

WHY BE CATHOLIC?

With all due respect for

ORTHODOX, EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTS, JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES, etc...

Catechesis n. 4 "From zero to the Eucharist ..." How to go, step by step, to the party that never ends!

Cathedral of Noto – Saturday Jan. 18 and 25 (and Feb. 1) 2014 / 8:30pm-9:30pm

(Catechesis is on two levels; young people and adults in front of the ambo,
children in the sacristy (with pictures to color or etc. that relate to the theme))

We will read and try to explain various passages from the...

- **Word of God (AT, NT)**
- **Teaching of the Catholic Church (from the Fathers to now)**
- **Experiences...**



(INTRODUCTION : - **Why?..** (cf. [John 14:6; Eph 3:21; 1John 2:19; John 10:16b; Rom 11:23])
- and **how to dialogue with them?**, Cf. John 10:16a and current Magisterium which follows...

SOME POINTS FROM THE MAGISTERIUM on ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

1 – POPE PAUL VI

1.1 – The three ways in *Ecclesiam suam*, introductory to the dialogue about Scripturist origin¹

1.2 - Conditions² and Characteristics³ for a peaceful dialogue.

1.3 – Circular structure of the dialogue, "ecclesiocentric"⁴.

¹ THE THREE WAYS or thoughts for dialogue: 1) *The awareness or knowledge of itself* (as the Church) in relationship to the Scriptures; 2) *amendment of defects* (in relationship to Christ); 3) from the 2 previous thoughts then the *Dialogue* with the world around, *the relations* that the Church of today must establish with the world that surrounds it and in which it lives and works (Cf. **PAUL VI**, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, nn. 10-12ff).

² CONDITIONS for a peaceful dialogue with all: *consideration, esteem, understanding, kindness* on the part of the one who engages in it (Cf. **PAUL VI**, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, n.79).

³ CHARACTERISTICS of a peaceful dialogue: *Clarity, meekness, confidence, prudence* (Cf. **PAUL VI**, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, n. 81).

⁴ THIRD CIRCLE (nearest to us Catholics): the separated Christian brethren:

"And so we come to the circle which is nearest to us, and which comprises all those who take their name from Christ. In this area the *ecumenical dialogue*, as it is called, is already in being, and there are places where it is beginning to make considerable progress. There is much more that could be said on this complex and delicate matter, but this will not be Our final word on the subject. So for the moment We will merely refer in passing to a few fairly obvious points. We readily accept the principle of stressing what we all have in common rather than what divides us. This provides a good and fruitful basis for our dialogue, and we are prepared to engage upon it with a will. We would even go further and declare our readiness to examine how we can meet the legitimate desires of our separated Christian brothers on many points of difference concerning tradition, spirituality, canon law, and worship, for it is Our dearest wish to embrace them in a perfect union of faith and charity. We must stress however that it is not in Our power to make any concessions regarding the integrity of the faith and the obligations of charity. We realize that this may cause misgiving and opposition in certain quarters, but now that the Catholic Church has on its own initiative taken steps to restore the unity of Christ's fold, it will not cease to exercise the greatest prudence and deliberation. It will continue to insist that the claims it makes for itself-claims which still have the effect of alienating the separated brethren-derive from the will of Christ, not from any spirit of self-aggrandizement based on the record of its past achievements, nor from any unsound theological speculation. Rightly understood, they will be seen to be for the good of all, for the common unity, liberty and fullness of the Christian life. The Catholic Church will never cease to prepare itself by prayer and penance for the longed-for reconciliation. That We, who promote this reconciliation, should be regarded by many of Our separated brothers as an obstacle to it, is a matter of deep distress to Us. The obstacle would seem to be the primacy of honor and jurisdiction which Christ bestowed on the Apostle Peter, and which We have inherited as his Successor. Are there not those who say that unity between the separated Churches and the Catholic Church would be more easily achieved if the primacy of the Roman pontiff were done away with? We beg our separated brothers to consider the groundlessness of this opinion. Take away the sovereign Pontiff and the Catholic Church would no longer be catholic. Moreover, without the supreme, effective, and authoritative pastoral office of Peter the unity of Christ's Church would collapse. It would be vain to look for other principles of unity in place of the true one established by Christ Himself. As St. Jerome rightly observed: 'There would be as many schisms in the Church as there are priests'" (**PAUL VI**, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, nn. 109-110).

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1. ORTHODOX

BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTES⁵

The Eastern Schism (1054)

- Reciprocal mistrust grew partly due to the fact that the Byzantines and the Latins were vying for influence in southern Italy. Already several years before the schism, the diplomatic relations between Rome and Byzantium had broken down and the name of the Pope was not being recited during the [Eastern] liturgical offices.
- In 1052, Michael Cerularius, the Patriarch of Byzantium (from 1043 to 1058), closed the churches of his jurisdiction in which the Latin rite was celebrated. In 1053, the Eastern church suggested the impossibility of its union with the Church of Rome, advancing various arguments – including their refusal to use unleavened bread in the Mass, the suppression of the Alleluia in Lent, etc.
- In order to clarify things, the Latins first sent a letter of response with various appeals to peace and reminders of the conditions for an enduring peace. Then Pope Leo IX sent Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida, the Chancellor of the Roman Church Federico di Lorena, and the Archbishop Pietro di Amalfi, as legates. The Byzantine patriarch excluded them from his communion. So they left a bull of excommunication against the patriarch on the altar of the church of Hagia Sophia (July 16, 1054), then they left the church, shook the dust from their sandals (according to the word of Jesus), and left. Michael Cerularius called for a synodal declaration condemning the actions of the papal legates, accusing the Church of Rome of many errors (including the addition of the *"Filioque"* to the Creed and the mention of the Holy Spirit at the end of the *"Gloria in excelsis"*, the prohibition of marriage to priests, etc.).

First resolution of the differences at the Second Council of Lyons (1274) and successive refusal of the Orthodox.

- In February 1274, the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII and some Byzantine metropolitans and bishops were adhering to and proclaiming the profession of faith of Pope Clement IV. At this point, Pope Gregory X convened a council in Lyons, where the Greek delegation had to present itself. On July 16, the fourth session of the council unfolded, dedicated to union with the Greeks. Gregory X affirmed that the Greeks "came freely in obedience to the Roman Church." The Greek delegates repeated the act of obedience and profession of faith already formulated by the emperor in Constantinople the preceding February. There followed the solemn chanting of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed with the addition of the Filioque. The act of union only lasted as long as its enactors...after the death of Michael VIII (1282), his son and successor, Andronicus, an anti-unionist, immediately repudiated the profession of faith of his father as well as every contact with the West.

Second resolution of the differences at the Council of Florence (1439)

- At the Council of Florence, the Catholics and the Orthodox formulated together a decree of union, *"Laetentur Caeli,"* approved by both sides on July 6, 1439. With this decree, the various doctrinal issues were resolved (as to the question of the *"Filioque,"* the two formulas of the creed were accepted; both parties recognized the validity of the consecration of leavened as well as unleavened bread; the three states after death were affirmed [beatitude, hell, and purgatory]; and – in particular! – the dogma of papal primacy was reaffirmed, and a hierarchy among the various patriarchs was established with the first place being given to the patriarch of Rome.

The final refusal of the Orthodox and the fall of Byzantium (1453)

- Later, however, in the reality of their actions, the Orthodox did not accept this decree. Not long afterwards, in 1453, the (Muslim) Ottoman Emperor, Mahomed II, attacked Byzantium (the see of the most important Orthodox patriarch). The Orthodox monks, rejecting the agreement that had been reached with the Church of Rome in 1439, fled towards Russia, to Moscow, where they planted their Orthodox religion and their opposition to Rome.

⁵ (Cfr. AMANN E. e DUMAS A., *Storia della Chiesa VII, L'Epoca Feudale. La Chiesa del Particolarismo (888-1057)*, Seconda edizione italiana a cura di Ovidio Capitano, Ediz. S.A.I.E., 1976 Torino, pp.150-202; Cfr. LEMONNIER MICHEL, *Storia della Chiesa. Dalla Pentecoste ai nostri giorni*, Ediz. Isg, Vicenza 2002², p. 198-199 ; Cfr http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concilio_di_Lione_II, [18-01-2014] ; P. CHENAUX, Dispensa: *Storia della Chiesa II*. Facoltà di Teologia PUL, II ciclo, corso 10136. A. A. 2008-9, pp. 14-15; DOCUMENTARIO VIDEO, *Quel giorno a Nazareth. Chiari e scuri. 14° puntata*, a cura di M. De Gioia, L. De Mata, F. Moraglia; Cfr http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fratelli_di_Ges%C3%B9#Fratellastri [27-01-2014]; ROPES JAMES H., *Epistle of St. James*, Vol. 41 di *"International critical commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments International Critical Commentary"*, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000, pp.55-59s.).

1.1. PETRINE PRIMACY?

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

FORESHADOWING THE PETRINE PRIMACY?

- ✓ “They shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my ordinances, observe, my statutes, and keep them.” (Ezek 37:24)

NEW TESTAMENT

PETRINE PRIMACY!

- ✓ “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd.” (John 10:16 b). And who is the Shepherd of whom Jesus speaks?
- ✓ “Peter [...], be the shepherd of my sheep!” (John 21:16)⁶.
- ✓ “And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt 16:18).

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

IT IS NECESSARY TO BE IN COMMUNION WITH THE CHURCH OF ROME

- ✓ --- **ST. IRENAEUS OF LYONS** (Bishop and Martyr, 130 - † 202) : “It is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with the Roman Church, on account of its preeminent authority.” (ST. IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies*, III, 3, 2).

PRIMACY OF THE BISHOP OF ROME EVEN OVER THE BISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE I** (381): “Because it is new Rome, the bishop of Constantinople is to enjoy the privileges of honour after the bishop of Rome.” (COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE I, *Canons*, can. 3) – this was confirmed again at the **COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON** in 451.

MEDIEVAL AGE

UNIVERSAL PRIMACY OF THE BISHOP OF ROME

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF FLORENCE** (1439): “We also define that the holy apostolic see and the Roman pontiff holds the primacy over the whole world and the Roman pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter prince of the apostles, and that he is the true vicar of Christ, the head of the whole church and the father and teacher of all Christians, and to him was committed in blessed Peter the full power of tending, ruling and governing the whole church, as is contained also in the acts of ecumenical councils and in the sacred canons.” (COUNCIL OF FLORENCE, *Definition*, 6 July 1439)

MODERN AGE

- ✓ --- **VATICAN COUNCIL I** (1869-1870): “Therefore, if anyone says that it is not by the institution of Christ the lord himself (that is to say, by divine law) that blessed Peter should have perpetual successors in the primacy over the whole church; or that the Roman pontiff is not the successor of blessed Peter in this primacy: let him be anathema.” (VATICAN COUNCIL I, *Dogmatic Constitution Pastor Aeternus*, 18 July 1870, II)

⁶ John 21:16b in Original Greek: « λέγει αὐτῷ (he said to him [Jesus to Peter]): ποιμαίνε (be shepherd) τὰ πρόβατά μου (of the sheep of mine) ”). (John 21:16 BGT very similar to the Codex Vaticanus).

UNITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

- ✓ --- VATICAN COUNCIL II (1963-1965): “...This is the one Church of Christ which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Saviour, after His Resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd [cf. John 21:17], and... erected for all ages as ‘the pillar and mainstay of the truth’ [cf. 1 Tim 3:15]. This Church... subsists in the Catholic Church... although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity.” (VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 16 November 1964, n. 8)

WHAT AUTHORITY TO THE BISHOPS HAVE WHO ARE NOT UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE POPE?

- ✓ --- VATICAN COUNCIL II (1963-1965): “... But the college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter as its head. The pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact.... For our Lord placed Simon alone as the rock and the bearer of the keys of the Church [cf. Matt 16:18-19], and made him shepherd of the whole flock [cf. John 21:15ff]; it is evident, however, that the power of binding and loosing, which was given to Peter [cf. Matt 16:19], was granted also to the college of apostles, joined with their head [cf. Matt 18:18; 28:16-20]. This college, insofar as it is composed of many, expresses the variety and universality of the People of God, but insofar as it is assembled under one head, it expresses the unity of the flock of Christ.” (VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 16 November 1964, n. 22)

Experiences

- ✓ The story of the orthodox man to whom a Catholic friar pointed out that an Orthodox patriarch never makes a pronouncement for everyone as the Pope does for the Catholic Church

1.2. TRUE SACRAMENTS OR CERTAIN SACRAMENTS?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

WHERE IS THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST "CERTAIN"?

- ✓ "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (*John 6:54*). But administered by whom?
- ✓ "I shall give you the benefits assured to [or 'certain for'] David!" (*Acts 13:34 b*). But in which Christian denomination?⁷

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

- ✓ --- **ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH** (Bishop and Martyr, † 107): "Let that Eucharist be considered certain, brothers, which is celebrated under the Bishop or the one to whom he has delegated that office." (SANT'IGNAZIO DI ANTIOCHIA, *Lettera agli Smirnesi*, 8: PG 5, 713, unpublished translation by pfsgm)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

- ✓ --- **JOHN PAUL II** (Pope from 1978 -†2005): "As Saint Ignatius of Antioch wrote: 'That Eucharist which is celebrated under the Bishop, or under one to whom the Bishop has given this charge, may be considered certain.' Likewise, since 'the Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity of the Bishops and of the multitude of the faithful', communion with him is intrinsically required for the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice." (POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 17 April 2003, n. 39)

Experiences

- ✓ The vision of a Catholic about Jesus and the Catholic communion, or the sword (of the Spirit that is the Word of God - cf. *Eph 6:17* - and of the various religious sources - cf. *Rom 2:12-16*).

⁷ To get the answer to this question, go (still in the Ecumenical theme in this file or sheets) to the Patristic era in the writings of Saint Ignatius of Antioch and in the Contemporary era in the writings of John Paul II, and you will better understand the Magisterial solution to the problem of which is the most certain Eucharist, given that our Orthodox brothers also have true sacraments. (Cfr. *Unitatis Redintegratio* n. 15).

2. PROTESTANTS / EVANGELICALS

(BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTES)⁸

Founder: Martin Luther (1483-1546)

- son of a farmer in Eisleben,
- on July 2, 1505, while on a journey, he was surprised by a hurricane. A lightning bolt struck nearby. The student was seized with terror, and turned to St. Ann: *"If you help me, St. Ann, I'll become a monk"*.
- On July 17, 1505, at 22, he entered the Augustinian convent at Erfurt.
- In 1507, he was also ordained a priest.
- From 1512 he was a professor of theology at the university of Wittenberg.

In 1517 Luther affixed his 95 theses to the door of the church of the castle of Wittenberg.

- Here, he mainly opposed the question of indulgences.

Doctrinal points :

- He maintained that, in order to be saved, one needed: faith alone, and not works; Scripture alone, and not tradition (according to him, only the authority of the Bible and individual interpretation of the Word of God are valid); grace alone, and not goodwill.
- He maintained that hierarchy should be abolished, as well as the magisterium, ministerial priesthood (and the sacraments, except for baptism and the last supper), and devotion to Mary and the Saints.

Excommunication

- In 1518 Pope Leo X invited Luther to come to Rome, but he refused the invitation, appealing to a general Council.
- In 1520 Pope Leo X condemned Luther's erroneous doctrines (in the bull "Exsurge")
- In 1521, in the face of Luther's refusal to submit, the Pope excommunicated him.

The German princes defended Luther (also for political reasons: they wanted independence from emperor Charles V and the Pope)

- Luther published his works, including:
 - *"To the Christian nobility of the German nation,"* a work in which Luther invited the German nobility to demolish the three pillars of "Rome:" the distinction between clergy and people; the exclusive rite of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to interpret the Scripture; the exclusive right of the Pope to call an ecumenical council.
 - a German translation of the Bible.
 - *"Against the papacy of Rome, founded by the devil"*.
 - In 1536, the principal Protestants refused to participate in the Council of Trent.
 - In 1555, with the "peace of Augusta," the Protestant confession of faith was recognized in the realm as having the same rights as that of the Catholics, and the princes were able to establish which of the two should be recognized in their own territories.
- The Churches which came out of the Protestant Reform of the 16th Century are generally called Evangelical Churches.

Written by Luther at the end of his life:

[To himself:] "Do you think that all the teachers of the past did not know? That our fathers were all fools? That you alone, in these last days, have been inspired by the Holy Spirit? That God has let His people go astray for so many years?... How many times my heart has pounded, how many times it has punished and reproved me with this single and most powerful thought. Only you are wise? All the others would have gone wrong, and would have been wrong for so much time? And if you are making a mistake, and dragging so many people into error, how much greater will be your eternal condemnation?" (M. LUTERO, *Werke*, Ediz. Uffiziale di Weimar del 1883, in: LEMONNIER MICHEL, *Storia della Chiesa. Dalla Pentecoste ai nostri giorni*, Ediz. Isg, Vicenza 2002², p. 320, unpublished translation by pfgsm).

Various branches following from the Protestant Reform (cf. FAMILY TREE of the Separated Brothers):

The Churches which derive from the Protestant Reform of the 16th Century are generally called Evangelical Churches (that is, all the Protestants). Among them, many different branches have formed:

- The Lutherans, various denominations which (in their state, regional, ecclesial, or free forms) are based on Martin Luther.
- The faith communities which are linked to the doctrines of Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) and of John Calvin (1509-1564) are called "Reformed" (in Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, France) and "Presbyterian" in the Anglo-Saxon countries (England, United States).
- Of Calvinistic derivation is Puritanism, developed in England, Scotland, and North America. In contrast to the Anglicans, who give great priority to worship, the Puritans prioritize a severe personal morality.
- From Puritanism come the Independents, the Baptists and the Quakers.
- The preaching of Philip Jacob Spener, the founder of German Pietism, also contributed to the diffusion of the evangelical movement, as did the teaching of John Wesley (1703-1791), the founder of the Methodist denomination, which derives from an association at Oxford in 1729 of some religious Anglicans. The Methodist Church is one of the largest free churches in the United States.

⁸ (Cfr. DE MOREAU E., JOURDA PIERRE E JANELLE PIERRE, *Storia della Chiesa XVI. La Crisi religiosa del secolo XVI*, Edizione italiana a cura di Aldo Stella, Ediz. S.A.I.E., 1980 Torino, pp.150-202 ; Cfr. LEMONNIER MICHEL, *Storia della Chiesa. Dalla Pentecoste ai nostri giorni*, Ediz. Isg, Vicenza 2002², p. 309-311 ; <http://www.fmboschetto.it/religione/Purgatorio.htm> , [16-01-2014] ; P. CHENAUX, Dispensa: *Storia della Chiesa II*. Facoltà di Teologia PUL, II ciclo, corso 10136. A. A. 2008-9, p. 27; cfr ENCICLOPEDIA ENCARTA, *Evangelicismo*, Microsoft Encarta, 2009).

- From the American movements of sanctification, influenced by the Methodists and Baptists, there broke off in the second half of the 19th Century various Pentecostal denominations; they attribute their enthusiastic/emotional devotion to the work of the Holy Spirit, pointing to the experience of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2).
- Founded in 1831/2 by the Baptist William Miller (USA), the Adventists are awaiting the end of the world...
- All the other separated denominations can be found at the end of this file at the FAMILY TREE OF CHURCHES AND DENOMINATIONS.

Other Doctrinal Points of the Protestants: Protestants and Evangelicals also argue against:

- the existence of purgatory.
- devotion to sacred images and statues.

2.1. FAITH ALONE? WITHOUT WORKS?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ "Faith without works is dead!" (*James 2:26*)
- ✓ "...but wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness. Yes, affliction and distress will come upon every human being who does evil, Jew first and then Greek. But there will be glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good, Jew first and then Greek." (*Rom 2:8-10*)
- ✓ "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." (*Eph 2:10*)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

- ✓ --- **ST. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR** (580 - † 662): *"You should not say: 'Faith alone in our Lord Jesus Christ can save me.' By itself faith accomplishes nothing. For even the devils believe and shudder. No, faith must be joined to an active love of God which is expressed in good works. The charitable man is distinguished by sincere and long-suffering service to his fellow man: it also means using things aright."* (ST. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Chapters on charity*, I, in: *Office of Read.*, VII Sunday O.T.)

MEDIEVAL AGE

- ✓ --- **ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA** (1195 - † 1231): *"Preaching is effective...when deeds speak...We are full of words but empty of actions... Let's do deeds or bear fruit that are worthy of conversion (cf. Luke 3: 8-9; Matt 3: 8-10); otherwise we will be cursed by the Lord, since he himself cursed the fig tree when he found no fruit but only leaves. (Which could symbolize having only words without deeds)."*
(S. ANTONIO DI PADOVA, *Discorsi*, I, 226, in: *Uff. d. Lett.*, 13 giugno, unpublished translation by pfsgm)

MODERN AGE

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF TRENT** (1545-1563): *"This disposition, or preparation, is followed by Justification itself, which is not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace, and of the gifts, whereby man of unjust becomes just, and of an enemy a friend, that so he may be an heir according to hope of life everlasting. Of this Justification the causes are these: the final cause indeed is the glory of God and of Jesus Christ, and life everlasting; while the efficient cause is a merciful God who washes and sanctifies gratuitously, signing, and anointing with the holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance; but the meritorious cause is His most beloved only-begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when we were enemies, for the exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, merited Justification for us by His most holy Passion on the wood of the cross, and made satisfaction for us unto God the Father; the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which (faith) no man was ever justified; lastly, the alone formal cause is the justice of God, not that whereby He Himself is just, but that whereby He maketh us just, that, to wit, with which we being endowed by Him, are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and we are not only reputed, but are truly called, and are, just, receiving justice within*

us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost distributes to every one as He wills, and according to each one's proper disposition and co-operation. For, although no one can be just, but he to whom the merits of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are communicated, yet is this done in the said justification of the impious, when by the merit of that same most holy Passion, the charity of God is poured forth, by the Holy Spirit, in the hearts of those that are justified, and is inherent therein: whence, man, through Jesus Christ, in whom he is ingrafted, receives, in the said justification, together with the remission of sins, all these (gifts) infused at once, faith, hope, and charity. For faith, unless hope and charity be added thereto, neither unites man perfectly with Christ, nor makes him a living member of His body. For which reason it is most truly said, that Faith without works is dead and profitless; and, In Christ Jesus neither circumcision, availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by charity. This faith, Catechumen's beg of the Church-agreeably to a tradition of the apostles previously to the sacrament of Baptism; when they beg for the faith which bestows life everlasting, which, without hope and charity, faith cannot bestow: whence also do they immediately hear that word of Christ; If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. Wherefore, when receiving true and Christian justice, they are bidden, immediately on being born again, to preserve it pure and spotless, as the first robe given them through Jesus Christ in lieu of that which Adam, by his disobedience, lost for himself and for us, that so they may bear it before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, and may have life everlasting... Having, therefore, been thus justified, and made the friends and domestics of God, advancing from virtue to virtue, they are renewed, as the Apostle says, day by day; that is, by mortifying the members of their own flesh, and by presenting them as instruments of justice unto sanctification, they, through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, faith co-operating with good works, increase in that justice which they have received through the grace of Christ, and are still further justified, as it is written; He that is just, let him be justified still; and again, Be not afraid to be justified even to death; and also, Do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. And this increase of justification holy Church begs, when she prays, 'Give unto us, O Lord, increase of faith, hope, and charity.'"

(COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decree on Justification*, VII, X, 13 January 1547)

Experiences

- ✓ The conversion to Catholicism of a very popular Protestant preacher and his wife, who were struck (among other things) by the Catholic Church's effort to have a true coherence between faith and works. This preacher and his wife "have seen in the Catholic Church 'a great love for Jesus and a sane theology, founded on the Bible and the classic dogmas,' they have experienced 'the riches of the sacramental life,' they have observed the logic of maintaining 'a solid priestly structure which conserves the faith of the Church and transmits it to successive generations,' and they have encountered 'an ethical and moral strength, a coherency that is capable of confronting the mentality of the world, and a loving care towards the poor and the weakest.'"

(cf. IL TIMONE, *Si converte al cattolicesimo Ulf Ekman, popolarissimo predicatore protestante. Un tornado scuote la Svezia*, in : <http://www.iltimone.org/30635,News.html>, [31-03-2014], unpublished translation by pfsgm)

2.2. SCRIPTURE ALONE? WITHOUT CHURCH TRADITION?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ It is true that it is written, "so that you may learn from us not to go beyond what is written" (1Cor 4:6), but we also read, "brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours..." (2Thess 2:15)
- ✓ "[T]here is no prophecy of scripture that is a matter of personal interpretation." (2Pet 1:20)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

MODERN AGE

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF TRENT** (1545-1563): *“no one, relying on his own skill, shall,--in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, --wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church,--whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,--hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.”*
(COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Second Decree: Concerning the Edition and Use of the Sacred Books*, 8 April 1546)
- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF TRENT** (1545-1563): *“The sacred and holy, ecumenical, and general Synod of Trent,--lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the Same three legates of the Apostolic See presiding therein,--keeping this always in view, that, errors being removed, the purity itself of the Gospel be preserved in the Church; which (Gospel), before promised through the prophets in the holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first promulgated with His own mouth, and then commanded to be preached by His Apostles to every creature, as the fountain of all, both saving truth, and moral discipline; and seeing clearly that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand; (the Synod) following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety, and reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament--seeing that one God is the author of both --as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession.”* (COUNCIL OF TRENT, *First Decree: Concerning the Canonical Scriptures*, 8 April 1546)

2.3. GRACE ALONE, OR ALSO GOOD WILL?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ “Glory to God in the highest, and peace⁹ to people of goodwill.¹⁰”
(cf. **Luke 2:14**, Bibbia Italiana CEI 1974, unpublished translation by pfsgm)
- ✓ “For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.” (**Phil 2:13**)
- ✓ “For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ.... [I]f the eagerness is there, it is acceptable according to what one has...” (**2Cor 8:9-12ff**).

Teaching of the Catholic Church

MODERN AGE

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF TRENT** (1545-1563): *“If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.”*
(COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decree on Justification*, can. 9)
- ✓ “If any one saith, that man's free will moved and excited by God, by assenting to God exciting and calling, nowise co-operates towards disposing and preparing itself for obtaining the grace of Justification; that it cannot refuse its consent, if it would, but that, as something inanimate, it does nothing whatever and is merely passive; let him be anathema.”
(COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decree on Justification*, can. 4)

⁹ Cf. 2 Pet 1:2, *may grace and peace be yours in abundance through knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*.

¹⁰ Good will, from the original Greek: « εὐδοκία », — good will (Lk 2:14 – BibleWorks, Greek text BGT)

2.4. IS THE EUCHARISTIC PRESENCE TEMPORARY? (THAT IS, DOES THE PRESENCE OF JESUS LEAVE THE EUCHARIST?)

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ Jesus said: *"Take and eat; this is my body.... this is my blood of the covenant"* (Matt 26:26-28).
He said, this is my body and this is my blood, but He didn't say, only for a little while...
in fact, Scripture itself explains:
- ✓ *"The blood of the eternal covenant!"* (Heb 13:20)
- ✓ *"For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink"* (John 6:55).
Always! (cf. Heb 13:20).
- ✓ *"It is acceptable according to what one has."* (2Cor 8:9-12ff)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

MODERN AGE

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF TRENT** (1545-1563): *"If any one saith, that, after the consecration is completed, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not in the admirable sacrament of the Eucharist, but (are there) only during the use, whilst it is being taken, and not either before or after; and that, in the hosts, or consecrated particles, which are reserved or which remain after communion, the true Body of the Lord remaineth not; let him be anathema."*
(COUNCIL OF TRENT, Decree Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, 11 October 1551, can. 4)

Experiences

- ✓ *The story of the child who wanted to pray in the Church where Jesus was...*

2.5. WHAT ABOUT THE INTERCESSION OF OUR LADY AND THE SAINTS?

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ The Lord says: *"If they were prophets, if the word of the LORD were with them, then they would intercede with the LORD of hosts."* (Jer 27:18)
- ✓ The people say to Moses: *"You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we shall die."* (Ex 20:19)
- ✓ *"[S]ince you are a devout woman, pray for us."* (Judith 8:31)
- ✓ *"Inquire for us of the LORD.... Perhaps the LORD will act for us in accord with his wonderful works"*
(Jer 21:2)
- ✓ *"They said to Samuel, 'Pray to the LORD your God for us, your servants, that we may not die...'"*
(1Sam 12:19)

NEW TESTAMENT

JESUS HEAD (AND BODY?)

- ✓ *"For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus"* (1Tm 2:5).
But is Jesus Christ only the Head, or does He also have a Body that completes in itself that which is lacking through its own sufferings?
- ✓ *"Now I rejoice in my sufferings" – says the Apostle – "for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church"* (Col 1:24),

- ✓ “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation [...] appealing through us” (2Cor 5:19-20).
- ✓ “So that all might believe through him [John the Baptist]” (John 1:7).

MARY

- ✓ “A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun ... and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child ... She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and to His throne. ... Then the dragon became angry with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God’s commandments and bear witness to Jesus.” (Rev 12:1-2, 5, 17). Therefore:
are you allied with this woman? If so, you are in possession of the true witness to Jesus.
If you are not allied with this woman, be careful...maybe you are allied with the dragon!
(Said with all respect for you!)
- ✓ Mary intercedes for the miracle of the wine: (cf. John 2:3).
- ✓ Before all is finished, Jesus says to the disciple: “Behold, your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home” (John 19:26-27).
So have you received Mary into your house, or your life?, If so, you are a disciple of Jesus...if not, what are you? (with all respect!)

SAINTS

- ✓ “Simon said in reply, Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.” (Acts 8:24)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

CAN'T THE CHRIST WHO INTERCEDES BE THE WHOLE CHRIST (HEAD AND BODY – CF. COL 1:18, 24)? (cf. POSTMODERN AGE – DOES ONLY JESUS SAVE?)

- ✓ --- **ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO** (Bishop, 354 - † 430): “And Esaias [Isaiah] remembers right well that they are two: for speaking in the person of Christ he says, ‘He has set a mitre upon me as upon a bridegroom, and adorned me with an ornament as a bride.’ One seems to speak, yet makes Himself at once Bridegroom and Bride; because ‘not two, but one flesh:’ because ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us.’ To that flesh the Church is joined, and so there is made the whole Christ, Head and body.” (ST. AUGUSTINE, Commentary on the first letter of John, I, 2)
- ✓ --- **ST. CLEMENT I** (Pope from 88 to † 97): “The head is nothing without the feet, just as the feet are nothing without the head. The smallest parts of our body are necessary and valuable to the whole. All work together and are mutually subject for the preservation of the whole body.” (POPE ST. CLEMENT, Letter to the Corinthians, XXXV, in: Office of Read., 23 November)

OUR LADY AND THE SAINTS INTERCEDE FOR US INSOFAR AS...

- ✓ --- **ST. JOHN DAMASCENE** (Bishop, 650 - † 749): “First, those places in which God, who alone is holy, has rested, and His resting-place in the saints [cf. Is 57:15], as in the holy Mother of God and in all the saints. These are they who are made like to God as far as possible, of their own free will, and by God’s indwelling, and by His abiding grace. They are truly called gods, not by nature, but by participation; just as red-hot iron is called fire, not by nature, but by participation in the fire’s action. He says: ‘Be ye holy because I am holy’ [Lev 19:2].” (Cf. ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, On Holy Images, III, translated by M.H. Allies, Thomas Baker, London, 1989, pp. 106-107)

MODERN AGE

WHY MEDIATE ON THE ROSARY, WITH REGARDS TO THE INTERCESSION OF OUR LADY?

- ✓ --- **ST. LOUIS M. G. DE MONTFORT** (1673 - † 1716): “For, in reality, the Rosary said without meditating on the sacred mysteries of our salvation would be almost like a body without a soul: excellent matter but without the form which is meditation—this latter being that which sets it

apart from all other devotions.” (ST. LOUIS M. G. DE MONTFORT, *The Secret of the Holy Rosary*, translated by Mary Barbour, Montfort Publications, Bay Shore [NY] 1973, p. 55)

- ✓ --- **POPE LEO XIII** (Pope from 1878 - † 1903): *“Now, to appease the might of an outraged God and to bring that health of soul so needed by those who are sorely afflicted, there is nothing better than devout and persevering prayer, provided it be joined with a love for and practice of Christian life. And both of these, the spirit of prayer and the practice of Christian life, are best attained through the devotion of the Rosary of Mary.”*

(POPE LEO XIII, Encyclical Letter *Magnae Dei Matris*, 8 September 1892, n. 7)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

DEVOTION TO, AND INTERCESSION OF, THE SAINTS – OR NOT?

- ✓ --- **CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**: *“The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings, and their prayer today. They contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth. When they entered into the joy of their Master, they were ‘put in charge of many things.’ Their intercession is their most exalted service to God’s plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world.”* (CCC 2683)
- ✓ --- **VATICAN COUNCIL II** (1963-1965): *“The Church has always believed that the apostles and Christ’s martyrs who had given the supreme witness of faith and charity by the shedding of their blood, are closely joined with us in Christ, and she has always venerated them with special devotion, together with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels. The Church has piously implored the aid of their intercession. To these were soon added also those who had more closely imitated Christ’s virginity and poverty, and finally others whom the outstanding practice of the Christian virtues and the divine charisms recommended to the pious devotion and imitation of the faithful.”*

(VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 16 November 1964, n. 50)

2.6. THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION? (from latin “im-maculata” – macula = stain, immacula = without stain)

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ A passage that foreshadows the Immaculate: *“You are beautiful in every way, my friend, there is no flaw in you!”* (Song 4:7)
- ✓ *“Forever it marches crowned in triumph, victorious in unsullied deeds of valor”* (Wis 4:2). And who more than anyone else runs into combat ‘without stain,’ crowned and having always triumphed (cf. Rev 12:1), if not the Immaculate Virgin Mary who was conceived and crowned without sin (as already figured in [Song 4:7])?¹¹

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ *“A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars”* (Rev 12:1).

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

- ✓ --- **GREGORY OF NYSSA** (335 - † 395): *“What happened in the stainless Mary when the fullness of the Godhead which was in Christ shone out through her, that happens in every soul that leads by rule the virgin life. No longer indeed does the Master come with bodily presence; ‘we know Christ no longer according to the flesh’ (2 Corinthians 5:16); but, spiritually, He dwells in us and brings His Father with Him, as the Gospel somewhere tells.”* (GREGORY OF NYSSA, On Virginity, II)

¹¹ (Cf. meditation of Friar Nathaniel and Friar Michael, with VV interpretation)

- ✓ --- **LATERAN SYNOD (649):** *"If anyone does not profess (following the holy fathers), in the proper sense and according to the truth, the holy, ever-virgin, and immaculate Mary, mother of God; given that at the end of times she, properly speaking and according to the truth, conceived without seed by the Holy Spirit and without corruption brought forth God, the Word Himself, who was begotten before all time by God the Father; and that even after childbirth she retained her virginity: let him be condemned."*

(SINODO LATERANENSE, *Canon*, can. 3, 31 ottobre 649, in: Denzinger 503, unpublished translation by pfgsm)

MEDIEVAL AGE

- ✓ --- **BL. DUNS SCOTUS (1265 - † 1308):** *"The perfection of the Mediator requires... the preservation from every sin, even original sin: therefore the Virgin was exempt from any original stain."* (BL. DUNS SCOTUS, *Reportatio parisiensis III*, d. 3, q. 2).
- ✓ --- **BL. DUNS SCOTUS (1265 - † 1308):** *"Christ exercised the most perfect level of mediation possible relative to a person for whom He was mediator. Now, for no one did He exercise a level [of mediation] more excellent than for Mary.... But this would not have happened if He had not merited to preserve her from original sin."* (BL. DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio 3*, d. 3, q. 1).

MODERN AGE

DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

- ✓ --- **POPE BL. PIUS IX (Pope from 1846 - †1878):** *"We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful."*

(POPE BL. PIUS IX, Papal Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, 8 December 1854)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

REGARDING THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

- ✓ --- **CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH:** *"Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, 'full of grace' through God [cf. Luke 1:28] was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin [Pius IX, Bull Ineffabilis Deus]."*
(CCC 491)
- ✓ *"The 'splendour of an entirely unique holiness' by which Mary is 'enriched from the first instant of her conception' [Ecumenical Council Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 56] comes wholly from Christ: she is 'redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son' [Ibid.]. The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person 'in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places' [Eph 1:3] and chose her 'in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love' [Eph 1:4]."* (CCC 492)
- ✓ *"The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God 'the All-Holy' (Panagia), and celebrate her as 'free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature' [Ecumenical Council Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 56]. By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long."* (CCC 493)

2.7. WAS MARY REALLY EVER-VIRGIN?

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; behold, the virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son, who will be called Emmanuel.” (cf. *Is 7:14*, *Bibbia Italiana CEI 1974*, unpublished translation by pfsgrm).
What would the sign be, if not that a Virgin conceives and gives birth while always remaining a virgin?¹²

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ “This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child had been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means ‘God is with us.’ When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.” (Matt 1:18-25)
- ✓ “The angel Gabriel was sent from God ... to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary.” (Luke 1:26-27)
- ✓ ““Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. ... But Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?’ And the angel said to her in reply, ‘The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.’” (Luke 1:30-31, 34-35)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

- ✓ --- **ST. IRENAEUS OF LYONS** (Bishop and Martyr, 130 - † 202) : “The Lord himself has given us a sign here below and in the heights of heaven, a sign that man did not ask for because he never dreamt that such a thing would be possible. A virgin was with a child and she bore a son.”
(IRENAEUS OF LYONS, *Against Heresies*, III, in: *Office of Read.*, Tuesday IV week O.T.)
- ✓ --- **ST PETER CHRYSOLOGUS** (Bishop, 380 - † 450): “A virgin conceived, bore a son, and yet remained a virgin. This is no common occurrence, but a sign; no reason here, but God’s power, for he is the cause, and not nature.” (ST. PETER CHRYSOLOGUS, *Discourses*, CXLVIII, in: *Office of Read.*, 30 July).
- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE II** (553): “We anathematize the heretical letter which Ibas is alleged to have written to Mari the Persian. This letter denies that God the Word was made incarnate of the ever virgin Mary, the holy mother of God, and that he was made man.”
(COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE II, *Sentence against the “Three Chapters”*)
- ✓ “If anyone will not confess that the Word of God has two nativities, that which is before all ages from the Father, outside time and without a body, and secondly that nativity of these latter days when the Word of God came down from the heavens and was made flesh of holy and glorious Mary, mother of God and ever-virgin, and was born from her: let him be anathema.”
(COUNCIL OF COSTANTINOPLE II, *Anathemas against the “Three Chapters,”* can. 2)
- ✓ --- **LATERAN SYNOD** (649): “If anyone does not profess (following the holy fathers), in the proper sense and according to the truth, the holy, ever-virgin, and immaculate Mary, mother of God;

¹² Friar VV heard the beginnings of this meditation at the beginning of his calling, in a community called *Francescani dell’Immacolata*.

given that at the end of times she, properly speaking and according to the truth, conceived without seed by the Holy Spirit and without corruption brought forth God, the Word Himself, who was begotten before all time by God the Father; and that even after childbirth she retained her virginity: let him be condemned."

(SINODO LATERANENSE, *Canoni*, can. 3, 31 ottobre 649, in: *Denzinger* 503, unpublished translation by pfsgrm)

- ✓ --- **ST. JOHN DAMASCENE** (Bishop, 650 – † 749): *"The Virgin Mother of God... remained a virgin before, during and after giving birth."* (ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, *Discourses*, VI, in: *Office of Read.*, 26 July)

2.8. IS MARY REALLY THE MOTHER OF GOD?

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son, who will be called Emmanuel [which means God is with us – cf. Matt 1:24-25])."* (cf. **Is 7:14**, *Bibbia Italiana CEI* 1974, unpublished translation by pfsgrm)

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ *"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,' which means 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus."* (**Matt 1:22-25**)
- ✓ *"Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, '... And how does it happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?'"* (**Luke 1:41-43**)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF EPHEBUS** (431): *"Therefore, because the holy virgin bore in the flesh God who was united hypostatically with the flesh, for that reason we call her mother of God, not as though the nature of the Word had the beginning of its existence from the flesh (for 'the Word was in the beginning and the Word was God and the Word was with God.'"*
(COUNCIL OF EPHEBUS, *Third Letter of Cyril to Nestorius*)
- ✓ --- **FORMULA OF UNION** (433): *"We will state briefly what we are convinced of and profess about the God-bearing virgin and the manner of the incarnation of the only begotten Son of God — not by way of addition but in the manner of a full statement, even as we have received and possess it from of old from the holy scriptures and from the tradition of the holy fathers, adding nothing at all to the creed put forward by the holy fathers at Nicaea. For, as we have just said, that creed is sufficient both for the knowledge of godliness and for the repudiation of all heretical false teaching. We shall speak not presuming to approach the unapproachable; but we confess our own weakness and so shut out those who would reproach us for investigating things beyond the human mind. We confess, then, our lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God perfect God and perfect man of a rational soul and a body, begotten before all ages from the Father in his godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born of Mary the virgin, according to his humanity, one and the same consubstantial with the Father in godhead and consubstantial with us in humanity, for a union of two natures took place. Therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord. According to this understanding of the unconfused union, we confess the holy virgin to be the mother of God because God the Word took flesh and became man and from his very conception united to himself the temple he took from her. As to the evangelical and apostolic expressions about the Lord, we know that theologians treat some in common as of one person*

and distinguish others as of two natures, and interpret the god-befitting ones in connexion with the godhead of Christ and the lowly ones with his humanity.” (FORMULA OF UNION, year 433)

- ✓ --- **LATERAN SYNOD (649):** *“If anyone does not profess (following the holy fathers), in the proper sense and according to the truth, the holy, ever-virgin, and immaculate Mary, mother of God; given that at the end of times she, properly speaking and according to the truth, conceived without seed by the Holy Spirit and without corruption brought forth God, the Word Himself, who was begotten before all time by God the Father; and that even after childbirth she retained her virginity: let him be condemned.”*

(SINODO LATERANENSE, *Canons*, can. 3, 31 ottobre 649, in: Denzinger 503, unpublished translation by pfsgrm)

MEDIEVAL AGE

- ✓ --- **FRANCISCAN SOURCES:** *“Hail, holy Lady, Most holy Queen, Mary, Mother of God, Ever Virgin.”*
(FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *Salutation of the Blessed Virgin*, in: *St. Francis of Assisi. Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, I, edited by M. A. Habig, Franciscan Press, Quincy [IL] 1991, p. 135)
- ✓ *“As he was living there by the church of our Lady, Francis prayed to her who had conceived the Word, full of grace and truth, begging her insistently and with tears to become his Advocate. Then he was granted the true spirit of the Gospel by the intercession of the Mother of Mercy and he brought it to fruition. He was at Mass one day on the feast of one of the apostles and the passage of the Gospel where our Lord sends out his disciples to preach and tells them how they are to live according to the Gospel was read. When Francis heard that they were not to provide gold or silver or copper to fill their purses, that they were not to have a wallet for the journey or a second coat, no shoes or staff, he was overjoyed.”*

(BONAVENTURE, *Major Life*, Ch. 3, n.1, in: *St. Francis of Assisi. Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, I, edited by M. A. Habig, Franciscan Press, Quincy [IL] 1991, pp. 646-647)

MODERN AGE

- ✓ --- **LEO XIII**, (Pope from 1878 to † 1903): *“It has always been the habit of Catholics in danger and in troublous times to fly for refuge to Mary, and to seek for peace in her maternal goodness; showing that the Catholic Church has always, and with justice, put all her hope and trust in the Mother of God. And truly the Immaculate Virgin, chosen to be the Mother of God and thereby associated with Him [‘co-redemptrix’] in the work of man’s salvation, has a favour and power with her Son greater than any human or angelic creature has ever obtained, or ever can gain. And, as it is her greatest pleasure to grant her help and comfort to those who seek her, it cannot be doubted that she would deign, and even be anxious, to receive the aspirations of the universal Church.”*

(POPE LEO XIII, *Encyclical Letter Supremi Apostolis Officio*, 1 September 1883, n. 2)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

- ✓ --- **CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH:** *“Since the Virgin Mary’s role in the mystery of Christ and the Spirit has been treated, it is fitting now to consider her place in the mystery of the Church. ‘The Virgin Mary... is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer.... She is ‘clearly the mother of the members of Christ’ ... since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head.’ ‘Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church.’” (CCC 963)*

2.9. IS THE HIERARCHY USEFUL?

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE ADOPTED BY MOSES

- ✓ “The next day Moses sat in judgment for the people, while they stood around him from morning until evening. When Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he asked, ‘What is this business that you are conducting for the people? Why do you sit alone while all the people have to stand about you from morning to evening? ... What you are doing is not wise... You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now, listen to me, and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. Act as the people’s representative before God, and bring their disputes to God. Enlighten them in regard to the statutes and instructions, showing them how they are to conduct themselves and what they are to do. But you should also look among all the people for able and God-fearing men, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain, and set them over the people as commanders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. Let these render decisions for the people in all routine cases. Every important case they should refer to you, but every lesser case they can settle themselves. Lighten their burden by letting them bear it with you! If you do this, and God so commands you, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people, too, will go home content.’ Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said.” (Ex 18:13-26)

UNITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH UNDER ONE POPE

- ✓ “They shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my ordinances, observe, my statutes, and keep them.” (Ezek 37:24)

NEW TESTAMENT

POPE:

- ✓ “Simon [Peter]... strengthen [or “confirm”] your brothers.” (Luke 22:32)
- ✓ “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd.” (John 10:16b). And who is the Shepherd of whom Jesus speaks?
- ✓ “Peter..., be the shepherd to my sheep!” (cf. John 21:16)¹³
- ✓ “And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt 16:18).

BISHOPS :

- ✓ “Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the holy Spirit has appointed you overseers [or “bishops”], in which you tend the church of God.” (Acts 20:28)

PRIESTS (PRESBYTERS):

- ✓ “Presbyters who preside well deserve double honor.” (1Tim 5:17)
- ✓ “I left you in Crete so that you might set right what remains to be done and appoint presbyters in every town.” (Titus 1:5)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

MODERN AGE

DIVINE INSTITUTION OF THE HIERARCHY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF TRENT** (1545-1563): “If any one saith, that, in the Catholic Church there is not a hierarchy by divine ordination instituted, consisting of bishops, priests, and ministers; let him be

¹³ “λέγει αὐτῷ [Jesus said to Peter]· ποιμαίνε [be the pastor] τὰ πρόβατά μου [to my sheep]” (John 21:16 BGT, very similar to the Codex Vaticanus).

anathema.” (COUNCIL OF TRENT, *The True and Catholic Doctrine, Touching Sacrament of Order. In Condemnation of the Errors of Our Time*, 15 July 1563, can. 5)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

UNITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH UNDER ONE POPE

- ✓ --- **VATICAN COUNCIL II** (1963-1965): *“...This is the one Church of Christ which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Saviour, after His Resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd (cf. John 21:17), and... erected for all ages as ‘the pillar and mainstay of the truth’ (cf. 1Tim 3:15). This Church... subsists in the Catholic Church... although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity.”*
(VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 16 November 1964, n. 8)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES RESULTING FROM THE 16TH CENTURY REFORMATION DO NOT HAVE A TRUE HIERARCHY, AND THEREFORE CANNOT BE CALLED “CHURCHES” IN THE FULL SENSE

- ✓ --- **Response of THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH:** *“According to Catholic doctrine, these [ecclesial] Communities do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element of the Church. These ecclesial Communities which, specifically because of the absence of the sacramental priesthood, have not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic Mystery cannot, according to Catholic doctrine, be called ‘Churches’ in the proper sense.”*
(CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Responses to some questions Regarding certain aspects of the Doctrine of the Church*, 29 June 2007)

2.10. CELIBACY OR NOT?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ Jesus said: *“For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.”*
(**Matt 19:12**, RSVCE) (cf. **Luke 20:34-36**)
- ✓ *“Then Peter said, ‘We have given up our possessions and followed you.’ He said to them, ‘Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or wife or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive [back] an overabundant return in this present age and eternal life in the age to come.’”* (**Luke 18:28-30**)¹⁴
- ✓ *“Now to the unmarried and to widows, I say: it is a good thing for them to remain as they are, as I do, but if they cannot exercise self-control they should marry”* (**1Cor 7:8-9**).
- ✓ *“An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. ... So then, the one who marries his virgin does well; the one who does not marry her will do better.”* (**1Cor 7:32-34, 38**)

¹⁴ On 1/26/14, Friar Volantino was thinking about adding this passage from the Gospel (Luke 18:28-30) into this file, and a little while later we found the following passage in the Gospel for the Mass of the day: “As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, [Jesus] saw to brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fisherman. He said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him” (**Matt 4:18-22**).

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

IT IS FORBIDDEN FOR BISHOPS, PRIESTS, AND TRANSITIONAL DEACONS TO MARRY

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF ELVIRA** (300-303): *"It is determined that bishops, presbyters, and deacons, or all clerics stationed in the ministry, are to restrain themselves completely and are to keep themselves away from their wives and are not to beget children. Anyone who does beget children is to be expelled from the honor of the clerical estate."*

(COUNCIL OF ELVIRA, can. 33, in: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, I, edited by W.A. Jurgens, The Liturgical Presse, Collegeville [MN] 1970, p. 256)

MEDIEVAL AGE

- ✓ --- **ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA** (1195 - † 1231): *"When Moses set off to Egypt with his wife and children (as Exodus tells), an angel tried to kill him. But when he left his wife and children, the angel let him go [cf. Ex 4:24-26]. So it is that the prelates and priests of our day [who] want to free God's people from the devil's captivity[:]... the Lord will meet them and kill them, unless they separate from their wives and children."* [in order to serve the Lord fully – like St. Peter, who, being called to this ministry, left his wife behind immediately! Cf. Matt 19:27-20; Matt 8:14]

(ANTHONY OF PADUA, *Sermons*, V Sunday after Pentecost, n. 11, translated by P. Spilsbury)

MODERN AGE

CELIBACY IS POSSIBLE FOR THOSE WHO ARE CALLED TO IT

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF TRENT** (1545-1563): *"If any one saith, that clerics constituted in sacred orders, or Regulars [i.e. religious], who have solemnly professed chastity, are able to contract marriage, and that being contracted it is valid, notwithstanding the ecclesiastical law, or vow; and that the contrary is nothing else than to condemn marriage; and, that all who do not feel that they have the gift of chastity, even though they have made a vow thereof, may contract marriage; let him be anathema: seeing that God refuses not that gift to those who ask for it rightly, neither does He suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able."*

(COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Doctrine on the Sacrament of Matrimony*, 11 November 1563, can. 9)

SUPERIORITY OF VIRGINITY OVER MARRIAGE

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF TRENT** (1545-1563): *"If any one saith, that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity, or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony; let him be anathema."*

(COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session XXIV, Can. 10)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

AGAIN, THE SUPERIORITY OF VIRGINITY OVER MARRIAGE

- ✓ --- **POPE PIUS XII** (Papa dal 1939 al † 1958): *"This doctrine of the excellence of virginity and of celibacy and of their superiority over the married state was... solemnly defined as a dogma of divine faith by the holy council of Trent [Session XXIX, can. 10] and explained in the same way by all the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church."*

(POPE PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter *Sacra Virginitas*, 25 March 1954, n. 32)

- ✓ --- **VATICAN COUNCIL II** (1963 – 1965): *"Students ought rightly to acknowledge the duties and dignity of Christian matrimony, which is a sign of the love between Christ and the Church [cf. Eph 5:32]. Let them recognize, however, the surpassing excellence of virginity consecrated to Christ, so that with a maturely deliberate and generous choice they may consecrate themselves to the Lord by a complete gift of body and soul."* (VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree *Optatam totius*, 28 October 1965, n. 10)

2.11. ONLY JESUS SAVES?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ It is true that only Jesus saves: *“He will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21).*
- ✓ But St. Paul also explains: *“in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church” (Col 1:24).*
- ✓ Indeed, Paul says to Timothy: *“Attend to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in both tasks, for by doing so you will save¹⁵ both yourself and those who listen to you” (1 Tim 4:16).*

Otherwise, if this participation of Christians were not necessary, why did the Apostles have to die as martyrs – if only the Head saves, without the participation of His own body? Jesus Christ is the whole Christ [Head and Body], as we will see further along in these notes, in the patristic age (St. Augustine).

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

THE WHOLE CHRIST (HEAD AND BODY)

- ✓ --- **ST. CLEMENT I** (Pope from 88 to † 97): *“The head is nothing without the feet, just as the feet are nothing without the head. The smallest parts of our body are necessary and valuable to the whole. All work together and are mutually subject for the preservation of the whole body.”* (POPE ST. CLEMENT, *Letter to the Corinthians*, XXXV, in: *Office of Read.*, 23 November)
- ✓ --- **ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO** (Bishop, 354 - † 430): *“‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us.’ To that flesh the Church is joined, and so there is made the whole Christ, Head and body.”* (ST. AUGUSTINE, *Commentary on the first letter of John*, I, 2)

MEDIEVAL AGE

JESUS SAVES FULLY THROUGH [OBEDIENCE TO] THE ROMAN PONTIFF

- ✓ --- **POPE BONIFACE VIII** (1295 - † 1303): *“We declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for [full – cf. UR 3] salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.”* (POPE BONIFACE VIII, *Papal Bull Unam sanctam*, 18 November 1302, parag. 3)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

FULLNESS OF THE MEANS OF SALVATION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

- ✓ --- **VATICAN COUNCIL II** (1963-1965): *“Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided. Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature [...] For it is only through Christ's Catholic Church, which is ‘the all-embracing means of salvation,’ that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation.”*
(VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Decree Unitatis Redintegratio*, 21 November 1964, nn. 1, 3)
- ✓ --- **CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH**: *“The Lord Jesus, the only Saviour, did not only establish a simple community of disciples, but constituted the Church as a salvific mystery: he himself is in the Church and the Church is in him (cf. Jn 15:1ff.; Gal 3:28; Eph 4:15-16; Acts 9:5). Therefore, the fullness of Christ's salvific mystery belongs also to the Church, inseparably united to her Lord. Indeed, Jesus Christ continues his presence and his work of salvation in the Church and by means of the Church (cf. Col 1:24-27), which is his body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-13, 27; Col 1:18). [...] If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that*

¹⁵ You will save yourself, from the Greek “σώσεις.” — To save (1Tim 4:16 – BibleWorks, Greek text BGT).

objectively speaking they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.”

(CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration *Dominus Iesus*. On the Unicity and the Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, 6 August 2000, nn. 16, 22)

ARE THERE SOME ELEMENTS OF SALVATION ALSO IN THE OTHER SEPARATED CHURCHES?

- ✓ --- **Response of the CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH:** “Although the fullness of the means of salvation is found only in the Catholic Church (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 3), nevertheless, “there are ‘numerous elements of sanctification and of truth’ which are found outside [the Catholic Church’s] structure, but which ‘as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, impel towards Catholic Unity.’ ‘It follows that these separated churches and Communities, though we believe they suffer from defects, are deprived neither of significance nor importance in the mystery of salvation. In fact the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as instruments of salvation, whose value derives from that fullness of grace and of truth which has been entrusted to the Catholic Church.’” (CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Responses to some questions regarding certain aspects of the Doctrine of the Church, 29 June 2007)

2.12. PREDESTINATION OF THE ELECT AND OF THE DAMNED?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ “Therefore, brothers, be all the more eager to make your call and election firm, for, in doing so, you will never stumble. For, in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.” (2Pet 1:10-11)
- ✓ “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.” (Matt 7:21)
- ✓ “Many are called, but few are chosen!” (cf. Matt 22:14), in the sense that the chosen (as St. Augustine will say further on) are those among the called who have persevered in their calling to the very end!

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

- ✓ --- **ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO** (Bishop, 354 - † 430): “Those whom he called he also justified. This statement can be disconcerting and make us ask if it is really true that all the called are also justified – especially when we read, elsewhere, Many are called but few are chosen. Since the chosen are also called, however, it is evident that there are none who are justified who were not also called, even if not all the called are included [among the justified] but only those who were called according to the predisposition, as it said above, meaning by ‘predisposition’ the plan of God and not the project of man. The same Apostle, indeed, explains what the phrase about predisposition means when he says: For those whom he knew beforehand he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. It follows that not all the called are called according to the predisposition which enters into the foreknowledge and predestination of God. He did not predestine anyone of whom he did not know, in his foreknowledge, that they would believe and follow his calling, that is, those whom he himself calls the chosen [or ‘elect’]. Indeed, it is true that many, although they are called, do not come; but there is no one who can come if he has not been called.” (ST. AUGUSTINE, Commentary on some phrases of the Letter to the Romans, n. 47)
- ✓ --- **ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO** (Bishop, 354 - † 430), regarding free will: “Now wherever it is said, ‘Do not do this,’ and ‘Do not do that,’ and wherever there is any requirement in the divine admonitions for the work of the will to do anything, or to refrain from doing anything, there is at once a sufficient proof of free will. No man, therefore, when he sins, can in his heart blame

God for it, but every man must impute the fault to himself. Nor does it detract at all from a man's own will when he performs any act in accordance with God. Indeed, a work is then to be pronounced a good one when a person does it willingly; then, too, may the reward of a good work be hoped for from Him concerning whom it is written, 'He shall reward every man according to his works' (Matthew 16:27)." (ST. AUGUSTINE, *On Grace and Free Will*, Ch. 4)

MODERN AGE

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF TRENT** (1545-1563): "No one, moreover, so long as he is in this mortal life, ought so far to presume as regards the secret mystery of divine predestination, as to determine for certain that he is assuredly in the number of the predestinate; as if it were true, that he that is justified, either cannot sin any more, or, if he do sin, that he ought to promise himself an assured repentance; for except by special revelation, it cannot be known whom God hath chosen unto himself." (COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decree on Justification*, Ch. XII)
- ✓ "If any one saith, that a man, who is born again and justified, is bound of faith to believe that he is assuredly in the number of the predestinate; let him be anathema."
(COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decree on Justification*, Can. 15)
- ✓ "If any one saith, that the grace of Justification is only attained to by those who are predestined unto life; but that all others who are called, are called indeed, but receive not grace, as being, by the divine power, predestined unto evil; let him be anathema."
(COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decree on Justification*, Can. 17)

3. JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTES ¹⁶

A sect that separated from the Adventists in 1879 and began in Pittsburgh (USA) with the goal of announcing to the world the imminent coming of paradise on earth.

Founder: Charles Taze Russell (1852 -1916)

- Born in Pennsylvania (USA) and educated in the Presbyterian religion of his parents, Russell then came in contact with the Congregationalist church, also studying the oriental teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism.
- Then he disapproved of the Congregationalist doctrine about the existence of an eternal hell, and adhered to the teaching of the Adventist Jonas Wendel, who thought that hell did not exist and the true date of the "parousia" or second coming of Christ would be in 1874.
- In 1870 Russell founded a Bible study whose members were later called "*Bible Students*". Russell decided that the only text for their belief would be the Bible.
- After 1874, predicted by Wendel as the year of the final coming of Christ, Russell encountered the Adventist Nelson H. Barbour who maintained that with the year 1874 there began an invisible presence of Jesus Christ to prepare a group of elect who would be raptured into heaven in 1878, in view of the true end of the world which – according to new calculations made together with Russell – would come about in 1914. But when the prophecy for 1878 failed, Russell and Barbour gave contradictory explanations as to why and this led them to separate.
- In 1879 Russell founded the magazine "*Zion Watch Tower*".
- In 1881, to organize his Bible study groups, he founded the "*Zion Watch Tower Society*".
- Russell admitted that he did not know Hebrew, and gave contradictory responses to various inquiries as to whether he knew Greek.
 - The Bible of the J.W.'s was not translated from the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, but "adapted" from an existing English Bible.
- When, in 1914, the prophecy about the end of the world did not come true, he immediately fixed another date for 1916, the year in which he died.

The First Successor: J. F. Rutherford (1869-1942):

- After the death of Russell, the judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford succeeded him in 1917 as the second president of the Zion Watch Tower Society; Rutherford, rejecting various teachings of Russell, brought about notable changes which then led to later schisms.
- One of the reasons for these schisms was the assumption of the official name "Jehovah's Witnesses" in 1931.
- Rutherford changed the date of 1874 (in which, according to Russell, the invisible presence of Christ began) to 1914.
- He began door-to-door evangelization.
- According to him, the cross was a pagan symbol because Christ died on a pole.
- He fixed a new date for the end of the world: 1925.

Works of preaching:

- The J.W.'s hand out their magazines "*The Watchtower*" and "*Awake!*" (printed in more than a hundred languages) by preaching door to door.
- The general quarters are in Brooklyn (New York), where the various local congregations send the reports about the work of "witnessing" carried out by almost six million faithful in more than two hundred countries.

Doctrine:

- Russell shares the "millenarism" of the Adventists, which expects *the extension of the Kingdom of God to the earth*. According to the J.W.'s, the seven days of creation mean that the world should last for 49000 years. At this point, 48000 years have already passed. There will be 1000 years of earthly paradise. Before this millennium Armageddon will happen (the final battle between God and the Antichrist, in which Jehovah will destroy all his enemies). After the millennium of earthly paradise, Satan will be set free and will induce men to rebel, but this won't last long because they will be destroyed forever, while the just will live forever: some in heaven, some in the earthly paradise. In fact, for the J.W.'s humanity is divided into the "sons of God" who are the "anointed," that is, the 144,000 plus the first Who is Jesus, who will reign in heaven together with Christ. They are only male adults who have perfectly lived the J.W. lifestyle; then there are the "grandchildren of God" or the "other sheep" or the "greet crowd," that is, the other J.W.'s, who will live in the earthly paradise; finally, there are the "goats," all those who are not J.W.'s – that is, the rebels..
- They deny the immortality of the soul (the dead will rise at the beginning of the millennium, and the wicked will be dissolved).
- They deny the existence of hell and purgatory.
- The J.W.'s affirm that Christ is the Savior, but not God; or, rather, He is "a god" with a small "g," as they write it in the prologue of John. For Russell, Jesus had received the gift of divinity only after He died on the Cross. Before He was incarnated, Jesus was the archangel Michael. There are other "gods," that is, powerful beings, including Satan.
- God is not One in three Persons because a divinity with three heads is nothing but a monster. The Holy Spirit is not a Person of the Trinity, but a manifestation of divine power.
- The cult only entails Baptism by immersion, the annual celebration of the death of Jesus on 14 Nisan, the reading of the Bible.
- The J.W.'s refuse military service, vows, oaths, and blood transfusion.
- According to them, Mary would have had other children after Jesus.
- As already mentioned, Russell believed that 1874 was the year of the second coming of Christ, that is, the year in which the period of the invisible presence of Christ would have begun, and that Armageddon would follow forty years afterward with the beginning of the "millennium" in 1914. Following this, other dates were fixed (1916, 1925, 1975), but today they speak of an imminent occurrence rather than a precise date.

Ecumenism of the J.W.'s? : The J.W.'s do not participate in the *World Council of Churches*.

¹⁶ (Cfr GERHARD J. BELLINGER, *Enciclopedia delle religioni. Testimoni di Geova*, Ediz. Garzanti, Cernusco 2002², p. 711. ; cfr ENCICLOPEDIA CATTOLICA, *Testimoni di Geova*, Bibl. : F. Spadafora, T.di G. Rovigo 1951. Leoni Cristiani, Ediz. Ente per l'Enciclopedia Cattolica e per il libro cattolico, Firenze 1954, p. 26 ; cfr ENCICLOPEDIA CATTOLICA, *Testimoni di Geova*, Microsoft Encarta, 2009 ; cfr PROVENZANO PAOLA MARIA (in Rel.: SR. LETIZIA M.V.), *I Testimoni di Geova. Elaborato per il corso Storia delle Religioni II (Sette e Nuovi movimenti religiosi)*, Pontificia Facoltà Teologica della Sardegna, Istituto superiore di Scienze Religiose Euromediterraneo, Tempio Pausania, Anno accademico 2010-2011, pp. 5-8; cfr http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Testimoni_di_Geova, [16-01-2014] ; cfr <http://www.eresie.it/it/Russell.htm> [16-01-2014]).

3.1. HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT THE JW'S PROPHECIES DIDN'T COME TRUE?

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

As is explained in the historical notes above, the various prophecies of the J.W.'s about the "end of the world" objectively didn't come true...therefore, Scripture says:

- ✓ "[I]f a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD but the word does not come true, it is a word the LORD did not speak. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; do not fear him" (Deut 18:22).

Teaching of the Catholic Church

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

- ✓ In the Catholic Church, on the other hand, we can observe that the prophecies of the Saints and of Our Lady always come true! – like, for example, those of Fatima, which came true with tremendous precision: *The end of World War I / the immanent death of the two little cousins / the long life of Sr. Lucia (almost 100 years!) / the great light in heaven before World War II / the attempted assassination of John Paul II / "in the end my immaculate heart will triumph" and the USSR crumbled on December 8, 1991, the day of the Immaculate Conception...*

(Cfr PROFEZIE DI FATIMA, *Sussidio Video n. 1,4*, in: www.fratipoveri.net, <https://vimeo.com/20531880>, [24-01-2014], là troverai anche le fonti tratte da un documentario, con testimoni e testimonianze reali)

3.2. STATUES OR NO STATUES? (a point of disagreement also with some Protestants)

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ "The LORD will [lead you there]. There [in that place] you shall serve gods that are works of human hands, of wood and stone, gods which can neither see nor hear, neither eat nor smell. Yet when you seek the LORD, your God, from there, you shall indeed find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul." (Deut 4:27b- 29)
- ✓ "Make two cherubim of beaten gold" (i.e. angels of gold) (Ex 25:18).
- ✓ "The tabernacle itself you shall make out of... sheets woven of fine linen... with cherubim embroidered upon them... You shall make a veil woven of violet, purple, and scarlet yarn... with cherubim embroidered on it." (Ex 26:1, 31)
- ✓ "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 [the statue] and recovered." (Num 21:8-9)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

CAN WE LOOK AT IMAGES AND THE CROSS?

- ✓ --- ST. JOHN DAMASCENE (Bishop, 650 - † 749): "In other ages God had not been represented in images.... But since God has now been seen in the flesh, and lived among men, I represent that part of God which is visible. I do not venerate matter, but the Creator of matter, who became matter for my sake and deigned to... bring about my salvation through matter."

(ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, *Contra Imaginum calumniatores* I, 16 Ed. Kotter pp. 89-90)

- ✓ --- COUNCIL OF NICAIA II (787): "One of these [ecclesiastical traditions] is the production of representational art; this is quite in harmony with the history of the spread of the gospel, as it provides confirmation that the becoming man of the Word of God was real and not just imaginary,

and as it brings us a similar benefit. For, things that mutually illustrate one another undoubtedly possess one another's message....We decree with full precision and care that, like the figure of the honoured and life-giving cross, the revered and holy images, whether painted or made of mosaic or of other suitable material, are to be exposed in the holy churches of God, on sacred instruments and vestments, on walls and panels, in houses and by public ways, these are the images of our Lord, God and saviour, Jesus Christ, and of our Lady without blemish, the holy God-bearer, and of the revered angels and of any of the saintly holy men. The more frequently they are seen in representational art, the more are those who see them drawn to remember and long for those who serve as models, and to pay these images the tribute of salutation and respectful veneration. Certainly this is not the full adoration {latría} in accordance with our faith, which is properly paid only to the divine nature, but it resembles that given to the figure of the honoured and life-giving cross."

(COUNCIL OF NICAIA II, Definition)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

CAN WE LOOK AT IMAGES AND STATUES?

- ✓ --- On **ST. MAXIMILIAN M. KOLBE**: "He begged a prisoner who was with him in the Auschwitz concentration camp to draw him 2 pictures, one of Jesus and one of the Madonna. He always carried them with him, even though by doing so he ran the risk of discovery and terrible punishment.... He could not go without contemplating them often."
(ST. MASSIMILIANO M. KOLBE, *Il folle dell'Immacolata*, p. 103, unpublished translation by pfsgm)
- ✓ --- **CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**: "Nevertheless, already in the Old Testament, God ordained or permitted the making of images that pointed symbolically toward salvation by the incarnate Word: so it was with the bronze serpent [cf. Num 21:4-9; Wis 16:5-14; John 3:14-15], the ark of the covenant, and the cherubim [cf. Ex 25:20-22; 1 Kgs 6:23-28; 1 Kgs 7:23-36]." (CCC 2130)

3.3. IS JESUS GOD OR ONLY THE SON OF GOD?

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

IS THE PROPHESIED CHILD ONLY THE SON OF GOD? OR THE POWERFUL GOD?

- ✓ "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, [Powerful] God, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace." (Is 9:5)

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,' which means 'God is with us'" (Matt 1:23).
- ✓ "And the Word became flesh The only Son, God¹⁷" (John 1:14, 18).
- ✓ Thomas the Apostle says to Jesus: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)
- ✓ "For if you do not believe that I AM [God – cf. Ex 3:14], you will die in your sins." (John 8:24)
- ✓ "From them [the Patriarchs] came Christ according to the flesh, he who is above all things, God Who is blessed forever. Amen!" (cf. Rom 9:5, Bibbia Italiana CEI)
- ✓ "Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped..." (Phil 2:5-6ff)

¹⁷ The only-begotten (Son of) God, from the original Greek "*μονογενής θεός*" (*The only-begotten God*) (John 1:18 BibleWorks, Greek Text BGT)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF NICAEA I (325):** *"We believe in one God the Father all powerful, maker of all things both seen and unseen. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten begotten from the Father, that is from the substance of the Father, **God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father,** through whom all things came to be, both those in heaven and those in earth."* (COUNCIL OF NICAEA I, *The Profession of Faith of the 318 Fathers*)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

- ✓ --- **CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH:** *For this reason the apostles confess Jesus to be the Word: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' [John 1:1]; as 'the image of the invisible God' [Col 1:15]; as the 'radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature' [Heb 1:3]."* (CCC 241)

3.4. CAN ONE GIVE BLOOD, OR NOT?

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ *"But make sure that you do not eat of the blood; for blood is life; you shall not eat that life with the flesh."* (Deut 12:23)

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ *"[A]bstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood" (Acts 15:29)* – but here we have to understand abstaining from blood offered to idols, but not from the blood of one's own life poured out for the salvation of others, given that Jesus Himself (in whom everything must be summed up) explains:
- ✓ *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink." (John 6:53-54)*
- ✓ In fact, Jesus *"took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.'"* (Matt 26:27-28)
- ✓ And to help us understand this better, St. Paul himself explains: *"And even if my blood must be poured out in libation on the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am content, and I rejoice with all of you!" (cf. Phil 2:17, Bibbia Italiana CEI 1974, unpublished translation by pfgsm)*

---- In synthesis (paraphrasing some biblical phrases) it would be, in a certain way, like saying: "Have you heard it said among the elders: You shall not eat flesh and not drink blood with life? (cf. Deut 12:23; Acts 15:29) – but I tell you (in reference to Jesus): indeed, *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood* with divine life within it, *has eternal life* (cf. John 6:54)." Or, rather, it is true that you do not have to eat or accept blood with life within it, eating the life of animals while they are still alive or anything else monstrous like that, but if the act of donating human blood, just as Jesus did (cf. John 6:54) for the Church that is his Body (cf. Col 1:24), is done voluntarily (cf. Phil 2:17) to give life to others, it is clear that we, too, following His example, can give our blood in grave situations so that others may have life (and even accept it) – as Pius XII also says further on in the contemporary era...

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

CAN ONE GIVE BLOOD, OR NOT?

- ✓ --- **Pope Pius XII (Pope from 1939 al + 1958):** *"We see in spirit and we adore the figure of the highest and divine Donor of His blood, Jesus, Redeemer, Savior, Giver of life to men... We love to think that all of you who are present here, voluntary donors of your blood, know how to find in*

Christ the best example to imitate and the best ideal, Whose beauty stimulates and pushes you [...]. Like your blood in the veins of those who owe to you their life and health, so the blood of Christ causes us to participate in the divine life, which we call sanctifying grace and which makes us truly sons of God (1John 3:1ff)..., the divine life that germinates here below in order to blossom in eternity." (PAPA PIO XII, *Discorso ai partecipanti al X congresso nazionale dell'Associazione Volontari Italiani del Sangue*, 9 ottobre 1948, unpublished translation by pfsgm)

3.5. SHOULD YOU GO FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE?

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ The Lord says: "Do not move about from one house to another." (Luke 10:7)
- ✓ "The Spirit told me to accompany them without discriminating ... and we entered the man's house." (Acts 11:12)
- ✓ "The Spirit said to Philip, 'Go and join up with that chariot.'" (Acts 8:29)

That is to say, don't evangelize in a mechanical way, from house to house, which runs the risk of boring people, but go according to the Spirit (and the logic of the *Acts of the Apostles* – cf. Acts 8:29; 11, 12¹⁸).

3.6. CROSS¹⁹ OR POLE? WHERE DID JESUS DIE?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ "Whoever does not carry his own cross (σταυρός)²⁰ and come after me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27)
- ✓ "The message of the cross (σταυρός) is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor 1:18)
- ✓ "The God of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree [or cross] (xylon).²¹" (Acts 5:30)

¹⁸ "[Jesus]" – says Pope John Paul II – "sent his disciples to bring peace from house to house, from town to town (Mt 10: 11-13)" (JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the Celebration of the XV Day of Peace*, 1 January 1982, n. 11). By saying "from house to house", John Paul II probably meant going, yes, "from house to house" [in the sense of] announcing the Gospel to every creature according to the mandate of the Lord Jesus in order to reach everyone (Mark 16:15), but also according to the movement of the Spirit Who indicates where and when to bring His voice to all (cf. John 3:8)...and *not* going mechanically from one house to the next, but rather following the indication or the logic of the Spirit Who indicates what house to go to, given that we can't get around the advice in Luke where Jesus clearly says, "Do not go from house to house!" (cf. Luke 10:7, *Bibbia Italiana CEI* 1974, unpublished translation by pfsgm). Indeed, St. Peter himself, the first Pope, adds, "The Spirit told me to go...into that man's house!" (cf. Acts 11:12, *Bibbia Italiana CEI* 1974, unpublished translation by pfsgm), and the Spirit indicates to Philip to get into *that* chariot (cf. Acts 8:29). Therefore: yes, the Gospel must be announced everywhere, in every city and to every creature (Mark 16:15), but always following the Spirit's lead (Acts 11:12) and timing (cf. Ps 145:15; Eccles 3:17b; John 3:8) and not mechanically (Luke 10:7) and all at the same time (cf. Sir 13:10), to avoid uselessly irritating the people (cf. Prov 25:17), as we often see happening to the Jehovah's Witnesses...

¹⁹ IN SHORT, THE WORD CROSS in the New Testament is identified with more than one term, such as for example Stauros (σταυρός) and Xylon (ξύλον). STAUROS / σταυρός (when referring to the instrument of torture upon which Jesus was killed) and cited in the New Testament 27 times (cf. Matt. 10:38; 16:24; 27:32.40.42; Mark 8:34; 15:21, 30, 32; Luke 9:23; 14:27; 23:26; John 19:17.19.25.31; 1Cor 1:17s; Gal 5:11; 6:12.14; Eph 2:16; Phil 2:8; 3:18; Col 1:20; 2:14; Heb 12:2), instead Xylon / ξύλον (always for when referring to the instrument of torture upon which Jesus was killed) is cited only 5 times (cf Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal 3:13; 1Pt 2:24). "The God of our ancestors raised Jesus though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree (xylon)" (Acts 5:30).

²⁰ - Stauros / σταυρός (masculine noun)

- according to the Greek-Italian dictionary of Franco Montanari (also used in Italian Classics lectures) means: pole, peg, but also Cross (FRANCO MONTANARI, *Vocabolario della Lingua Greca* (GI), Loescher Ed., Torino 2004, p. 1959, unpublished translation by pfsgm).
- Secondo il famoso Dizionario Greco-Italiano di Lorenzo Rocci (usato anche nei Licei Classici) significa: palo, palizzata, croce. (LORENZO ROCCI, *Vocabolario Greco Italiano*, Società Ed. Dante Alighieri, 1943, p. 1699).

²¹ - Xylon / ξύλον (neuter noun)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

CONTEMPORARY AGE

DID JESUS DIE ON A CROSS OR A POLE?

- ✓ --- **MONS. L. MINUTI** (brilliant Video explanation – *Italian only*): “Cross or pole? In this video, Mons. L. Minuti shows that several times the J.W.’s, in order to demonstrate that “Stauros or Xylon” only means pole (etc.) instead of cross, have tampered with various substantial Greek dictionaries. He says that several Jehovah’s Witnesses, after having this fact demonstrated to them, have returned to the Catholic Church.”

(MONS. L. MINUTI, *Croce o palo? P.3*, in: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSWGsyAZQw>, [31-03-2014], unpublished translation by pfsgm)

3.7. TRINITY OR NO TRINITY?

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ “The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oak of Mamre Looking up, he saw three men and bowing to the ground, he said: ‘my Lord.’”

(cf. **Gen 18:1-3**, Bibbia Italiana CEI 1974, unpublished translation by pfsgm)

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ “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” (**Matt 28:19**).

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

TRINITY OR NO TRINITY?

- ✓ --- **ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN** (Bishop, 330 - †390): “This I give you to share, and to defend all your life, the One Godhead and Power, found in the Three in Unity, and comprising the Three separately, not unequal, in substances or natures, neither increased nor diminished by superiorities or inferiorities;... the infinite conjunction of Three Infinite Ones, Each God when considered in Himself;... the Three One God when contemplated together.... No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the Splendour of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish Them than I am carried back to the One.” (ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Orationes*, 40, XLI)
- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (381)**: “We believe in one God the Father all-powerful, maker of heaven and of earth, and of all things both seen and unseen. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all the ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things came to be;... And in the Spirit, the holy, the lordly and lifegiving one, proceeding forth from the Father, co-worshipped and co-glorified with Father and Son, the one who spoke through the prophets.”

(COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE I, *The Exposition of the 150 Fathers*)

-
- According to the Greek-Italian dictionary of Franco Montanari (also used in Italian Classics lectures) means: wood, timber, tree, wood of a tree, object made of wood, cotton shrub, staff, club, bench, table, seat, reserved place, perch, pillar, stump, pole, cross (FRANCO MONTANARI, *Vocabolario della Lingua Greca* (GI), Loescher Ed., Torino 2004, p. 1434, unpublished translation by pfsgm).
 - According to the famous Greek-Italian dictionary by Lorenzo Rocci (used also in Italian Classics lectures) it also means: wood, piece of wood, trunk, door jamb, tree, plant, cotton, stump, staff, cane, club, perch, stick, pillar, cross, table, bench, seat, string, vessel. (LORENZO ROCCI, *Vocabolario Greco Italiano*, Società Ed. Dante Alighieri, 1943, p. 1299, unpublished translation by pfsgm).
(RICERCA ETIMOLOGICA di *stauros* e *xylon* iniziata da FRÀ VOLANTINO e approfondita da FRÀ GIUSEPPE M.G., Licenziando al Biblico di Roma, con spunto iniziale tratto dalla preziosa ricerca non indifferente di MONS. L. MINUTI, *Croce o palo ? P.3*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSWGsyAZQw>).

- ✓ --- **CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH:** *"The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the 'consubstantial Trinity' [Council of Constantinople II: DS 421]. The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire: 'The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is, i.e. by nature one God' [Council of Toledo XI (675): DS 530:26]. In the words of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), 'Each of the persons is that supreme reality, viz., the divine substance, essence or nature' [DS 804]."* (CCC 253)

3.8. WHAT IS THE NAME OF GOD, YHWH OR YEHOWAH?

Word of God (exegetical analysis)²²

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ *"This is the story of the heavens and the earth at their creation. When the LORD (YHWH) God made the earth and the heavens – there was no field shrub on earth and no grass of the field had sprouted, for the LORD (YHWH) God had sent no rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the ground..." (Gen 2:4-5).*
- ✓ *"God said to Moses: I am who I am. Then he added: This is what you will tell the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you. God spoke further to Moses: This is what you will say to the Israelites: the LORD (YHWH), the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever; this is my title for all generations." (Ex 3:14-15)*

---- 1. In the beginning, the exact form had to be: 'YAHAWEH' that is a future verb that means 'He does (or will) bring into being; He does (or will) cause to happen; He does (or will) cause to be' with a clear reference to the God creator of all, cause of all things (cf. Gen 2:4-5).

2. The correct pronunciation (given that vowels are not written) was lost, and is no longer known!

3. Beginning from the epoch of the second Temple (or rather after the exile to BABYLON, around the year 515 AD) the Name of YHWH was publically unpronounceable in the reading of the Text. Therefore, given that it was unpronounceable, the Masoretes thought to add the consonants of YHWH the vowels of 'ADONAI, in which the result was: YĀHŌWĀH.

4. Given that the Hebrew text YĀH was already the abbreviated form of the Name of YHWH (cf. Ps 68:5.19), the Masoretes, to avoid pronouncing the Divine name YĀH, did not write the exact form YĀHŌWĀH but wrote the incorrect form: YEHŌWĀH, using at the beginning of the word the most insignificant vowel that they knew, the Shewà. But this does not indicate the name of God, but only a flawed pronunciation, incorrect and not exact. The Christians of the Renaissance (and, now, all the Jehovah's Witnesses) did not understand or did not take it into consideration this lesson of the Masoretes, and from then on, they believed that YEHŌWĀH was the exact form of the name of the name of YHWH, not knowing that the form was incorrect." (cf. Friar GIUSEPPE M. PIPITONE, Licentiate at the *Biblicum* in Rome)²³

²² FRA GIUSEPPE M.G.-J., Licenziando al *Pontificio Istituto Biblico* a Roma ; Cfr. G.J. BOTTERWECK – H. RINGGREN., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Gran Rapids 1977).

²³ "I will try to explain the Name YHWH in a very simple way (many things could be said, but I will limit myself to the basics in an easy, comprehensible way).

- The etymology of the name יהוה - YHWH has been highly debated. We will limit ourselves to saying that יהוה - YHWH is generally thought to be a verbal form derived from the root הוּי (HWY), later הוּה (HWH), "to exist, to be there, to become, [also: to be at hand]". If to הוּה (HWH) we add a Yod at the beginning, we get the tetragrammaton יהוה – YHWH, which would be a future verb and takes these vowels: הַיְהוּה. "Yahaweh" [to put it simply it would be a 3rd person singular future masculine verb, in Hifil form], meaning: "He does (or will) bring into being; He does (or will) cause to happen; He does (or will) cause to be," with a clear reference to God as the creator of all, the cause of every thing. Anyhow, this form, הַיְהוּה. "Yahaweh", which as we said would be a future verb, is the most generally accepted one today.
- The pronunciation of the original Name of God, however, was lost; among other reasons, because, beginning with the second Temple era (after the Babylonian exile, around 515 BC), the name of YHWH was publicly unpronounceable in the reading of the Text. Therefore, given that it was unpronounceable, the Masoretes thought to add to the consonants of יהוה - YHWH the vowels of אֲדֹנָי - 'ADONAI, resulting in: יְהוָה (YĀhōwāh).
- But given that the Hebrew text was the abbreviated form of YHWH, namely, הָ - Yāh (cf. Ps 68:5, 19), the Masoretes, to avoid pronouncing the Divine name הָ - Yāh, did not write the exact form יְהוָה (YĀhōwāh), but wrote the incorrect form יְהוָה (Yehōwāh), using the most insignificant vowel that they knew at the beginning of the word, the Shewà. But this does not indicate the name of God, but only a flawed pronunciation, incorrect and not exact. The Christians of the Renaissance (and, now, all the Jehovah's Witnesses) did not understand, or did not take into consideration, this lesson of the Masoretes, and from then on they believed that Yehōwāh was the exact

3.9. WILL PARADISE BE ON THIS EARTH?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ “[Christ] ascended on high and took prisoners captive” (Eph 4:8).
- ✓ “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil 3:20).
- ✓ “For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven.” (2 Cor 5:1)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

- ✓ --- **ST. AMBROSE OF MILAN** (Bishop, 339 - † 397): “We must take refuge from this world in that place where there is peace, where there is rest from toil, where we can celebrate the great sabbath.” (ST. AMBROSE, *Off. of Read.* Saturday Week II of Lent)
- ✓ --- **ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO** (Bishop, 354 - † 430): “Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven [your homeland]... therefore, those who rejoice in the goods of the Spirit experience, in time, this reward; but [in heaven] they will be given the fullness of every sense, when even that which is subject to death obtains immunity from death.” (ST. AUGUSTINE, *Disc. Mont. Lib. A cap. 15,15*)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

- ✓ --- **PAUL VI** (Pope from 1963 to † 1978): “We believe that the multitude of those gathered around Jesus and Mary in Paradise forms the Church of heaven” (PAUL VI in CCC 1053).
- ✓ --- **VATICAN COUNCIL II** (1963-1965): “Already the final age of the world has come upon us (cf. 1 Cor 10:11; SLC p. 402c) and the renovation of the world is irrevocably decreed and is already anticipated in some kind of a real way; for the Church already on this earth is signed with a sanctity which is real although imperfect. However, until there shall be new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells,(243) the pilgrim Church in her sacraments and institutions, which pertain to this present time, has the appearance of this world which is passing” (VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 48).

3.10. DOES PURGATORY EXIST? (a point of disagreement also with the Protestants, etc.)

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ “The Lord... makes one descend to the underworld²⁴ and brings him back again.” (cf. **1Sam 2:6**, *Bibbia Italiana CEI* 1974, unpublished translation by pfsgm)
- ✓ “Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be absolved from their sin.” (**2Mac 12:46**)

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ “[I]n the spirit [, Christ] also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient ... in the days of Noah” (**1Pet 3:19-20**);
- ✓ “[T]he Gospel was preached even to the dead that... they might live in the spirit in the estimation of God.” (**1Pet 4:6**)

form of the name of YHWH, not knowing that the form was incorrect.” (CF. FRIAR GIUSEPPE M. PIPITONE, Licenziante at the *Biblicum* in Rome)

²⁴ The underworld here can't be hell, since no one can leave hell; it is clear that the text speaks of a different place, a place of purification (purgatory) after death.

Teaching of the Catholic Church

MEDIEVAL AGE

- ✓ --- **ST. THOMAS AQUINAS** (1225 - † 1274) speaks of two hells, one you can leave and one you can't leave. The one you can leave is purgatory. He also speaks of a place of repose where the Patriarchs used to be. (Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *S. th. III*, q. 52, a 2)
- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF FLORENCE** (1439) : *"Also, if truly penitent people die in the love of God before they have made satisfaction for acts and omissions by worthy fruits of repentance, their souls are cleansed after death by cleansing pains; and the suffrages of the living faithful avail them in giving relief from such pains, that is, sacrifices of masses, prayers, almsgiving and other acts of devotion which have been customarily performed by some of the faithful for others of the faithful in accordance with the church's ordinances."*
(COUNCIL OF FLORENCE, Session VI)

MODERN AGE

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF TRENT** (1545-1563): *"Whereas the Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Ghost, has, from the sacred writings and the ancient tradition of the Fathers, taught, in sacred councils, and very recently in this oecumenical Synod, that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar; the holy Synod enjoins on bishops that they diligently endeavour that the sound doctrine concerning Purgatory, transmitted by the holy Fathers and sacred councils, be believed, maintained, taught, and every where proclaimed by the faithful of Christ."* (COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session XXV, Decree Concerning Purgatory)

3.11. DOES HELL EXIST? (AND ARE THERE PEOPLE THERE?)

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ "He will send fire and worms into their flesh, and they will weep and suffer forever." (Judith 16:17)
- ✓ "But he will join the company of his fathers, never again to see the light." (Ps 49:20)

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ "'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...' And these will go off to eternal punishment" (Matt 25:41, 46).
- ✓ St. Paul says: "For it is surely just on God's part ... to grant rest along with us to you ... at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his mighty angels, in blazing fire, inflicting punishment on those who do not acknowledge God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal ruin, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." (2Thess 1:5-9)

AND ARE THERE SOULS IN HELL?

- ✓ "[A]nd from the netherworld [hell], where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ... Abraham replied, '... between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.'" (Luke 16:23)
- ✓ "Likewise, Sodom, Gomorrah, and the surrounding towns, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual promiscuity and practiced unnatural vice, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire." (Jude 1:7)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

PATRISTIC AGE

- ✓ --- **ST. CLEMENT I** (Pope from 88 to † 97): *"Envy brought Dathan and Abiram down alive into hell, for because they were rebellious against Moses, the servant of God."*
(POPE ST. CLEMENT I, *Letter to the Corinthians*, IV, 12)

MEDIEVAL AGE

- ✓ --- **COUNCIL OF FLORENCE** (1439) : *"Moses, the man of God, [...] had perceived, under the Lord's inspiration, that those seditious and schismatic men [Korah, Dathan, and Abiram] would incur a grievous retribution, as was demonstrated afterwards when even the earth could not bear with them but by God's just judgment swallowed them up, so that they fell alive into hell."*
(COUNCIL OF FLORENCE, Session VII)

MODERN AGE

THE HORRIBLE DANGER OF HELL.

- ✓ --- **ST. FRANCIS DE SALES** (1567 - † 1622): *"Imagine a gloomy city, completely on fire with sulphur and foul-smelling tar, full of people who are unable to leave it. [...] The damned are in the abyss of hell like in this miserable city. There they suffer unspeakable torments in all their senses and in all their members. [...] Besides all these torments, there is one still greater, that is, the privation and loss of God's glory which they are debarred from seeing forever. [...] Think above all of the eternity of these punishments which by itself makes hell unbearable. Alas, if a flea in the ear or the heat of a slight fever makes a short night seem so long and exasperating, how dreadful the everlasting night filled with torments! This eternity gives birth to eternal despair, and blasphemies and ravings that never end."*
(ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, *Philotea. Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part I, Ch. 15)

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

THE DUTY OF ANNOUNCING THE EXISTENCE AND THE DANGER OF HELL.

- ✓ --- **POPE BENEDICT XV** (Pope from 1914 to † 1922): *"For our 'Preacher of truth' [St. Paul] never imagined that he should avoid such subjects [as eternal fire] because, owing to the corruption of the age, they appeared too stern to his hearers. Therefore it is clear how unworthy of commendation are those preachers who are afraid to touch upon certain points of Christian doctrine lest they should give their hearers offense."*
(BENEDICT XV, Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis Redemptionem* n. 19)
- ✓ --- **POPE PIUS XII** (Pope from 1939 to † 1958): *"The preaching of the primary truths of the faith and of the last things not only has lost none of its appropriateness in our times, but on the contrary has become more necessary and urgent than ever. Including the preaching of hell. [...] The Church has, before God and man, the sacred duty of announcing [this truth], of teaching it without any mitigation, as Christ has revealed it, and there is no condition of the times that can diminish the rigor of this obligation."*
(PIO XII, *Discorso ai Paroci e ai Quaresimalisti*, 23 marzo 1949, unpublished translation by pfsgm)
- ✓ --- **POPE FRANCIS**, (Pope from 2013 to ...): *"And I feel that I cannot conclude without saying a word to the absent bosses today, to those absent but central figures: the men and women of the mafia. Please, change your lives, convert, stop, cease to do evil! We are praying for you. [...] This life you are living now, it won't bring you pleasure, it won't give you joy, it won't bring you happiness. The power, the money, that you possess now from so many dirty transactions, from so many mafia crimes, is blood-stained money, it is power soaked in blood, and you cannot take it with you to the next life. Convert, there is still time, so that you don't end up in hell. That is what awaits you if you continue on this path. [...] Cry a little and convert."*
(POPE FRANCIS, Address: Prayer Vigil for the 19th "Memorial and Commitment Day," 21 March 2014)

HELL EXISTS AND IS ETERNAL

- ✓ --- **POPE BENEDICT XVI** (Pope from 2005 to 2013): *"Jesus came to tell us that he wants us all in Paradise and that hell, about which little is said in our time, exists and is eternal for those who close their hearts to his love."*
(POPE BENEDICT XVI, Homily, Visit to the Roman Parish of St. Felicity and her Children, Martyrs, 25 March 2007)
- ✓ --- **CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**: *"Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven – through a purification or immediately – or immediate and everlasting damnation."* (CCC 1022)

THE VISION OF HELL WHICH OUR LADY SHOWED THE CHILDREN AT FATIMA

- ✓ --- **Sr. LUCIA DOS SANTOS** (1907 – 2005): *"Our Lady showed us a great sea of fire which seemed to be under the earth. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks of a huge fire, without weight or equilibrium, and amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repulsive likeness to frightful and unknown animals, all black and transparent. This vision lasted but an instant. How can we ever be grateful enough to our kind heavenly Mother, who had already prepared us by promising, in the first Apparition, to take us to heaven. Otherwise, I think we would have died of fear and terror."* (CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *The Message of Fatima*)

Experiences

- ✓ The testimony of Dr. Gloria Polo (Italian)
(Cf. *La Nuova Testimonianza della dott.sa Gloria Polo*, a cura di Flaviano Patrizzi
<http://www.santissimo.it/paradiso/gloria.polo.vita.oltre.la.morte.html> [24-01-2014])
- ✓ The story of Friar Volantino when told a confused layperson (at the episcopal residence in Noto) that if hell didn't exist he wouldn't have become a friar...(in order that so many would not end up going "down," based on the message of Fatima of May 13 1917...)

3.12. WILL THE WICKED RISE OR BE DISSOLVED?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ Jesus says: *"the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation." (John 5:28-29)*

Teaching of the Catholic Church

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

- ✓ --- **CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**: *"The resurrection of all the dead, 'of both the just and the unjust' (Acts 24:15), will precede the Last Judgement. This will be 'the hour when all who are in the tombs will hear [the Son of man's] voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgement' (John 5:28-29). Then Christ will come 'in his glory, and all the angels with him...Before him will be gathered all the nations'" (CCC 1038).*

3.13. WHO ARE THOSE WHO ARE ON THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT OF THE LORD? (The J.W.'s say – wrongly – that only they will be on His right, and everyone else will be on His left.) This is who will be on the right OF THE LORD...

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ “And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 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. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me....whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’ 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. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me....what do you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’” (Matt 25:31-45)

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PATRISTIC AGE

- ✓ --- **ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO** (Bishop, 354 - † 430): “‘He will judge the world with equity and the peoples in his truth’ (Ps 95:13). What are equity and truth? He will gather together with him for the judgment his chosen ones, but the others he will set apart; for he will place some on his right, other on his left. What is more equitable, what more true than that they should not themselves expect mercy from the judge, who themselves were unwilling to show mercy before the judge's coming. Those, however who were willing to show mercy will be judged with mercy. For it will be said to those placed on his right: ‘Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world’ (Matt 25:34). And he reckons to their account their works of mercy: ‘For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink’ (Matt 25:35-40). What is imputed to those places on his left side? That they refused to show mercy. And where will they go? ‘Depart into the everlasting fire’ (Matt 25:41) Whoever rejoices to hear the good report will not fear the bad. This is equity, this is truth.”

(AUGUSTINE, Off. of Read. Sunday 23rd Week O.T.)

3.14. DID JESUS HAVE BROTHERS OR NOT? (A point of disagreement also with the Jehovah's witnesses etc...)

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

GESTURES WHICH EXPLAIN WHO JESUS CONSIDERS BROTHERS...

- ✓ “And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother.’” (Matt 12:50)
- ✓ “And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. [For] whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.’” (Mark 3:35)
- ✓ “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it.” (Luke 8:21)

EVIDENCE THAT JESUS DID NOT HAVE BIOLOGICAL BROTHERS

- ✓ “But I did not see any other of the apostles, only James the brother of the Lord” (Gal 1:19). Among the apostles, there are only two named James:

- ✓ “[he appointed the twelve:] Simon, whom he named Peter; James, son of Zebedee, and John... Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot” (Mark 3:16-18).²⁵

--- And so the two Apostles named “James,” being the sons of Alphaes and of Zebedee, ipso facto are not the sons of St. Joseph and are therefore not the earthly brothers of Jesus, but at most they are cousins, or spiritual brothers, in keeping with the previous passage (cf. Gal 1:19)²⁶.

--- And so Mary did not have other children; here, too, we can demonstrate the virginity of Mary, given that Jesus was born of an extraordinary conception (cf. Luke 1:31-35).

--- In the Hebrew language, as we will show, the word “brother” was used rather loosely for a family relationship. In the Old Testament, Abraham used the term “Achimm” “brothers” (אֲחִימִם *’aHîm*) when he was speaking of his nephew Lot (Gen 12:5); we read: “Abraham said to Lot (his nephew – Gen. 12:5) “*Let there not be strife between me and you... for we are brothers*” (cf. Gen 13:8, *Bibbia Italiana CEI 1974, unpublished translation by pfsgrm*). It is confirmed by the Word, therefore, that when speaking of the so-called “brothers” of Jesus (*Your brothers our outside* – cf. Matt 12:47) the authors of the Gospels were not referring to blood brothers of Jesus but to another family relationship, as has been demonstrated with various passages cited here on this theme of “blood brothers of Jesus” (or not!)²⁷.

3.15. OPINION OF THE BIBLE AND THE PBC – ON THE FORCED INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ Jesus said to Peter: “*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.*” (Matt 16:19)
- ✓ For this reason, Peter will later say: “*there is no prophecy of scripture that is a matter of personal interpretation*” (2Pet 1:20).

--- Sì, *Nessuna Scrittura Profetica va soggetta a privata spiegazione* (2Pt 1,20), perché le chiavi della giusta ermeneutica o interpretazione delle cose del Regno dei Cieli – come abbiamo letto – sono state affidate solo a Pietro o a chi ne fa le veci, come infatti poi Gesù stesso parla al plurale del medesimo argomento, dicendo: *In verità vi dico: tutto quello che legherete sopra la terra sarà legato anche in cielo e tutto quello che scioglierete sopra la terra sarà sciolto anche in cielo !* (Mt 18,18).

--- Dunque, la sicura interpretazione delle Scritture, spetta solo al Papa e ai suoi Vescovi in comunione con lui, come nel caso della Sicura Eucaristia! (Cfr. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Lettera Enciclica: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 39 b, in: *Tutte le Encicliche di Giovanni Paolo II*, Ediz. LEV, Città del Vaticano 2005², pp. 1620-1622).

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POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

OPINION OF THE PBC ON THE INTERPRETATION OF J.W.'S ETC...

- ✓ --- **PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION** : “[C]are should be taken to avoid tendentious interpretations, that is, readings which, instead of being docile to the text make use of it only for their own narrow purposes (as is the case in...certain sects, for example Jehovah’s Witnesses).” (PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, “*The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*,” http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp-FullText.htm [accessed 09/09/20])

²⁵ On 1/24/14, we added this passage from the Gospel (Mark 3:16-18) to this file, and a little while later we found the same passage in the Gospel for the Mass of the same day!

²⁶ (Cf. meditation of Friar Picchignito, with VV interpretation)

²⁷ (Cf. meditation of Friar Michael, with VV interpretation)

4. MORMONS

BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTES²⁸

Founder: Joseph Smith (1805 - 1844)

- Born in Sharon (Vermont) in a Presbyterian family.
- In 1820 the fifteen-year-old Joseph, still without any true religious formation, had his first revelation: God appeared to him to exhort him not to adhere to any existing religious community, because "in His eyes they are all in error."
- On the night of September 21, 1823, Smith (supposedly) had a vision of the angel Moroni, who spoke to him about a book written on tablets of gold. The holy inscriptions were buried in a box on Mt. Cumorah, not far from the Smiths' property.
- Four years later, on September 22, 1827, Smith said that he had another vision, during which the angel entrusted him with the golden tablets. With the help of two crystals called *Urim* and *Thummim*, the illiterate Smith was able to decipher and translate the texts.
- The work which resulted from this, which he dictated in English to his secretaries, was printed at the beginning of 1830 under the title *The Book of Mormon*.
- On April 6, 1830, Smith founded the new religious community in Fayette [...].
- Starting from 1838, the community took the name **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints**, and the founder presented himself as the announcer of a New Revelation.
- As a popular public figure, Smith presented himself as a candidate for the United States presidency in 1844.
- As he was suspected of crimes, however, he ended up incarcerated in Carthage (Illinois). The trial was never carried out, because on June 27, 1844, a crowd assaulted the prison and killed Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum.

The first successor: Brigham Young (1801-77)

- from March 1846 to July 1847, he led 15 000 followers on 1050-mile trek toward the least populated region of the West, to the Great Salt Lake where the Mormons founded **Salt Lake City** (Utah), their most important center (even today).

Polygamy:

- J. Smith ... was at first decidedly in favor of monogamy;
- later, he had polygamous relationships (the number of his wives seems to have been between 27 e 49), and in 1843, he added polygamy to the ethical precepts of the Mormons.
- In 1862, the United States Congress issued laws against polygamy.
- This practice was definitively interrupted in 1890, the year in which the *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* issued a degree which put an end to polygamy, punishing it with the excommunication of those of the faithful who had practiced it.
- From the schismatic group led by *Woolley* for twenty years of the previous century, originated the various branches of *polygamous fundamentalism* which exist today. These are about a dozen of them, and none of them or their adherents have any ties to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Doctrine: The 13 articles of faith approved in 1841 represent the principle doctrines of the Mormons.

- In them, Elohim, God the Father, Christ Jhw, his son, and the Holy Spirit, represent the three divinities bound by a common goal.
- The similarity between man and God testifies to the potential sameness between the individual and God. The soul is incarnated in an earthly body in order to be perfected, through the knowledge of the truth, and to reach the divine essence and the condition of a son of God. "*As man is now, God was once; as God is now, man can become.*"
- Jesus Christ, during his earthly life, was married to Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene.
- *The bishops were ordained and chosen by Joseph Smith who, after receiving a vision in which the apostles Peter, James, and John appeared to him, instituted the order of the High Priesthood or Highest Priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek (the Priesthood of Melchizedek).*

Holy Books: In addition to the Bible, the Mormons refer to three other sacred texts:

- The most important is the *Book of Mormon*. According to the narration of this book, which extends from 600 BC to 421 AD, some Israelites colonized America, driving out the Jaredites who had lived there before. Then the Israelites separated into the Nephites, who feared God, and the Indians (called Lamanites), who were rebels. After his Resurrection, Christ went to America, to the Nephites, to bring them other elements of Revelation. Then, over the course of continuous battles, the Lamanites almost completely destroyed the Nephites; only a few were saved, including Mormon, the last prophet of the old Covenant, together with his son Moroni. Together they wrote the Book of Mormon, which was then buried by Moroni in 421 AD.
- The other two holy books of the Mormons, "*The Precious Pearl*" and the "*Doctrine and Covenants*," contain prophecies announced by the charismatic leaders.

MORMON ecumenism?: The Mormons do not participate in the *World Council of Churches*.

²⁸ (Cfr GERHARD J. BELLINGER, *Enciclopedia delle religioni. Mormoni*, Ediz. Garzanti, Cernusco 2002², pp. 596-599. ; See JOHN A. WIDTSOE, *Priesthood and Church Government*, rev. ed. [1954], 110-11; cfr DOCUMENTARIO VIDEO, *Dottrine dei Mormoni. CinemaVerita.com*, Ediz. Italiana, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIQ1dz1L-PU> [31-01-2014]; cf. WIKIPEDIA, *Joseph Smith*, http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Smith [16-01-2014].

4.1. DO THEY HAVE THE APOSTOLIC LAYING-ON OF HANDS?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

Even if J. Smith had a vision in which Peter, James, and John appeared, as mentioned in the historical notes above, the recognition of the apostles in the Bible comes about through a concrete encounter. In fact, St. Paul says:

- ✓ *"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to confer with Cephas and remained with him for fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles, only James the brother of the Lord."*
(Gal 1:18-19)

- ✓ *"Then after fourteen years I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas....and when they recognized the grace bestowed upon me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas their right hands in partnership, that we should go to the Gentiles..."* (Gal 2:1, 9)

--- So, given that St. Paul himself explains, "glory be to God in the Church and in Christ Jesus through every generation, unto the ages of ages" (cf. Eph 3:21), the task entrusted by Jesus to the apostles is always transmitted and maintained within the Church, from generation to generation. And so, given that John Smith didn't go physically to find the legitimate and historical successors of St. Peter and the Apostles (i.e. the Catholic Pope and Bishops of his time) in order to enter into communion with them (as St. Paul did) so that he, too, might receive the laying-on of hands, we recall what is written when St. Paul says to the young bishop Timothy, "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate." (cf. 1Tim 4:14).

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POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

- ✓ --- VATICAN COUNCIL II (1963-1965): *"That divine mission, entrusted by Christ to the apostles, will last until the end of the world (cf. Matt 28:20), since the Gospel they are to teach is for all time the source of all life for the Church. And for this reason the apostles, appointed as rulers in this society, took care to appoint successors....They therefore appointed such men, and gave them the order that, when they should have died, other approved men should take up their ministry. Among those various ministries which, according to tradition, were exercised in the Church from the earliest times, the chief place belongs to the office of those who, appointed by the episcopate, by a succession running from the beginning, are passers-on of the apostolic seed. Thus, as St. Irenaeus testifies, through those who were appointed bishops by the apostles, and through their successors down in our own time, the apostolic tradition is manifested and preserved....And just as the office granted individually to Peter, the first among the apostles, is permanent and is to be transmitted to his successors, so also the apostles' office of nurturing the Church is permanent, and is to be exercised without interruption by the sacred order of bishops. Therefore, the Sacred Council teaches that bishops by divine institution have succeeded to the place of the apostles, as shepherds of the Church, and he who hears them, hears Christ, and he who rejects them, rejects Christ and Him who sent Christ (cf. Luke 10:16)."*

(VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 20)

Experiences

- ✓ Story of two Catholic brothers who met two mormons "evangelizing" two Muslims...

4.2. POLYGAMY OR NOT? ACCORDING TO REVELATION OR THE STATE?

Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT

- ✓ In the Old Testament polygamy was permitted (having more than one wife – cf. *Gen 6:2; Gen 37:2; 2 Sam 19:6*), as well as divorce (cf. *Matt 19:8*), but only because of the hardness of their hearts (*Mark 10:5*).

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ “Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” (**Matt 19:8**)
- ✓ “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” (**Matt 19:4-5, 9**)

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POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

- ✓ --- **Pius XI** (Pope from 1922 to †1939): “Nor did Christ Our Lord wish only to condemn any form of polygamy or polyandry, as they are called, whether successive or simultaneous, and every other external dishonorable act, but, in order that the sacred bonds of marriage may be guarded absolutely inviolate, He forbade also even willful thoughts and desires of such like things: ‘But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.’ Which words of Christ Our Lord cannot be annulled even by the consent of one of the partners of marriage for they express a law of God and of nature which no will of man can break or bend.” (PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter *Casti Connubii*, n. 21)
- ✓ --- **VATICAN COUNCIL II** (1963-1965): “Yet the excellence of this institution [of marriage and the family] is not everywhere reflected with equal brilliance, since polygamy, the plague of divorce, so-called free love and other disfigurements have an obscuring effect.”
(VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 47)

4.3. DID JESUS, IN HIS EARTHLY LIFE, HAVE WIVES OR NOT?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ “Jesus said to [Mary Magdalene], ‘do not touch me.’”²⁹
(cf. **John 20:17**, *Bibbia Italiana CEI 1974*, unpublished translation by pfsgm)

Teaching of the Catholic Church

POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

DID JESUS HAVE A WIFE IN HIS EARTHLY LIFE?

- ✓ --- **St. John Paul II** (Pope from 1978 -†2005): “The concrete ideal of this state of consecrated life is Jesus, the model for all, but especially for priests. He lived in celibacy, and for this reason was able to dedicate His entire strength to the preaching of the kingdom of God and the service of men, with a heart open to all of humanity, as the father of a new spiritual generation. His choice was truly ‘for the kingdom of God’ (cf. *Matt 19:12*).”
(GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *La Logica delle consacrazione nel celibato sacerdotale*, n. 3, Udienza Generale 14 Luglio 1993, unpublished translation by pfsgm)

²⁹ The more literal translation of the Greek *Μή μου ἅπτου* (*Me mu aptu*) = *Do not touch me* (including in a sexual sense – according to a Greek dictionary [Franco Montanari, op. cit.]).

4.4. ARE THERE OTHER PUBLIC REVELATIONS BESIDES THE CANONICAL TEXTS OF THE BIBLE?

Word of God

NEW TESTAMENT

- ✓ *"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach [to you] a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, let that one be accursed!" (Gal 1:8-9)*
- ✓ Jesus says: *"I warn everyone who hears the prophetic words in this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words in this prophetic book, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city described in this book." (Rev 22:18-19)*

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POSTMODERN (OR CONTEMPORARY) AGE

ARE THERE OTHER PUBLIC REVELATIONS BESIDES THE CANONICAL TEXTS OF THE BIBLE?

- ✓ --- **CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY ON FATIMA BY J. RATZINGER:** *"The teaching of the Church distinguishes between 'public Revelation' and 'private revelations.' The two realities differ not only in degree but also in essence. The term 'public Revelation' refers to the revealing action of God directed to humanity as a whole and which finds its literary expression in the two parts of the Bible: the Old and New Testaments."*
(JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Theological Commentary*, in : CONGREGAZIONE FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *The Message of Fatima*)
- ✓ --- **CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH:** *"Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one....'The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.'"* (CCC 65-66)

IN CONCLUSION:

- ✓ *All roads lead to Rome, if one recognizes the objective truth of the Biblical, historical and magisterial documents.*

IN FINAL SUMMARY:

- ✓ *Let whoever wants to understand, understand: which requires an upright mind, humility, and true wisdom, so that one can go immediately to Paradise after death (cf. CCC 1022), in true and holy communion with Jesus...as we have demonstrated here during these evenings of catechesis *Cum Deo et Cum Ecclesiae!* (cf. Matt 7:21; John 6:53-54)*

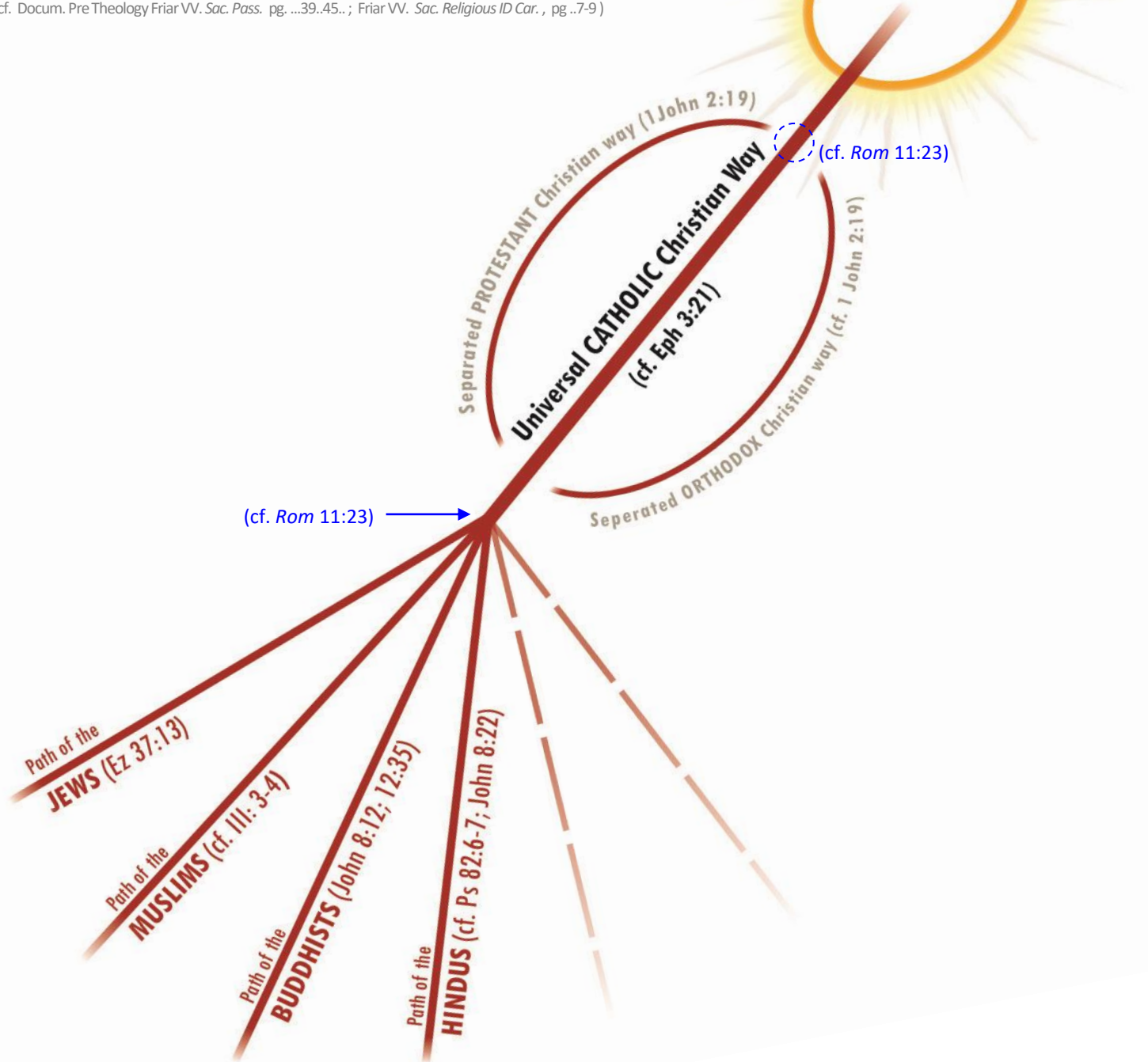
NB. In regards to all the passages that we did not read or explain: if you are interested in having a deeper knowledge of the topic, according to God, the Church, and experience, you can make an appointment with us at the end of the catechesis or by email and we will do what we can (even come to your house, if possible!). We'll just have to agree on the details and gather some people who are thirsty for the truth. You can find the email at: www.poorfriars.net.

– with Christian affection, the Little Friars and Nuns of Jesus and Mary



**“May your Way may be known on earth,
your Salvation, among all nations!”**
 .. May the nations be glad and rejoice;
 for you judge the peoples with Fairness !”
 (Ps 68:3:5)

(cf. Docum. Pre Theology Friar VV. Sac. Pass. pg. ...39..45..; Friar VV. Sac. Religious ID Car. , pg ..7-9)



THIS ONE WAY (cf. John 14:6) or street, **WHICH HAS BEEN SEPARATED INTO MULTIPLE CHRISTIAN WAYS**, must be summed up in the famous old proverb which says, *All roads lead to Rome!* – that is, to the house of the Father, which is fully found in the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church (cf. 1Tim 3:15) from generation to generation (cf. Eph 3:21): not only until 1054 or 1521 or etc., which is when our “separated brethren” (cf. 1 John 2:19) left the Catholic Church. The true Church which possesses the fullness of the truth of Salvation (cf. UR n. 3) has always been placed, from the very beginning, on a territory under Roman control, prefiguring the Church of today under the *Roman Pontificate*. Even Jesus Himself was presented as a baby in that temple of God which was located in a territory under *Roman domination*; and I am certain that this (and this only) is the certain Way toward Full Salvation from sins (cf. Eph 1:14B, CCC 868; UR 3)...unless someone might want to contradict Him Who has received the true keys of Truth, and spend some time in purgatory (cf. Ch. IX DNA V.V.) having a good solid experience of restoration (if all goes well) to a certain real communion of life with the life of Jesus, who is One, Head and Body (Dominus J. N. 16.22), the only Way to go straight to Paradise after death! Amen!