogue must be sincere, in the sense that differences and disagreements based on the respective faiths must not be overlooked but must become part of the conversation.[308] In order to be sincere the dialogue must neither overlook nor underestimate the actual differences: for Benedict „in those areas in which, due to our profound convictions in faith, we diverge, and indeed, precisely in those areas, we need to show respect and love for one another."[309]

This has already been the case in the dialogue between the Chief Rabbinate and the Holy Sees's Commission, where „the willingness of the delegates to discuss openly and patiently not only points of agreement, but also points of difference, has already paved the way to more effective collaboration in public life."[310] The sincerity of the dialogue can be seen in the common declarations released after every meeting, which while highlighting the „the views which are rooted in both our respective religious convictions", also acknowledge „differences of understanding."[311]

In conclusion, the overall goal of Christian-Jewish dialogue is twofold: first, to seek jointly a deeper understanding of the shared spiritual heritage, and of its theological and existential implications; and second, to make visible the fundamental unity that unites

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[307] Ibid.; *Address to the Delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People*, 12/03/2009. Benedict mentioned the Commission in his *Address during the Courtesy visit to the Two Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem*, 12/05/2009, 523.

[308] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 19/08/2005, 908.

[309] Ibid.

[310] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Courtesy visit to the Two Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem*, 12/05/2009, 522.

[311] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People*, 12/03/2009.

Christians and Jews at the level of identity, through shared witness to the world, for the salvation of the world.

## 4. Controversies and opportunities

What is Benedict XVI's theological contribution to Jewish-Christian Dialogue? In 2008, John Pawlikowski acknowledged that Benedict was very interested in and well disposed towards contemporary Judaism but observed that he had so far not contributed anything new to the development of the Catholic Church's theological understanding of its relationship with the Jewish People. Pawlikowski regretted that his papal teaching had not included the „theological kernels he put forth in this regard in his latter years as Cardinal Ratzinger."[312]

As a matter of fact, in the following years there have been developments in Benedict's papal teaching and attitudes regarding Jewish-Christian relations. There have been difficult moments of tension which have provided Benedict XVI with opportunities to offer important clarifications through his teaching and actions and to introduce new perspectives. Both controversies and „moments of grace", as David Neuhaus calls them, need to be considered in making an assessment of Benedict XVI's contribution to the Jewish-Christian dialogue.

### *a) Controversies*

Under Benedict XVI's pontificate, a number of controversies have occurred that seem to have shaken Jewish-Christian relations.

In 2009 David Neuhaus, Israeli Jesuit Catholic priest and Patriarchal Vicar for the Hebrew-speaking Catholic communities in Israel since 2009, provided an extensive analysis of such incidents, including the Holy See's denunciation of the Gaza conflict; the

[312] Pawlikowski, „Pope Benedict XVI on Jews and Judaism."

lifting of the excommunication of four Lefèbvrist bishops, including the Holocaust-denier Richard Williamson, and the process of canonisation of Pius XII.[313]

A major controversy was sparked in 2007 by Pope Benedict's decision to extend permission to celebrate the Mass according to the 1962 edition of the Roman Missal. This is the edition previous to the 1970 missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI, which included the liturgical changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council. In fact the 1962 edition was never juridically abrogated, but the permission of the local ordinary was required to celebrate the Mass in the pre-Vatican II style, and could be granted only in specific circumstances. *Summorum Pontificum* (7 July 2007) devolves the right to deal with requests on the part of groups of Catholic faithful from the bishop to the parish priest, potentially expanding the scope of the celebration of the Tridentine Mass, which remains nevertheless the 'extraordinary form' of the Roman Rite.[314] The publication of the *motu proprio* meant therefore the return for potentially larger numbers of Catholic communities of the prayer for the Jews which forms part of the celebration of the Good Friday liturgy. Although the offensive elements of the Tridentine prayer had already been removed by decree of John XXIII in 1959, the return to the 1962 missal was seen by a number of voices, including Jews, as contradicting the revolution in Christian-Jewish relations brought about by Vatican II with the publication of *Nostra Aetate* and the dramatic improvement that had taken place since. The controversy lasted several months and even when Pope Benedict responded (6 February 2008) by replacing the 1962 prayer with a new one, it was not extinguished, as the new prayer also came under criticism as reflecting Pope Benedict's alleged intention to obliterate the good Jewish-Christian relationship fostered by Paul VI and John Paul II.

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[313] David Neuhaus, "Moments of Crisis and Grace: Jewish-Catholic Relations in 2009," *One in Christ* 43, no 2 (2009), 7-13.

[314] Benedict XVI, *Summorum Pontificum*, 7/07/2007, *AAS* 99 (2007),777-781.

At the heart of the controversy was ultimately the question of Benedict XVI's attitude towards the Jewish people and Jewish-Christian relations. The Pope's visit to the Synagogue of New York, gave him the opportunity to reiterate his deep esteem for the Jewish People.

Two years later, in *Light of the World* (2010), Benedict XVI explained that he modified the prayer for two reasons: first because the old formulation was indeed offensive to the Jews and, second, because it did not express the intrinsic unity between the Old and the New Testament.[315] The new prayer positively affirms on the one hand the Christian faith in Christ as the sole saviour and, on the other hand with regard to the salvation of the Jews, it shifts the focus from a sense of direct Christian mission to the Jews to a „plea' to the Lord that the time of history may come when Christians and Jews will be one.[316]

As in other similar cases, the controversy over the Good Friday Prayers for the Jews provided Benedict the XVI with an opportunity to express more explicitly his positive appreciation of the Jewish people based on theological truths.

Benedict XVI was the object of criticism following the combination of two events between the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009. The context was the relationship of the Catholic Church with the Society of St Pius X, founded in 1970 by Marcel Lefebvre, who notoriously opposed the changes inaugurated by Vatican II. In 1988, against the will of Pope John Paul II, Lefebvre consecrated four bishops: Alfonso de Galarreta, Bernard Fellay, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, and Richard Williamson. This schismatic act, in defiance of the efforts of the then Cardinal Ratzinger to find a compromise with the Society in order to regularise its position within the Catholic Church, resulted in the excommunication of those involved in the ordination. On 21 January 2009, in response to a request from Bernard Fellay and also written on behalf of the other three bishops on 15

[315] Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 106-107.
[316] Ibid., 107.

December 2008, Pope Benedict lifted the excommunication as a sign of the Church's desire for reconciliation. The lifting of the excommunication raised harsh criticism as it was interpreted by many as an endorsement of the doctrinal positions of the Society of St Pius X, openly against Vatican II, and in particular against the teaching of *Nostra Aetate*. The gesture of reconciliation was interpreted as a return of the Church to a pre-Vatican II theological understanding of Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations and attitude towards the Jewish people.

This became all the more serious as the pope had not realised that Williamson had publically denied the Shoah in an interview on a Swedish television broadcast on the same day as the lifting of the excommunication. The combination of the two events caused outrage among the world Jewish Community, the State of Israel, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Anti-Defamation League. Some interpreted the lifting of the excommunication as an endorsement of Williamson's anti-Jewish views.

Benedict XVI's final word in the controversy was a letter to the Bishops on 10 March 2010 in which he clarified the facts, admitted his responsibility in not being sufficiently well informed, and above all manifested the reasons of faith and Christian charity underlying the decision to lift the excommunications.[317] Pope Benedict spoke more about the _Williamson affair' in *Light of the World*, expressing his opinion that despite the misunderstanding, the relationships between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community around the world have become strong enough that an interruption of the dialogue was out of the question.[318]

Once again his intervention, characterised by his ability to go to the heart of situations and problems, contributed to turning a seriously unfortunate circumstance into a possibility for the advancement of Jewish-Christian relations.

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[317] Benedict XVI, *Letter to the Bishops,* 10/03/2010.
[318] Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 120-127.

The third most controversial point of Benedict XVI's pontificate affecting Jewish-Christian relations has been the process of canonisation of Pope Pius XII. On 19 December 2009, on recommendation of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, Pope Benedict proclaimed Pius XII as Venerable, advancing the cause of his canonisation to the second of the four necessary steps (following the recognition as Servant of God, and preceding the beatification and canonisation). The decision triggered responses of disappointment and even anger on the part of Jewish groups worldwide, most notably the World Jewish Congress. The reason was the ambiguity still existing with regard to Pius XII's role vis-à-vis the Nazi persecution of European Jewry culminating in the Shoah.[319]

Benedict XVI has refused to give in to one-sided interpretations of history which see Pius XII as having collaborated with the Nazi regime or not having done enough to protect the Jews from Hitler's plan, and has on various occasions presented him in a positive light. Perhaps the most important mention was on 19 September 2008, in his address at the end of a Symposium on Pius XII organised by the Pave the Way Foundation, in which he praised the efforts of the symposium towards a more balanced appreciation of his predecessor, based on historical evidence and not influenced by ideological bias.[320]

Another controversy arose in January 2009 when the Pope spoke in response to the violent conflict that exploded in the Gaza Strip. When Palestinian radicals fired rockets into Israeli territory on 27 December 2008, Israel responded with a full-scale invasion of Gaza, which lasted over three weeks.[321] The Pope's view that _military options are no solutions,' combined with the intervention of Archbishop Migliore, the Holy See's permanent observer to the UN, at the General Assembly, and with the arguably ill-

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[319] Hubert Wolf, *Pope and Devil: the Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich*, tr. Kenneth Kronenberg (London: Belknap, 2010).

[320] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Participants in the Symposium of the Pave the Way Foundation*, Castel Gandolfo,18/09/2008, *AAS* 101(2009*),*735-737.

[321] David Neuhaus, ―Moments of Crisis and Grace, 7.

considered comment by Cardinal Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, comparing Gaza to a concentration camp, caused tension between the Holy See and Israel.[322]

Benedict XVI's ability to face moments of crisis by identifying and clarifying the core issues, has been crucial in turning the moments of crisis into "moments of grace." Neuhaus has observed that during the pontificate of Benedict XVI the Catholic Church and the Jews are learning to converse not just on the commonalities but to tackle "more systematically" the points of divergence, and this is leading to deeper relationships.[323]

### *b) Moments of grace*

According to Henrix, the controversies have had the effect of obscuring "Benedict XVI's conviction that the faith of Israel is the foundation of Christian belief."[324] However, the sincere hospitality manifested in inviting and welcoming Jewish representatives to the Vatican on numerous occasions, is a very eloquent sign of Pope Benedict's positive relationship with the Jewish people and their faith. Even more eloquent and convincing is the desire to deepen and strengthen the Christian-Jewish bond shown in numerous pilgrimages and visits to places that are very significant to Judaism like the Synagogues of Cologne, New York and Rome, the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, and the Holy Land.

On a different level, a very positive sign was a letter that, days after his election, Pope Benedict sent to Chief Rabbi emeritus of Rome Elio Toaff for his ninetieth birthday, thanking him for his contribution in strengthening Jewish-Christian relations especially during John Paul II's pontificate, and as renewing his "commitment to continuing the

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[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid., 24.
[324] Henrix, "Pope Benedict and the Jews," 556.

dialogue between us, looking with confidence to the future.'[325] Five years later, Pope Benedict sent Toaff another message on the latter's ninety-fifth birthday.

Also, soon after his election Pope Benedict suspended the beatification of Leon Gustav Dehon, founder of the Catholic religious missionary order of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. The beatification had been approved by John Paul II and scheduled for 24 April 2005. Following accusations of anti-Semitism in the writings of Dehon, Pope Benedict asked for a re-examination of the material, and the beatification is now on hold. This is a clear sign that for Pope Benedict Christian holiness is incompatible with an adverse attitude to Judaism and the Jews.

Pope Benedict has twice invited prominent Jewish personalities to address the Synod of Bishops. In 2008, at the Synod on the Word of God, Chief Rabbi of Haifa, Shear-Yashuv Cohen, addressed the assembly on the Hebrew Scriptures in Jewish faith and liturgy.[326] In 2010, on the occasion of the Synod for the Middle East, held from 10 to 24 October, the assembly listened to Rabbi David Rosen, former Chief Rabbi of Ireland, representative of the American Jewish Committee and advisor to the Chief Rabbinate in Israel.[327] The gesture of inviting a Jewish religious authority to speak to the Synod of Bishops is extremely significant and consistent with Benedict's theological convictions with regard to the unique bond between Christianity and Judaism, Christians and Jews.

Pope Benedict's visit to the Holy Land (May 2009) and to the Synagogue of Rome (17 January 2010) deserve a special mention.

Benedict's pilgrimage to the Holy Land has been of tremendous importance in the progress of Catholic-Jewish relations. The fact that he stressed the essential link between

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[325] Benedict XVI, *Letter to Prof. Elio Toaff, Chief rabbi Emeritus of Rome on the Occasion of his 90th Birthday*, Vatican, 30/04/2005, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20050430_rabbino-toaff_en.html

[326] Shear Yashuv Cohen, "Address to Synod of Bishops on 'The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church'," *Zenit*, 7/10/2008, http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/rabbi-s-address-to-synod.

[327] David Rosen, "Address to the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East," *Zenit*, 13/10/2010, http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/rabbi-rosen-s-address-to-mideast-synod.

Christianity and Judaism, acquires even more significance as the address was delivered on Mount Nebo, which is in Jordan, a predominantly Muslim country.[328] By stating that the ‗ancient tradition of pilgrimage to the holy places also reminds us of the inseparable bond between the Church and the Jewish people,' he interpreted his journey to the Holy Land as a sign of the Jewish-Christian connection.[329] According to Henrix, the visit ‗consolidated Pope Benedict's personal attachment to the Jews. '[330]

The visit to the Synagogue of Rome on 17 January 2010, with Pope Benedict's speech delivered on the occasion, is a milestone in Jewish-Catholic dialogue. Benedict had been accused of being ambiguous vis-à-vis Judaism and the Jewish people, as he had not spoken clearly on certain issues important to the Jews. In-depth examination of Ratzinger/Benedict's writings and speeches proves that the opposite is the case. Nevertheless, it is true that on certain occasions a more straightforward statement would have avoided misunderstandings. According to Henrix, Pope Benedict's visit to the Synagogue of Rome dispelled once for all the ‗shadows of ambivalence' from his relationship with the Jewish People, dispelling previous suspicion towards him.[331] He did so by the unambiguous statement that God's Covenant with the Jewish People is ongoing, by admitting to the Church's share of responsibility in the Shoah and by conferring new authority on post-Vatican II Catholic teaching on Jewish-Christian relations and dialogue.[332]

Although these two events are only instances of a much broader and constructive engagement with Judaism, they are the highlights and proof of the significant contribution of Benedict XVI to the advancement of the Jewish-Christian engagement inaugurated by

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[328] Neuhaus, "Moments of Crisis and Grace," 13-14.

[329] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Basilica of the Memorial of Moses*, Mount Nebo, Jordan, 9/05/2009, AAA 101 (2009*),*508.

[330] Henrix, "Pope Benedict and the Jews, 552.

[331] Ibid., 553-556.

[332] John Pawlikowski, "The State of the Global Catholic-Jewish Dialogue," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 5 (2010), 1-2.

Vatican II and carried on by his predecessors. He contributes by bringing unprecedented definitive clarity on key theological questions and showing their practical implications in the life of both the Church and of the Jewish people.

## 5. Conclusion: Benedict XVI's contribution to Jewish-Catholic dialogue

A careful examination of Benedict XVI's thought and teaching reveals that under his pontificate the process that began with Vatican II continues and Jewish-Christian relationships are growing. He builds on the developments which took place under his predecessors but with different emphases and style.

There is progress in interreligious dialogue when it occurs both at the level of theology and practice. Benedict XVI's contribution to the advancement of Jewish Christian relations is primarily theological but has nonetheless had a real impact on the relationship between Catholics and Jews.

At the theological level, Pope Benedict has contributed by bringing unprecedented clarity to what is the Catholic belief with regard to Judaism, the Jewish People and the Church's relationship with them. The points have been highlighted: the ongoing validity of the Jewish covenant, both at the Abrahamic and Mosaic stages; the ongoing mission of the Jewish people; the correct understanding of how the Christianity fulfils Judaism and the Church is the fulfilment of Israel which excludes the idea of replacement (supersession). From this theological level, a particular approach to the Jewish faithful and their belief emerges which, shaped by the conviction that in relating to the adherent to Judaism, the Christian believer relates to someone who stands in theological unity with them. The Jew is not a stranger, but a co-member of God's covenanted family. Pope Benedict's warmth in offering hospitality to and relaxedness in receiving hospitality from Jewish people emerges from the theological conviction that Christian and Jews are one.

Benedict XVI's theological contribution does not consist in opening new lines of enquiry or offering original ideas but rather in recovering known ideas and setting them within new perspectives shaped by the contemporary context. He does so by providing existing Catholic teaching with new substance and in showing its ongoing value and relevance. With regard to the teaching of Vatican II on Judaism and Jewish-Catholic relations, particularly *Nostra Aetate* 4, Pope Benedict has advanced Jewish-Catholic dialogue by adding new depth to Catholic theology and teaching rather than by expanding the scope of the enquiry.[333] He has taken up *Nostra Aetate* 4 as a theological mandate and, while remaining within the boundaries set by the Council, his theological reflection has aimed at articulating in more detail the content of such teaching, seeking to provide it with stronger biblical and theological foundations.

Pope Benedict's theology of Judaism provides a strong foundation to Catholic engagement with Judaism because it is interwoven with his Christology. Commenting on Benedict XVI's first volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*, Potworowski points out that almost every major element of Benedict's portrayal of Jesus Christ contains something pertinent to the relationship between Christians and Jews.'[334] This a very important point, because it means that the Christian relationship with Judaism functions almost as a Christological category. Similarly, it has been pointed out that Benedict XVI's theological vision of the Jewish people and their faith is essentially ecclesiological. This twofold link is to be expected, given the strong emphasis on the direct link between Christology and ecclesiology in Pope Benedict's theological vision.

At the level of practice, Benedict's major contribution is twofold. First, he seeks to ensure that the progress at the theological level is significantly reflected in the life and

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[333] Kurt Koch, "Building on *Nostra Aetate*: Fifty Years of Christian–Jewish Dialogue," Lecture at the Pontifical University St Thomas Aquinas, Rome, 16/05/2012, https://jp2center.s3.amazonaws.com/medialibrary/2012/06/Angelicum_Koch_Building_on_Nostra_aetate__50_years_of_ChristianJewish_dialogue_FINAL.pdf.

[334] C. F. Potworowski, "Benedict and Israel: the possibility of friendship," *Israel Affairs* Vol. 16, no. 4 (October 2012), 486.

structure of the Catholic Church. This aspect becomes more obvious by comparing his ministry vis-à-vis Judaism to Pope John Paul II's. The latter, as pointed out earlier, had the merit of placing interreligious dialogue at a prominent place within the life of the Church, through powerful gestures consistent with his more charismatic reality. Benedict XVI has explicitly professed his determination to continue in John Paul II's footsteps, however his original contribution consists in that he aims at institutionalising the changes, i.e. ensuring that the structure and life of the Church be transformed, making the achievements of Catholic dialogue with the Jewish People irreversible. This is entirely consistent with the inalienable importance he attaches to Tradition. He, like a modern Church Father, is aware that the progress achieved must become part of Tradition, and that his role as pope consists in making sure that the process happens unhindered.

Secondly, Pope Benedict has challenged the existing structure of Jewish-Catholic dialogue, mainly based on exploring the issues of agreement and convergence. By tackling the core and difficult issues with sensitivity, Pope Benedict has show that true dialogue involves a real commitment to build a sufficient level of trust and esteem that does not evaporate when agreement is impossible. As a modern Church Father, he has not just said this but has actually taught the Church by setting the example on various occasions, especially those that have been referred to as moments of crisis. Benedict XVI has consistently succeeded in turning crises into opportunities for growth, with his ability to remain focussed on the important elements and to clarify the terms of the questions, his intentions and the correct understanding of Catholic teaching. If Benedict's XVI theological vision of Judaism and the Jews is duly taken into account, it is inevitable that the ‗controversies' in Jewish-Catholic relations of the past years cannot be seen as symptoms of an alleged design to reverse the advancement of Church teaching on Judaism since *Nostra Aetate*. They are rather reminders, as Pope Benedict observed with regard to the Williamson affair, that the relationship still remains complex and deserves

continuous attention as well as a disposition to clarify misunderstanding and to ask for and offer forgiveness.[335] Pope Benedict seems comfortable with this reality, because he has a clear sense of direction in Jewish-Catholic dialogue based on theological reasons. Commenting on Benedict XVI's gestures and statements given at the Synagogue of Rome in January 2010, Henrix has observed that by this clarity he has provided the Jewish-Catholic engagement with a „fundamental point of orientation for constructive development."[336] It is not inappropriate to say that this is true for all of Benedict XVI's teaching on Judaism and Jewish-Catholic dialogue.

Benedict has his own style of approaching the Jewish People and Judaism, relying on the „power of the word and humble encounter," to share his spiritual profundity and by doing so pushes the Catholic-Jewish dialogue towards its goals, which have been identified earlier. This is in line with Pope Benedict's commitment to speak on behalf of religion and claim its rightful space within contemporary society, which tends to push God and religious matters to the margins if not out of the public sphere. Within this broader perspective, his contribution to Catholic-Jewish relations acquires even more significance.

[335] Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 124.
[336] Henrix, „Pope Benedict and the Jews, 556.

## C. BENEDICT XVI, ISLAM AND CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

### 1. Introduction

Benedict's second most prominent focus in interreligious dialogue has been the Muslim world, the world's second largest religion in terms of number of adherents.

In recent times, Christian-Muslim dialogue has come to the fore, in conjunction with the increasing visibility of the Islamic presence on the world scene. It has already been seen that the Catholic Church's interest in establishing and maintaining good relations with Muslims is not new. Vatican II was certainly an important turning point, but figures like Louis Massignon, Charles de Foucauld and others, had already expressed, before the Council, the Catholic concern for Muslims and their religion, indeed paving the way for the Conciliar ‗revolution'.[337]

Nevertheless, the changing geopolitics of the contemporary world has caused the Catholic Church, and other Christian Churches and communities, to move the issue higher on the scale of priorities. It cannot be denied that a sense of urgency has arisen as a response to the emergence of radical Islam, however this extreme case is only a part of the picture. More relevant to the experience of most Christians is above all the question of society becoming more multicultural and multireligious. With Christianity and Islam being the largest religious communities in the world, the Christian-Muslim interaction is the interreligious relationship that seems to be generally increasing worldwide.

This is the context in which Benedict XVI engages in dialogue with Islam. However, it is not his starting point. In fact Ratzinger's initial encounter with Islam took place at the level of theological reflection.

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[337] Hugues Didier, ―Louis Massignon and Charles de Foucauld," *Aram* 20, no. 2 (2008*),* 337–353. Ariana Patey, ―Sanctity and Mission in the Life of Charles de Foucauld," in *Saints and Sanctity*, ed. Peter Clarke and Tony Claydon, Studies in Church History 47 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Published for the Ecclesiastical History Society by the Boydell Press, 2011), 365–375.

The aim of this section is to present the thought of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI on Islam and on Christian-Muslim relations in order to appreciate whether, and if so how, it contributes to the progress of the present-day engagement of Catholics, and Christians in general with Islam.

Benedict XVI is both theologian and pope, and these two aspects have to be taken into account to appreciate the continuity between his theology (more developed in the pre-pontificate years) and praxis (prevalent during his pontificate). A study of his understanding of Islam and Christian-Muslim dialogue requires taking into account a number of questions: What does the theologian say *about* Islam and Muslims? What does he say *to* Islam and *to* Muslims? What are the ideas underlying his praxis of encounter with Muslims? What is the place of Islam, if any, in Benedict‘s theological vision? What do his gestures and actions reveal of his understanding (theology) of Islam and of Christian-Muslim relations?

As a theologian Benedict has not written systematically about Islam and, therefore, a reconstruction of his theology of Islam can only be attempted by putting together ideas found in different theological writings on various other subjects. The task involves an exploration of his wide spectrum of writings and a sufficient grasp of his theology, especially his ecclesiology, as well as familiarity with the sources that influence his thought. Nor has Benedict XVI as pope written any document or delivered any speech specifically on Islam or Christian-Muslim relations. The task therefore will also include an analysis of various kinds of statements occasioned by different circumstances: for example his addresses to the ambassadors of Muslim countries, to Muslim representatives during his apostolic journeys, and his messages for the World Day of Peace.

## 2. Islam in Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's writings

Probably Ratzinger's most substantial treatment of Islam is to be found in his 1996 interview with Peter Seewald, where he highlighted four points.[338]

Ratzinger's first observation is that it is difficult to identify Islam as a uniform reality on account of its lack of a central authority recognized by all Muslims. „No one can speak for Islam as a whole", he says, because Islam exists in many varieties (in addition to the schism between Sunni and Shi'a) which refer to different mutually independent religious authorities.[339] As a consequence, „dialogue with Islam" is an abstraction and in effect it is only possible to engage in dialogue with certain specific Muslim groups or individuals.

Secondly, in order to understand better the complexity of Islam, it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of a „noble" Islam but also of a kind of „extremist, terrorist Islam" which cannot be identified with Islam as a whole.[340] Pope Benedict has often emphasised that it is the „noble" Islam that the Church considers as a potential partner in the dialogue.

A third point is that in Islam the interrelationship between society, politics and religion is completely different from that in Christianity. At its heart, Islam „does not have the separation between the political and the religious sphere that Christianity has had from the beginning." In effect, the Qur'an is a „total religious law" which defines all political and social life, so that „Sharia shapes society from beginning to end."[341] The implication is that Muslims can only temporarily fit into a system that is not totally Islamic, because Islam is in essence oriented towards the establishment of such a system. Its absolute claim is ultimately incompatible with the idea of a plural society in which all religious expressions have the same normative value. The institution of *dhimmi* status

[338] Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 244-246.
[339] Ibid., 244.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Ibid.

(subordinate legal status) is a clear illustration: Islam accepts a multireligious society which includes only the religions mentioned in the Quran (Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastranism), and only as long as the overarching framework, in which other faiths are tolerated and often respected, is Islamic.[342] Benedict observes that if Islam accepted as definitive a situation different from this, it would be an ‗alienation from itself.'[343] According to Benedict then Islam ‗is not simply a denomination that can be included in the free realm of a pluralistic society.'[344] When this fact is overlooked, Islam is defined by projecting on it the Christian model of the interaction between religion and politics and is not recognised in its reality.[345]

Fourth, in the recent past, Islam has been experiencing a worldwide consolidation, which for Ratzinger is due to two factors. The first is external, namely the financial power that the Arab countries have attained which makes possible the establishment of mosques and Muslim cultural institutes worldwide, with a significant increase in propaganda. The second factor is that Islam is experiencing a new self-awareness, which has been growing with the declining influence of Christianity in civilizations with Christian foundations that began in the 1960s. This has coincided with a great moral crisis of the Western world, which Muslims basically view as the Christian World, and which Muslims have clearly seen as a crisis and almost the failure of Christianity as religion. According to Ratzinger,

> this is the feeling today of the Muslim world: the Western Countries are no longer capable of preaching a message of morality but have only know-how to offer the world. The Christian religion has abdicated; it really no longer exists as a religion; the Christians no longer have a morality or faith.[346]

Islam manifests its ‗inner power' in the conviction that it is the religion that holds its ground and has a message to offer to the world (Benedict has spoken of ‗a new

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[342] On the notion of *dhimma* (minority status under Islamis rule), see: Jacques Jomier, ―The Treatment of Conquered Countries," in *How to Understand Islam*, by Jacques Jomier (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 87–89; Yohanan Friedmann, ―Religious Diversity and Hierarchy of Religions," 13–53, and ―Classification of Unbelievers," 54–87, in idem, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

[343] Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 244.

[344] Ibid.

[345] Ibid., 245.

[346] Ibid.

intensity about wanting to live Islam [that] has awakened‗), and Christianity must naturally come to terms with this inner power.[347]

In a more recent interview with Seewald, Benedict XVI has offered some additional notes on Islam.[348] These new fragments of reflection came three years after Benedict's controversial Regensburg lecture, a crucial event in his relationship with Islam, and touch on aspects closely related to the lecture.

Benedict XVI's initial remark is that the controversy that followed his Regensburg address revealed clearly that ‗Islam needs to clarify two questions in regard to public dialogue, that is the question concerning its relation to violence and its relation to reason.'[349] In this regard, he says appreciatively, it was remarkable that ‗now there was within Islam itself a realization of the duty and the need to clarify these questions, which has since led to an internal reflection among Muslim scholars, a reflection that has in turn become a theme of dialogue with the Church.'[350] This realisation has found concrete expression by Muslim authorities seeking a certain consensus among themselves in the document *A Common Word*, which Benedict considers of great importance because it is an interpretation of Islam ‗that immediately placed it in dialogue with Christianity.'[351]

Benedict's second point is that Christians and Muslims ultimately have two things in common: first, ‗both defend major religious values – i.e. faith in God and obedience to God'; second, they face the same challenge of modernity and both ‗need to situate ourselves correctly' within it. In this regard,

> at issue are questions such as: What is tolerance? How are truth and tolerance related? The question of whether tolerance includes the right to change religions also emerges. It is hard for the Islamic partners to accept this. Their argument is that once someone has come to the truth, he can no longer turn back.[352]

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[347] Ibid., 246.
[348] Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 97-101.
[349] Ibid. See Ana Belen Soage, ―The Muslim Reaction to Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg Address,‖ *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 1 (February 2007), 137–143.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Ibid., 98-99.
[352] Ibid., 99.

Thirdly, Benedict XVI believes that the really important contrast that is shaping the present historical situation is not between Christianity and Islam but that between radical secularism and the question of God _in its various forms_. Christianity and Islam find themselves on the same side, facing the same challenge.[353] Nevertheless, the reality is that relations between Christians and Muslims in the world range from _tolerant and good coexistence' to _intolerance and aggression.'[354] There is a lot of work for Christians and Muslims to do and for Benedict this consists in living out

> the grandeur of our faith and to embody it in a vital way, while… trying to understand the heritage of others. The important thing is to discover what we have in common and, wherever possible, to perform a common service in this world.[355]

Lastly, because Islam is diverse, situations obviously vary. In contexts where Islam has _monocultural dominance, where its traditions and its cultural and political identity are uncontested,' it tends to understand itself as a corrective to the Western world, _as the defender… of religion against atheism and secularism.'[356] In such situations _the sense for truth then can narrow down to the point of becoming intolerance, thus making the coexistence with Christians very difficult.'[357] But this is of course only part of the larger picture, and it is important for the Church to _remain in close contact with all the currents within Islam that are open to and capable of dialogue so as to give a change of mentality a chance to happen' even in cases in which Muslims associate their claim to truth with violence.[358]

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[353] Ibid., 100. On the relationship of Islam and secular society see the work of French scholar Olivier Roy (born 1949), professor at the European University Institute, Florence, Italy. Among his books, see: Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam,* tr. George Holoch, (New York; Columbia University Press, 2009); *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); *Globalised Islam: the Search for the New Ummah* (London: Hurst, 2004); *The Failure of Political Islam*, Carol Volk tr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[354] Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 100.

[355] Ibid.

[356] Ibid., 101

[357] Ibid.

[358] Ibid.

According to Samir Kahil Samir,[359] Benedict XVI has

> profoundly understood the ambiguity in which contemporary Islam is being debated and its struggle to find a place in modern society. At the same time he is proposing a way for Islam to work towards coexistence globally and with the religions... based on rationality and on a vision of man and human nature which comes before any ideology or religion.[360]

The stark difference between Islamic and Christian understanding of the relationship between religion and society derives from the nature of Islamic revelation: because the Qur'an is dictated to Muhammad, _not inspired, then there is very little room for interpretation.'[361] Consequently, this leaves considerably less flexibility to imagine new modes of interaction.

In a brief interview on 24 July 2005, Benedict XVI stated that _Islam suffers from ambiguity vis-à-vis violence', in some cases justifying it, however, _we must always strive to find the better elements.'[362] This signals Benedict's awareness that many Muslims reject the use of violence justified by religion.[363] For these Muslims and for Christians terrorism is a shared concern and together they have a common duty to eliminate its causes, a difficult but not impossible task which consists in _eliminating

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[359] Egyptian Jesuit Samir Khalil Samir is an Islamic scholar, theologian and the founder of CEDRAC (Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Arabes Chrétiennes) which was established in 1986 and in 1996 became part of the Université Saint-Joseph, Beirut-Ashrafieh, Lebanon.

[360] Samir Khalil Samir, –When Civilizations Meet: How Joseph Ratzinger Sees Islam," *Asia News*, 26/04/2006.

[361] Samir, –When Civilizations Meet".

[362] As reported by John L. Allen, –The Vatican and Islam (...)," *National Catholic Reporter* 42, no. 4 (29/07/2005). During the Angelus on that day Benedict had deplored recent terrorist attacks in various countries including the London bombing of 7 July 2005. Journalists asked him about Islam soon after. On the question of Islam and violence, Muslim responses vary: Islam is not intrinsically violent; it is a religion of peace; it is not more violent than other religions, particularly Judaism and Christianity. See Najib Ghadbian, –Political Islam and Violence.," *New Political Science* 22, no. 1 (March 2000), 77–88; Matthew J. Kuiper, –Joshua's Jihad? A Reexamination of Religious Violence in the Christian and Islamic Traditions," *Transformation* 29, no. 2 (April 2012), 149–169; Perez Musharaf, –Islam Teaches Tolerance Not Hate," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 68, no. 8 (February 2002), 226; A. Rashied Omar, –Islam and Violence," *Ecumenical Review* 55, no. 2 (April 2003), 158-163. From the Catholic perspective see: Samir Khalil Samir, —Violence et non-violence dans le Coran et l'Islam," *Proche-Orient Chretien* 55 (2005), 359-394; Michel Cuypers, –Is a Non-Violent Interpretation of the Qur'an Possible?," in Anthony O'Mahony and John Flannery eds., *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East,* 317-329.

[363] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Synagogue of Cologne*, 19/08/2005, 907.

from the hearts any trace of rancour; resisting every form of intolerance and opposing every manifestation of violence.'[364]

The Regensburg lecture produced contrasting outcomes. On the one hand, it triggered anger and violent reactions on the part of Muslims in various parts of the world; on the other hand it provided the opportunity to begin a serious engagement between the Catholic Church and a section of the World Islamic community that is yielding positive results.[365] The controversy was sparked by Benedict quoting a statement by the Emperor Manuel II Paleologus about the violent nature of the message of Muhammad.[366] In their immediate reactions not a few missed the point that the address was not a lecture on Islam but on the role of reason and the necessity for modern reason to allow itself to be purified by faith in order to fulfil its true purpose, i.e. to serve humanity. In this context Islam was mentioned as part of a larger discussion, as an example of what happens to faith that is not balanced by reason. Benedict did in fact also acknowledge that Christianity has often fallen into the same error. His point was that true religion cannot justify violence because violence is against reason and therefore, God being reasonable, violence cannot be God's will. In this sense, incidentally, Joseph Fessio has observed that while in *Deus Caritas Est* Benedict defends the foundational truth that God is Love, in his Regensburg lecture he is

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[364] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of some Muslim Communities*, Cologne, 20/08/2005, *AAS* 97 (2005*),*916.

[365] The "Open Letter" to Benedict XVI by a group of thirty-eight scholars, the first attempt to engage the Pontiff in a serious critique, was followed by the document *A Common Word*. The latter was initially signed by 138 Muslim scholars and leaders worldwide and addressed to Pope Benedict XVI and all Christian leaders and led to various responses, including the establishment of the Catholic-Muslim Forum under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. See Allamah Abd Allah bin Mahfuz bin Bayyah et al., "Open Letter to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI," 12/10/2006, *Islamica Magazine* 18 (2006), 26-32. Also "Catholic-Muslim Forum to Further Dialogue," *Zenit,* 5/03/2008, http://www.zenit.org/article-21979?l=english.

[366] Benedict made explicit reference to Adel Theodore Khoury and his edition of the dialogue: Manuel II Palaeologus, *Entretiens Avec un Musulman. 7e Controverse. Introduction, Texte Critique, Traduction et Notes Par Théodore Khoury.* (Paris: Cerf, 1966). Khoury (born 1930) is a a Greek Catholic Melkite priest and theologian from Lebanon, and former dean of the theology department of the University of Münster in Germany. He is known for his commitment to Christian-Muslim dialogue. Among his most important works: Adel Théodore Khoury, *Apologétique byzantine contre l'Islam (VIIIe-XIIIe s.)* (Altenberge: Verlag für Christlich-Islamisches Schrifttum, 1982); *Der Koran: Erschlossen und kommentiert* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 2005).

defending the foundational truth that God is Logos, Reason.'[367] The point is that Christianity and Islam make incompatible truth claims about the nature of God, which Christian-Muslim dialogue must address in its inception in order to be authentic.[368] According to James Schall, the Regensburg lecture poses a crucial theological challenge for Islam, namely whether God is to be understood as pure will or as reasonable.[369] The question is crucial because when God is understood as pure will, on account of his being above everything (absolutely transcendent), including reason, then it is easy for unreasonable actions (i.e. violence) to be justified on the basis of obedience to God's will.[370] This points to a concept of God very different from the Christian concept of God, and *if* this is the God of Islam, then Christians and Muslims do not worship the same God.[371] Such a notion of God has obvious moral consequences, as it has the potential to legitimate the idea that suicide bombers are not practising violence but virtue, because they are acting – as it is claimed – with the intention of doing God's will.[372]

According to Joseph Fessio, in examining its own truth claim, Islam must address the question:

> Is this violence an aberration that is inconsistent with genuine Islam (as it would be an aberration inconsistent with genuine Christianity)? Or is it justifiable on the basis of Islam's image of God as absolutely transcending all human categories, even that of rationality?[373]

Mark Brumley sees Benedict's address at Regensburg as a challenge for the whole world to a serious reflection on the relationship between religion, reason and science. In

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[367] Joseph Fessio, "Is Dialogue With Islam Possible? Some Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's Address at the University of Regensburg," 18/09/2006, http://www.ignatiusinsight.com.

[368] Ibid.

[369] James V. Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture* (South Bend, Indiana: St Augustine Press, 2007), 41-52.

[370] Benedict mentioned the Muslim thinker Ibn Hazm and the Islamist R. Arnaldez. Ibn Hazm, (994, Córdoba-1064, Sevilla), was a Muslim historian, jurist, and theologian of Islamic Spain; one of the leading figures of the Ẓāhirī school of jurisprudence that relies exclusively on the literal (Arabic: *ẓāhir*) meaning of the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth. He authored some four hundred works of jurisprudence, logic, history, ethics, comparative religion, and theology. See Roger Arnaldez, "Ibn Hazm," ed. B. Lewis et al., *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 790-799. Arnaldez (1911-2006) was a French Islamist and authority on the thought of Ibn Hazm.

[371] Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture*, 45-46.

[372] ibid., 48-49.

[373] Fessio, "Is Dialogue with Islam Possible?"

this context a significant difference between Christianity and Islam emerges, i.e. the fact that „while most of Christianity has worked through many of the issues regarding reason and the modern world, much of Islam hasn't.“[374] In this sense Benedict challenges moderate Muslims to take a stand in the face of those Muslims who address difference of belief and of opinion with violence, and to „declare their embarrassment on account of such distortion of authentic Islamic thought and practice and call them to renounce violence.“[375]

For Benedict XVI a more urgent conversation has to occur within Islam before more and deeper Christian-Muslim engagement can take place. Contemporary Islam has to reflect on itself in the context of the present world and articulate its authentic teaching unambiguously, so that manipulation of the religion to justify violence may be prevented, and Islam may be seen as a force in the service of the genuine development of humanity.[376]

Speaking from an Eastern Catholic perspective, Gregorios III, Patriarch of the Greek Melkite Catholic Church, suggests that Benedict's quotation of Manuel II's statement must be understood according to the rule of scholarly debate of the time and can be seen as „an invitation to Muslims to frank and open dialogue on the topic of *jihad* through the centuries.' This implies the more important question of the need „for a reading of the Qur'an, which comprises life and structure and dogma, that looks both to the letter and to the spirit, to reason and faith.“[377] In this sense „the most important passage of the lecture is the call to broaden the concept of reason by faith… The world's

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[374] Mark Brumley, „Benedict Takes the Next Step with Islam," 21/09/2006, http://www.ignatiusinsight.com.

[375] Ibid. Brumley is of the opinion that the impact of moderate Islam in the West – the kind with which we are more likely to engage in „placid' conversation – on the wider Islamic world should not be overestimated. In this sense he sees in the Regensburg address also an invitation to look realistically at the situation of Christian-Muslim engagement.

[376] Ibid.

[377] Gregorios III, „Patriarchal Letter on *The Regensburg Lecture* of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI (12/09/2006)," 28/09/2006, https://melkite.org/patriarchate/patriarchal-letter-on-the-regensburg-lecture-of-pope-benedict-xvi.

profoundly religious cultures see this exclusion of the divine from the universality of reason as an attack on their most profound convictions. A reason that is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion into the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures.'[378]

In the context of a much broader reflection on the relationship between reason and religion, Benedict's point about Islam is an open question about how Islam understands its own claim to truth.[379] This is the perspective from which Benedict wishes to engage in serious dialogue with other believers and with Muslims in particular. He is for a dialogue that goes to the heart of the faith and seeks to understand the Truth.

## 3. Benedict XVI and Christian-Muslim relations

An overview of statements by Benedict XVI as Pope can help to identify the major traits of his understanding of Christian-Muslim dialogue. These elements emerge always within reflections occasioned by specific circumstances, almost always given in the presence of Muslims and addressed to them in the context of actual encounters. Benedict strongly believes that authentic interreligious dialogue is the 'fruit of the very core of faith,' because faith in God, who has created humanity and loves each person and wants love to be the dominant force in the world, implies the encounter among the believers, which is therefore a 'requirement of faith itself.'[380]

Benedict XVI did not say much about interreligious dialogue in his first papal address, limiting himself only to assuring the followers of other faiths of his commitment to it, in continuity with John Paul II.[381] However, five days after his election, he had a

[378] Ibid.
[379] Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture*, 51-52.
[380] Benedict XVI, *Interview during the Flight from the Holy Land to Rome*, 15/05/2009, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2009/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090515_ritorno-interview_en.html.
[381] Benedict XVI, *First Message at the End of the Eucharistic Concelebration with the Members of the College of Cardinals* (6), 20/04/2005, 698.

special meeting with the representatives of other Christian Churches and communities and of other religions. In that context, in which incidentally he explicitly expressed his gratitude for the presence of Muslims in particular, he gave his first ‗definition' of interreligious dialogue. Benedict affirmed his commitment to interreligious dialogue understood as ‗building bridges of friendship' with other believers aimed at ‗seeking the true good for every person and society as a whole.'[382] Peace is an essential dimension of the true good, and is at the same time God's gift as well as a duty for all people and especially for those who call themselves believers. For this reason, Benedict XVI believes that all ‗efforts to come together and foster dialogue are a valuable contribution to building peace on solid foundations.'[383] This first definition of interreligious dialogue has remained the motif behind Benedict's subsequent encounters and exchanges with the followers of other religions.

Benedict's mention of the ‗true good' already contains the theme of truth and interreligious dialogue, something which he has developed extensively since. For him an essential aspect of authentic dialogue is the ‗common pursuit of truth', which implies the respect of identities and excludes both syncretistic and relativistic tendencies.[384]

These are general observations, which apply to all Catholic interreligious engagement, including that with Muslims. However, with regard to Christian-Muslim dialogue in particular Benedict's thought is characterised by certain specific points.

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[382] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Delegates of Other Churches and Ecclesial communities and of Other Religious Traditions*, 25/04/2005, *AAS* 97(2005),742-744. In Benedict XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*, 08/12/2010, he states that interreligious dialogue is ‗an important means of cooperating with all religious communities for the common good.' (*AAS* 103 (2011),55).

[383] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Delegates of Other Churches and Ecclesial communities and of Other Religious Traditions*, 25/04/2005.

[384] Benedict XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*, 01/01/2011, 55.

### *a) The theological foundations of Christian-Muslim relations*

The first basis for Christian-Muslim dialogue is theological, and consists of two fundamental tenets shared by Christians and Muslims. First, the belief that humanity has in God the Creator its common origin and destiny.[385] Second, the fact that both Christians and Muslims „trace their ancestry to Abraham", although they do so „according to their respective traditions.[386]

Historically Islam was born in a context marked by the presence of Judaism and the various forms of Christianity, and „these circumstances are reflected in the Koranic tradition," so that the three religions have much in common, especially on two points: our origins and our faith in the one God. This is for Benedict a sufficiently strong foundation for genuine Christian-Muslim dialogue and also for Christian-Jewish-Muslim dialogue.[387]

The theological foundation of Christian-Muslim dialogue is to be found in the common source of the respective faiths, which is (for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike) „God's irruptive call… heard in the midst of man's ordinary daily existence."[388] Because they begin with the irruption of the Eternal into history, the religious experiences of Jews, Christian and Muslim share a common dynamic, whereby „attuned to the voice of God, like Abraham, we respond to his call and set out seeking the fulfilment of his promises, striving to obey his will, forging a path in our particular culture."[389] There is therefore a „fundamental unity" between Christians and Muslims (and Jews) which is based on a

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[385] Nostra Aetate 1.

[386] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with the President of the Religious Affairs Directorate*, Ankara, 28/11/2006, *AAS* 98(2006*)*,904. Caspar, "Abraham in Christianity and Islam."

[387] Benedict XVI, *Interview during the Flight to the Holy Land*, 8/05/2009. On Jewish-Muslim relations see Douglas Pratt, "Muslim–Jewish Relations: Some Islamic Paradigms," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 2010), 11–21.

[388] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with Organizations for Interreligious Dialogue*, Jerusalem, 11/05/2009, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2009/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090511_dialogo-interreligioso_en.html.

[389] Ibid.

shared experience of God's self-revelation, although this is understood and articulated in different ways.[390]

The common faith of Christians and Muslims in the one God constitutes a certain essential _unity', visible in their _mutual respect and solidarity,' and is fully realised when authentic mutual dialogue and engagement takes place.[391] Despite their different theologies, Christians and Muslims _worship and must worship' the one God who created and is concerned for every single human being. _Mutual respect and solidarity' between Christians and Muslims is the visible sign that _we consider ourselves members of… the one family that God has loved and gathered together from the creation of the world to the end of human history.'[392]

### *b) The theological-anthropological foundation of Christian-Muslim relations*

From belief in the Creator God a specific theological anthropology follows, that is a notion of humanity whose central mark is the dignity of the human person on account of the sacred character of human life, which is a tenet of the faith of both Christians and Muslims.[393] For Benedict, the basis of mutual respect and esteem and of cooperation in the service of peace for all, which is _the dearest wish of all believers,' is that _Christians and Muslims following their respective religions, point to the truth of the sacred character and dignity of the person.'[394] Christians and Muslims believe in the unity among people grounded in the _perfect oneness and universality' of God, who created all men and women in his image and likeness and created them in order to draw them into his divine

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[390] Ibid.

[391] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Participants in the Seminar Organized by the Catholic-Muslim Forum*, 6/11/2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20081106_cath-islamic-leaders_en.html.

[392] Ibid.

[393] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of some Muslim Communities*, Cologne, 20/08/2005, 916.

[394] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with the President of the Religious Affairs Directorate*, 28/11/2006, 903.

life and be one in him. This means that division and conflict among people contradict human nature and God's will, even more so do division and conflict among believers.[395]

Recognition of the centrality of the human person constitutes the anthropological foundation of the dialogue between Christians and Muslims. This makes mutual understanding possible and constitutes an antidote and a solution to conflict.[396] Conflict is often generated not only by misunderstanding but also and above all by the ideological manipulation of religion. This is the case of the kind of terrorism that justifies violence in the name of God, "as if fighting and killing the enemy could be pleasing to him."[397] In the present context these forms of terrorism claim to be Islamic. According to Benedict, this kind of Islam is not the "noble Islam," which treasures all human life as sacred, but a distorted version that contradicts the foundation of the faith of Islam and of Christianity as well. It is therefore "a perverse and cruel choice" because it "shows contempt for the sacred right to life and undermines the very foundation of all civil coexistence."[398]

On the contrary, putting the person in the centre "neutralizes the disruptive power of ideologies," and becomes the common foundation for joint opposition to all violence and religious intolerance. To be true believers, Muslims and Christians must submit to the will of the Creator, and this implies that human life must be respected in all its rights and particularly its religious freedom. It is by recognizing the centrality of the human person and by working for the respect of all human life that "Christians and Muslims manifest their obedience to the Creator, who wishes all people to live in the dignity that he bestowed on them."[399] In the general audience of 24 August 2005 in Rome, when

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[395] Benedict XVI, *Address Delivered during the Courtesy Visit to the President of the State of Israel*, Presidential Palace, Jerusalem, 11/05/2009, *L'Osservatore Romano,* English weekly edition, no. 20 (2009), 4.

[396] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of some Muslim Communities*, Cologne, 20/08/2005, 916.

[397] Ibid., 917.

[398] Ibid., 915.

[399] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Ambassadors of Countries with a Muslim Majority and to the representatives of Muslim Communities in Italy*, Castel Gandolfo, 25/09/2006, *AAS* 98 (2006),706.

summarizing his message to the Muslim representatives in Cologne, Benedict expressed his "hope that fanaticism and violence will be uprooted" and that Christians and Muslims "will always be able to work together to defend human dignity and protect the fundamental rights of men and women."[400]

As a necessary implication of the shared foundations of their respective faiths, it is the responsibility of Christians and Muslims to oppose all forms of intolerance and manifestations of violence. Religious leaders have the even greater responsibility to ensure that their faithful understand this.[401] By defining the theological-anthropological foundation of Christian-Muslim dialogue, Benedict has also identified the criterion to discern true Christianity and true Islam from their possible distortions.

### *c) Religious freedom: necessary precondition and priority for Christian-Muslim dialogue*

Religious freedom is for Benedict XVI the first among the universal human rights because it corresponds to the deepest nature of the human person, "his relation with his Creator."[402] Benedict believes that by recognizing and owning the principle of religious freedom, which is an "essential principle of the modern state," Vatican II has "recovered the deepest patrimony of the Church."[403] Commitment to advancing religious freedom in

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[400] Benedict XVI, *General Audience: World Youth Day in Cologne*, Vatican, 24/08/2004, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2005/documents/hf_benxvi_aud_20050824_it.html.

[401] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Ambassadors of Countries with a Muslim Majority*, 25/09/2006, 705.

[402] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps*, 10/01/2011, *AAS* 103(2011), 101.

[403] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia*, 22/12/2005, 50. On religious freedom in Catholic thought see John Coleman, "The Achievement of Religious Freedom," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24, no. 1 (January 1, 2006), 21–32; John Witte and Frank S. Alexander eds., *The Teachings of Modern Roman Catholicism on Law, Politics, and Human Nature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Kenneth L. Grasso and Robert P. Hunt eds., *Catholicism and Religious Freedom: Contemporary Reflections on Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Liberty* (Lanham, MD; Rowman, 2006); Michael J. Perry, "Liberal Democracy and the Right to Religious Freedom," *The Review of Politics* 71, no. 4 (October 1, 2009), 621–635.

the world is part of the Church's mission. This applies to Islam as well, on account of the shared faith in God. This is an important element of continuity with John Paul II.

In the contemporary world religious freedom is being violated in two ways. First, in countries where religious minorities are not permitted to express their faith publicly and are persecuted on its account, as in the case of Christians within certain political domains that define themselves as Islamic. On his arrival in Jordan at the beginning of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in May 2009, by acknowledging the freedom enjoyed by the Catholic community in that country, Benedict took the opportunity to reiterate the importance and necessity of religious freedom.[404] Also in the apostolic exhortation that followed the Synod of the Bishops for the Middle East, he insisted on the right of Catholics in the Middles east to "enjoy full citizenship' in their native countries, not to be treated as "second-class' believers, and to be given the possibility "to make their specific contribution' to the life of the different cultures in the region.[405]

Second, religious freedom is also, and more subtly, being violated where religion is marginalised because it is seen as irrelevant or even destabilizing for modern society. This violation of religious freedom is evident in the "banning of religious feasts and symbols under the guise of respect for the members of other religions,' and ultimately constitutes an attack not only on the fundamental right of religious freedom of all the believers but also on the cultural roots of many nations.[406] Benedict believes that a "healthy secularity,' i.e. the relationship of "unity in distinction' of the spiritual-religions and the temporal-political spheres, is necessary for the harmonious and full development of society.[407]

Freedom of religion, "institutionally guaranteed and effectively respected in practice,' is the "necessary condition' that enables Christians and Muslims to be true

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[404] Benedict XVI, *Welcoming Ceremony Address*, Queen Alia International Airport, Amman, 8/05/2009, *AAS* 101(2009),503.
[405] Benedict XVI, *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* 25, 26-27.
[406] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps*, 10/01/2011, 104.
[407] Benedict XVI, *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* 29.

believers, to contribute to the building of society, and therefore the precondition for their authentic mutual dialogue.[408]

In the path of Christian-Muslim relations, on the basis of the theological and anthropological common foundations, the defence of religious freedom _is a permanent imperative' and the respect for minorities a sign of _true civilisation.'[409]

### *d) The common vocation of Christians and Muslims, and Jews*

The shared religious experience of Jews, Christians and Muslims imposes on them a common vocation to proclaim that experience clearly and to witness to the God that is the source of their faiths.[410] Benedict sees Jerusalem, the place where the three faiths meet each other in a very special way, as a very important symbol of that common vocation, which consists of three aspects: first, to bear witness to the peaceful coexistence desired by all who worship God; second, to manifest God's plan for the unity of all humanity revealed to Abraham; and third, to reveal the true nature of the human person, that is, to be a seeker after God.[411]

As far as Christians and Muslims in particular are concerned, Benedict points out some concrete implications of these three aspects, defining what he sees as their common task.

First, in the contemporary world marked by relativism and which too often excludes the _transcendence and universality of reason', men and women of today expect from Christians and Muslims _an eloquent witness to show all people the value of the religious dimension of life.'[412] Christians and Muslims together can and must offer today's society

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[408] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with the President of the Religious Affairs Directorate*, Ankara, 28/11/2006, 904.

[409] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of some Muslim Communities*, 20/08/2005, 917.

[410] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with Organizations for Interreligious Dialogue*, Jerusalem, 11/05/2009.

[411] Benedict XVI, *Address during the Courtesy Visit to the President of the State of Israel,* Presidential Palace, 11/05/2009. For Christian perspectives on Jerusalem see Anthony O'Mahony ed., *Christianity and Jerusalem* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2009).

[412] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Ambassadors of Countries with a Muslim Majority*, 25/09/2006, 705.

_a credible response to… the question of the meaning and purpose of life.'[413] Their task is to work together to help society open itself to the transcendent so to give God his rightful place in the life of humanity.[414] In so doing they fulfil their most important service to humanity, that is to contribute to _the fulfilment of man's noble aspirations, in search of God and in search of happiness.'[415] Together Christians and Muslims can proclaim that God exists and can be encountered, that he is Creator of all people and that he calls all people to live according to his _design for the world.' Benedict insists that the common task of Christian and Muslim is to offer this truth to all, so that it may illumine morality and empower reason to go beyond its self-imposed empirical limitations.[416] Concretely, Benedict suggests that we are called to create spaces _where God's voice can be heard anew, where his truth can be discovered within the universality of reason, where every individual, regardless of dwelling, or ethnic group, or political hue, or religious belief, can be respected as a person, as a fellow human being.'[417]

This shared mission of witness of faith becomes increasingly urgent in the contemporary context, where it is quite a common opinion that religion, regardless of differences between religions, disrupts society because it is a source of conflict. It is the shared task of Christians and Muslims

> to strive to be known and recognized as worshippers of God faithful to prayer, eager to uphold and live by the Almighty's decrees, merciful and compassionate, consistent in bearing witness to all that is true and good, and ever mindful of the common origin and dignity of all human persons, who remain at the apex of God's creative design for the world and for history.[418]

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[413] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with the President of the Religious Affairs Directorate*, Ankara, 28/11/2006, 904.

[414] Ibid.

[415] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps to the Republic of Turkey*, Ankara, 28/11/2006, *AAS* 98(2006),907.

[416] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with Organizations for Interreligious Dialogue*, Notre Dame Center, Jerusalem, 11/05/2009.

[417] Ibid.

[418] Benedict XVI, *Address to Muslim Religious Leaders, Members of the Diplomatic Corps and Rectors of Universities in Jordan*, al-Hussein bin Talal Mosque, Amman, 9/05/2009, *AAS* 101(2009), 513.

Christians and Muslims are faced by a common challenge: to prove that their respective religions – and therefore their mutual dialogue – are credible by showing clearly that Christianity and Islam carry a ‗message of harmony and mutual understanding,' that is incompatible with any form of violence.[419]

By being ‗true to their principles and beliefs' Christians and Muslims must show the world that the cause of conflict is not religion but the ideological manipulation of religion, which is the true source of religious extremism and terrorism.[420]

Second, Christians and Muslims share the vocation to serve humanity through peace-building, opposition to violence and intolerance and the promotion of reconciliation and solidarity. They are ‗to build bridges and find ways of peaceful coexistence,' rejecting, on the basis of their common belief in God ‗the destructive power of hatred and prejudice, which kills men's souls before killing their bodies.'[421] According to Benedict, ‗fidelity to the one God, the Creator, the Most High leads to recognition that human beings are fundamentally interrelated'on account of the common origin of their existence and their common destiny. Because Christian and Muslim believers are aware that all human persons are ‗imprinted with the indelible image of the divine,' they are called to promote reconciliation and human solidarity.[422]

Third, Christians and Muslims are called to cooperate in the promotion of human dignity. They seek what is just and right and must encourage political leaders to do the same, protecting human dignity and human rights, particularly freedom of religion, especially for minorities.[423]

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[419] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Participants in the Seminar Organized by the Catholic-Muslim Forum*, 6/11/2008.

[420] Benedict XVI, *Address to Muslim Religious Leaders*, Amman, 9/05/2009, 512.

[421] Benedict XVI, *Homily*, Mount of Precipice, Nazareth, 14/05/2009, *AAS* 101(2009*),*481.

[422] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Muslim Community during the Courtesy Visit to the Gran Mufti*, Mount of the Temple, Jerusalem, 12/05/2009, *AAS* 101(2009),521.

[423] Benedict XVI, *Address to Muslim Religious Leaders*, Amman, 9/05/2009, 514.

### *e) The content and the activities of Christian Muslim dialogue*

The purpose of Christian-Muslim dialogue and relationships is in great measure to enable them to fulfill the shared vocation that ensues from their respective faiths. At a practical level, Benedict XVI suggests that Christian-Muslim dialogue and engagement should focus on specific goals and activities.

The first aim of Christian-Muslim dialogue is a serious theological exchange aimed at recognizing and developing their spiritual bonds.[424]

The second is the common search for the truth. Benedict sees a „possibility of unity" in the authentic believer's search for „something beyond," which is also a necessary precondition to interfaith engagement.[425] In the presence of genuine common commitment to search for the truth, differences gradually cease to be insurmountable barriers. The secret of successful Christian-Muslim dialogue (and of all interreligious dialogue) is a personal authentic growth in one's faith.[426] Truth claims are not an obstacle to interfaith engagement because they are constitutive of authentic religious belief. They follow from the fact that „the one who believes is the one who seeks the truth and lives by it." The differences between Jews, Christians and Muslims should not hinder their efforts to witness to the power of the truth.[427] For the believer, search for the Truth and search for God are one, and the aim of Christian-Muslim dialogue should be a „wholehearted, united search for God."[428] For this reason Christians and Muslims in dialogue encourage „one another in the ways of God."[429]

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[424] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with the President of the Religious Affairs Directorate*, Ankara, 28/11/2006.

[425] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with Organizations for Interreligious Dialogue*, Jerusalem, 11/05/2009.

[426] Ibid.

[427] Ibid.

[428] Benedict XVI, *Address Delivered during the Courtesy Visit to the President of the State of Israel*, Jerusalem, 11/05/2009.

[429] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with Organizations for Interreligious Dialogue*, Jerusalem, 11/05/2009.

The third goal of Christian-Muslim dialogue is to cultivate „the vast potential of human reason", „in the context of faith and truth."[430] This is crucial because „when human reason allows itself to be purified by faith' it is not weakened but becomes stronger and able to pursue its purpose, which is to serve humanity. This means that „genuine adherence to religion – far from narrowing our minds – widens the horizons of human understanding," contrasts „the excesses of the unbridled ego' that absolutises the finite and excludes the infinite, „ensures that freedom is exercised hand in hand with truth' and enriches culture with its insights on „what is true, good and beautiful."[431]

On the occasion of his courtesy visit to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Benedict offered both a programme as well as elements for a spirituality of Christian-Muslim dialogue. He did so by suggesting ways in which it may advance: through theological exploration of „how the Oneness of God is inextricably tied to the unity of the human family'; by engaging in dialogue while submitting to his loving plan for creation; through the study of God's law inscribed in the cosmos and in the human heart; by reflecting on God's self-revelation, while keeping „their gaze fixed' on God's absolute goodness which is also „reflected in the face of others'; and by „bearing witness to the One God by generously serving one another", in a „spirit of harmony and cooperation."[432]

### *f) Attitudes for Christian-Muslim dialogue*

For Benedict certain attitudes are necessary for the dialogue between Christians and Muslims to be „authentic', i.e. according to its nature and aim.[433]

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[430] Benedict XVI, *Address to Muslim Religious Leaders*, Amman, 9/05/2009, 514.
[431] Ibid.
[432] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Muslim Community during the Courtesy Visit to the Grand Mufti*, Jerusalem, 12/05/2009, 521.
[433] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with the President of the Religious Affairs Directorate*, Ankara, 28/11/2006, 904.

The Christian-Muslim dialogue requires sincerity. It should be a _sincere exchange among friends,'[434] and sustained by a _sincere wish to know each other better.' Sincerity is also necessary with as regards the value and the goals of interreligious dialogue.

Christian-Mulsim dialogue must be based on _more authentic reciprocal knowledge,'[435] hence it also requires the willingness and the effort to learn about the other as a person of faith. As such effort is carried out, both commonalities and differences will be identified at a deeper level. For this reason Benedict suggests that two more attitudes are needed: the ability to rejoice in recognising the common religious values, and loyalty in respecting differences.[436]

Also very important is an awareness of the the intercultural dimension of Christian-Muslim dialogue. Benedict has introduced a subtle distinction within the notion of Christian-Muslim dialogue, by speaking of _dialogue between religions and between cultures.'[437] He has described the engagement between Christians and Muslims as _interreligious and intercultural dialogue,' which he believes _can not be reduced to an optional extra.'[438] Benedict suggests that the barriers between Jews, Christians and Muslims often arise from cultural difference and not from the level of religion, and that acknowledging this fact can make the task of unity easier.[439] It is therefore necessary that, as Christians and Muslims engage in dialogue, they remain constantly aware of the complex interactions between religion and culture, which often operate at deeper levels.

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[434] Ibid., 903.

[435] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Ambassadors of Countries with a Muslim Majority and to the representatives of Muslim Communities in Italy*, 25/09/2006, 705.

[436] Ibid.; Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with the President of the Religious Affairs Directorate*, Ankara, 28/11/2006, ,904

[437] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Ambassadors of Countries with a Muslim Majority*, 25/09/2006, 705. See also *Address to the Representatives of some Muslim Communities*, 20/08/2005, 918.

[438] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Representatives of some Muslim Communities*, Cologne, 20/08/2005, 918; also *Address at the Meeting with the President of the Religious Affairs Directorate*, Ankara, 28/11/2006, 903.

[439] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with Organizations for Interreligious Dialogue*, Jerusalem, 11/05/2009.

The fundamental attitude of Christians and Muslims who engage in dialogue is commitment to their own spiritual growth, which is a journey of conversion. Faith in the one God, which Christians and Muslims have in common, requires believers „to strive constantly for righteousness, while imitating his forgiveness,' which are „intrinsically oriented' towards the peace and harmony of humanity.[440] Thus personal faith does not become individualistic but re-directs both Christians and Muslims towards the world. Their dialogue then must be carried out „with a view to fruitful cooperation in the service of all humanity,'[441] with an attitude of of universal responsibility.

## 4. Conclusion: Benedict XVI's contribution to Christian-Muslim dialogue

Benedict XVI does not contribute a systematic theological reflection on Islam, but takes as his starting point the theological interpretation of Islam offered in *Lumen Gentium* 16 and in *Nostra Aetate* 4. He finds in Vatican II sufficiently firm foundation for authentic Christian-Muslim engagement. His approach to Islam is guided by the more general principle enunciated in *Nostra Aetate* about the fundamental task and attitude of every Catholic (and Christian) towards other faiths: Benedict seeks indeed to „recognise, prevent and promote' what is true and holy in Islam (*Nostra Aetate* 2) and develops it in dialogue with his particular understanding of the place of Islam in the history of religions and in relation to Christianity.

Faithful to his own theological methodology, Benedict does not become entangled with the question of the salvation of Muslims, because that has also been answered by Vatican II and by the subsequent teaching of the Church: They are saved „in ways known

[440] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Muslim Community during the Courtesy Visit to the Gran Mufti*, Jerusalem, 12/05/2009, 529.

[441] Benedict XVI, *Address to the Ambassadors of Countries with a Muslim Majority and to the representatives of Muslim Communities in Italy*, 25/09/2006, 705.

to God‘ (*Gaudium et Spes* 22), those who live according to the dictates of their conscience and to what is true and holy in their religious traditions.

Benedict however is indeed contributing to the progress of Christian-Muslim dialogue in various ways; first of all by trying to understand Islam in its complexity and reality, and from within, examining the essence of Islam and of its truth claims. Second, Benedict XVI contributes by encouraging both Christians and Muslims to a serious commitment to interreligious dialogue. Christian-Muslim engagement is not simply a convenient option, even more so in the context of contemporary tensions, but is an intrinsic demand of their shared vocation to serve humanity, which is based on their belief in the One God. Third, he exhorts both Christians and Muslims to take their faith seriously and commit to it wholeheartedly. In this regard, when Benedict challenges Islam to clarify its own notion of God and its own truth claims, Benedict does nothing different from what he does when challenging Christians to deepen their understanding of the Christian faith and life.

Fourth, Benedict contribute to Christian-Muslim relations by calling Muslims to take responsibility for the _distorted Islam‘ of _bad Muslims‘ and remove all ambiguities so that only _noble Islam‘ may emerge in the world; and, fifth, by challenging Muslims to take responsibility for humanity as an implication of their faith. Finally, in so doing Benedict is challenging Islam to articulate its own theological understanding of interreligious dialogue; that is to say to find in the Islamic faith the foundations for constructive engagement with Christianity as well as with other believers. This is no small challenge, considering the fact that Islam has a clear basic understanding of Christianity as a distortion of the true religion which is corrected and completed by God‘s revelation to Mohammad. However, the challenge comes with a little help, subtly but most probably not unintentionally, in that Benedict XVI has ultimately challenged Islam to think theologically about Christian-Muslim relations and had identified the possible foundations on which Muslims themselves can build.

## D. CONCLUSION

The examination of Benedict XVI's approach to the religions shows that his attention focuses primarily on Judaism and Islam, on account of their affinity to Christianity.

Like Judaism, Islam occupies a specific place in Ratzinger's theological vision. This emerges both at the level of his theology of religions, as well as that of his particular engagement with Islam and the Muslim world. This place is of importance, on account of what Christianity and Islam hold in common, as they both see themselves as the response to God's self-revelation, from which a shared vision of reality and of human life derive. They also share a common mission that derives both from the common humanity of Christians and Muslims, as they consider themselves as created by God, and also from the call to respond to God's revelation.

However, for Ratzinger-Benedict XVI the relationship of Christianity to Islam is qualitatively different from that of Christianity to Judaism. The latter is truly unique because it belongs to the essence of Christian faith, and constitutes the matrix through which Christianity learns to relate to all other forms of religious otherness.

Although for Benedict the Christian-Muslim engagement is necessary, its foundations are different from those of Jewish-Christian relations. Islam and Christianity do belong together but at a different level than Christianity and Judaism. As a matter of fact, the nature of Christianity would be affected in its essence without Judaism, but not without Islam. Islam is therefore a very important priority for the Church's interreligious dialogue, according to Benedict XVI, but not the foremost one.

Study of Benedict XVI's notion of interreligious dialogue has shown that he sees a clear hierarchy of priorities in the Christian engagement with other religions, in the line of the teaching of Vatican II and on the basis of precise theological foundations. During his

pontificate, Benedict XVI has been concerned primarily with the Jewish other and then with Islam. In the light of his thought, this does not seem to have been accidental, largely dictated by external factors, but in line with his theological vision. He has given relatively little attention to the religions belonging to the more external ‚circle'. On account of his consistency in pursuing pastoral ministry following clear theological lines, it is legitimate to wonder whether this would have been his next step, had his pontificate been longer.

# VI. CONCLUSION

At first sight, Benedict XVI‘s pontificate was marked by some ambiguity with regard to the religions. He professed his commitment to interreligious dialogue in his first papal homily and visited the Synagogue of Cologne a few months later, but the Regensburg (in 2006) and the Williamson (in 2009) incidents raised doubts about the sincerity of his engagement with Muslims and Jews respectively. During the apostolic journeys to the Holy Land and Turkey and his visit to the Synagogue of Rome, he confirmed the seriousness of his intentions and offered continuing clarification of his position. I hope this work helps further to confirm that seriousness, and further to assist that clarification.

I consider that my original contribution to the study of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI thought and the Catholic Church's engagement in interreligious relations can be summarised as follows.

I have shown that for Benedict XVI interreligious dialogue is an integral aspect of the Church‘s life and identity for theological reasons, at the level of his fundamental theology, ecclesiology, theological-anthropology and soteriology. Interreligious dialogue is an imperative for the Church, because it is an essential aspect of its ultimate goal. The Church, and the papacy at its heart, exists as a sign of the unity to which God calls all men and women, and as an instrument to realize such unity. The Church‘s work for unity must be differentiated as it must adapt to the different elements of humanity that are to be brought into unity. Interreligious dialogue is: first, the concrete way of establishing unity with the followers of the religions, on the basis of the search for the truth that they have in common; and second, a way of working together with other believers for the salvation of all men and women. Through interreligious dialogue believers are able to witness jointly that the source of meaning (the truth) of human existence lies beyond themselves and

beyond empirical reality and encourage each other to seek it. Together believers can make space for God in the midst of humanity so that all men and women may find themselves by meeting him.

I have shown that by identifying the deep theological foundations of interreligious dialogue at the very heart of Christian faith, Benedict XVI has given Catholics and all Christians, and his successors in the Petrine office, strong motivations for engaging in the dialogue with the followers of other religions, not as a practical necessity but as a demand of their faith. He has confirmed and clarified the Church‘s teaching that interreligious dialogue is a legitimate, integral and necessary element of the Church‘s mission showing that progress in the theology of religions is not hindered but supported by the Tradition and the Magisterium.

Although this has required a quite laborious work of historical and theological enquiry, the research has shown that although Ratzinger articulates the notion of interreligious dialogue creatively and originally, especially Jewish-Christian and Christian-Muslim relations, his contribution is consistent with the teaching and ministry of his predecessors. Not only does he build on the achievements of John Paul II, but he also draws very significantly on the legacy of Paul VI, which was somehow obscured by the impressive ministry of his successor. Benedict XVI‘s notion of interreligious dialogue is consistent with the ecclesiology of Vatican II and John XXIII‘s modern instincts that made him convoke the Council. However, Benedict XVI is also consistent with the modern trajectory of development inaugurated by Benedict XV and followed by Pius XI and Pius XII, in the first half of the twentieth century marked by the two World Wars. The continuity shows that interreligious dialogue is truly a natural development of the Church‘s self-understanding.

Benedict XVI has provided a model for theology of religions and of interreligious dialogue that shows that Church teaching is not an obstacle but an asset, and that the

results of such theology are actually relevant to the life and mission of the Church. He does so by embracing the kind of theological perspective and methodology that has been described in detail and that allows for him to be understood as a „modern Church Father."

Benedict XVI defines interreligious dialogue as a joint quest for the truth which unites Christians, Jews, Muslims, other believers and also men and women who do not associate themselves to any form of organised religion. This definition allows for the relationship between interreligious dialogue and evangelisation to be seen in a new light, so that they are mutually necessary elements of the Church's mission, rather than contradictory and mutually exclusive. This is a case in which Benedict builds on and develops previous Church teaching by recasting it in a new light that gives it more clarity. Benedict XVI's definition based on the quest for truth shows that authentic interreligious dialogue does not require relativism but is actually damaged by it. Religious differences need not be denied or played down for the sake of engaging in dialogue if the dialogue partners recognise that the truth they seek unites them, so that their bond lies at the level of the source of their respective religious convictions. Benedict has also shown how from the theoretical understanding of dialogue concrete aspects of the engagement can be derived. This definition has practical implications.

The weakness of the research lies in its very ambitious goal. Locating Benedict XVI's notion of interreligious dialogue in the broader context of Church history and theology has required a broadening of perspective that is as necessary as it is hazardous. The first danger is that of obscuring the specific focus of the research. Admittedly a less detailed exposition of the premises would have made for an easier read, however it would also have resulted in a more superficial appreciation of Benedict's contribution. Secondly, this also means that the research has touched upon several subthemes, a number of which could not be fully developed for the sake of keeping to the main focus. Some examples are: the relationship of peace-building and interreligious dialogue; of interreligious

dialogue, human rights and religious freedom in specific interreligious contemporary contexts; the influence of Catholic thought on papal approaches to interreligious dialogue; the relationship between interreligious dialogue and the dialogue of cultures. Hopefully these and other themes that could not be developed further will provide openings for further research leading to greater appreciation of Pope Benedict XVI‘s contribution to interreligious dialogue.

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