

Editor's Note: In light of Pope Francis' upcoming trip to Morocco (Mar. 30-31, 2019), the [official logo](#) of which was recently released by the Vatican (shown above — see [here](#) for an interesting take on the logo), the following article by Professor William Kilpatrick is a timely reminder that Francis' position on Islam (rooted in Vatican II) is both false and extremely dangerous. It amounts to nothing less than "An Absurd Whitewash of Islam," as declared by John Vennari (R.I.P.), Michael Matt, and Christopher Ferrara in [Part II](#) of their three-part joint statement, *With Burning Concern: We Accuse Pope Francis*, published in 2016. As the international stakes continue to rise, CFN stands with Prof. Kilpatrick and supports his ongoing efforts to speak the unpleasant truth about Islam.

Two young Scandinavian women who were hiking in the Atlas Mountains in Morocco were found dead in mid-December in their tent. The ISIS terrorists later posted a video of themselves decapitating one of the victims.

The mother of one of the women [told reporters](#), "Her priority was safety. The girls had taken all precautionary measures before embarking on this trip."

"Except," [as Robert Spencer commented](#) in *JihadWatch*, "that it no doubt didn't even occur to them that what they thought they knew about Morocco's religion and culture might be inaccurate and designed to whitewash Islam, leaving them ill-informed about a threat that they actually did end up facing."

If one depended on the European media and European schools for one's knowledge of Islam, one would indeed come away with a misleading picture of Islam. But the same could be said of Catholics who rely on Church pronouncements about Islam. Ever since the Second Vatican Council, Church leaders have presented a smiley-faced version of Islam which emphasizes the commonalities with Catholicism and leaves out the alarming elements.

Over the last six years, the chief proponent of this bowdlerized view of Islam has been Pope Francis. He has reassured Christians that Islam is opposed to violence, advised Muslim migrants to find comfort in the Koran, and has portrayed terrorists as betrayers of true Islam.

More significantly, he has become perhaps the world's foremost spokesman for an open-borders, let-everyone-in policy toward immigration. Seemingly indifferent to the increasingly dangerous situation created by jihad-minded Muslims in Europe, Francis has encouraged a welcoming attitude toward all while scolding opponents of mass migration as fearful and xenophobic.

In short, Pope Francis has acted as an advocate for Islam. He has portrayed it as a religion of peace, the moral equivalent of Catholicism, and a force for good. A number of people, however, now feel that the pope has seriously misled Christians about the nature and goals of Islam and Islamic immigration. Like the teachers and other cultural elites who left the two Scandinavian women “ill-informed about a threat that they actually did end up facing,” Pope Francis, by whitewashing Islam, has left millions of Christians unprepared for the escalating threat that is now facing them.

The analogy between the misinformed Scandinavian friends and misinformed Europeans breaks down in one respect: No one forced the young women to travel to Morocco. They went there of their own accord. It’s one thing to invite yourself into the high mountains of Morocco and take your chances, but it’s quite another thing altogether to invite Morocco into Europe and let ordinary Europeans bear the consequences. This is what the European elites—with much encouragement from Francis—have done.

The combination of high Muslim birth rates, mass Muslim migration, and European concessions to Islam’s blasphemy laws has set Europe on a course toward Islamization. Islamization, in turn, will spell *dhimmitude* for Christians. As the Islamic influence grows, Christians will be subject to increasing restrictions on the practice of their faith, perhaps even to the point of persecution. It’s possible that Christianity in Europe will be exterminated.

Is Francis Naïve About Islam?

The pope has done much to promote the cause of Islam—so much so that he has been praised by Islamic leaders for his defense of their faith. The questions that then arise are these: Is Francis aware of the possibility that Islam will become dominant in Europe? Is he aware that this may spell the end of European Christianity? And if he is aware, does he care?

For a long time, I thought that Francis was simply naïve regarding Islam. His counterfactual statements about Islam and his Pollyannaish view of mass Muslim migration must, I thought, be the result either of blissful ignorance or of bad advice from “experts,” or a combination of both.

Now, however, I have my doubts. The catalyst for these doubts is Francis’s approach to the current sex-abuse crisis. I originally supposed that he was naïve about this, too: perhaps he didn’t realize the full extent of the problem or the full extent of the cover-ups, or perhaps he wasn’t aware of the numerous lavender networks in seminaries, in dioceses, and in the

Vatican itself. But in light of recent revelations, it no longer seems possible to give him the benefit of the doubt. In several cases, he not only knew of the crimes and cover-ups, but he took steps to protect and/or promote those involved. Francis seems determined to push through a revolution in doctrine and morals—what he calls [“a radical paradigm shift”](#)—and it doesn’t seem to matter that the men he has chosen to help him achieve his goals are the ones most deeply implicated in the scandals. By all accounts, Pope Francis is a “hands-on” pope who knows exactly what he wants, carefully calculates his moves, and leaves little to chance.

Why, then, should we suppose Francis is completely naïve about the extent of the threat from Islam and from Islamic immigration? It’s difficult to imagine that he isn’t fully aware of the widespread persecution of Christians in Muslim lands. And it’s just as difficult to think that he’s ignorant of the Islamic crime wave on his own doorstep—the escalating incidence of rape, riots, and terrorist attacks in Europe. Does he really believe that such things have nothing to do with Islam?

Unless one assumes that Francis is ignorant of history and out of touch with current events, one must entertain the possibility that—to repeat a favorite slogan of his—he wants to “make a mess” in Europe.

But why? Why risk the damage to the Church that would surely follow on the Islamization of Europe? Doesn’t Francis care about the Church? Increasingly, it seems that he does not. This is to say that he doesn’t have much use for the “old” Church—the one that was handed down by the Apostles, and which has now become too narrow and tradition-bound to suit his liberal tastes.

The Fluid Church of the Future

What he does care about is the new Church of the future—a Church of openness, inclusiveness, and fluidity. Led by the Spirit and free of bothersome dogma, this liberated Church would be able to adjust to the changing needs of the times. If one reads between the lines, this is what Francis and those around him seem to desire.

Indeed, one needn’t bother to read between the lines. In the words of [Fr. Thomas Rosica](#), a media advisor to the Vatican: “Pope Francis breaks Catholic traditions whenever he wants because he is free of disordered attachments.” Moreover, “Our Church has indeed entered a new phase. With the advent of this first Jesuit pope, it is openly ruled by an individual rather than by the authority of Scripture alone or even its own dictates of tradition plus Scripture.”

And [this is from Francis himself](#) speaking at a conference on Church closings:

The observation that many churches, which until a few years ago were necessary, are now no longer thus, due to a lack of faithful and clergy ... should be welcomed in the Church not with anxiety, but as a sign of the times that invites us to reflection and requires us to adapt.

Translation: Francis is not particularly concerned about church closings. Perhaps he even thinks of them as a blessing, i.e., a necessary end to the old order of things that will clear the way for the construction of the new order.

What is this new order? In many respects, it resembles the new world order envisioned by politicians and academics on the left. Like them, Francis has a dim view of national borders and national sovereignty, and, like them, he has an almost unquestioning belief in the benefits of international institutions. One gets the impression that Francis would be quite content to let the U.N. run the world, despite the fact that the U.N. is increasingly run by leftists and Islamists. For example, Francis has [praised the U.N.'s Global Compact for Migration](#) because he believes that immigration should be governed globally rather than by individual nations.

How does this relate to Christianity and Islam? Just as Francis seems to favor a one-world government, he also seems to be drawn by the vision of a one-world religion. He hasn't said so in so many words, but he has given several indications that he envisions an eventual blending of religions. This would not be the "one flock, one shepherd" Church that Christ spoke of but something a bit more diverse.

One way to achieve this unity in diversity is by de-emphasizing doctrine. Doctrinal differences are, after all, the main dividing line between different faiths. Thus, by downplaying the importance of doctrine—something he has done fairly consistently throughout his papacy—it's probable that Francis hopes to smooth the path to interreligious harmony. Just as Francis disapproves of borders between nations, it's quite likely that he looks upon borders between religions as artificial and unnecessarily divisive.

Indifferentism

This is speculation, of course, but it's not sheer speculation. As George Neumayr points out in [The Political Pope](#), Francis frequently shows signs of indifferentism—i.e., the belief that all religions are of equal value. For example, when speaking of the murder of Fr. Jacques Hamel by two jihadists, he drew a moral equivalence between Islam and Christianity, saying, ["If I speak of Islamic violence, I must speak of Catholic violence."](#)

Other signs of his indifferentism are [not difficult to find](#). In 2014, he told a group of Protestants, “I’m not interested in converting Evangelicals to Catholicism. I want people to find Jesus in their own community.” On another occasion, he criticized Pope Benedict’s “ordinariate” for Anglicans interested in becoming Catholics by saying that they should remain “as Anglicans.” On still other occasions, he has waxed enthusiastic about Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation.

Ironically, several examples of his indifferentism can be found in *Evangelii Gaudium*—ostensibly an exhortation to evangelize. Although the document urges us to spread the joy of the Gospel, it provides a number of reasons why we shouldn’t bother. The main reason given is that we already share so many ethical and spiritual values with other faiths that there’s no point in converting non-Catholics.

Thus, *Evangelii Gaudium* leaves the impression that Jews shouldn’t be evangelized (an impression that was later explicitly confirmed by the Vatican). Moreover, Francis also seems to exempt Muslims from any need to convert. As I wrote previously in [Crisis](#):

After reading *Evangelii Gaudium*’s positive assessment of Islam, one could be forgiven for concluding that the conversion of Muslims is not an urgent matter. And, indeed, there is no suggestion in the document that Muslims should be evangelized. At the most, Christians should dialogue with Muslims about their “shared beliefs.”

Rather than converting others, Francis seems more interested in learning from them. In *Evangelii Gaudium* and in numerous talks, he frequently extols the “richness” and “wisdom” of other cultures. Whereas Christ commanded his apostles to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...,” Francis’s message is more along the lines of: “Go therefore and learn the wisdom of other cultures.” Francis’s attitude toward evangelization can perhaps be summed up in something he said to atheist journalist Eugenio Scalfari: [“Proselytism is solemn nonsense.”](#)

If this is the case, then Pope Francis probably has no desire to convert the Muslims streaming into Europe. After all, like Evangelicals, Muslims can also “find Jesus in their community.” Of course, it’s not the same Jesus, but perhaps the resemblance is close enough for someone with scant interest in doctrinal differences. Exactly what, then, does he have in mind by encouraging mass migration into Europe? One possibility, as I suggested earlier, is that he envisions a kind of multicultural blending of religions. But in order for this to happen, it would be necessary for the respective faiths to dilute their doctrinal positions.

Pope Francis seems quite willing to do this on the Catholic side. He has already made substantial concessions to the Chinese communist government on the appointment of bishops. He seems willing to alter Church teachings in order to build bridges with the LGBT “community” and other sexual revolutionaries. And, in general, he prefers to be guided by the prompting of the Spirit rather than by the teachings of the Church.

Moreover, he seems more concerned with political and humanitarian goals than with the goal of getting to heaven. As George Neumayr has noted in *The Political Pope*, when awarded the Charlemagne Prize, Francis “used his acceptance speech not to call for the restoration of Christianity, but for the spread of a ‘new European humanism.’” And, as Francis sees it, the main obstacle to achieving these humanitarian goals is the fundamentalist Christians who refuse to integrate with Muslim migrants and, in general, fail to adapt to changing times. Perhaps he thinks that a flood of migrants will force fundamentalists to encounter the “other” and come to terms with their “otherness.”

But what about fundamentalist Muslims? A harmonious world religion dedicated to humanitarian ends would require not only a watering-down of Christianity, but also a considerable moderation of Islam. Both in terms of percentages and in absolute numbers, there are far more fundamentalist Muslims in the world than fundamentalist Christians. Francis has acknowledged the existence of fundamentalist Muslims, but he claims that they do not represent “authentic” Islam, and he seems to believe, contrary to much polling data, that they are only a small minority. [“All religions have these little groups,”](#) he once said.

A Self-fulfilling Prophecy?

Whether or not he believes that fundamentalists are a small minority, he seems to have a rough strategy for facilitating the emergence of a more moderate Islam. This strategy is to claim that Islam is already—and always has been—a moderate and peaceful faith. Most notably, he asserted in [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) that “authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Koran are opposed to every form of violence.” [n. 253]

The strategy Francis seems to be employing is referred to by sociologists as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The idea is that if you express high expectations for others, they will endeavor to live up to the expectations and thus fulfill your “prophecy.” But, according to [Robert K. Merton](#), the sociologist who coined the term, “the self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a *false* definition of the situation.” But the false definition or assumption can evoke “a new behavior which makes the original false conception come *true*.”

Sometimes self-fulfilling prophecies work and sometimes they don’t. A lot depends on the

awareness of the subject. Young children are more susceptible to such influence, while adults who understand what is being attempted are less so. I recall reading an article on a radical Islamic website which accused Pope Francis of using just such a strategy. I don't remember if the author used the term "self-fulfilling prophecy," but he did complain that the pope was deliberately painting a false but pleasing picture of Islam in order to win Muslims over to a moderate view.

In any event, the self-fulfilling prophecy strategy seems an awfully slender reed upon which to stake the future of the world. For decades now, global leaders have been assuring us that Islam means peace, that violence has nothing to do with Islam, and that the vast majority of Muslims are moderate. Yet most of the evidence suggests that the Western "prophecy" about Islam's pacific nature is not working. With some notable exceptions, moderates have been losing ground, while fundamentalists are in the ascendancy.

Just as he has little anxiety about the wave of church closings, Francis seems to have little anxiety about the Islamization of Europe. Indeed, as evidenced by his encouragement of mass migration, he seems to have no objection to Islamization.

Either because he truly believes the false narrative that Islam is a religion of peace, or because he believes that the self-fulfilling prophecy strategy will create a more moderate Islam, Francis seems to be at peace with the fact that Islam is spreading rapidly.

Whatever he has in mind, it seems that Pope Francis is betting against the odds. A few weeks ago, those two young Scandinavian women mentioned earlier took a similar gamble when they embarked on a camping trip in Morocco. They were betting their lives on the assumption that the whitewashed narrative of Islam that they had no doubt learned in school and university was the correct one. They lost the "bet." They had—to borrow a line from *Casablanca*—been "misinformed" about the situation in Morocco.

Whether Francis has been misinformed about Islam or whether he has adopted a strategy of misinformation, he is taking a huge gamble—not only with his own life, but with the lives of millions. When the religion of Muhammad meets the religion of indifferentism, which seems more likely to prevail?

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