

## MONTFORT A LOVER OF JESUS CHRIST WISDOM

*(from the work of Brother Jean Bultean)*

**Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort experienced the encounter with God, in Jesus Christ, "Eternal Wisdom, Incarnate, Crucified and Glorious"... and he dedicated his life as a missionary to making her known.**

### 1. The personal experience of the Wisdom of God as opposed to the Wisdom of the world

Ordained a priest in June 1700, Louis-Marie left the seminary of Saint Sulpice in Paris, where he could have "made a career", with the desire to commit himself fully to parish missions.

**In Nantes** (St. Clement), he is disappointed by the type of priestly community he finds and by the near inaction to which he is condemned (winter 1700-1701). He would like to learn more about the "missions"..., "to go simply and poorly to teach catechism to the poor", to make Jesus Christ known. He would be made to understand that his place was not at St. Clement... since he did not want to "settle in" there like everyone else...

*Misunderstanding... opposition... disappointment... uncertain future... (Cf. L. 5 of November 6, 1700).*

**In Poitiers**, he locked himself in the hospital with the poor, out of obedience. However, he wrote: "Catechism for the poor of the city and the country is my element" (L. 9, 16 September 1701).

Very quickly he aroused opposition by sharing the life of the poor, seeking their spiritual good as well as their material "well-being".

Called as a savior, welcomed as a god, he was expelled as an evil demon. Disagreement with the administrators, slandered before the bishop who forbids him to preach.

*Opposition... denigration... no human support...*

**In Paris** (spring 1703), at the Salpêtrière hospital, among the poor... he was quickly dismissed by the other chaplains...

He disturbs everywhere. His "reputation" began to precede him. Even his former Sulpician masters, who had esteemed and admired him, now rejected him. His spiritual director abandons him.

*Excluded... Abandoned... Slandered... Sent away... Marginalized...*

No doubt because of his (singular) ways of doing things, but even more because of the evangelical demands of his behavior...

He chose to take refuge under a staircase, "in a small hole in a **small** house", street du Pot de fer (late summer - autumn 1703). Alone with God. It is in this painful stage of his life that the writing of "The Love of Eternal Wisdom" (LEW) is situated.

He spent the winter of 1703 with the hermits of Mont Valérien.

He returned to Poitiers in March 1704.

As a young priest (30 years old), ordained only three years earlier, his apostolic dream was shattered.

On the Street du Pot de Fer, he was ready to give up the powerful attraction he felt for the mission. He has nothing. He is reduced to nothing. Recognized by nobody. Only God matters to him. He prays, meditates, contemplates, asks for true Wisdom, which is God himself: Jesus Christ. (Cf. L15; L 16 of 24 October 1703). He experienced the opposition between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God.

It was not until 1706 that he definitively found his way as an "apostolic missionary", after his encounter with Pope Clement XI in Rome. A life that would henceforth be totally animated by "missionary wisdom... always having something new to undertake in the manner of the Apostles" (Cf. his interview with his friend Canon Blain in Rouen in 1714) (Cf. *Abrégé de la vie de LMG de Montfort JB Blain, Documents et recherches, p. 185-190*).

### 2. "The Love of Eternal Wisdom" (LEW) (one of Montfort's first works).

The title should be understood in two complementary ways:

\* The Love of Eternal Wisdom for Humanity

\* Man's love for Eternal Wisdom

## The plan

- o **Introduction:** Nos. 1 to 7 and Chapter 1.
- o **Part 1:** chapters 2 to 14: Need or Motives for loving the Eternal Wisdom.
- o **2nd part:** chapters. 15 to 17: Means to acquire the Eternal Wisdom.

**Montfort's language** is "mystical".

Mystical experience is an experience that confronts the deepest part of our being with 'Someone'. It is a moving encounter with 'the absolute'.

We feel affected in such a way that we are transformed and can no longer abandon ourselves to be what we were before, without feeling a sense of loss and/or infidelity. This experience is always based on love, a kind of loving emotion that can guide our lives. It is both a painful experience of purification and transformation and also an experience of deep joy, that of meeting Someone who fills us completely.

**Hence the vocabulary of the love relationship:**

- to contemplate, to see, to look at, to admire...
- to seek, to desire, to acquire, to find, to possess, to keep, etc.
- love, tenderness, friendship, treasure...

see LEW 65 to 71:

God who loves man as a lover [...] to arouse in him knowledge and love.

Knowledge awakens love and makes it grow,  
Love awakens the desire to know more and more.

To know and love Jesus Christ, unique and marvellous Wisdom, leads to the desire to make him known and loved by many (mission).

**Two essential meanings of the word "Wisdom"** (*among the various meanings that Louis-Marie gives to this word: cf. LEW 13*)

\* **Wisdom** as a '**Person**', that is, **Jesus Christ**.

\* **Wisdom** as a '**gift**', that is, **the communication of Christ to humanity**.

## 3. Jesus Christ, Wisdom, according to Montfort

"Montfort's vision of wisdom is both **very fragmented** - he himself proposes a whole series of distinctions or quasi-definitions - and **very focused**, since he brings everything into the mystery of **Christ Wisdom**, which is essentially a mystery of alliance and salvation for humanity. (cf. Art. Sagesse de J.P. Prévost Dict. Spi. Montfortaine p. 1173ff)

In attributing to **Christ this title of Wisdom**, Louis Marie highlights **four aspects** of His Mystery, in harmony with Biblical Revelation.

He does so in the perspective of the gift that Wisdom gives us of herself in a (mystical) experience of loving and savory knowledge, of communion, of transformation, of divinization...

3.1. **Christ as "fullness"** "containing in Himself all the fullness of the divinity (Col. 1:16; 2:9) and of humanity"....; "a summary of the works of God... a pearl of great price (for the acquisition of which one is ready to sacrifice everything)" (LEW 9); "**one in all things**, which will suffice for us" (TD 61).

The theme of Christ "infinite treasure for mankind" is strongly emphasized by Louis Marie (cf. LEW 61, 63). It guides the human attitude of searching, of decision, of intense friendship, of conjugal relationship (of husband or wife) cf. LEW 30, 59, 61, 73, 132. See also Mt 13, 44-46: treasure, pearl...

3.2. **Christ as the Word** who reveals and transforms. Louis Marie identifies Wisdom with Christ in his permanent function of revealing the Father: "Since divine Wisdom is the Word in eternity and in time, she has always spoken and in her word everything has been done and everything has been repaired. She has spoken through the prophets,

through the apostles, and she will speak to the end of the ages through the mouths of those to whom she will give herself" (LEW 95).

Wisdom "has come from heaven to teach us the secrets of God, and we have no other true teacher (cf. Mt 23:8-10; TD 61) than this incarnate Wisdom called Jesus Christ" (LEW 56).

Thus we understand the importance of the word of God for Louis Marie (cf. among others: LEW chapter XII, references to Wisdom in the Old Testament).

**3.3. Christ as the "Love"** of the Father and the Holy Spirit (LEW 118), descending to man in a divine logic of lowering and poverty, which contrasts with human perspectives. Louis Marie repeatedly identifies Wisdom with the Son of God who comes to man, choosing not the way of power and glory, but that of poverty and suffering, to the point of hiding himself in the Eucharistic bread. This choice is part of a "great plan" of Wisdom, whose ways are different and far removed from those of the wisest men (LEW 167).

It is the way of Love which is the giving of self, the desire for identification, the transformation: God wants us to become His children. In Jesus, the Word and the bread are food that transforms.

(LEW 118) LEW 45, 70, 71; cf. Ephesians 1, 3-14, especially vv 5 and 9.

### **3.4. Christ Wisdom in relation to the Mystery of the Cross**

The Cross is the summit of the revelation of God's love. There is no greater love than to give one's life (Jn 15:13). After a precise choice (LEW 164-168), the Cross becomes the culmination of Christ's life (LEW 169-170), "the greatest mystery of Eternal Wisdom" (LEW 169). Louis-Marie sees such an intimate link between Wisdom and the Cross that he comes to identify one with the other: "True Wisdom ... has been so incorporated and united to the Cross that it can be said with certainty that **Wisdom is the Cross and the Cross is Wisdom**" (LEW 180).

*N.B. \* These realities are less to be "understood" than to be contemplated in love... It is a question of letting oneself be moved... and transformed... by Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God (intelligence, heart, behavior). It is necessary to ask for Wisdom (through the Holy Spirit and Mary) to live her...*

*\* The freedom that makes man great is sometimes (often) an obstacle. But beyond the fall, the sin, God is faithful to his "project" on man. In his love (his mercy and his forgiveness) he always seeks to seduce man.*

*\* How can one not say "yes" to such love? Christian life consists in this "yes" (cf. Mary), in accepting this covenant contract that the Wisdom of God proposes to man out of love, a condition for happiness and full realization here on earth, even through suffering, and then in eternal joy, in total communion with the glorious Wisdom.*

## **4. Christian life as Wisdom**

**4.1 Fundamental option.** The movement of Wisdom (Jesus Christ) towards man calls for the free but necessary movement of man towards Wisdom. Continuous search (LEW 30, 63, 72-73); ever greater intimacy. Wisdom is for man and man is for Wisdom' (LEW 64). Christ Wisdom thus becomes something like a living challenge to man's freedom (LEW 59), calling in return for the irrevocable surrender of the heart. (LEW 132).

**4.2 Breaking with the vain and false wisdom of the world.** This is an indispensable condition for the coming of Christ, true Wisdom, with his gifts, and for his permanence in us (LEW 73, 199), (cf. LEW 13, 75-88, 178-179, 196-199).

Louis-Marie denounced the false wise men, who were well represented by the "honest man" of the 18th century (LEW 76, 178). The worldly wise man is egocentric (LEW 75-76), a man of engagement (LEW 76), a man of quiet life (LEW 76-80), a man of money, a "businessman" (LEW 80), an epicurean (LEW 81), a megalomaniac (LEW 82).

### **4.3. Transformation of man through the Wisdom that communicates her gifts...**

When divine Wisdom enters a soul, she brings with her all kinds of goods and communicates to it innumerable riches" (LEW 90):

- knowledge: a vital and active knowledge (LEW 93), the sense of discernment (LEW 92);
- the experience of joyful communion: the friendship of Christ, peace (LEW 9);
- a purification: the cross is inseparable from Wisdom, it is both a hard and a soft path (LEW 100, 103);
- the transformation of internal dynamism: acting in a new way (LEW 99);
- apostolic activity (LEW 100);
- the ability to transmit: the gift of the word (LEW 96), the action of the Spirit (LEW 97).

## 5. Paths that lead to Wisdom

Louis-Marie proposes and presents four means (fruits of his experience) to realize the encounter with Wisdom. These four means are logically articulated:

**5.1 Desire.** A solid spring is first of all necessary to undertake this journey: "an ardent desire" (LEW chap. 15).

**5.2 Prayer.** From this desire, in "continuous prayer", emanates the search for Wisdom (LEW chap. 15).

**5.3 Renunciation.** To welcome the Wisdom ardently desired and implored, one must make room for her, abandoning everything that is contrary to her and that hinders her coming. Hence the need to train in "universal mortification" (LEW chap. 16).

**5.4 Tender and true devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary** Through devotion to Mary, the space thus liberated can be occupied by divine Wisdom (LEW chap. 17). It is the greatest of all means and the most wonderful of all secrets to acquire and preserve divine Wisdom ...! (LEW 203).

These means are above all gifts from God, even if they require the decisive cooperation of man.

I give myself completely to Jesus Christ, through the hands of Mary, to carry my cross in his footsteps all the days of my life. This is the heart of the "Baptismal Covenant Contract" that Louis Marie had Christians renew at the end of their parish missions (cf. O.C. p. 824-826).

## 6. Becoming Wisdom to others: the mission

The acceptance of Wisdom who gives herself to man out of love and, in return, the total surrender of man to Wisdom, out of love, necessarily leads to a missionary availability. How can we not make known to many others the treasure we have discovered?

Wisdom not only gives man her light to know the truth, but also a marvelous capacity to make her known to others" (LEW 95 and 97).

...she makes them all burn; she inspires them great undertakings for the glory of God and the salvation of souls...! (LEW 100).

Missionary commitment in turn reinforces the intimacy between Wisdom and her disciple (or her lover).

Cf. LEW 30: the three degrees of piety.

## 7. By way of conclusion

- God has his wisdom, and he is the only true one who should be loved and sought after as a great treasure" (LEW 74). This Wisdom has been manifested to us in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom. He is goodness, mercy, beauty, sweetness, fullness, the Word, Love... even the Cross, the way to happiness.

- He wants to give himself, he offers himself, he communicates, he seeks the friendship of the man he wants to win over to make him happy and to live in friendship with him. He seeks, he runs, he cries out: Listen! Come to me!

- It is up to man to desire him, to ask for him, to seek him and to search for him, to find him, to obtain him, to acquire him, to possess him and, above all, to know him, to listen to him, to love him, to preserve him... and to make him known and loved by many others.

- To do this: to prefer nothing but Him, to leave everything, to be determined, full of ardor and constancy, to be ready to suffer everything and to undertake everything.

**To know Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, is to know everything.**

**To know everything, but not to know Him, is to know nothing (LEW 11).**

Re-read chapters 5, 6 and the beginning of chapter 7 of Rey-Mermet.  
(1984 edition, pp. 43-70 or 1996 edition, pp. 71-115)

### Reminder of some dates to guide the reading:

**1700: June 5th:** Priestly ordination at St. Sulpice (Paris).

**October:** arrival in Nantes.

**Winter 1700-1701:** "inaction" at Fr. Lévêque's house in Nantes for more than 5 months.

**1701: 25-27 April:** travels to Fontevrault to attend his sister's Sylvie take of the habit. He meets Mrs de Montespan, who invites him to go to Poitiers (Bishop Girard has been her children's tutor). He goes there (end of April-beginning of May).

**Then he returned to Nantes:** the Bishop of Poitiers asked for the opinion of Mr. Leschassier, his spiritual director, and of the Bishop of Nantes about him.

**June-September:** some missions in the Nantes area, including Grandchamp.

**25 August:** letter from the Bishop of Poitiers, Mgr. Girard, who calls him to his diocese and, in November, at the request of the poor of the General Hospital, appoints him chaplain of the Hospital.

**1702: During the summer, he travels to Paris** (to help his sister Louise).

**From October 1702 to Easter 1703:** stay at the General Hospital in Poitiers (5 or 6 months).

He takes Marie-Louise Trichet there. Due to insurmountable difficulties, **he resigns and decides to leave Poitiers to go to Paris.**

**1703: At the General Hospital of La Salpêtrière**

Only a few months (4 or 5) ... and they throw him out.

**Late summer and autumn:** Alone, like an outcast, Street du Pot de Fer.

Winter: Hermit among the hermits of Mont Valérien.

**1704: In March,** at the request of the poor, the Bishop of Poitiers calls him and appoints him **Director of the General Hospital.** He will be there for 15 months. An experience as "negative" as the first one.

**1705: Autumn-Winter:** After leaving the General Hospital for good, he gives missions in Poitiers: Montbernage, St Savin, Le Calvaire...

**1706: Spring:** Pilgrimage to Rome, to discover his way!

**June:** Audience with Pope Clement XI.

**End of August:** Return to Poitiers.

...and, so as not to forget:

"To grasp the whole spirituality of Grignon at that time, we must be careful not to dissociate the three complementary sides: Wisdom, the Cross and the rejection of the madness of the world. All three are indissolubly intertwined in his existence at that moment, as well as in the work in which he projects himself. ("Rey-Mermet": 1984 edition, p. 65 or/and 1996 edition, p. 105).

LETTERS TO MARIE LOUISE TRICHET	THE FOUR MEANS TO OBTAIN WISDOM (L.E.W.) (1703-1704 ?)
L.15 Y 16 (1703 ?)34	
<p>"Go on, redouble your pleading on my behalf. Let it be extreme poverty, a very heavy cross... I accept everything, as long as you pray that he may be with me and at the same time he does not abandon me for a single moment, because of my infinite weakness. Oh, what wealth, what glory, what pleasure, if by all this I reach the divine Wisdom, for which I sigh night and day. » (L 15)</p> <p><i>"O, when shall I possess this kind and unknown Wisdom? When shall she come to dwell in me? When shall I be so adorned that I may serve as a refuge for her?..."</i></p> <p><i>Oh, who will give me to eat that bread of understanding with which She feeds the great souls? Who will give me</i></p>	<p><b>An ardent desire</b> (n° 181-183)</p>

<p><i>to drink that cup with which to quench the thirst of Her servants?</i>  <i>Oh, when will I be crucified and lost to the world? ...do not cease to share my desires. » Can you, dear child in Jesus, to satisfy my wishes, to quench my thirst”?</i>  (L 16)</p>	
<p>"Go on, even redouble your pleading for me, [...] No, I will never stop asking for that infinite treasure. And I firmly believe that I will attain her [...] I believe that your prayers are too effective [...] Because, although the possession of this divine Wisdom would be impossible by the ordinary means of grace, which is not true, it would be possible thanks to the strength with which we ask for her, because everything is possible for the one who believes, this is an immutable truth. [...] Therefore, my dear daughter, I beg you to include in this crusade of prayers some good souls, your friends, especially until Pentecost, and to pray with them every Monday from one to two in the afternoon. I will do the same at the same hour. Send me their names in writing." (L 15)</p> <p><i>"I feel that you continue to ask divine Wisdom for this insignificant sinner through crosses, humiliations and poverty... I am infinitely grateful to you. I feel the effect of your prayers because I feel more than ever impoverished, crucified, humiliated. [...]</i></p> <p><i>Don't fail to share my pleas... You can, yes, you can, along with some good friends. Nothing can resist your prayers; God himself, as great as he is, cannot resist them. He has let himself be overcome by a living faith and a firm hope. Pray then, sigh, ask for divine Wisdom for me, you will get her all for me. I believe so. » (L 16)</i></p>	<p><b>A continuous prayer</b>  (n° 184 -193)</p>
<p>"What makes me say I will get her, (the possession of divine Wisdom) are the persecutions I have had and have every day, day and night." (L 15).</p> <p><i>"I am infinitely grateful to you. I experience the effects of your prayers, because I find myself more than ever impoverished, crucified, humiliated. Men and demons are waging a kind and sweet war against me in this great city of Paris. Let them slander me, ridicule me, tear my reputation to shreds, lock me up in prison! What precious gifts! What exquisite delicacies! What seductive greatness! They are the baggage and courtship of divine Wisdom, which She brings to the houses of those in whom She wants to dwell." (L 16)</i></p> <p>"Long live Jesus! Long live his Cross!</p>	<p><b>Universal mortification</b>  (n°194-202)</p>

I adore the just and loving action of divine Wisdom on her little flock, which is installed and hidden at will in her divine Heart, which has just been pierced by the lance for this purpose. ... » (L 34)	
"I think your prayers are too effective, the goodness of our God is too tender, the protection of the Blessed Virgin, our loving Mother, is too great..." (L 15).	<b>A tender and true devotion to Blessed Virgin (n° 203-207) + Consecration.</b>

### **"Wisdom, Wisdom" Polysemy of meaning in St. LM de Montfort**

Cf. P. Olivier Maire of SMM (in his 1989 license thesis)

On a mysterious statue representing Wisdom as portrayed by Solomon in the book that bears his name, a statue that Father of Montfort gave to Sister Marie-Louise de Jésus (cf. Besnard, *La vie de la Soeur Marie-Louise de Jésus...* document and research t. VII p. 352-355), O. Maire wonders and talks about the enigma of this representation that we do not even know, by the way, what it has become.

*This same Book of Wisdom that inspired the statue was paraphrased by Father of Montfort during a conference to the seminarians of the community of the Holy Spirit in Paris, (cf. Besnard doc and research t. IV). Here this Wisdom is not Jesus Christ. It is supernatural and divine, the wisdom of the Gospel, taught by Jesus Christ in his words and actions, unknown and despised by human wisdom.*

*Thus we see the polysemic character of the wisdom in Fr. of Montfort. He has evolved in his way of seeing Wisdom/wisdom and has always safeguarded its plurality. To reconstruct the history of this concept in him is a delicate task because there are few documents with precise dates.*

Having said that, if we examine Father of Montfort's letters, some points of reference: Eight contain the word "wisdom" in three different senses:

#### **1. The wisdom of Christ and of the Christian associated with the cross,**

(Cf. L.13 OCp. 40; L14 OC p. 41; L20 OC p. 55; L34).

#### **2. Divine Wisdom, Attribute of the Divinity, (L. 15; 16).**

#### **3. and the gift of wisdom, which is the word given to preachers and the "taste of virtue".**

*Wisdom is a "virtue" united and inseparable from the Cross of Christ: "It is in this kind Cross that true Wisdom is enclosed. Love of divine wisdom is love of the Cross (L 14), to marry wisdom is to marry the Cross (L 20). In his last letter, around Easter 1716, he speaks of the "Wisdom of the Cross on Calvary" (L 34), cf. also LAC 45; C 19,8; C 102,9.*

Thus, many of Montfort's Letters manifest his mystical search for "essential" Wisdom, an attribute of divinity" (Montfort asks for divine wisdom which is none other than the gift of the word).

Letter to the inhabitants of Montbernage (LM OC p. 811)

To the pilgrims of ND des Ardilliers RS Pompain OC p. 817 "to obtain good missionaries and the gift of Wisdom to know, taste and practice virtue.

This Wisdom is "virtue", knowing how to live from Jesus Christ (cf. C. 41:18; 58:8) and from the Christian.

This Wisdom of God is Himself (cf. C 16:29; 19:25).

This is essential, supernatural wisdom, the helper of the divinity (cf. C. 125.9; 126; SM 23).

Wisdom which is the Word (C 125.7)

Wisdom of which Mary is full (C. 90:12; C. 52)

But Wisdom is Jesus himself (C. 65,4; 103; 124; 129,2; RP 301; TD 240).

Divine Wisdom (C 103,1; PR 46), infinite (TD 80; 139), uncreated (C 103,4), incarnate (C 126,2)

## Conclusion on this polysemy of the meaning of the term "wisdom" in the work of Father of Montfort

1- *Wisdom, a fragmented notion of which*

2- *the figure of the Essential Wisdom emerges as the mysterious person of the Divinity who*

3- *will be identified with Jesus Christ almost exclusively in the LEW. which, from this point of view, contrasts with the rest of Montfort's works.*

"In L 15; 16; 17; C 125; 126; LEW, a whole common vocabulary: treasure, wealth, pleasure, to possess, to obtain, to acquire, to ask for, to desire, beauty, sweetness, etc. which can only be highlighted in LEW, if one takes as a criterion the identification of Wisdom with the uncreated and incarnate Word of God" (cf. note 101 doc O. Maire).

### About the LEW sources (O. Maire p. 28ff)

The biblical foundations cf. various works. Among them is the article by Fr Maurice Gilbert (SJ) "L'exégèse spirituelle de Montfort" in NRT of Louvain, 104 p.678-691, Nov-Dec 1982.

It shows, among other things, how Montfort adhered to the Book of Wisdom: "*The case of Montfort, spiritual exegete of the Book of Wisdom, is exceptional*".

### Other "spiritual author" sources.

The results of various works on LEW sources "have given rise to debates with rather conflicting conclusions". In fact, five authors influenced Montfort at LEW:

o **Jean-Baptiste Saint-Jure** (SJ) ("De la connaissance et de l'Amour du Fils de Dieu Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ", Paris, 1634) especially in LEW 1 ; 2 ; 8-12 ; 66 ; 67 ; 69 ; 154-156

o **Father Amable Bonnefons** (SJ), his "Petit Livre de Vie" from which Montfort drew the forty-nine oracles of Wisdom in LEW 133-149.

o **Father François Nepveu** (cf. note 1 concerning n° 223ff which presents the Consecration of himself to Jesus Christ Wisdom incarnate by the hands of Mary).

o **Henri Boudon** (cf. footnote 2 of Chapter XIV of the LEW, OC p. 180)

o **Isaac Le Maistre de Sacy** is the main source. Montfort owes him his translations of Scripture and also a commentary.

Note also **Henri de Suso** (OP)

A simple summary of most of the articles in the Dictionary of Montfortian Spirituality shows that there are numerous references to the theme of Wisdom/Wisdom.

Article	Some notes	Pages
<b>Covenant</b>	Covenant and wisdom	29
<b>LEW</b>		47-62
<b>Apostle, apostolic</b>	Apostolic wisdom	78-79
<b>Beatitudes</b>		153
<b>Beauty</b>	Ref LEW	159ss
<b>Bible God's Word</b>	Cf LEW	183ss
<b>Canticles</b>	Cf C	210
<b>Consecration</b>		282
<b>Cross</b>	Wisdom/madness	339ss
<b>Discernment</b>	False or true wisdom – Christ Wisdom	392, 394
<b>Disciple</b>	LEW 227	400
<b>Doctor of the Church</b>	Important themes for the future: Incarnate Wisdom...	414-415
<b>French School of</b>	Montfort apostle of the Eternal Wisdom	445
<b>Church</b>	Paschal mystery Wisdom /Cross	465
<b>Woman</b>	Wisdom, her spouse (L20 ; C.126,1.2.4.5 )	555ss, 558ss
<b>Daughters of Wisdom</b>		590ss, 592ss
<b>Brothers of Saint Gabriel</b>		644
<b>Incarnation</b>	At the light of LEW	691ss
<b>Jesus Christ</b>	JC Incarnate and crucified Wisdom	749ss
<b>Louis Marie of Montfort</b>	The quest of wisdom; JC eternal and incarnate Wisdom	806ss;814ss;825

<b>Mary</b>		850, 861,
<b>Marie Louise of Jesus</b>	The quest of wisdom cf. LEW 54	898ss
<b>Models</b>	JC Wisdom	953
<b>Mystic (mysticism)</b>	Cf wisdom, Pauline mystery/madness	979ss
<b>Christmas</b>	Incarnate Wisdom	1001
<b>Peace</b>	Response to Christ Wisdom	1005
<b>Poverty/poor</b>	A problem of wisdom	1032-1033
<b>Priest/priesthood</b>	I married Wisdom and Cross	1067
<b>Prayer</b>		1080, 1084
<b>Providence</b>		1091
<b>Rosary</b>		1148
<b>Wisdom</b>		1163-1184
<b>Monfortian Spirituality</b>		1231 ; 1241ss
<b>Treatise True Devotion</b>	The quest of Wisdom	1254
<b>Trinity</b>	The Son	1280ss
<b>Virtues</b>	Wisdom	1330

**Some excerpts from articles that may shed light on the meaning of the word  
"Wisdom / Sagesse", employed by Father of Montfort**

**Art. Wisdom of J.P. Prévost. Montfortian Spir. Dict.p. 1173ff**

The results of several studies:

"Montfort's view of wisdom is therefore **very fragmented** - he himself proposes a whole series of distinctions or quasi-definitions - and **very focused**, since he takes everything back to the mystery of Christ-Wisdom, which is essentially a mystery of alliance and salvation for humanity.

Examination of this diversity:

A- In LEW (beginning) Montfort proposes a definition based on etymology.

"Wisdom, in general, taken according to the meaning of its name, is a tasty science, *sapida scientia*, with the taste of God and his truth."

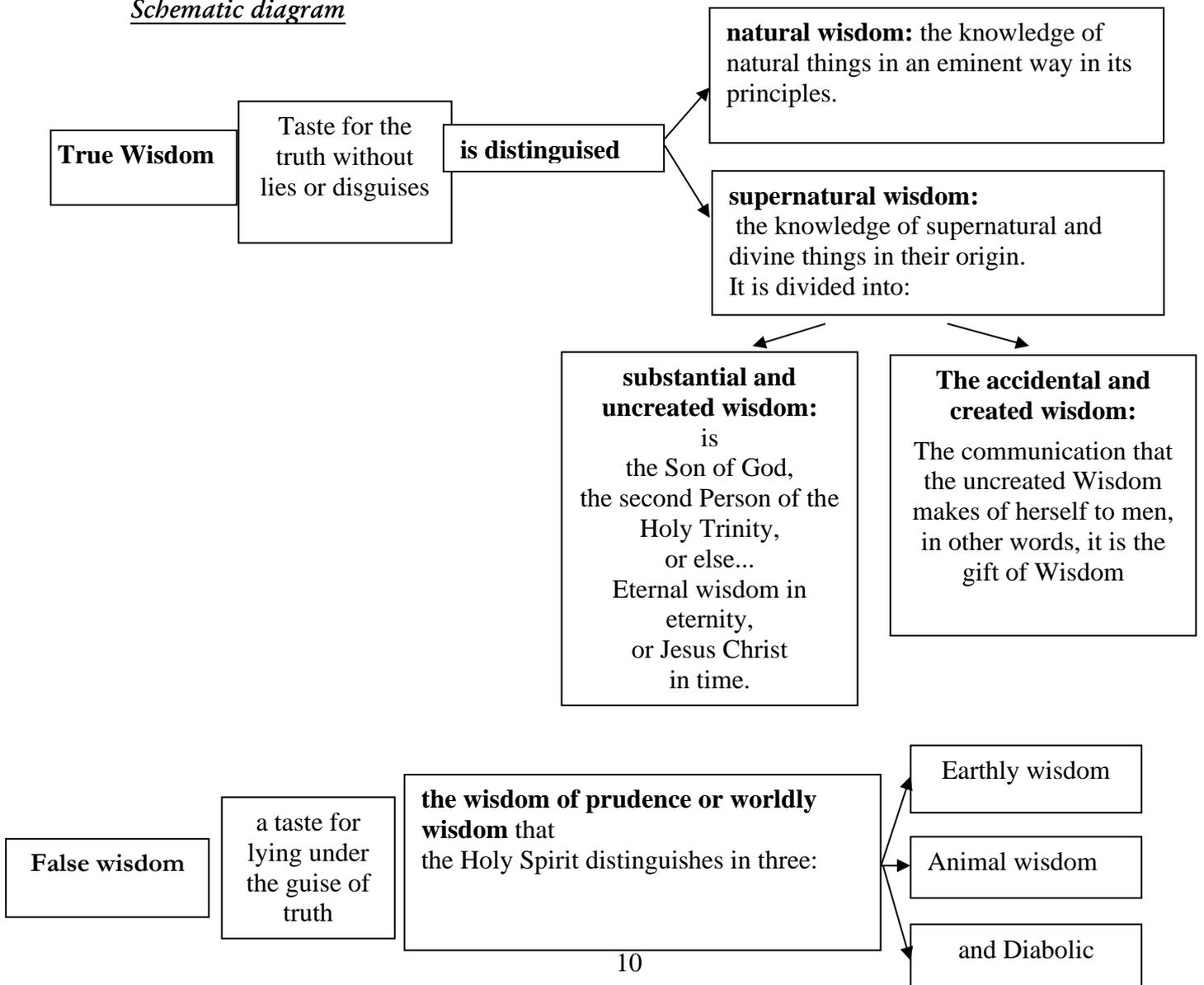
Wisdom linked to knowledge, a **savoury** knowledge. So it is not a theoretical, abstract and cold knowledge, but a **knowledge that one tastes and gives life.**

(Cf. the choice of terms in LEW and the Song of Songs: taste, bitterness, appreciable, treasure, sweetness, pleasure, delights, etc.)

B- Montfort also proposes distinctions of a philosophical nature which he draws, this time, from his scholastic formation.

"There are many kinds of wisdom, etc. (cf. LEW 13).

**Schematic diagram**



If the distinctions (natural/supernatural wisdom) would hardly be maintained according to recent studies on biblical wisdom and according to the theological and biblical renewal of Vatican II, the distinction between (accidental wisdom and substantial and uncreated wisdom) has not lost its value today, so its formulation would simply have to be reconsidered a little.

In addition to these "essentialist" definitions, Montfort also tended **to define wisdom in an inductive way**, that is, by a detailed description of the effects it produces on those who seek it:

- spirit of discernment (LEW 92),
- the knowledge that gives life (LEW 93-94)
- ability to communicate and to bear prophetic witness (LEW 95-97)
- Taste for all that is God's (LEW 98)
- the gifts of the Spirit (LEW 99)
- Audacity and apostolic strength in proof (LEW 100)

Montfort, therefore, resorts to his own experience and sense of observation in matters of spiritual life. In doing so, he joins the biblical tradition, to which Wisdom always gives a complete measure and an incalculable wealth: (cf. LEW 90 quoting Wisdom 7:11).

It is also from the Bible that Montfort borrows the essential part of his "definition" of Wisdom.

He quotes and comments on the major Old Testament texts on **Wisdom personified** (cf. Pr 8; Sir 24; Wis 6-8; (LEW 16-17); 20-" 0; 65-68).

As well as its application, by the authors of the NT to the **person of Jesus** (LEW 16-19) etc. (Cf. article: Wisdom, Montfortian Spir. Dict. p. 1175).

**The Montfortian notion is therefore extremely rich in connotations (etymological, philosophical, experiential, biblical and, of course, theological).**

**The three main axes of Montfort's theology of wisdom:**

- o **Christ Wisdom**
- o **Evangelical and missionary wisdom**
- o **The paradoxical wisdom of the cross**

## **1-Christ Wisdom**

The great originality of Father of Montfort is his Christological reading of the biblical texts on Wisdom. If the wisdom current reveals the diversity of meanings of the word "wisdom", the development of reflection leads, however, the wise men of the Bible to a displacement of questions. From the question "What is Wisdom?", the sages have moved on to the question "Who is Wisdom?" (cf. Job 28; Pr 8; Si 24; Wis 6-8).

**For Father of Montfort**, it is obvious that this is the question that comes first. For him the answer is the same as for Paul (Cor 1:15-20) and John (Jn 1:1-18): Wisdom is Jesus Christ, **the creative Word and the Word of God made flesh**.

In the LEW there are more than forty references to Christ as Wisdom, mostly under the term **"Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom"**. (Cf. LEW 6; 8; 17-18).

Cf. the structure and the development that Montfort proposes in the LEW; they invite us to read in a Christological sense. (Cf. LEW 7). "It is of this eternal Wisdom that we are going to speak", he writes explicitly (cf. LEW 13).

Biblical wisdom is not the whole of Scripture, just as the title Wisdom is not the whole of New Testament Christology. Both, however, provide a better understanding of the great unity of salvation history and of God's loving presence in his creation. Montfort thus helps us to better perceive the unity between "the one and the other Testament" between the first and second covenants.

## 2-Evangelical and missionary wisdom

The Wisdom that Montfort proposes is none other than the wisdom of the Gospel.

Cf. the whole chapter that he dedicates to the "principal oracles of Incarnate Wisdom that one must believe and practice in order to be saved" (LEW chapter XII). This "compendium" refers directly to the Gospel from which Montfort invites Christians to draw all their wisdom.

The Gospel, source of wisdom for him, is the meaning of the answer he gave to his friend Blain in 1714. (Blain Doc and Rech. 185-186). He will show him the wisdom he intends to follow, that of missionaries, of apostolic men. (Cf. Blain...)

The wisdom that makes him live is a wisdom that impels him to "undertake" and "leave Jerusalem" as the Apostles did, to do "something new [...] for God". It is not surprising, therefore, to see him recommend his missionaries to value above all else the gift of wisdom for the success of their preaching. (Cf. RM 60).

## 3-Paradoxical wisdom of the cross

**"Wisdom is the cross and the cross is wisdom"** (Cf. LEW 180). This famous maxim of Montfort says well to what extent these two realities are linked in his thought (and in his spiritual experience). Chapter XIV of LEW (n°167-180) dedicated to the "triumph of eternal Wisdom on the cross and through the cross" is strongly influenced by Pauline thought (1 Cor 1-2). Like St. Paul, Montfort bows to the paradoxical ways of divine Wisdom "so distant and so different from those of men" (LEW 167-168).

The wisdom theology of Montfort's cross does not have only Pauline roots. It is part of a broader framework of biblical theology where the mystery of God is perceived under the sign of what Fr François Varillon called "the humility of God" and Fr Jean Morinay "the weakness of God".

(Cf. LEW 127). Identification Cross-Wisdom cf. also Ct 19; 102.

The cross, the supreme sign/ gesture of the realization in Jesus and through Jesus of the salvation of the world through love. "Having loved his own ... he loved them to the end" (John 13:1), (cf. Montfort Ct 19:6; LEW 172).

Cf. Art. Art of the **"Cross"** taught by Montfortian Spir.Dict.

Therefore, the cross is seen as the supreme wisdom. If God chose the way of the cross to show us his love in Jesus, his Son, this cross becomes the supreme Wisdom that condemns the human wisdom of which James speaks (cf. LEW 80-82). God will not change. Eternal Wisdom is united to the Cross in an indissoluble bond, in an eternal alliance.

"Never the cross without Jesus nor Jesus without the cross" (LEW 172).

"Wisdom is the cross and the cross is wisdom" (LEW 180)

cf. Article **"Woman"** Montfortian Spir. Dict. p. 555-556

1704 Letter to his mother (L 20)

**"In my new family, of which I am a member, I have married Wisdom and the Cross..."** This metaphor is developed in (Ct 126, 1.2.4-5)

Who is this Wisdom that Montfort declares to be his wife? The biblical figure of Wisdom is central to Montfort's Christology. This feminine figure of Wisdom is the second person of the Holy Trinity to become incarnate.

What is new in LEW, and perhaps even unique in the history of Christian spirituality, is that Montfort always sees Christ from the angle of Wisdom.

Article **"Montfortian Spirituality"**, Montfortian Spir. Dict.1242ff

About a "systematic synthesis" of Montfortian spirituality, on the one hand, based on a look that embraces two poles:

- a) **historical pole** (Montfort in the totality of his spiritual experience)
- b) **current cultural pole** (the awareness of the Church today and contemporary culture)

on the other hand: of the **bipartite** division present in Montfort's works:

- a) **the downward movement** (historical-salvific) from God to man,
- b) **the upward** (theo-anthropological) **movement** of man towards God.

This double movement is reflected in the very structure of LEW.

- a) LEW Chapter I – XIV: Wisdom on its Journey to Humanity.
- b) LEW Chapter XIV-XVIII, indicates the means by which this can be achieved. (LEW 7;14).

"She (Wisdom) herself wants to come down to earth in order to (man) ascend to heaven" (LEW 168). In other words, cf. TD 1

**The formula that summarizes Montfortian spirituality could be the following:**

*"To respond to the love of the Father, expressed in salvation history by the mission of the Word and the Holy Spirit, by living for God alone, Father and Providence, through the total consecration of oneself to Christ Wisdom, in docility to the Spirit, in communion with Mary, in the ecclesial community that announces the Kingdom of God".*

**Another shorter formula:**

*"To God alone, through Christ Wisdom, in the Spirit, in communion with Mary for the sake of the Kingdom."*

**On the title "Wisdom" which Montfort likes to attribute to Christ.**

**According to LEW, this title highlights four aspects of the mystery of Christ:**

- **The fullness** (LEW 9)
- **the Word** (LEW 95)
- **Love** that descends towards man in a logic of descent (LEW 70-71)
- **the Cross** (LEW 180)

By interpreting these **four aspects** in terms adapted to our culture, we can recognize **four attributes of the Wisdom of Christ:**

- **The only mediator of salvation** (cf. *St. Paul 1 Tim 2:5; 1 Cor 8:6 "We proclaim Christ, the only mediator between God and men" cf. Col 1:16; Jn 1:3.10.16-17; Col 1:20; Jn 1:14).*
- **Teacher of life**
- **Christ in his kenosis of love**
- **Christ in his Paschal Mystery**

**Art. "Daughters of Wisdom"-Montfortiana Spir. Dict. p. 593ff by Fr.**

Precisions on the meaning of Jesus' Wisdom.

"For Montfort there is no doubt: Wisdom is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is Wisdom (cf. LEW 13-14, 83, 88, 89). There is a perfect identification: "The Son of God or Eternal Wisdom" (LEW 17); "Eternal Wisdom or the Son of God" (LEW 108); "Jesus Christ, Incarnate Wisdom" (LEW 154, 166, 14). In his Christian reading of the OT, Montfort sees the eternal Word at work in the creation of the world and in the history of salvation. In particular, he applies to the person of the Word what the OT attributes to Wisdom personified, and considers the book of Wisdom "as a letter from a lover to his lover to win his affection" (LEW 65).

From a strictly biblical point of view, it is difficult to sustain today the identification between Wisdom and Jesus. The texts of Paul (1 Cor 1-2; Col 1:15-20) and John (Jn 1:2-4), by describing Christ with wisdom traits and attributing to him functions proper to the Wisdom of the Old Testament (creative and saving mediation), never explicitly affirm that Jesus is Wisdom. The reason for this discretion of the NT is that "Jesus infinitely surpasses Wisdom as the wise men of the OT could know her" (cf. art. of M. Gilbert).

However, if the Wisdom of the OT is not Jesus Christ, it is no less true that Jesus Christ is "the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24) "who has become wisdom for us" (1 Cor 1:30). This Theou Sophia (Wisdom of God) designates "God's plan of salvation which is realized in the crucified Christ, revealed by the Spirit present in the heart of man". "(cf. note 51). It is even possible to discern a "functional identification" between the Wisdom of God and Christ: on the Cross the wisdom of God, that is, his saving will, appears and is fully realized. It should be added that Jesus is presented in the Gospels as a teacher of wisdom, who resorts to the wisdom language of the Beatitudes and parables, but who goes beyond the wisdom of Solomon, the wise man par excellence (cf. Mk 12:42; Lk 11:31).

Montfort, following the tradition that goes back to the Alexandrian school and to St. Augustine, elaborates the data of the Bible and arrives at a spirituality centered on Christ Wisdom. Under this title, he brings together various aspects of the person of the Incarnate Word, seen in his historical-salvific dynamism. It cannot be denied that Montfort, by attributing to Christ the title of Wisdom, highlights at least **four aspects of his mystery in harmony with biblical revelation:**

- o Christ as **"Fullness"** or "Infinite Treasure for Men" (LEW 9, 62)
- o Christ as **"Word"** or revelation of the secrets of God and the way of salvation (LEW 16, 56, 95, 133-153),

- o Christ as the "**Love**" of the Father and the Holy Spirit (LEW 118)
- o Christ towards man in a divine logic of lowering and poverty that contrasts with human perspectives, and in relation to the "**Cross**", which is "the greatest mystery of eternal Wisdom" (LEW 167). Cf. Kenosis.

Theologically, there is no doubt that Jesus is the Wisdom of the Father, within the Trinitarian mystery, and he reveals himself as Wisdom in the history of salvation, especially in the fundamental mystery of the Incarnation and in the central mystery of the death-resurrection.

This contemplation of the Wisdom that comes to man (cf. the movement described in LEW), leads to vital attitudes. (cf. 4 ways of acquiring it)

"Wisdom is for man and man is for wisdom" (LEW 64).

Incarnation Spirituality (*kenosis*)

Mary, prototype of the reception of Wisdom and meeting place between Wisdom and humanity. (LEW 105; 47)

The icon of Mary and the mystagogue of Wisdom. According to Montfort, the role of Mary is not limited to attracting Wisdom to the hearts of men. He assigns to the Mother of Jesus the role of educating Christians to persevere in the communion of love with Wisdom.