Stay, Catholics!

Protestants, Come to Us!

Matteo Bonno

The author intended for this book to be accessible to everyone. That's why the digital version is available for free on his blog at **matteobonno.com**

By purchasing the printed version, you'll help cover future expenses related to the book (translations, promotions, etc.), and facilitate its distribution to those who don't have the means to obtain it.

ISBN: 9782959330650

Legal deposit: April 2024

This book is also available:

- In French: ***Catholiques restez-le ! Protestants rejoignez-nous !***
- In Spanish: ***Católicos iquédense! Protestantes ivengan a nosotros!***

Acknowledgments:

I want to sincerely thank Father J.B for the time he has dedicated to me and for his valuable advice in producing the French version. To Father Daniel Guzmán for his great availability and for correcting and improving the Spanish translation. Thanks to Reimar Rodriguez for the English translation. Also, I am grateful to those who took care of the proofreading, layout, and cover of the book. I also give special thanks to all the people who, sometimes unknowingly, contributed to the creation of this book. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to all those who work for its dissemination around the world.

Preamble

Before diving into this book, it's crucial to clarify an important point to avoid any confusion. While in French the word "Chrétien" refers to all who believe in Christ and not to a particular denomination, in Spanish or English, while the word "Cristiano" or "Christian" may also refer to Christians in general (Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox), it is also used for those of Protestant denominations. Typically, they won't say, "I am Protestant" or "I am Reformed," but rather, "Soy Cristiano" or "I'm Christian." For this reason, and to avoid misunderstandings, in this book, we will use the term "Protestants" or "Reformed" only when specifically referring to them, and we will use the term "Christian" when referring to both Catholics and Protestants.

Preface

Matteo Bonno was born in the suburbs of Paris in 1995. A Catholic by conviction rather than tradition, as he likes to emphasize, he struggled in school and was hyperactive. He quickly left the formal education system and earned his bakery diploma at the age of 18. At 20, he left France to engage in humanitarian work. A few months after returning from this experience, he set off solo again between Mexico and the United States. It is these encounters around the world that inspired him to write this book. While the content may be at times tough and raw, he wants to make it clear that it would be a mistake to view this book as a personal vendetta. Similarly, it would be a mistake to think that the author attacks individuals. Rather, he critiques the doctrines of pastors and Protestantism. However, the author believes that our differences should not prevent us from coexisting, praying together, or even being friends. He has experienced this openness himself. In his youth, Matteo spent several years in an ecumenical prayer group where Protestants and Catholics gathered. More recently, he has also lived under the same roof with a Protestant.

Introduction

What prompted me to write this book

Firstly, it's the numerous debates I've had with Protestants (mainly Evangelicals). Secondly, it's the numerous videos and writings of pastors that I've watched and read, which ultimately convinced me that something needed to be done. Namely, a small and accessible book for everyone, addressing the most contentious issues (baptism, confession of sins, tithing, Mary, angels, saints, images, etc.). Indeed, the influence and growing success of Protestantism, which gains more members each year, have led, it must be acknowledged, to some positive things, but mostly to much confusion. Unfortunately, many honest and well-intentioned, but somewhat naive individuals are seduced by the pastor's energetic preaching, the communal atmosphere, and a modern and dynamic form of worship. My intention, therefore, is to explain to Protestants why they shouldn't remain in their church. The other reason that motivated me to write this book is to demonstrate to Catholics that they are in the right Church. But, unfortunately, few know how to respond to Protestant arguments, and some even end up joining them.

Yes, the Lord can manifest Himself through Protestants. Yes, some have received charisms. Because anyone who imitates God through their actions and words can receive the Holy Spirit, and the Lord looks at the person's heart before the name of the church to which they belong. So, we could stop here and say that the most important thing is to live in the Holy Spirit, regardless of which church we belong to. But to fall into this idea would be a mistake. It's true that we naturally tend to say that if God often manifests Himself through a person or within a church, there's no need for suspicion. It seems that everything said, believed, or done there is correct. Group dynamics act in such a way that we get carried away without asking too many questions, to trust more easily. But it's important not to systematically confuse joy with the presence of the Holy Spirit. The atmosphere of concerts or parties makes some people reach extreme euphoria, but the Holy Spirit is not found there. It's simply the music and the atmosphere with others that have created this. Likewise, when a team scores a goal or wins, fans sing, dance and hug, sometimes even without knowing each other. It's the massive turnout, the emotion, and what's at stake that have produced this reaction. But this joy is not the joy of the Holy Spirit, but merely human joy. The same happens in churches. We may be happy to see people we like, to sing together, but this joy is not necessarily the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. The fact that someone shouts into a microphone and raises their hands to heaven is also not a guarantee that God is manifesting through them. How many pastors claim to

have received visions and Revs from God to found their church, although they oppose the doctrines of other pastors who claim to have received the same calling? This is precisely what should catch our attention. Even among Protestant churches of the same denomination, they are not systematically in agreement on everything. The advantage we have as Catholics is unity. No matter in which city or country we find ourselves, the doctrine is the same everywhere, the sacraments are the same, and therefore, access to spiritual graces is maintained. We can live our faith all over the world.

Religion can be a very profitable business, and this is what motivates certain individuals, regardless of their religion, to become preachers. They are not concerned with teaching the truth, but rather with the opportunity to make a name for themselves. This is something we need to be aware of. For example, many evangelical churches record and publish videos where they claim to cast out demons in order to impress and attract people to their churches. Because the more members they have, the more tithes are paid, and the better their salary at the end of the month (see Chapter 10). However, it must be said that if Protestantism has brought to the forefront what seems to have been neglected over time by Catholicism (praise, charismatic renewal), it has also unfortunately, brought with it this facet of the *spectacle* of faith, filming and broadcasting at all costs everything they do and their supposed exploits. Although, any sane person knows that

the gifts of God are not meant to be filmed to arouse curiosity, nor to satisfy our own interests (profit, reputation, propaganda, etc.). He who does not respect this cannot receive the gifts of God.

What is the purpose of this book?

The purpose of this book is not only to show that Protestants are wrong, but also to help them realize all the graces that are lost by accepting or rejecting certain doctrines. I also realize that the Catholic Church, despite the negative image they have of it, is more faithful to God and to the Bible, doctrinally speaking, than the Protestant churches. I understand very well that it can be difficult to leave a church where the community life and worship are joyful. It can be difficult to leave a church that provides us with food every week, helps us pay our taxes, helps with our immigration process, or pays our medical expenses. Pastors know what to do to keep their members and attract others. However, having access to all these things does not necessarily mean that we are in the right church. It is good to think for ourselves, to educate ourselves independently of our usual circle, and above all, to seek the truth. He who truly loves God should not focus on the advantages that his Church offers him, but rather, should ask himself if he is in the truth, and if not, have the humility to change. The truth is priceless! We can cite the example of Scott and Kimberly Hahn, a couple of highly educated Protestant pastors who were very hostile to the Catholic

Church. However, in order to be sure that they were teaching the truth to their students, they studied Catholicism, and eventually converted to Catholicism. Their book *Rome sweet home*, is one of the most well-known books in the world on this subject and translated into many languages.

Who is this book for?

It may be that some branches of Protestantism feel more concerned than others, although this book is addressed to all Protestants and also to all Catholics. Before we begin, we see one of the reasons why some Protestants cannot imagine converting to Catholicism, namely: the bad reputation of the Catholic Church.

1) WHY DOES THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAVE A BAD REPUTATION?

Indulgences

It's true that not everything was, is, or will be perfect within the Church. Martin Luther, a Catholic priest, didn't intend to found another Church but to reform the one to which he belonged. He was correct on some points among his 95 theses, such as those concerning the sale of indulgences. It's not that indulgences are inherently bad. They have existed since the early centuries, and contrary to a widely held belief, they have never allowed the forgiveness of sins or direct entry into heaven. They pertain to what we call temporal punishment. Simply leaving confession doesn't mean that instantly, the consequences of my sins toward others or myself miraculously vanish. The pain I may have caused others doesn't just disappear. For instance, a murderer who has just confessed won't bring the victim back to life; the consequences of their sin and the family's pain persist. Likewise, someone causing a car accident due to irresponsible behavior remains in a state of sin. Confession won't repair the damage to the crashed cars or heal fractured limbs.

While the sin is forgiven, its consequences remain. It's normal to try to help the injured in the best way possible through actions, both physical (visiting, offering assistance, etc.) and spiritual (praying for their recovery, abstaining from something, saying a mass for them and attending it, etc.). Through these actions to try to make amends for our faults, we can also seek relief from our temporal punishment. That is, to receive the indulgence of the Lord, seeing the sincerity of our actions, our will, and our hope in making amends for our faults. Furthermore, although I've used examples where we know we've harmed someone, most of the time, we don't know. Therefore, making a habit of these actions can benefit both ourselves and others. Later on (*chapter 11*), we'll see that we can also seek the Lord's indulgence for the dead.

Now that we've clarified and demonstrated the legitimacy of indulgences, it's true that there were and have been abuses within the Church long before Luther, which were even condemned in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council. However, it wasn't a condemnation of the sale of indulgences, as it didn't exist yet. It was Luther who rightly spoke out against this practice in the 16th century in a document known as the 95 Theses. Teaching that one could reduce their purgatory time with money was an error because the grace of God can't be bought. Moreover, many ecclesiastics didn't agree with this, and Pope Leo X, in his letter *Exsurge Domine*, didn't reject all of Luther's theses, showing that Luther was right to point out this problem.

However, he also drew heavily from the ideas of Wycliffe and Huss, precursors of Protestantism, condemned by the Church as heretical. Some beliefs of Wycliffe, Huss, or Luther were not mistaken and were even shared by members of the Church, but that doesn't mean they were right in everything. When they claim to speak in the name of God or the Bible while contradicting God, the Bible, or Tradition and refuse to repent, it's normal for the Church to proclaim their excommunication. However, despite the Church's efforts to explain its decisions through texts and often seeking to preserve unity by engaging with those who opposed it, many still find it impossible today to imagine being Catholics due to the numerous problems and controversies surrounding it. So, how do we respond to Protestant accusations against the Church? With the utmost honesty possible; that is, knowing how to defend the Church when necessary but also recognizing that not everything has been perfect.

The Church Facing Persecutions and Political Alliances

The Church is often criticized for not focusing solely on its spiritual duty, but it didn't choose this path. The Church and Christianity were actively persecuted for centuries, leading to the recognition of martyrs. Then, when it became the state religion, this didn't mean that the Church had total freedom and could do as it pleased, quite the opposite. It's worth noting that the Church faced all adversaries who sought to suppress it by force. Therefore,

it also had to resort to certain alliances to survive and protect itself, such as moving from Rome to Avignon. Others meddled in the internal and spiritual life of the Church, putting Popes on the throne, as was the case with the Theophylact family, an influential Roman family that dominated the papacy and installed more than ten Popes on the throne, the last of whom was John XII in 955, at just 18 years old, leaving a disastrous legacy. This turbulent period of about sixty years is now known as the *Pornocracy Papal*. Another example of this dominance over the Church for centuries is that the first eight ecumenical councils were convened by the Roman Emperors, not by the clergy. It's important to remember that if the Church participated in power struggles at some point in its history, it was primarily a victim of them.

As for the Church's internal problems and controversies, like any institution, there are rules, but not everyone follows them, and it's challenging to ensure that all clergy worldwide lead exemplary lives, especially in times of war and persecution when politics are never far away. But once again, the fact that certain religious individuals took liberties doesn't mean that this was approved by the Church and the Pope; making this distinction is crucial. The Church has admonished, through councils, religious individuals who succumbed to worldly fashions and licentiousness, but with greater or lesser success, despite the threat of sanctions. Over time, many bishops and cardinals were more concerned with the

external privileges offered by their position than with spiritual matters. However, the idea that the Church was responsible for all evils and decided everything is a dangerous and false notion, often asserted by critics of Catholicism. Legends or an amplification of the Church's responsibilities (Crusades, Inquisition, papal dictatorship, consideration of women and their place in the Church, the relationship with Jews, etc.) remain persistent today, as explained very well in the book *L'Église en procès*[1]. Unfortunately, there are also serious problems that Protestants rightly don't fail to remind us of and use to justify that the Catholic Church is not the true Church. This is the scourge of pedophilia.

Sexual Scandals

Before delving into this regrettable reality, it's essential to start by saying that when the media talks about the Catholic Church, it's almost always for negative reasons. Catholicism receives a lot of criticism, more than any other religion, and the reason is straightforward: it's universal and structured. If a book or a movie is made against it, it affects all Catholics. Hence, it has a global impact, just as when a new dogma is proclaimed or a change is made, all Catholics are affected by that modification. Conversely, if someone attacks a Protestant church, it won't create as

[1] L'Eglise en procès, sous la direction de Jean Sevilla (édition, Tallandier/Le Figaro)

much noise because there are tens of thousands of different churches, and they don't even agree among themselves. The controversy will then be local, perhaps regional, and at worst, national. If tomorrow a bishop, a cardinal, or the Pope falls off their chair because they've had too much to drink and end up in the hospital to heal their wounds, the whole world will know about it. If the same happens to a pastor, few will know. If a priest declares support for homosexuality, women priests, abortion, or euthanasia, the whole world will hear about it. If a pastor makes similar statements about the same issues, it won't receive the same media coverage. I'm not saying this to try to minimize or excuse the failures of these religious figures, but to make it clear that unfortunately, there are also sexual abuses elsewhere, including among Protestants, but the media coverage isn't the same.

That's why those who want to destroy the reputation and image of Christianity and its perceived outdated doctrines attack what is most influential, namely Catholicism, not Protestantism. By doing so, they are sure that their books, statements, and accusations will be picked up by the media, increasing the likelihood of being known and invited on television. Lastly, there are also jealous people or anti-Christian activists who make false statements with the aim of bringing about change, attempting to remove a religious superior from their position. It's true that we've deviated a bit from the topic of pedophilia, but we had to. Not to criticize the media and

say they're incompetent and everything they say is false. But simply to realize that many take the liberty to condemn or blame before the Judge, preferring to speak negatively about institutions that go against current ideologies. Now that we've exposed and clarified the media's lack of neutrality and why the Church is so attacked, of course, sometimes the criticisms are perfectly justified and necessary for things to change. Returning to the main topic, namely pedophilia in the Church, yes, we must acknowledge that it is a reality. Although it remains one of the only religious institutions, if not the only one, to publicly acknowledge the facts, call for independent investigations, and even to excommunicate the guilty and apologize to the victims, this in no way excuses the deeds. And if we are Catholics, it's logical that many questions come to mind: How can we continue to want to be part of a church that admits to these facts? How can we want to continue supporting and defending it when all our coworkers will bother us about it? How can we continue to trust the priests when the one who gives me communion every Sunday or hears my confession might be one of those who committed such serious crimes? What is the Church waiting for to authorize priests to marry again, we might think, albeit mistakenly. When serious things happen, it's not easy to distinguish matters. Emotion, courage, and indignation sometimes lead us to have this tendency to mix everything up, to lump everyone together, and to be totally and definitively against God and, in this case, the Catholic Church.

But we must not confuse the Church itself as an institution, which remains holy and unblemished, as it was loved and founded by Jesus himself **(Eph 5:25-27)**, which has existed for centuries and will never die, as the gates of hell cannot prevail against it **(Mt 16:18)**. With those who work within and for this institution, who are passing through on earth and who, according to their actions, improve or tarnish the image of the Church.

In other words, the legitimacy of the Church cannot be questioned, no matter what happens. But the legitimacy of those who work within it can indeed be questioned, as man remains an imperfect, weak, sinful being, free to act. Unfortunately, they are sometimes more attracted by money, power, corruption, and sex.

Ultimately, it's not so much the spiritual side, the dogmas, and Catholic doctrines that should be reproached, but the fact that some people took liberties they shouldn't have, and that has greatly undermined the legitimacy and reputation of the Catholic Church.

However, this does not automatically justify founding another church or the fact that Protestant doctrines are correct. Even Jesus, several times during his life denounced the bad behavior of his followers, and never abolished his Church to found another. Even when Judas betrayed him or when he told Peter: "Get behind me, Satan!" **(Mt 16:23)**, he didn't suppress it, even when he was crucified. Not even

when, after his death, he appeared to Mary Magdalene and his disciples **(Jn 20)**.

This confirms to us that, despite all possible controversies, we are in the Church that Jesus wanted for humanity. It remains the path to salvation. The only one that can give us everything we need daily, primarily through the sacraments, and we are not called to leave when problems arise, but to participate in their improvement, to offer our services, and to pray for all religious figures. Once this clarification about the reputation of the Church has been made, a conclusion is in order. Indeed, while it may seem impossible to imagine being Catholic or remaining so in the face of accusations against the Church, it also seems impossible not to remain Catholic or become one when we study deeply and have experienced the spiritual graces of Catholicism, which no other Church can offer us. So, let's do this work together and let's start by demonstrating in more detail what allows us to justify the authority of the Church.

2) AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH VS AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE (SOLA SCRIPTURA - SCRIPTURE ALONE)

Contrary to Catholics, Protestants reject the authority of the Church because they believe this authority is not based on Scripture. In fact, they do not consider it a divine institution, nor do they believe that Christ intends to save humanity through it. They view the Church only as a community of believers. Scripture Alone is probably the most important doctrine for Protestants. It is the belief that the Bible is the sole authority and self-sufficient, and that all our beliefs must come from Scripture. They affirm that all their beliefs are based on Scripture and criticize ours that are not biblical. However, let's say it now before going further: the doctrine of Scripture Alone is not biblical. For all those who read this book and are Protestants, go ask your pastor on what verses he relies to justify Scripture Alone. He will surely feel uncomfortable because no verse asserts that everything is in Scripture and that it is the sole authority. Worse yet, the Bible itself contradicts this idea. Let’s begin by saying that it was Jesus himself who gave this power to the early Church represented by Peter, to be the guardian of faith and to make decisions.

Mt 16:18-19: Jesus founds His Church on Peter: *"And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

Jn 21:15-17: Jesus asks Peter to be the shepherd of His flock: "Tend my sheep," "Feed my lambs." The Greek word "bosko" can be translated as "watch over," "feed," or "teach."

Another important fact to remember is that the Church has existed since Pentecost. That is, before the writing of the New Testament. Indeed, at the death of Jesus, there were no texts from Paul or the apostles, but that did not prevent the early Church from making decisions, teaching its doctrine, rejecting sects, and even holding its first council with Peter at the head of the Church.

Acts 15:1-14: There is a debate among the people about circumcision. The apostles and elders gather in Jerusalem to discuss (here we clearly see the role of the Church), and it is Peter (Head of the Church) who will speak and make the decision, not a book. Here we have the first council of the Church:

"The apostles and the presbyters met together to see about this matter. After much debate had taken place, Peter got up and said to them, "My brothers, you are well

aware that from early days God made his choice among you that through my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe..."

An argument often used by Protestants is to say that the Lord's call only concerned Peter. This would mean that Jesus only wanted a temporary Church, without lasting succession, and therefore without stability. This contradicts Christ, the Bible, and the early writings of the Church fathers.

Mt 18:15-18: *"If your brother sins [against you], go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 'If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

Col 1:18: God is the head of the body, which is the Church: *"He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent."*

Eph 3:21: To him be the glory in the Church: *"To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."*

1 Tim 3:15: The Church is the house of God, which is the pillar and foundation of truth: *"But if I should be delayed, you should know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth."*

Apart from the Bible, we also have texts from the time of the apostles that point in the same direction, such as Ignatius of Antioch (1st century), who knew St John and St Peter and was the third bishop of Antioch after Peter and Evodius. He constantly evokes this duty of unity and obedience that we must have towards the Church and the bishops. By the way, he was the first to use the word Catholic to define Christians around the year 110. Although this word will be little used (we rather speak of the early Church, Latin and Greek Christians, Westerners and Easterners), this dismantles another assertion of many pastors, who say that the word and the denomination Catholic were born with Constantine in the 4th century:

"In everything you do, do nothing without the bishop. Don't even consider the Eucharist valid if it's not celebrated by a bishop. Whenever the bishop appears, let the people be there too, just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church." (Lettre aux Smyriotes, Editions nfa p. 77).

Finally, Irenaeus of Lyons (2nd century) also insists on apostolic succession and the tradition coming from the apostles. It is also thanks to him that we have the list of those who succeeded St Peter on the throne of the Church:

"The very great, very ancient, and universally known Church founded and established at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul. They showed that the tradition they handed on and the faith they proclaimed to men had come down to us by succession from the apostles. (...) Therefore, after founding and building up the Church, the blessed apostles entrusted the sacred office of the episcopate to Linus. It is to Linus that Paul refers in his letter to Tim ***(2 Tim 4, 21)****. He was succeeded by Anacletus. After him, third from the apostles, the office of bishop fell to Clement."* (Contre les hérésies édition du Cerf, p 279-280).

Today, the same thing happens within the Catholic Church. There is a hierarchy, and when there are debates and controversies, the final decision is always made by the Institution, which relies on the Bible. Yes, the Church cannot go against God who is above it; as we have already seen, it is the Church that is the body of Christ and not the Bible **(Col 1:18)**.

Here are some examples:

- God never said that priesthood was forbidden for a woman, but, on the other hand, He never said they could be priests. So, if the Church decides to deny priesthood to women, it does not oppose God. There is no biblical text that speaks of a woman being a priest. On the contrary, only men are called by Jesus for this function. We will come back to this later.

- There are passages in the Bible that show that priests were married, just as others were invited to celibacy **(**cf. **Mt 19:12; 1 Cor 7:7-8 and 32-35)**. The Church considered it appropriate at one point to request celibacy. She could make that decision because Jesus did not impose celibacy or marriage on consecrated persons.

- Conversely, if tomorrow the Church and the Pope are in favor of homosexual marriage, they would be opposing God and biblical texts, both in the Old and New Testaments. For this reason, there has been no change regarding this **(**cf. **Gen 2:24; Lev 18:22; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 7:1-4)**. It is important to specify that the function of the Church and the Pope is not to follow the trends of the world but to teach and defend the Faith and Tradition. And it does not have to change its opinion to please certain people or associations who, most of the time, are not even believers. It is not the Church's role to adapt to everyone's beliefs, but people's, and the same happens in all religious movements. No one is obliged to become Catholic, but if they wish to, they must understand that it implies a certain way of life and beliefs in accordance with God and the Church. However, the Church does not exclude anyone. It is not against homosexual people but against the practice of homosexuality. This is not the same thing. A homosexual can have a good heart, be sincerely faithful, and has as much right as others to enter a

church, attend Mass, make an appointment with a priest... but at the same time, they must understand that homosexual acts are against God and His vision of creation and sexuality. In fact, the Church considers it incompatible with morality and invites those in these situations to work on it and change.

Not everything is in the Bible

Through these examples, we see that while the Bible has significant value in deciding Catholic doctrines, let us not forget that, from the early centuries of Christianity, they also relied on apostolic Tradition. Moreover, many issues are not in the Bible: world wars, terrorism, the washing machine, the elevator, the airplane, cinema, contraception, abortion, pornography, in vitro fertilization, euthanasia, gender ideology, evolution theory, social networks, philosophical currents, drugs, and modern medicines, etc. And how do we know what to think about all this if the Bible does not mention it? That is why Jesus wanted an institution (the Church), which is the support and pillar of truth and has authority on earth. It is thanks to men (Church Fathers), the Church, and its councils, moved by the Holy Spirit, and not thanks only to the Bible, that things have been condemned or accepted. Moreover, how can we have a doctrine that says that only the Bible is the word of God and that everything is in the Bible when it says the opposite? **Jn 20, 30**: Jesus did things that were not

written: *"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of [his] disciples that are not written in this book."*

Jn 21, 25: Here, we see again that not everything Jesus did was written down: *"There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written."*

2 Jn 1, 12: *"Although I have much to write to you, I do not intend to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and to speak face to face so that our joy may be complete."*

Mt 28, 20: The Lord asks His disciples to teach people and to keep everything He has commanded them: *"Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."*

2 Thess 2, 15: *"Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours."*

The apostles call the people to follow both the written teachings (that we know) and the oral ones (that we do not know). Thus, if there are some beliefs that Catholics have, although not explicitly in the Bible, it does not mean that these beliefs are senseless, and some have even been taken up by Protestants. We will see this in detail in the following chapters. For example, we are all glad to have the Bible. However, the Scriptures do not speak of a collection of books that will one day be compiled and called the Bible.

It was men and the Catholic Church, supported by the Holy Spirit, who gave the Bible to the world. This last example shows us that while everything was fulfilled in terms of prophecy about the person of Jesus, not everything was fulfilled in terms of faith. The proof is that Jesus says He will send us the Holy Spirit **(Jn 14:26)**. His will is then to continue acting in us. If everything had been fulfilled and known in terms of Rev and spirituality, what would have been the purpose of the Holy Spirit? On the contrary, He sends His disciples on a mission, continues to reveal Himself through men through healings and prophecies **(Eph 3:2-5)**. That is why the Bible cannot contain everything. For example, the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary has not been recognized as a dogma thanks to the Bible. Although it was a belief of the early centuries of Christianity, it was not a dogma because if the biblical texts could give us the impression of going in this direction, it is not clearly mentioned, and the Church then decided not to impose this belief on Catholics. But what led it to believe in the Immaculate Conception made sense. Indeed, since Jesus was God before He was Man, being perfectly pure, He could only be born of a pure woman. The Catholic Church relies on Scripture and theological reflection inspired by the Holy Spirit to affirm that Mary was preserved from original sin, and, in fact, did not transmit it to Jesus. It is true that Protestants would be right to say that it is also written that we are all born with original sin **(**cf. **Ps 51:5-7; Rom 5:12 and 18-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22)**, which includes Mary. So what should we believe? Actually, the Bible also has its limits.

Indeed, if the texts speak in general terms and for everyone, there can be exceptions.

For example, Lazarus died twice **(Jn 11)**, while it is written that man dies only once **(Heb 9:27)**. The Bible also tells us that Enoch and Elijah were taken up to heaven with their bodies. This means they are not really dead! **(**cf. **2 Kgs 2:11; Heb 11:5)**. The case of Moses is also interesting. It is not explicitly said that he was taken to heaven, but that once dead, no one found his body, and then, during the transfiguration, he appears alongside Elijah next to Jesus. We clearly see that some people have experienced things different from the destiny normally reserved for everyone. We can say they are exceptions. And the Church also believes that Mary is one of those exceptions. She is the only woman in the world to conceive by the Holy Spirit. The only woman to conceive and give birth to the savior of humanity, to a child who had a dual nature (human and divine). God can perform miracles (supernatural) within a natural context. That is why we believe she received a special grace before her birth, a doctrine will later become, as we have said above, a dogma, that of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Although the Church does not proclaim its dogmas according to private Revs, it seems essential for this subject to read the lives of Catalina Labouré[2] and Bernadette Soubirous[3].

---

[2] Petite vie de Bernadette. René Laurentin (Editions Artège)

[3] Petite vie de Catherine Labouré. René Laurentin (Éditions Artège)

3) PROTESTANT INCONSISTENCIES REGARDING SCRIPTURE ALONE

Let's start by saying that the first inconsistency comes from Martin Luther himself, as he violated his own doctrine by adding the word "alone" in his German translation of **Rom 3:28**. Secondly, let's remember that Protestants refuse to believe in a doctrine if it is not found in the Bible and often ask us Catholics, "where is it written in the Bible about this or that thing we believe in?" But where is the word "Bible" in the Bible? We can tell them nowhere. However, they use this word as much as we Catholics do, just like the words New Testament, Council, chapter, verse, Protestant, evangelical, Pentecostal, charismatic renewal, even though they are not biblical. They also refuse to believe in Purgatory on the pretext that this word does not exist in the Bible, but at the same time, they believe like us in the Trinity and the Incarnation, while these two words also do not appear in the Bible. It's hard to be more contradictory. Let's also add that they believe, like us, that the New Testament has 27 books, although it is not biblical. Nowhere is it written that Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John wrote the Gospels, but Protestants believe and say like us: Gospel according to John, Mark, Matthew, and Luke. Like us, most Protestant churches celebrate their worship on

Sunday and not on Saturday, although this is not biblical. Saturday (Sabbath) is the day consecrated to God and then to worship. If indeed the apostles broke bread on the first day of the week, that is, Sunday **(Acts 20:7)**, there is nothing in the Bible that says Sunday has to be the official day consecrated to God and worship instead of Saturday.

If we have just demonstrated that Protestants ultimately have many beliefs that are not biblical, on the contrary, some Protestant churches have other beliefs that they say come from Scripture, while as we will see in the following chapters, they are not. Indeed:

- Nowhere is it written that someone has the right to establish another church.
- It is not written that a woman can lead a church.
- It is not written that only adult baptism is valid.
- It is not written that there is a minimum age for baptism.
- It is not written that only immersion baptism is valid.
- It is not written that Mary had sexual relations.

On the contrary, we will see that they reject what is biblical: confession to a human being (priest), anointing of the sick, intercession of angels and saints, purgatory, prayer for the dead, etc. We also need to talk about Mary, so denigrated and considered like any other woman by

many, who reproach us for our devotion to her. But if the Our Father that we pray daily comes from the Bible, so does a part of the *Hail Mary* **(Luke 1:28 and 42)**. It will also be difficult for them to acknowledge that it was thanks to Mary's "yes" that all the prophecies have been fulfilled. It is also thanks to Mary's "yes" that liberation and Salvation came to the world. That is why we are so grateful to her and love her so much. She, whom all generations will call blessed **(Luke 1:48)**.

4) SCRIPTURE INTERPRETATION

It is true that some differences in interpretation are understandable; both can be plausible due to few detailed or scarce biblical texts. But, in many cases, our divergences are mainly due to the fact that pastors have a tendency to take only certain verses to justify their beliefs and to leave out the others. While we try to take as many biblical verses as possible, which allows us to have more elements and, therefore, to have a doctrine that holds up.

In **Jn 3:22-23**, it says that Jesus baptizes. However, a chapter later, we have the rest of the story, in **(Jn 4:1-3)**. People thought Jesus was baptizing, but then we learn that only his disciples were doing it. If we only know **Jn 3:22-23**, we will believe and proclaim that Jesus was baptizing. Conversely, if we only know **Jn 4:1-3**, we will believe and teach that Jesus never baptized. This has little importance here, but we see with this example how false doctrines arise. And some Protestant churches have become specialists in criticizing all Catholic positions by interpreting Scripture in a more than questionable way, and it is important to stop the bleeding by clarifying things.

Do not call anyone father

This is another reproach of many Protestants to Catholics. We sin against God and are not in the right church because we call priests *father*. They justify this doctrine by referring to some biblical verses.

Mt 23:8: Do not call anyone *Master*.

Mt 23:9: Do not call anyone *Father***.**

Mt 23:10: Do not call anyone a *Guide/Leader*.

However, this refers to not taking other people for God and instead of the only true God; these are not texts that should be taken literally. In fact, Jesus himself uses this word in front of the people, and they, in responding, also use the word "*father*," and Jesus does not prohibit it. Because here, the word father, refers to an exemplary person, to a guide or a model to be inspired by, and not to a god **(Jn 8:38-44)**. Jesus does not reproach them for using the word father but for having the devil as their father.

Jn 8, 53-56: *"Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? Or the prophets, who died? Who do you make yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is worth nothing; but it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' You do not know him, but I know him. And if I should say that I do not know him, I would be like you a liar. But I do know him and I keep his*

word. Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad."

Again, Jesus uses the word father and is not offended that the people in front of him use this same word **(**cf. **Jn 4:12-13)**. Furthermore, whether we are Protestant or Catholic, we all say "a guide" when someone shows us around a place. We all say "a teacher" at school or in music, "she's my mother," or "he's my father," and not because of this do we take these people for God or commit a sin by using these words.

The brothers and sisters of Jesus

Based on the Bible, there are Protestants who claim that Jesus had brothers and sisters **(**cf. **Luke 2:7; Mark 6:3; Mt 13:55-56)**, and therefore, Mary would not have remained a virgin.

Luke 2:7: *"And she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."*

However, the firstborn son born, that is, the "firstborn," does not necessarily mean there will be others. An only child in a family is also the firstborn. If we only know the texts previously cited by Matthew and Mark, we will obviously believe that Jesus was not an only child.

Mark 6:3: *"Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And*

are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him."

But if we also know **Mt 27:55-56**, that gives us another interpretation: *"There were many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee."*

We learn that James and Joseph had another Mary as their mother, the wife of Cleopas **(Jn 19:25)**. Immediately, we understand from **Mt 27:55-56** and **Mark 15:40** that we must reconsider the word brother, "*ah*" in Hebrew, and not take it literally as a blood brother. Of course, Jesus spoke Aramaic, and the word "ah" could express different degrees of kinship (brother, sister, cousin, same people, etc.). For example, in **Ex 2:11**, the word "ah" is used to designate the same people:

"On one occasion, after Moses had grown up, when he had gone out to his kinsmen and witnessed their forced labor, he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his own kinsmen."

In **Gen 14:11-16**, Lot is called the "ah" of Abram, although he is actually his nephew: *"The victors seized all the possessions and food supplies of Sodom and Gomorrah and then went their way. They took with them Abram's nephew Lot, who had been living in Sodom, as well as his*

possessions, and departed. A survivor came and brought the news to Abram the Hebrew, who was camping at the oak of Mamre the Amorite, a kinsman of Eshcol and Aner; these were allies of Abram. When Abram heard that his kinsman had been captured, he mustered three hundred and eighteen of his retainers, born in his house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He and his servants deployed against them at night, defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. He recovered all the possessions. He also recovered his kinsman Lot and his possessions, along with the women and the other people."

Abram himself uses the word “ah” to describe Lot: *"So Abram said to Lot: “Let there be no strife between you and me, or between your herders and my herders, for we are kindred.”* **(Gen 13:8)**

It is true that in Greek, a different word is used. There is "*adelphos*" for blood brother and "*anepsios*" for cousin, and it is "*adelphos*" that is used to define James, called the brother of the Lord. From there, some Protestants conclude that if he were a cousin and not a brother, the word "*anepsios*" would have been used. But we (Catholics) believe that the New Testament authors followed the Hebrew word’s influence when writing in Greek. Indeed, the word "*anepsios*" appears only once in the Bible **(Col 4:10)**, unlike "*adelphos*," which is used more than 300 times and not always to designate brothers of the same father and mother.

In **Jn 20:17-18**, Jesus himself calls his disciples "*brothers*."

In **2 Cor 1:8**, Paul speaks to the people using the word "*brothers*." **(**cf. **Phil 3:1; 1 Thess 2:17; Rom 12:1)**

Finally, another element that weakens the Protestant assertion is the fact that if Jesus had brothers and sisters, they would have been half-siblings, words that also exist in Greek: "*homopatôr*" and "*homomêtor*," but which do not appear in the New Testament. This confirms that although there are different Greek words to designate a brother, half-brother, or cousin, it is the word "*adelphos*" that was still mainly used to refer to people from the same family or the same town. We cannot then assert with certainty that Jesus had blood brothers.

The Virginity of Mary

To justify that Mary did not remain a virgin, some Protestants take **Mt 1:25**: "*He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus."*

This does not prove that they had sexual relations. It refers to Joseph not being Jesus's biological father, and that he had nothing to do with Mary's pregnancy. He did not understand what had happened and was concerned about not harming her. However, to reach this conclusion, we cannot take only verse 25. We must take the whole explanation from the beginning, namely, from verse 18.

These Protestants, of course, have other arguments, some of which are interesting, such as saying that Mary and Joseph could not have lived together without having sexual relations, as this goes against the union of a man and a woman who are called to be fruitful. But this is not proof. It is true that a normal couple is called to have sexual relations and to be fertile, but are Mary and Joseph a normal and ordinary couple? Is there any other couple in the world where the woman became pregnant by the Holy Spirit's action and who carried and gave birth to the savior of humanity? There is none. It is a unique life that does not resemble any other and, therefore, cannot be compared to the lives of other couples. Mary, having been chosen by God to give birth to Christ, becomes consecrated to God. She will stay with Joseph but in abstinence. This is what the Catholic Church defends since, once again, there is no solid evidence to the contrary in the Bible or Tradition. Indeed, Mary's non-virginity after the birth of Jesus is a very poorly widespread belief among Christian authors of the early centuries. Furthermore, Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants were overwhelmingly in agreement regarding Mary's perpetual virginity. It was only in the 19th century that Protestants began to doubt it.

Wine

Other Protestant churches say, based on the Bible, that drinking is a sin that leads straight to Hell. Indeed, some texts mention that being a drunkard is a very serious sin

that deprives us of Heaven. Other texts say that one should not be a drinker. For example, in the prophecy about the coming of John the Baptist, the angel says he will not drink wine.

Luke 1:13-15: *"...for he will be great in the sight of [the] Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink..."*

In **1 Tim 3:2-3**, it also says that the overseer must not be addicted to wine. Therefore, it seems appropriate, even obvious, to believe that alcohol is a sin and that, in fact, it is forbidden to drink it. But two chapters later, in **1 Tim 5:23**, there is talk of the need to drink wine:

"Stop drinking only water, but have a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses." Other passages mention a banquet with wine **(**cf. **Isa 25:6; Isa 55:1)**

So, what do we do? What should we believe? How do we know what God wants? Not being a "*drinker*" does not mean it is completely forbidden to drink, but rather that one must know how to control consumption to remain in control of oneself, one's gestures, and words. Let us not forget that Jesus, in his first miracle, turned water into wine **(Jn 2:1-11)**. If he had really been against alcohol, he would not have performed this miracle, nor would he have drunk wine with bread at the Last Supper.

The Eucharist

Once again, the interpretation of the texts will help each one understand what he wants. If some Protestants have a literal view of certain texts that we have mentioned in previous chapters, it is not the case here. The "*this is my body*" **(Mt 26:26)**, they understand it as this represents my body or this is the symbol of my body. Also, since it tastes like bread and wine and looks like bread and wine, this leads us to reject this change of substance and the real presence of Christ. Thus, it turns out that we Catholics believe in Transubstantiation (which Luther also believed before changing his mind), and once again, there is not unity among Protestants. Certain churches believe in a spiritual presence of Christ through the Eucharist (Consubstantiation), while others believe it is purely symbolic and reject the idea of even a simple spiritual presence (also called memorialism). However, when Jesus speaks in parables, the authors make us understand it, and it is often specified with the phrase "*it is like*" or the word *parable* is used directly **(**cf. **Mt 13:1-53; Mt 22:1-14; Mt 24:32-33; Mt 25:1-13; Luke 6:9; Luke 15:1-32, etc.)**

But here, nothing indicates that it is a parable or an image. Jesus did not say: "*this represents my body*" but "*This is my body."* In **Jn 6:51-52**, he says it again: "*I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The Jews quarreled*

among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?"

If it were only an image or a symbol that Jesus wanted to express, there would not have been so much agitation, the Jews would not have disputed among themselves. For them, it is clear that Jesus speaks of his flesh in this bread that we will eat, and he confirms it again in the following verses **(53-56)**. It is then bread in appearance and taste, but it truly becomes his body (his flesh) at the moment of consecration. It is surely this simple but completely irrational discourse of Jesus that disturbed the Jews. One of the most significant sources supporting the belief in God's real presence in the Eucharist comes from the apostles themselves and those who succeeded them. Indeed, the Church Fathers, some of whom knew the apostles, already believed in God's real presence in the Eucharist. Explaining it back then wasn't necessarily an absolute necessity, but regardless, the belief was there. One of the most interesting and ancient examples is that of Ignatius of Antioch:

"Look at these men whose strange doctrine opposes the grace of Jesus Christ poured out upon us; how far their conduct is from the spirit of God! (...) They abstain from prayer and the Eucharist, because they do not want to acknowledge that the Eucharist is the very flesh of Jesus Christ, that flesh which suffered for our sins, that flesh which the goodness of God the Father raised up." (Lettre aux Smyrniotes, nfa p. 76).

Justin Martyr (2nd century) offers another testimony of the Eucharist that corroborates Ignatius of Antioch's: *"We call this food Eucharist. No one can partake of it unless they believe in the truth of the Gospel, unless they have been first purified and regenerated by the water of baptism, unless they live according to the precepts of Jesus Christ; for we do not take this food as ordinary bread or drink. Just as Jesus Christ, our Savior incarnate by the word of God, truly took flesh and blood for our salvation; so we are taught that this food, which, by transformation, nourishes our flesh and blood, becomes, by the power of prayer containing its own words, the flesh and blood of this same Jesus incarnate for us."* (Première apologie, nfa p. 107).

5) SOLA FIDE (FAITH ALONE)

Doctrine that asserts that it is faith alone that saves

(Good works cannot help/participate in salvation)

Let's remember that Martin Luther was a German Catholic monk, but he didn't feel fully satisfied with monastic life and its requirements (prayer, fasting, abstinence, etc.). He also finds it difficult to control certain thoughts and temptations, especially regarding chastity, which leads him to believe that he will go to hell if he doesn't rid himself of them. Feeling stuck and seeking relief, he then finds a form of comfort and escape in **Rom 3:28**, but adding the word "*alone*": *"For we consider that a person is justified by faith <u>alone</u> apart from works of the law."*

Luther's interpretation is somewhat peculiar, and forgets to consider all the other verses that oppose his view of **(Rom 3:28)**. But for him now, it's obvious that salvation is only through faith. In other words, man no longer has to participate in his salvation, no longer has to make efforts, no longer has to be an actor but a spectator; it's not a Covenant between God and man, but only God. This idea of God alone will permeate Luther's theology, explaining his rejection of purgatory, the communion of saints, and

heavenly intercession. Even today, all Protestants agree with Sola Fide. It's part, along with Scripture Alone, of one of the five pillars of Protestantism. And once again, although we have 66 books in common, the divergences between Catholics and Protestants arise from the interpretation of the texts or from only considering those that support our position.

-The Protestant is correct

Eph 2:8-9: "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast*."

-The Catholic is correct

2 Cor 5:10: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil."*

On the one hand, the Bible clearly states that it's not deeds that save us, but faith, and at the same time, it equally clearly states that each will receive their sentence according to their deeds. So, what are we to understand? Do the books of the Bible contradict each other? If instead of reading **Eph 2:8-9**, we read **Eph 2:8-10**, the understanding changes completely.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from

works, so no one may boast. For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them."

This verse 10 changes everything. It's clear that works have their importance. The same goes for **Titus 3:5-8** instead of just **Titus 3:5**. It's true that we are saved by the Grace of God, and the Church also agrees on this point, as it declared in the sixth session of the Council of Trent regarding justification:

"If anyone says that man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the *law*, without divine grace through *Jesus* Christ, let him be anathema. "
(canon 1)

But it adds:

" If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema."
(canon 12)

The Catholic Church in agreement with the Bible

The Church teaches then that works alone do not justify and that faith alone does not justify either. Unlike Protestants, the Church considers that being a spectator alone (Faith Alone) is not enough to obtain salvation; one

must be an actor for our salvation (faith and works). It's not only God who does everything; it's a Covenant between God and man. It's only God who decides our sentence, but his decision is influenced by the life we have led, a life of actions and words. But above all, it's the intention of our heart through our words and actions that will be taken into account **(**cf. **Jer 17:10; Heb 4:12-13**). Finally, it's exactly as if we were in a case before the judge in court. He (the Judge) and only he will decide our sentence, but he will make his decision based on the elements of the defense (what we have in our favor) and the accusation (what we have against us). But here, the Protestant will not agree and will again use the references we have seen before, as well as other similar verses like **(Jn 11:25-26)**. But then, what is faith? Ultimately, the whole debate is here. Having faith is believing, and believing is acting; they are two inseparable things. One does not go without the other, and both are necessary to claim salvation one day. The Bible is very clear about that:

Jn 14:12: *"Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do."*

Mt 7:21: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."*

Jas 2:14-26: *"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has*

no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Indeed someone may say, "You have faith and I have works." Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works. You believe that God is one. You do well. Even the demons believe that and tremble. Do you want proof, you ignoramus, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works. Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called "the friend of God." See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by a different route? For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." **(**cf. **Eccl 12:14; Jn 3:18-21; 1 Pet 1:17).**

6) GESTURE, IMAGE, AND DEVOTION

The Sign of the Cross

Among the criticisms that Protestants may level against us is the first thing we do upon entering a church, namely, the sign of the cross, arguing that it is a blasphemous and superstitious gesture, although its origin is also biblical.

Ezek 9:4: *"And the LORD said to him: Pass through the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and mark an X on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the abominations practiced within it."*

It is true that in Hebrew, it says "mark on the forehead of a Tav" and not of a cross. But the Tav (the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet) was written in the form of a cross in Ezekiel's time. Today, this sign, although it has evolved, still exists. However, it's regrettable to see how many people, including athletes, make the sign of the cross at the drop of a hat (when they enter and leave the playing field, when they score, after a victory), kneel down, and wave their arms in all directions and towards the sky. Here, it is clearly a superstition. Why would God favor one athlete over another who is also praying? Do we have to signal ourselves like we breathe? We all know the passage in **Mt 6:5-6** where it is said not to do everything to be seen in the

synagogues. If we are already called to discretion and sobriety in places of prayer, it is obvious that we are even more called to this discretion and sobriety in public places, especially those that are filmed:

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

However, this gesture of the sign of the cross, even if misused by some, has been ordained by God. So we are called to do it, but with wisdom and sincerity.

Images

The other reproach made against us is the worship of images. Some even go so far as to say that we are idol worshipers, that we have multiple gods. There are no images in the temples of the reformed because, according to them, the Bible prohibits it. On the other hand, in Catholic churches, it is quite the opposite; we find images, statues, relics, and more. So whom to believe?

Ex 20:4 indeed prohibits images and bowing down to them*: "You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth."*

But in **Ex 25:19**, God himself ordered the making of two cherubim (angels) to cover the Ark of the Covenant: *"Make one cherub at one end, and the other at the other end, of one piece with the cover, at each end."*

It is completely illogical and contradictory, isn't it? How can God prohibit images and then, in the same book, five chapters later, order the construction of an object with two angels? So, what are we supposed to understand? Simply that it is not against all types of images. The problem is that Protestants only take one part of the first commandment to justify that images are prohibited **(Ex 20:4 and Deut 5:8)**. However, to fully understand, one must read the entire first commandment, namely **(Ex 20:3-6** and **Deut 5:7-10)**. And from there, we realize that worship and representation of other gods and idols are what is prohibited, not images in general:

"You shall not have other gods beside me. You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or serve them. For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their ancestors' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation; but showing love down to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments."

We find the same explanation again in **Deut 7:25:** *"The images of their gods you shall destroy by fire. Do not covet the silver or gold on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD, your God."*

Other verses confirm that it is idolatry that is prohibited and not the making of images. **Isa 42:17-18** says, "*They shall be turned back in utter shame who trust in idols; whosay to molten images, "You are our gods." You deaf ones, listen, you blind ones, look and see!"* **(**cf. **Lev 26:1 or 1 Kgs 6:23-29)**.

At no point does God prohibit making objects that represent family, saints, angels, or prophets. We must also remember something that tends to be forgotten; images and paintings also had a pedagogical utility as they allowed those who could not read to have knowledge of biblical stories and Tradition. Furthermore, among Catholics, it is not the image or statue itself that we pray to and love, but the persons and what they represent. The image or statue is only a support, an aid to enter into prayer. But can God pass through a statue, an image, a relic, a cloth?

The Worship of Images and Saints

The endless debate between Catholics and Protestants, each with their own arguments, persists. For us Catholics, the abundance of graces is evident, and it's not always necessary to pray to saints to feel them. How many times,

just by reading the life of a saint or seeing a photo or a movie, do we sense the presence of the Holy Spirit? For Protestants, it's an abomination to engage in the worship of images and saints. However, it is biblical. God Himself instructed Moses to make a statue that would heal and save those who looked at it. It's a matter of devotion and proof that an image can be a sign of God's presence.

Num 21:8-9: *"And the LORD said to Moses: Make a seraph and mount it on a pole, and everyone who has been bitten will look at it and recover. Accordingly Moses made a bronze serpent and mounted it on a pole, and whenever the serpent bit someone, the person looked at the bronze serpent and recovered."* **(**cf. **Jn 3:14-15).**

We have another significant example in **Acts 19:11-12:** *"So extraordinary were the mighty deeds God accomplished at the hands of Paul that when face cloths or aprons that touched his skin were applied to the sick, their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them."*

This demonstrates that God is not against such practices, as He has used intermediaries and objects to spread His grace. Therefore, Catholics cannot be reproached for continuing these devotions. Furthermore, what the Lord did through Paul, who was a holy man, He continues to do through men and women, some of whom have even been declared saints by the Catholic Church, and we pray to them. In the Bible, we often find the word "saint" or "sanctification," meaning righteous before God.

To deny that men can become saints is to deny what Jesus and the Bible call us to live.

1 Pet 1:15-16: *"But, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, for it is written, "Be holy because I [am] holy."*

Lev 19:1-2: *"The LORD said to Moses: Speak to the whole Israelite community and tell them: Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy."* **(**cf. **Mt 5:48)**

Rom 6:22: *"But now that you have been freed from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit that you have leads to sanctification, and its end is eternal life."*

The history of sanctification

The feast of All Saints is not a superstition or an omission of giving glory to God. Initially, it was a tribute to all who died persecuted for their faith, who worked all their lives until they lost it for the Kingdom of God. The desire to make their lives known had a clear motive: to hope that people might be touched, follow the same path, and that those who do not believe may convert and come closer to the Father. Therefore, the cult of the saints is not about stealing glory from God, but, on the contrary, expanding it. Additionally, it's important to know that, since the early centuries, many people have reported receiving graces and healings when visiting the tombs of martyrs or after praying for their intercession. It's clear why the Church attaches importance to this. However, it was prohibited to

worship a person without the Church's agreement, to prevent abuse and to allow the Church to take the necessary time to study the cases.

Indeed, canonization was done under very precise conditions until the Middle Ages. But since then, there has been extensive research into the life of the person in question and very specific conditions to be recognized as a saint. This explains why it can take several decades or even hundreds of years. It's not about the goodwill of men, but a divine condition. In fact, except in certain situations, two miracles recognized by the Church are required to be declared a saint. And since only God can perform miracles, it's entirely in His power to decide whether He wants to act through these people or not, He who knows better than anyone their hearts and intentions during their lives. If He decides to perform these miracles through these people, it proves that they led a holy life and that God wants these men and women to be recognized, thus becoming instruments of Christ.

It's hard not to believe when we study the history of the saints, their prophecies that have come true, the miracles that have occurred, the phenomena of bilocation, or even intact bodies many years after their death (Fatima, Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit, Catherine Labouré, Bernadette Soubirous, Padre Pio, Curé d'Ars, etc.). It's difficult not to believe when even science finds no explanation. Obviously, we don't need their consent to

believe in miracles, nor do we need miracles to believe in our faith and in the power of God. But the fact that an independent entity (science) affirms the same is a tremendous ally and a tremendous testimony for those who are skeptical. In Lourdes alone, the International Medical Committee of Lourdes (CMIL) has recognized 7,500 medically inexplicable healings, and the Church has decided to recognize as miraculous "only" 70 of them. Thousands of conversions, inner healings and inexplicable events have also occurred after a visit to Lourdes, devotion to a saint, the Miraculous Medal, the rosary, Fatima, Medjugorje, and more.

Can we pray for the dead?

Of course, and it's a good thing. Protestants bring up all the verses they know, like **Deut 18:10-12**, to show that Catholics are wrong:

"Let there not be found among you anyone who causes their son or daughter to pass through the fire, or practices divination, or is a soothsayer, augur, or sorcerer, or who casts spells, consults ghosts and spirits, or seeks oracles from the dead. Anyone who does such things is an abomination to the LORD, and because of such abominations the LORD, your God, is dispossessing them before you."

It's extremely important to distinguish prayer for the dead from the invocation of the dead. Invoking or

consulting the dead is completely prohibited. This is called spiritism. However, praying for the deceased is asking God for something on their behalf or asking the dead who are with God (the saints) for something. We do not question the dead. It's completely different and it's biblical. We do not seek to contact them directly or ask them to read our future or give us powers. To understand this difference well, we can read **(1 Sam 28:3-18)**. It shows that in those times, God had the habit of manifesting Himself through dreams and prophets, but anyone who tries to directly contact the dead exposes themselves to serious consequences. Saul is frustrated because God has not answered him and seeks an answer elsewhere, invoking the dead. This is where Sam appears to him, disapproving of this method and clearly telling Saul that the Lord has not given him any sign because he has turned away from Him. However, asking for the intercession of Mary and the other saints or praying for a deceased person is very legitimate.

The most suggestive passage about prayer for the dead, and incidentally, about purgatory, is found in a book that is not part of a Protestant edition of the Bible, so we will deliberately omit it here, but we will return to it in due time in the last two chapters. However, other books we have in common undoubtedly show this intercessory prayer for the dead. In **1 Kgs 17:17-22**, Elijah prays to the Lord for the dead to return to life, and the Lord does not tell him that praying for the dead is prohibited and that we

can no longer do anything for them; rather, He accepts Elijah's prayer and restores life to the child:

" Some time later the son of the woman, the owner of the house, fell sick, and his sickness grew more severe until he stopped breathing. So she said to Elijah, "Why have you done this to me, man of God? Have you come to me to call attention to my guilt and to kill my son?" Elijah said to her, "Give me your son." Taking him from her lap, he carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. He called out to the LORD: "LORD, my God, will you afflict even the widow with whom I am staying by killing her son?" Then he stretched himself out upon the child three times and he called out to the LORD: "LORD, my God, let the life breath return to the body of this child." The LORD heard the prayer of Elijah; the life breath returned to the child's body and he lived."

This intercessory prayer to bring a dead person back to life is accepted by the Lord, so why couldn't He accept our prayers for the salvation of our deceased? Other verses show this intercessory prayer for the dead.

- In **2 Kgs 4:32-35**, Elisha prays to the Lord and the child returns to life.
- In **Acts 9:36-41**, Peter prays and the dead person returns to life.
- Jesus Himself did it **(**cf. **Luke 7:13-15; Jn 11:39-44)**.

Can angels and the dead pray for us?

If we have just demonstrated the legitimacy of praying for the dead, can we ask angels or a dead person to intercede for us? Protestants don't understand why we don't ask everything directly from God, relying, for example, on **Luke 11:1-4**, but this is not only what the Bible teaches. Yes, we agree with Protestants that only God can perform miracles, that only He is all-powerful, that He Himself acts through dreams, people and statues, to help us, to warn us. We have seen this with Moses **(Num 21:8-9)**, with Paul **(Acts 19:11-12)**, or with Sam **(1 Sam 28:3-18)**. But does the same happen with angels? There is a well-known text among Protestants from Paul to the **Col 2:15-18** that says we should not worship angels. But then, what should we do with all the Bible passages that openly show that angels and the dead can intercede for us? When Paul asks to stop ancient practices, which includes the worship of angels, it does not mean that he opposes their role as intercessors and messengers. He opposes them being worshiped and considered equal to God by a part of the Col:

"Despoiling the principalities and the powers, he made a public spectacle of them, leading them away in triumph by it. Let no one, then, pass judgment on you in matters of food and drink or with regard to a festival or new moon or sabbath. These are shadows of things to come; the reality belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, delighting in

self-abasement and worship of angels, taking his stand on visions, inflated without reason by his fleshly mind."

Paul will affirm the same to the **Col 1:16; 2:15**, namely, that God is superior to other powers. We have countless examples throughout the New Testament, especially in the letter to the Heb, to address this issue and remind us that God is superior to angels. Or even **Acts 7:42**, which uses the expression "*worship of the stars of heaven*," which is common in the Old Testament and refers to the stars that were deified by certain pagan religions **(**cf. **Deut 4:19; 17:3; Jer 8:2; 19:13, etc.)**

This introduction to angels allows us to make an observation that is too often forgotten. Devotion to angels is not a Catholic invention. Numerous biblical texts, the Talmud (Chabbat 12b; Sota 33a; Sanhedrin 148, etc.), and archaeological discoveries (see Mika Ahuvia's book, *on my right Michael, on my left Gabriel: Angels in Ancient Jewish Culture*, University of California Press) confirm that Angelolatry (worship of angels) or devotion (veneration) was a practice that already existed in some pagan and Jewish groups. Although the relationship and worship of angels have their own definition in the Catholic Church, it did not invent it and opposed, like Paul, a worship of adoration of angels. During the Council of Laodicea in the 4th century (canon 35), it condemned Christians who worship angels.

Evidence of the intercession of angels and saints

Rev 1:1: God manifests Himself through an angel to reveal the Apocalypse to John: *"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show his servants what must happen soon. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John."*

Mt 18:10: Proof that we all have guardian angels. Jesus affirms: *"See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father."*

Gen 19:1-22: Two angels save Lot from death.

Luke 1:26-38: The angel Gabriel announces the coming of Jesus. **(**cf. **Gen 22:11-12, 15-18; 1 Kgs 19:3-8; 2 Chr 32:20-21; Luke 1:11-20)**

How, even after having read all these verses, can we say that the worship of angels and saints and the fact of praying to them is not biblical and that we should only go through God? Let's take another example. In **Judg 13:8-9**, Manoah not only asks the Lord for His help, but he sends "a man of God" to tell him what he must do, and He grants it. He does not say to him, "Why do you want the intercession of someone to tell you what you have to do when I am almighty?" God accepts it because the angel works with Him and for Him

"Manoah then prayed to the LORD. “Please, my Lord,” he said, “may the man of God whom you sent return to us to teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born.” God heard the prayer of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman..."

Protestants will say that the above examples show that they prayed to God and that He sent angels, but not that we can pray to them directly. But when an angel helps us, isn't it normal to speak with him and frequently ask for his help since he was sent by God?

Heb 1:13-14: " *But to which of the angels has he ever said: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool”? Are they not all ministering spirits sent to serve, for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*"

We can take up several biblical examples cited above, which show that men do not always communicate directly with God. Lot speaks with the two angels. When Zechariah sees the angel, he listens to him and then speaks to him. He does not speak directly with God but with the angel. When Sam appears before Saul, he is not talking to God but directly to Sam. Manoah dialogues directly with the angel. And the same happens with the saints (righteous men, faithful servants). One of the most revealing texts is found in **Mt 27:50-53:**

“*But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit. And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in*

two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split, tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many."

A text that confirms everything said above is **(Rev 8:1-4)**. Here, the prayer of all the saints is mentioned. We already see that the dead who are in heaven pray and thus intercede for us before God. It is evident that these prayers they present before God are our personal petitions. They are not prayers for themselves since they are in heaven and need nothing:

"When he broke open the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw that the seven angels who stood before God were given seven trumpets. Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a gold censer. He was given a great quantity of incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the holy ones, on the gold altar that was before the throne. The smoke of the incense along with the prayers of the holy ones went up before God from the hand of the angel."

Other texts, notably in **Rev 5:8**, show the intercession and communion of angels and saints: "When he took it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones."

Conclusion

To summarize this chapter, we have seen that the sign of the cross is biblical and that wanting to prohibit all images is not biblical. We can pray only to God if we want, but He Himself manifests through other means (men, images, angels, saints...). We have also seen that we can pray for the dead. However, one essential thing must be clarified: we only pray to God. We ask angels or saints to intercede for us before the Father; we do not implore them as if they replaced God and could act without Him. For example, in the Hail Mary, we ask her to pray for us, nothing more; it is her intercession before the Father. It is true that many times we say to a saint, "Give me the grace to overcome this trial" and not "pray to the Father to help me overcome this trial." But this language custom does not discredit our beliefs at all and does not mean that we take angels and saints instead of God. The Church has always taught that the worship of these individuals is a simple veneration (dulia) and not a worship of adoration (latria) which is reserved for God. That is to say, when a Catholic prays, whether standing, sitting, lying down, or kneeling, he knows perfectly well that it is God who acts through the person in question. It is also important to remember that kneeling is not automatically a sign of worship for Catholics. In the Bible, we see that kneeling before someone can also mean great respect **(**cf. **Gen 33:1-3; 1 Sam 28:14; 1 Kgs 1:51-53)**.

7) A CALL TO CHANGE MINDSET

We've reached the halfway point of this book, and before we delve into what follows (baptism, confession, tithing...), it's important to make an observation. We've seen that many Protestant beliefs, as well as the criticisms they may level against us, aren't entirely fair. So, what can we conclude from this? We cannot say that all Protestants are dishonest; that would be insulting and untrue. However, we must acknowledge a certain ignorance and invite them to a change of mindset, which seems indispensable. It's crucial for both Catholics and Protestants to understand that constantly seeking the latest historical or scientific evidence can lead us to miss the overall message left by Christ and the apostles, causing us to overlook the spiritual intimacy that Christ offers us. There are Christians who spend all their time studying Christianity and know many things, but they do not know God in a personal and intimate way, which is the most important thing. Conversely, we have examples of simple, uneducated, sometimes illiterate, and even carefree individuals receiving the greatest graces and Revs, like children. Let us not forget to have the soul of a child. We can reflect on **(Mt 11:25)**. However, there is a middle ground, and it is essential to dedicate a minimum amount

of time to our religious culture; otherwise, it opens the door to ignorance, which often leads to naivety and vulnerability to believing anything and everything.

Based on my own experience, I quickly realized in my various discussions with Protestants that they were content to repeat what their pastor told them. I had the right to the same criticisms, the same phrases against the Catholic Church. Yet, most of them didn't even know the doctrinal and historical foundations of their movement, let alone the theology and Catechism of the Catholic Church. When they were invited to study Catholicism, to read a book, to watch a video, to learn about someone important to us, few accepted. I hope that by saying this, they will not become permanently frustrated, but rather, it will encourage them to be more culturally open. Let us clarify, for both Catholics and Protestants, that humility is the foundation of everything. God cannot enter and dwell in a proud heart, for pride is a powerful repellent to the Holy Spirit. He cannot work in us, or deliver us from our weaknesses, fears, or wounds, or help us discern right from wrong if we lack humility or the desire to have it. Being humble does not mean letting others trample on us or constantly doubting oneself. It means accepting to be led, not always wanting to control everything. It also means accepting to study the arguments of those who do not think like us. Having convictions is good, but it is essential to occasionally question oneself and examine one's own life. How many of us lock ourselves into certainties that, without realizing it,

imprison us and cause us to miss out on many things and many graces?

The people we associate with also play an essential role in the direction our lives will take. Indeed, spending time with people who are mean, proud, vulgar, slanderous, self-centered, or negative gradually infects us, and we begin to exhibit the same behavior. This negative influence damages our hearts, our minds, and, therefore, our faith and our relationship with God. Conversely, being with educated, humble, cultured, and charitable people will elevate us positively and inspire us to cultivate ourselves, be humble, and charitable, thus bringing us closer to God.

Returning to the criticisms that certain Protestants may level against us, it is true that there are Catholics who sometimes confuse things. Yes, indeed, some tend to deify Mary or the saints, but this is not what the Church teaches. Let us take a few examples of behaviors (two in detail and then a few more briefly) that have become widespread among Christians, including Catholics, even though they contradict Church teachings:

Yoga

When we hear the word "meditation," we immediately think of seeking well-being. But we no longer think of the meditations that exist in Christianity; rather, we think directly of Yoga. However, Yoga is absolutely incompatible with Christianity. Yoga, which means *union*, aims to elevate

oneself to become one's own God and reach Nirvana to stop the cycle of reincarnation (samsara). Moreover, the yogi masters themselves assert that any type of Yoga practiced physically is inseparable from Eastern philosophy and spirituality. Whether we want it or not, one does not exist without the other. We find again this spirituality and philosophy, which confuses body and soul (absence of duality) and is totally opposed to Christianity, in other Eastern medicines and practices (reiki, Tai-chi, acupuncture, reflexology, etc.) or inspired by them (sophrology, chiropractic...). The goal is to become one's own god, to self-heal and to achieve total self-sufficiency. It also involves believing in a whole scheme of the body and energies that need to be unlocked and maintained to feel good physically and mentally (one goes with the other), although we believe that happiness comes from Christ and that we will always need Him. That is, we will never be equal to God, no matter what we do. This is a significant difference. It is true that many of these practices can relax us momentarily, but often our physical or mental problems do not disappear; they just move elsewhere. Moreover, this supposed well-being does not withstand the tests of life, and as believers, why should we strive to find peace and well-being where our God is not found?

But the confusion is even greater because there are some priests and nuns who practice Yoga and invite Catholics to join them in Yoga and the other practices mentioned above. In 2002, however, the Catholic Church

condemned the New Age movement in a lengthy document ("*Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life*"), explaining that its philosophy and practices are incompatible with Christianity. However, given the current situation's breadth - twenty years later - it is surprising that the Vatican has not issued a stronger call to order with an official and specific text on the issue of Eastern practices and medicines. This would help to curb this growing and concerning phenomenon of Christian Buddhists or Christian Hindus when, once again, the two are perfectly incompatible. There is no possibility of Christian Yoga, as Father James Manjackal[4], a priest born in India and among Hindus, explains perfectly.

Sunday day

Today, it is easy to observe that everything is open on Sundays, even what is not essential: supermarkets, restaurants, bakeries, cinemas, shopping malls, amusement parks, etc. And this consumer habit has also spread to many Catholics. Although the Lord gave us six days to do whatever we want and one day to step away from all business and rest **(Ex 20:8-10)**, which for us is Sunday. This is one of the Ten Commandments and something the Church has always upheld since the beginning of Christianity. It is even a precept of the Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2042. Hereinafter CCC). Popes have always reminded us of this Sunday obligation and explained

[4] https://www.jmanjackal.net/eng/engyoga.htm

its importance (CCC 2180-2188). The most recent one being Pope Francis *(General Audience, Paul VI Hall, Wednesday, August 12, 2015, and General Audience, Wednesday, September 5, 2018).*

So, what should we conclude from this? First of all, we should not think that we can't do anything on Sunday except be bored and refuse to go out with our friends. Sunday should not discourage socialization but teach us to live differently and to be occupied without necessarily spending or earning money. There may always be exceptions or emergencies, but if this becomes a habit, the true meaning of Sunday and the graces that accompany it are lost. When there is an event, among the production staff, security, journalists, organizers, etc., there are millions of people working every Sunday, traveling, and having no private life, not seeing their families, abandoning their faith, and this is exactly what the Church wants to avoid at all costs. These are causes of depression, divorces, or, on the contrary, how many forbid themselves from having a partner and a family life in order to keep up with the crazy pace demanded? Although we could easily go without a day of concerts, exhibitions, sports news, and other non-essential activities. Living only for oneself or for work and professional achievement has never been a path to happiness but a path of breathlessness, fatigue, and regret. Those who work on Sundays against their will should not blame themselves, and it is also true that some jobs are necessary every day. The firefighter will not say to

us, "I'm sorry, it's Sunday, I'll go put out the fire at your house tomorrow morning." Likewise, the police, hospitals, doctors, public transport, accommodation facilities, etc. However, we must ensure that this does not endanger our family life, social life, spiritual life and me must try not to work every Sunday. Let us not forget that attending Sunday Mass is a precept of the Church and is also given on Saturday evening. It is a mistake, although tempting, to think that we can be Catholic without the Church.

Other examples

The Church also does not teach the belief in Santa Claus, yet how many of us make our children believe he exists? The Church also condemns in its Catechism (CCC 2116-2117) astrology (horoscopes), divination, or witchcraft, but that does not prevent some of us from reading horoscopes, drawing cards, or going to see fortune tellers. Another example that demonstrates that the Church cannot control all the personal statements and initiatives of believers, but which is later condemned, is when in the Philippines, on Good Friday, there are people who have the habit of inflicting physical wounds similar to those received by Jesus and even have their hands pierced as if they were crucified. Protestants also have the right to be surprised by certain behaviors of ours. A priest once said in a homily that if the Pope were to come to celebrate Mass in our church, we would stay up all night to make sure we have a place. But many people arrive late every

Sunday for Mass. Many also leave before the final blessing. How can they remain indifferent when they see us pushing each other, shouting, crying, trying to touch the Pope as if he were God himself or a celebrity? Finally, they also have reason to be astonished if we think that if we do not carry our cross, our rosary, or other religious objects, we are no longer protected, and in fact, our day will be bad. This is pure superstition.

All these examples are not meant to blame us and say that we can no longer do anything, but to show that the reference for Catholic beliefs is not in each of us but in the Church's doctrine summarized in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. We Catholics should consult it frequently, just like Protestants, and you will see that it does not teach witchcraft, superstition about religious objects, worship of images, the Virgin Mary, the saints, the Pope, or the behaviors mentioned above. The Catholic Church also does not teach that the Pope is infallible in everything he says and does.

That said, let us continue discussing the topics (baptism, confession, tithing...) that often spark lively debates between Catholics and certain Reformed churches.

8) BAPTISM

First of all, let's begin by looking together at what Baptism grants us. It allows us to become part of the Church; to be united with Christ by being born again; to receive forgiveness of sins; to receive the Holy Spirit; and it plays a role in our salvation **(**cf. **1 Pet 3:20-21; Jn 3:3-6; 1 Cor 12:12-13)**. Unfortunately, we hear all sorts of contradictory things about Baptism, leading to much confusion. That's why it's necessary to talk about it.

The Heresies of Evangelical Protestants

Let's start by remembering that not all Protestants, even among the evangelicals, necessarily agree with each other. So, there's a lot of confusion and different beliefs. To be concrete and brief, we'll only mention here the most commonly used arguments by these pastors and Protestants, demonstrating, according to them, that they are in the truth and we are in error.

Is immersion baptism the only true baptism?

The first argument of these pastors is to say that the baptism given in the Catholic Church is not valid because only immersion baptism is true baptism. They claim that Jesus himself was baptized in this way by John the Baptist,

and that, in fact, to be a Christian, one must be baptized or undergo "rebaptism" by immersion. Let's say it immediately, this reasoning is perfectly unfounded, and worse still, it contradicts the Bible. Indeed, John the Baptist says that his baptism is only temporary and symbolic and that it is not the one we will have to follow in the future. Water baptism will give way to baptism in the Spirit.

Jn 1:33: *"Did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the holy Spirit.'."*

Mt 3:13-16: *"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him."*

Acts 1:5: (Jesus said) *"For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

What is done in **Mt 28:16-19**: *"The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, All*

power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

In **Acts 19:1-7**, we see again that it is no longer the baptism of repentance by immersion given by John that is relevant, but that of Jesus, who baptizes with the Spirit:

"While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior of the country and came [down] to Ephesus where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They answered him, "We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." He said, "How were you baptized?" They replied, "With the baptism of John." Paul then said, "John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid [his] hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. Altogether there were about twelve men."

Water is a symbol of life and death, but also of purification, so we continue to use it today **(Jn 3:5)**. But baptism is equally valid whether it is given with a drop of water or with a hundred liters. It is perfectly impossible to doubt it.

Infant Baptism

The other major heresy of evangelical branches is to be against the baptism of babies, and for some of them, baptism must only be performed on adults. It's the famous *believer's baptism*. However, nowhere in the Bible does it say that the baptism of babies is forbidden. That does not exist! But they have plenty of arguments that seem very convincing, such as saying that Jesus was baptized as an adult; or that we cannot impose baptism on someone, but they have to want it, relying on **Mark 16:16**: *"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned."*

Another argument is to say that a baby, being innocent, cannot be responsible for its actions, so it does not sin. We agree. Then (they continue their argument), since it does not sin, it is not necessary to baptize it. Here, we disagree because a baby is born with original sin due to the disobedience of Adam and Eve **(**cf. **Ps 51:5-7; Rom 5:12, 18-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22)**, and the only way to be freed from it is to be born again through baptism. We can read again **(1 Pet 3:20-21; Jn 3:5-6)**. Regarding the fact that Jesus received baptism when he was an adult, it must be remembered that it was impossible for him to be baptized as a child because John did not begin to preach and baptize until adulthood and was the same age as Jesus **(**cf. **Luke 1:34-42; Luke 3:21-23)**. Then, to understand **Mark 16:16**, we must put it in the context of the time, namely, that at that time, the first Christian community was just being

born. So those who were able to understand (the adults) had to believe first to be baptized. We have another similar example in **Acts 2:38**:

"Peter [said] to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

A gift which, as we have seen above in **Mt 28:18-20**, has been given by Jesus to the apostles. But neither Jesus nor the Bible say that baptism is reserved only for adults; quite the contrary. We take up the passage from the Acts of the Apostles again, but adding the next verse, namely **Acts 2:38-39**:

"Peter [said] to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <u>For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call</u>."

Other verses also indirectly demonstrate that children and babies were baptized in the time of the apostles.

- **1 Cor 1:16**: *"(I baptized the **household of Stephanas** also; beyond that I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)."*
- **Acts 16:14-15**: *"One of them, a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God, listened, and the Lord opened her*

*heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying. After **she and her household** had been baptized, she offered us an invitation…"*

- **Acts 16:33**: *"He took them in at that hour of the night and bathed their wounds; then **he and all his family** were baptized at once."*

- **Acts 18:8**: *"Crispus, the synagogue official, came to believe in the Lord along with **his entire household**, and many of the Corinthians who heard believed and were baptized."*

These four verses have one thing in common: they all speak of the baptism received by an adult person that leads to conversion and therefore to the baptism of the whole household. "*The whole household*," "*all his family*," shows that no one was excluded. Otherwise, they would have written: the whole household except for the women or the children or the babies. Furthermore, households at that time were not like those of today, namely composed of few people. There were also domestic servants with their families, which considerably increases the number and age range of people, including children and babies. This assertion is all the more accurate since we know that the expression "*he and his household*" is actually very ancient and is already present in the Old Testament and includes people of all ages, even those who have just been born **(**cf. **1 Sam 1:20-23; 1 Sam 22:16-19; Gen 45:17-18** with **46:5-7)**.

1 Sam 1:20-23: *"She conceived and, at the end of her pregnancy, bore a son whom she named Samuel. "Because I asked the LORD for him." The next time her husband Elkanah was going up with the rest **of his household** to offer the customary sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vows, Hannah did not go, explaining to her husband, "Once the child is weaned, I will take him to appear before the LORD and leave him there forever." Her husband Elkanah answered her: "Do what you think best; wait until you have weaned him. Only may the LORD fulfill his word!" And so she remained at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him."*

Apart from all this evident demonstration in favor of the baptism of children and babies, there is another point that shows the contradiction of evangelical Protestants. Indeed, one must be born again to be part of the Kingdom of God, which inevitably involves baptism. As we have seen, although it is not sufficient in itself, it is also one of the conditions for salvation. And Protestants agree with us that the Lord came for everyone and so that everyone can be saved. But if, on the other hand, as they claim, there is a minimum age for baptism, that is tantamount to saying that Jesus did not come for everyone, that not everyone has access to the same grace and this New Covenant, but it depends on our age. This is a thought absolutely contradictory to the Bible and Tradition. Because of this belief, how many died without having received baptism? God wants and has always wanted babies and children to

be part of the Covenant. The first covenant between God and man was circumcision and it was done on the eighth day after birth. We already see that parents did not wait for their children to be able to speak to know their opinion. Just as we do not expect their consent when they are born to choose their name, their clothes, what they will eat, and, once they are children, the school they will attend or the rules of life we impose on them. We love our children and want is the best for them, and we decide what we think is best for them. And if we call ourselves Christians, followers of Christ, of the apostles, and of the Bible, we cannot say that only believer's baptism and by immersion is the true baptism. It is a sin if, as parents, we voluntarily prevent our children from being part of the Covenant desired by God. Because, once again, it is depriving them of receiving the graces He promises to all.

We also have a large number of texts and testimonies that directly or indirectly prove that baptism was given to newborns and that it was a practice that dates back to the apostles. Irenaeus of Lyon, Hippolytus of Rome, Origen, Tertullian (who, however, for reasons not theological but practical, will rise in certain cases against the baptism given at too young an age, but that does not stop the practice of baptizing babies); or also Cyprian of Carthage:

"If no one is excluded from baptism and grace, how much more should a small child not be excluded, who, just born, has committed no sin - except that, born according to

the flesh after Adam, he contracted the stain of ancient death from the moment of his birth - and who finds access to the remission of sins all the easier in that the sins are not forgiven to him personally, but to the sins of others." (Cyprien de Carthage Correspondance, J.P Migne p. 244).

We also have funerary inscriptions that show that babies or very young children who were not able to speak had been baptized. We will send those who want to know more about the subject, to different books, especially that of Joachim Jeremias[5], as well as to two texts of the Church. The first *(The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die without Being Baptised)*, answers a big question: Can babies and children who have died without being baptized be saved? Although the second *(Instruction on Infant Baptism)*, the Church explains and justifies the tradition of baptism from the youngest age.

[5] Le baptême des enfants pendant les quatre premiers siècles, Joachim Jeremias, traduit par Bruno Hubsch et François Stoessel, (Editions Xavier Mappus)

9) CONFESSION OF SINS (OR SACRAMENT OF PENANCE)

For a confession to be valid in the Catholic Church, it must be made before a priest. On the contrary, according to most Protestant movements, it is sufficient to confess sins directly to God because only He is omnipotent and because the Bible says in **1 Tim 2:5** that Jesus is the only mediator between God and men:

"For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human."

This response is a classic among the reformed, but before answering it, one must know that this argument reveals another inconsistency of Protestantism. Indeed, if they do not confess with a man but directly with God, on the pretext that He is omnipotent and the only mediator for men, why then do they ask a man and a pastor to be baptized? Why not ask God to baptize them directly from their homes?

We must be serious and not force certain Bible verses to say what they do not say. Let's take **1 Tim 2:5**, which expresses that God is the only mediator concerning

Salvation, not for the forgiveness of sins. But to know this, one must read before and after verse 5. Also, if Christ was truly against earthly intermediaries, why then does He allow man to lay hands on His behalf? **(**cf. **Mk 16:17-20; Mt 10:8; Acts 5:12)**. Why, although He could do everything Himself, does He ask those He has chosen to confess, anoint the sick, baptize? Men have always had this participatory role in the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, we have many elements showing that confessing sins directly to God is not valid as it goes against His teachings, the Bible, and Tradition.

Biblical Evidence

From the Old Testament, the Lord calls men to the priesthood to serve Him: *"Have your brother Aaron, and with him his sons, brought to you, from among the Israelites, that they may be my priests: Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons."* **(Ex 28:1)**.

And among the functions they receive is that of atoning for sins: "*When someone is guilty in regard to any of these matters, that person shall confess the wrong committed, and make reparation to the LORD for the wrong committed: a female animal from the flock, a ewe lamb or a she-goat, as a purification offering. Thus the priest shall make atonement on the individual's behalf for the wrong*." **(Lev 5:5-6)**.

It is undeniable that the priest already had this ministry in Judaism (Yom Kippur rite), confession of sins which was collective and public with offerings in sacrifice **(**cf. **Lev 16:32-34; Num 15:24-28)**.

In the New Testament, this is also present with John the Baptist: *"And were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins."* **(Mt 3:6)**.

More importantly, in **Jn 20:23**, Jesus entrusts this ministry to His apostles and the Church: *"Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."* **(**cf. **2 Cor 5:18-21)**.

Jas 5:14-16: "Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful."

These latter verses confirm - if necessary - the authority not of the Bible but rather of the Church as an institution, as we have seen in chapter 2. It is within it and not outside of it that our faith is fully nourished.

When a minister of the Catholic Church gives absolution, sins are truly forgiven

The Catholic Church, founded on the authority of Christ, has decided that only delegated men of the Church can administer the sacraments. Certainly, it is Jesus who forgives sins through them, but as we have seen, it is in their ministry to be the mediator between God and men for the forgiveness of sins. Not everyone can do it. The Catholic Church distinguishes between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of the faithful.

Evidence from Tradition

Another important element is that this was also part of Apostolic Tradition. The Didache[6] is considered one of the earliest reference texts and is frequently cited by the Fathers of the Church. The author, though unknown, already speaks of confession: "*In church you shall confess your sins, and not approach prayer with an evil conscience."*

Thanks also to the authors of the early centuries, we have more information about this sacrament and its evolution. Such as the fact that confession was already made in their times with a bishop or a priest, particularly for serious sins before becoming generalized for all sins.[7]

---

[6] Redaction estimated around the middle of the 1st century, or, at the latest, at the beginning of the 2nd century, but which has only been found again in the 19th century.

[7] La confession sacramentelle dans l'Église primitive**,** Elphège Vacandard, (Editions Hachette Livre BNF).

The importance and graces of true confession

We should not try to reproduce everything we are taught to please God. He does not need anything. It is not God who needs man, but man who needs God. It is not God who needs our prayers, fasts, and more, but by performing these actions among others, we ourselves receive the fruits. The benefits of confession are irreplaceable. For example, it teaches us humility. Indeed, it takes humility to recognize and confess one's own faults before someone we usually do not even know. Moreover, one cannot be at peace with oneself if one goes for a long time without confession, months or years. Sins weigh heavily, and the more they accumulate, the heavier they become and prevent us from having that full inner peace and total intimacy with God. Confession, as God has taught us and as we perform it within the Church, is a true liberation.

10) TITHING

It must be positively acknowledged that not all Protestant churches practice tithing, and it is mandatory ten percent. But many do demand it (mainly evangelical churches). These pastors will cherry-pick certain verses to make their members believe that tithing ten percent is still justified today, such as **Mal 3:8-10**:

"Can anyone rob God? But you are robbing me! And you say, "How have we robbed you?" Of tithes and contributions! You are indeed accursed, for you, the whole nation, rob me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, That there may be food in my house. Put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, And see if I do not open the floodgates of heaven for you, and pour down upon you blessing without measure!"

This text is perfect for these pastors, as it gives them all they need to make their members feel guilty, telling them that those who do not tithe are robbing God and are under the threat of going to hell. So, everyone dutifully gives their ten percent tithe, thinking it's mandatory to avoid condemnation. By the way, isn't it contradictory to believe and say that only faith saves without acts (as we've seen in

chapter 5), and yet, on the other hand, say that those who don't tithe will go to hell?

They also take the examples of Abraham **Gen 14:18-20** and Jacob **Gen 28:16-22**, who tithed, although pastors know very well that they were not under the law, as it did not exist as a commandment. God did not ask anything of them; they did it of their own free will. There was no obligation to do so. But this is something pastors conveniently omit to mention to their members. They also cite **Luke 11:42** and **Mt 23:23** to justify tithing, although Jesus is speaking to Jews, and thus, under the law. Indeed, mandatory tithing was solely a prescription for the Jews and reserved only for the tribe of Levi, which was the priestly tribe **(Num 18:25-32)**. How can a pastor demand tithing from their members, even though they are not descendants of the Levites? How can they demand a law of the Old Covenant, even though they claim to belong to the New Covenant?

The New Covenant

It is clearly stated in the Bible that there is an abolition of the previous law, that whoever gets circumcised must then practice the entire law.

Gal 5:2-3: *"It is I, Paul, who am telling you that if you have yourselves circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again I declare to every man who has himself circumcised that he is bound to observe the entire law."*

This means that if pastors ask to practice certain previous laws like tithing, they must also ask their members for: circumcision, animal sacrifices, and all ceremonial laws. **(**cf. **Heb 7:1-22; Heb 8:7-13; Gal 3:10-13; Gal 5:2-3)**.

Finally, and perhaps most glaringly, we have scriptural evidence that offering is voluntary:

1 Cor 16:2: "On the first day of the week each of you should set aside and save whatever he can afford, so that collections will not be going on when I come."

2 Cor 8:1-3, 10-11: *"We want you to know, brothers, of the grace of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their profound poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For according to their means, I can testify, and beyond their means, spontaneously (…) And I am giving counsel in this matter, for it is appropriate for you who began not only to act but to act willingly last year: complete it now, so that your eager willingness may be matched by your completion of it out of what you have."*

2 Cor 9:5-7: *"So I thought it necessary to encourage the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for your promised gift, so that in this way it might be ready as a bountiful gift and not as an exaction. Consider this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each*

must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

Continuing to defend mandatory tithing of ten percent is not honest, and they should ask themselves if it is money they hold as a god and if the true God is just a pretext for enriching themselves. This also raises another issue of moral and social order: when a person barely manages to make ends meet, they cannot always pay their bills, feed their family well, and tithe at the same time. It is not normal that, out of fear of going to hell or to avoid pressure from their pastors, these people prefer to pay their tithes and, if necessary, even borrow money and sacrifice the rest. However, faith should not put us in debt, create legal problems, or jeopardize the vital needs of our family. Let's hear it.

Offering in the Catholic Church

Let's start by saying that no one puts a knife to our throat at the time of offering or requesting a mass for a deceased if we don't have money. However, and in accordance with the Bible (see verses above), we are called to participate in collections. It is even one of the five precepts of the Church, but everyone is invited to participate according to their means:

"The faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his own abilities." (CCC, 2043)

Indeed, whether it is for priests to live, for projects to renovate our local church, for charitable works, etc., we can give a lot of money if we want, even more than ten percent of our salary. But there is no minimum amount required, much less to go to heaven.

1 Pet 1:18-19: *"Realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb."*

11) THE END TIMES (DEATH AND JUDGEMENT)

Protestants do not believe in purgatory, and praying for the dead is of no use because the deceased goes straight to Heaven or Hell. For Catholics, it's quite the opposite. So, whom to follow? First of all, we distinguish two possible scenarios: Hell or Paradise. Eternal Fire or Eternal Life.

Mt 25:34, 41, and **46**: *"Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (…) Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (…) And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."*

What determines God's judgment?

Again, we see two final possibilities: Hell or Paradise, and what determines our sentence are our actions, as we had seen in Chapter 5 (Faith Alone).

Rev 20:12: *"I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. Then another scroll was opened, the Book of Life."*

However, the Bible also teaches that not all who are saved go directly to God.

Intermediate State (Purgatory)

We mentioned in chapter 6, without revealing from which book to avoid confusion, that the most evocative passage of prayer for the dead and purgatory was in a book Protestants do not have. It is found in **2 Maccabees 12:40-46**.

"But under the tunic of each of the dead they found amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. So it was clear to all that this was why these men had fallen. They all therefore praised the ways of the Lord, the just judge who brings to light the things that are hidden. Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out. The noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection in mind; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be absolved from their sin."

Of course, Protestants say this book is not part of the Bible (we will come back to this point). However, it nevertheless reveals a reality that is too often forgotten. Prayer for the deceased was not invented by the Catholic Church, and the belief in an intermediate state of purification was not invented by Catholics in the Middle Ages, contrary to what many pastors and Protestants claim. Indeed, this text from Maccabees irrefutably proves that there were Jews who did not believe that everyone was instantly in Paradise or Hell; otherwise, they would not have found it useful to pray for them. This demonstrates, on the contrary, that they believed the dead must first go through a stage of purification, and that it was up to the living on earth to intercede through prayers, deeds, and devotions. Hoping to obtain the Lord's indulgence so that the deceased could stop suffering and be with the Father more quickly. Hence come the indulgences for the deceased and the intentions for the masses that are still practiced in the Catholic Church today (see Chapter 1).

However, this text from Maccabees is not the only one that speaks of an intermediate state. We also find it in the New Testament.

1 Cor 3:13-15: We see that some, though saved, must first suffer for their sins, to be purified (Purgatory), while others will go to Heaven without undergoing this suffering:

"The work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire [itself]

will test the quality of each one's work. If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage. But if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; the person will be saved, but only as through fire." **(**cf. **Rev 20:12-15)**

In addition to having seen that prayer for the dead and purgatory are beliefs found in Scripture and come from Judaism and were not invented by the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, we can also demonstrate it thanks to several writings that show that from the beginning of Christianity, prayer for the dead was already a well-established custom, as was the doctrine of purgatory, although it has progressed over time.

Letter No. 1 from Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, addressed to the priests, deacons, and Christian people of Furni (around the year 250).

"This is what our predecessor bishops took into account (...) that no Christian at the time of death should appoint a clergyman as guardian or trustee, and that, if he did, no offering should be presented for him, nor should a sacrifice be celebrated for his repose. For he is not worthy to be named at the altar in the bishop's prayer who has wanted to keep bishops and ministers of God away from the altar. And therefore, since Victor, going against the form recently prescribed in the council by the priests, has dared to appoint the presbyter Geminio Faustino as guardian, there is no reason why an oblation should be made for his death

among you or any prayer be made for him in the Church, so that we observe the decree of the priests religiously elaborated and by necessity, and at the same time an example is set for the other brothers, so that no one calls the priests and ministers of God dedicated to his altar and his Church to worldly annoyances." (Correspondance, Editions Migne, p. 36).

In the early second century, we have several letters from Tertullian (*De Corona, De Anima, De Carnis or De Monogamia*), which explicitly speak of prayer for the dead and purification. We see some excerpts:

- *"In a word, since by this prison, which the Gospel teaches us, we understand hell*[8]*, since 'by this debt, which must be paid to the last penny,' we understand that it is necessary to be purified in these same places from the slightest faults, in the interval that precedes the resurrection, no one can doubt that the soul already receives some punishment in hell without prejudice to the fullness of the resurrection, when it will receive the reward together with the flesh."* (De Anima, ch 58).

[8] "The underworld" is the dwelling place of the souls of all the deceased while they await the resurrection of their bodies. However, while awaiting this resurrection, the situation is not the same for everyone. The righteous are saved, but before that, they need to be purified; it is a time when they suffer due to the separation from God that they cannot see, they are in a state of limbo (1 Pet 3:18-19). Once purified, they are in heaven with God and will enter Paradise at the resurrection of the bodies. The condemned, on the other hand, can expect nothing, and at the resurrection of the bodies, they will be cast into hell.

- *"We make oblations (offerings) every year for the dead and for the anniversaries of the martyrs."* (De Corona, ch, 3).

- *"Certainly, she prays for the soul of her husband. She asks that during this interval he may find rest and share in the first resurrection. She offers each year the sacrifice on the anniversary of his falling asleep."* (De Monogamia, ch 10).

As early as the year 203, one of the documented Christian martyrdoms that spread very quickly was that of Perpetua. From her prison, she writes herself that she prayed for her brother Dinocrates, who died at the age of 7 from cancer of the face. She recounts that, during the night, she had a vision showing her brother in Purgatory. Of course, we are free to believe or not in her vision, but it nevertheless shows that already in the year 203, prayer for the dead and the belief that one had to pray for them to be freed from purgatory was something widespread. This was not invented by Perpetua; she did not invent Purgatory (the abode of the dead) or prayer for the dead, since, once again, these were beliefs already present in Judaism.

12) THE DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS (The Bible: 73 or 66 Books?)

This is a highly debated topic in interfaith discussions, and we couldn't finish this book without mentioning it. However, if we were to recount all the data and hypotheses about the canon of the Scriptures, it would involve hundreds of pages. This book would then lose all its meaning, as it aims to be short and accessible to everyone. But at the same time, we had to try to cite as many references as possible. Indeed, this twelfth and final chapter will require a bit more concentration than the others, as we need to do a slightly deeper dive here.

We can begin by saying that the history of the biblical canon is complex, and there are still many unanswered questions. There are writings that were lost; there is no perfect translation from one language to another, and words or expressions do not necessarily have their equivalent in other languages. And it's always complicated for the translator or translators to be completely neutral. This can explain certain laxity or sometimes questionable initiatives. Perhaps over time, new discoveries will allow us to confirm or refute certain assumptions. But what we know is enough to state that the rejection of the Deuterocanonical books is a mistake. Once again, it's

important to say that not all Protestants reject these seven books as some consider them important and have even kept them in their Bible. But they are largely in the minority, and whether on websites, in Protestant schools, or directly from the mouths of pastors, some arguments to justify rejecting the Deuterocanonical books are constantly brought up. Therefore, we must expose them.

a) They are inconsistent or even contradictory with the other books

Of course, inaccuracies about the authors, dates, and possible contradictions of the texts can lead to doubts. For example, the section of Daniel or the version of Esther that is in Greek is a subject of debate. Are they tales? How would it be for the book of Tobit and Judith, as many assert? But is this an argument? Jesus also spoke in images and parables to make himself understood. So, we can also think that these books could have been inspired by God. There are also divergences in the book of Judith about Nebuchadnezzar, and all this leads Protestants to say that they are apocryphal books. However, these are not doctrinal differences. The most important thing is the substance, not the form. Furthermore, we find this same problem of "divergences" in other books, and Protestants have not excluded them from their Bible.

In **Mt 1:1-17** and **Luke 3:23-38**, there are discrepancies about the genealogy of Jesus. When Peter denies Jesus, it is reported in **Mt 26:69-75** that two maids and then some

people saw him, while in **Luke 22:56-60**, it is one maid and two men. In **Mark 15:32**, the other crucified ones insulted Jesus, while in **Luke 23:39-43**, only one insulted him, while the other defended him, and Jesus promised him that he would be with him in Paradise. Although these narratives differ in form, they are similar in content, and that is what is most important. We understand that there were people who saw Peter deny Jesus and that Jesus was insulted on the cross. Then, whether there were 3, 20, or 100 people who saw Peter deny Christ and 3, 20, or 100 people who insulted Jesus, it is not so important because it does not change the meaning or understanding of the story. We can also take up the examples we saw in Chapter 2. Remember that in the letter to the Hebrews, it is said that man dies only once, when at the same time in John, Jesus resurrects Lazarus, implying that he will die twice. Even the letter to Hebrews "contradicts" itself since it mentions two chapters after saying that man must die only once and that Elisha did not die but went straight to heaven with his body. The same "contradiction" occurs with the second book of Kgs. But despite that, all these books are in the Protestant Bible.

b) The Council of Jamnia

The history often told is this:

The Jews, dispersed throughout various regions, had two main spiritual centers, one in Palestine and the other in Alexandria. The issue arose when the Jews in Alexandria, over generations, no longer spoke Hebrew or Aramaic but

Greek. Ptolemy II, curious about Jewish culture, aimed to translate the books into Greek. When the translators from Palestine arrived, they translated the protocanonical books (the books we all have, 22 books for Jews, equivalent to 39 for Christians), but they also became acquainted with other books recognized in Alexandria that they didn't have, which were also in Greek. So, on the one hand, there were Jews who had 39 books in Palestine and Greek-speaking Jews who had more books in Alexandria. However, both the theory of a dual canon and the theory that all Deuterocanonical books are of Greek origin are myths. Nowadays, we can affirm that only two of the seven Deuterocanonical books are of Greek origin (Wisdom and 2 Maccabees). The rest (Judith, Baruch, Tobit, Sirach [Ecclesiasticus], 1 Maccabees) have their origin in Aramaic or Hebrew. For instance, the prologue of the book of Sirach undeniably demonstrates that it was first written in Hebrew, known and accepted by the Jewish people (we'll see this later), and only later translated into Greek. The original had been lost, along with several other books, but fragments have been found in Hebrew in Cairo, Qumran, and Masada.

Then, Jamnia, a city in Palestine, was a significant cultural center. There was a rabbinic school that trained legalistic and Pharisaic Jews, who, besides being anti-Christian, opposed Hellenization. This might lead us to think that all Deuterocanonical books were therefore rejected because they were written in Greek. This is the

argument of the famous Council of Jamnia, which asserts that by the end of the first century, a list of 39 sacred books was defined. This is a claim that many Protestants and their schools still use today to justify having only 39 books. Let's start by saying that this argument is quite recent since it was first proposed by Heinrich Graetz in the 19th century. But this assertion is refuted by all serious specialists in this matter, as historical evidence demonstrates the opposite. There were, among other concerns, discussions about sacred books in Jamnia, but certainly not a definitive canon.

Furthermore, we know from rabbinic writings that not all Jews agreed among themselves on the canonicity of certain books. Then, we must distinguish (for those belonging to the tradition of rabbinic Judaism) the Jews, from rabbinic Judaism, which is established today. For them, it is not the Hebrew Bible that holds authority, but what they call the Oral Torah. Namely, the writings of rabbinic discourse are found in the Talmud. And we know from these works that the list of Old Testament books within rabbinic Judaism was still not settled in the 5th century.

To demonstrate the existence of the Council of Jamnia, some Protestants refer to the Talmudic text (*Baba Batra 14b and 15a*), which dates between the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and lists the authors of the Bible, and could make us believe in a definitive list of 22 books. However, this is not a definitive list. In fact, if this were the case,

rabbinic Jews would have cited the canon of Jamnia to end the debate over whether the books of Eccl or the Song of Solomon were inspired by God. However, the rabbis never refer to this at any point (cf. *Mishnah Yadayim 3:5*). These discussions demonstrate that nothing had been definitively established yet. More relevantly, if a Council had been held in Jamnia defining a list of 22 books, the rabbis of the 4th and 5th centuries would not have continued to cite Sirach (*ben Sira*), as part of the Ketuvim (cf. *Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kamma 92b; Haguiga 13a*). This incontrovertibly demonstrates that certain rabbis and Jewish groups considered the book of Sirach to be part of the Scriptures and that Christians (Orthodox and Catholics) decided to preserve it.

Even today, among Jews, there are festivals, beliefs, and prayers described in books that are not part of the Hebrew canon, such as the prayer for the dead found in the Second Book of Maccabees. The same goes for the festival of Hanukkah, mentioned in the First Book of Maccabees and referred to in the Babylonian Talmud (*Gemara Shabbat 21a; 21b, etc.*). This once again demonstrates the influence and significant consideration of the Deuterocanonical books by a significant part of the Jewish people, as well as by the authors of the New Testament and by the Church Fathers. With all these elements, the most likely conclusion is that the Deuterocanonical books, five of which were originally written in Aramaic or Hebrew, were considered both by Hebrew-speaking Jews in Palestine and by Greek-

speaking Jews in Alexandria, but were gradually expelled by rabbinic Judaism (see, for example, *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 100b*)

c) The Church Fathers had not accepted these books

Firstly, Flavius Josephus (37-100 AD) explains that there are only 22 books (equivalent to the 39 that all Christians have). But this is not surprising since he was a Pharisaic Jew. An even more interesting fact is that these Protestants take the example of Origen, who does not include the Deuterocanonical books in his list of books. They also cite Athanasius (4th century), who does not consider them canonical but simply as good and useful reading for new converts. They also cite St. Jerome (4th-5th centuries), who was not in favor of their translation into Latin. Perfect! If Protestants use the statements of St. Jerome to justify their doctrines, then that means they are in favor of the cult of the martyrs and also believe that the dead can intercede for the living. Since Jerome says this in his treatise *against the heretic Vigilantius*. Good news finally, we agree on that. Let's leave the jokes aside; this example has allowed us to note that they know how to use the writings of the Church Fathers when it suits them, but they overlook the writings that demonstrate that the Deuterocanonical books were accepted. Jerome or Athanasius have the right to give their personal opinion on the matter, but does that mean that, without reflection, the Church should agree with it? Some books of the New Testament have undergone exactly the

same process. Debates and disagreements have existed. Since always and on some topics, certain Church Fathers did not agree with each other, sometimes with strong debates. Others, although they contributed much to the Church, were not always in tune with it, and the Church did not adapt or change its doctrine to please them in return for the service they had given. On the contrary, the Church did not hesitate to denounce the problem when necessary. However, it is true that, in the preceding chapters, we have often cited the writings of the Church Fathers to lend weight to our arguments. So, for the sake of objectivity and honesty, we must recognize that some were not in favor of their introduction to the Bible. But we would have loved it if these Protestants also took into account the writings of those who did not support their view.

To mention only the most well-known and ancient writings: Polycarp of Smyrna, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus of Lyon, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus of Rome, Cyprian of Carthage... they refer several times to the Deuterocanonical books, which demonstrates their significant value. As for Eusebius of Caesarea (*Ecclesiastical History*), 3rd-4th centuries, who is considered the first Christian historian, when he cites the list of books that were part of the Scriptures according to Origen, he gave a list according to what was recognized as canonical by the Jewish people with whom he lived. This explains the absence of the Deuterocanonical books in his lists and not

the fact, as most Protestants claim, that it is because Origen did not consider them inspired by God.

Here is an example that confirms this. A Christian scholar named Julius Africanus (Julian the African) had attended a debate between Origen and Bassus. The African wanted to know why Origen, to argue his positions, had quoted a passage from the history of Susanna. A story that is part of the book of Daniel in the Septuagint version but is not found in the Hebrew Bible. Through this situation, we can see the question arise: Which Sacred Text should be used? That of the Jews or that of the Christians? Origen replies as follows:

" Should we then (...) suppress the copies in use in the churches and order the community to reject the sacred books in use at home and flatter the Jews? (...) But neither do we try to ignore their text, so that when we speak with the Jews, we do not quote to them what is not in their copies and make use of what is in theirs, even if it is not in our books. Because if we prepare well for our controversies with them, they will not despise us or mock us as they usually do." (Philocalie, 1-20 sur les Ecritures et la lettre à Africanus sur l'histoire de Suzanne, sources chrétiennes n° 302 Editions du Cerf. Lettre à Africanus paragraphe 8-9 p.533-535)

This response from Origen to Julius Africanus, estimated to be around the year 250 AD, is very interesting. Although no canon of Scripture had yet been promulgated in the Church in the 3rd century, we learn that Christians

had more recognized books than the Jews in the Old Testament, and they should not reject them just to satisfy this Jewish group. This greater number of recognized books among Christians than among Jews demonstrates that Christians had accepted the Septuagint, which had already been accepted by the apostles. This fact is too often hidden by many Protestants. Indeed, when the Old Testament is quoted in the New Testament by the apostles, which happens more than 300 times, the Septuagint translation is used 70% of the time. This shows that the apostles considered more than 39 books worthy of faith. Therefore, it is not surprising that many Church Fathers consider the Deuterocanonical books sacred and frequently cite them in their writings, even Origen (Contre Celses, V, XIX ; Traité des principes, II, 2 ; Homélies sur les Nombres, III, éditons du Cerf).

d) The Catholic Church did not decide on the canon of Scripture until the 16th century, at the Council of Trent, and added seven books to the Bible.

Although we have just demonstrated that in the 1st century there was no firm and definitive canon of Scripture in Jamnia, and we have seen that not all Jews agreed with each other, let us suppose that a firm and definitive list had been established by all Jews. This does not resolve or justify the Protestant position of the 39 books. Indeed, Christians are not obliged to align themselves with Jewish beliefs and decisions. It is not the competence of Jewish rabbis to decide on the Christian biblical canon, as they do not have the authority for this. That is a matter of Christian

authority, and that authority lies in the Church founded by Christ. It was the same Church in the year 382, at the Council of Rome presided over by Pope Damasus I, when a list of 73 canonical books was first established. This list remains valid today in the Catholic Church. Whether we like it or not, the Bible was born within and thanks to the early Church (Catholic today, being the only one to recognize the primacy of the Pope). Furthermore, this date of 382 is crucial because it demonstrates that Christians and the Church had decided on a canon of Scripture long before rabbinic Judaism did, and it included 46 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament.

It is important to emphasize this point because many claim that it was at the Council of Trent (1545-1563) that the Catholic Church added seven books to the Bible. But this claim is historically false. In addition to the Scripture canon dating back to the Council of Rome in the year 382, we also have the Synod of Hippo in the year 393, the Council of Carthage in the year 397, and much later the Council of Florence in the year 1439, which reaffirm this list. Moreover, the first printed Bible dates back to before 1460, nearly a century before the start of the Council of Trent, and already contained 73 books (see the Gutenberg Bible). The Council of Trent merely reaffirmed the list already recognized in the past[9].

[9] To avoid any controversy or prevent Protestants from using this argument against us, 29 years after the end of the Council of Trent, in

Another point we can add is that when Luther decided to translate the Bible into German, he translated these 73 books. Those who refuse to believe this can look up Luther's Bible from 1534, eleven years before the Council of Trent began, and they will see that it has 73 books and not 66. It is true that Luther criticized seven books of the Old Testament, calling them apocryphal, because they opposed his beliefs (intercession of angels, purgatory, prayer for the dead, indulgences, communion of the saints...), although, contradictorily, he considered them at the same time useful and good to read. He also criticized books of the New Testament that opposed his beliefs or had some ideas similar to the Deuterocanonical books, such as Rev, Heb, and also the Epistle of James, which he called a "straw epistle" (see chapter 5). However, Luther never removed these books from the Bible, and very few have undertaken a similar project. It was not until the 19th century (1826) that the *British and Foreign Bible Society* began mass-producing Bibles without the Deuterocanonical books.

1592, until 1979, three additional books (the Prayer of Manasseh as well as 3 and 4 Esdras) appeared at the end of the New Testament and in smaller print. However, these books were not considered canonical but "anagignoskomena," meaning good and useful for reading. Therefore, we have always maintained 73 recognized canonical books and not 76.

e) Other arguments frequently used

Now that we have laid the groundwork and demonstrated so far that the arguments and accusations of these Protestants against the Deuterocanonical books are unfounded, we can also say that their arguments and doctrines can be counterproductive. In other words, before coming to attack us for our biblical canon, they should first ensure that theirs is coherent, as contradictions and inconsistencies abound. The first thing to ask them, as followers of Scripture Alone, is: where in the Bible does it say that the Old Testament will have 39 books, 46 books, or 80? Nowhere! How, then, can they tell us that there must be only 39 books? Then, these Protestants often take the pretext that these books are of Greek origin and, therefore, cannot be recognized as canonical. We have already seen that, in reality only two books are of Greek origin. But even assuming that all the Deuterocanonical books were, once again, as followers of Scripture Alone, we will ask them to find us a verse that says that no book can be recognized as inspired by God if it is written in Greek. Surely, we will have to wait a long time, as there is no such verse. Another argument often used by these Protestants is to say that none of these books is cited in the New Testament. Again, since, according to them, all their doctrines are based on the Bible, we will ask them: where is it written in the Bible that an Old Testament book must be quoted in the New Testament to be recognized as inspired by God? The answer is simple: nowhere. Second contradiction, in that

case, why have they retained many other books of the Old, Nehemiah, Esther, Eccl, Song of Songs, etc.) although they are also not directly cited in the New Testament? On the contrary, why do they not have in their Bible the books of pagan poets like Menander[10], Aratus[11] or Epimenides[12], even though they are cited by Paul in the New Testament? Following this same logic, why do they not have in their Bible all the books cited in the Old Testament? (Books of the Acts of Solomon, Book of the prophet Nathan, Book of Shemaiah, Chr of the Kgs of Media and Persia...)

Furthermore, we will demonstrate, not to try to justify ourselves, but only for the sake of religious culture and truth, that there are passages in the Deuterocanonical books that are cited in the New Testament. Again, this is not for us Catholics a source of proof or argument, as we do not claim that the Old Testament books must be cited in the New. On the contrary, as it is a condition for Protestants who reject the Deuterocanonical books, if we show them otherwise, they will have no choice but to accept them if they are consistent with themselves. Here is a non-exhaustive list of examples, but one that cannot be denied by taking hostage the excuse of interpretation.

As mentioned above, only in Maccabees **(**cf. **1 Maccabees 4:36-59; 2 Maccabees 1:18; 2 Maccabees 10:1-**

[10] 1Cor 15, 33; Acts 18, 25-26
[11] Acts 17, 28a
[12] Tt 1, 12

8), is the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple mentioned, better known as Hanukkah. This is picked up in **Jn 10:22**: *"The feast of the Dedication was then taking place in Jerusalem. It was winter."*

None of the 39 books we have in common says there are seven angels. Only the book of Tobit mentions this **(Tobit 12:15)**, and it is taken up in the New Testament by John **(**cf. **Rev 8:2; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9)**. The book of Wisdom, which is indeed of Greek origin, reveals several prophecies about Jesus **(Wisdom 2:12-20)**, which will be fulfilled at the time of his passion and which are taken up in the four Gospels. This shows that Wisdom is a book inspired by God or, failing that, that the four evangelists wrote false things and are liars. Question: why, then, did these Protestants retain the four Gospels if they verify the prophecy of an apocryphal book? It is totally contradictory. In reality, it is, above all, a serious mistake to have removed the book of Wisdom from the Bible when we know **2 Pet 1:21**:

"For no prophecy ever came through human will; but rather human beings moved by the Holy Spirit spoke under the influence of God."

The Book of Wisdom also speaks of something new that we will find everywhere in the New Testament, namely the idea of life after death. It is, first of all, the idea of the immortality of the soul and, secondly, the idea of reward. That is, they (the souls of the righteous) will have their

reward with God on Judgment Day, while the souls of the wicked will live eternally in misery. In the other books of the Old Testament, the fate of the righteous has a different conception. It is rather a virtue that benefits them on earth (living well, long, and happy life, success in everything they undertake, etc.), but ceases with their physical death. However, this conception that the righteous enjoy a better earthly life than the unrighteous is not always fulfilled. Indeed, some righteous people die before the unrighteous, others are sterile, and others experience illnesses and persecution. This reality does not escape the author of the Book of Wisdom, who teaches us a new vision, which is that being righteous on earth does not necessarily mean that we will see all the graces here on earth, but certainly in the hereafter.

Conclusion

There will always be Protestants who, in order to defend their doctrines, will continue to launch accusations against the Catholic Church instead of questioning themselves and facing reality and truth. But I hope that these twelve chapters have served to raise awareness among the Protestant community. I also hope that this book has helped Catholics better understand and defend their faith. Finally, I hope to have also encouraged readers to dedicate more time to their religious education.

ABBREVIATION OF THE BIBLICAL BOOKS USED

(New American Bible NABRE)

Acts - Acts of the Apostles

Chr – Chronicles

Col - Colossians

Cor - Corinthians

Deut - Deuteronomy

Eccl - Ecclesiastes

Eph - Ephesians

Ezek - Ezekiel

Ex - Exodus

Gal - Galatians

Gen - Genesis

Heb - Hebrews

Isa - Isaiah

Jas - James

Judg - Judges

Kgs - Kings

Lev - Leviticus

Mal - Malachi

Mark - Mark

Mt - Matthew

Num - Numbers

Pet - Peter

Phil - Philippians

Ps - Psalm

Rev - Revelation

Rom - Romans

Sam - Samuel

Thess - Thessalonians

SUMMARY

To contact the author:

matteobonnoapologetique@gmail.com

You can reach out to the author in French, English, or Spanish. However, for the message to be forwarded, emails should be constructive.