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Incomplete Information: A Case in Point

At the beginning of his new encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (FT), the title of which is based on words of St. Francis of Assisi ("brothers all"),[1] Pope Francis shares, "This saint of fraternal love, simplicity and joy, who inspired me to write the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, prompts me once more to devote this new Encyclical to fraternity and social friendship. … Wherever he went, he sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters" (FT 2).

The Pope goes on to summarize "an episode in the life of Saint Francis that shows his openness of heart," namely, "his visit to [Islamic] Sultan Malik-el-Kamil, in Egypt," in 1219 during the Fifth Crusade (1218-1221). "Unconcerned for the hardships and dangers involved," the Pontiff writes, "Francis went to meet the Sultan with the same attitude that he instilled in his disciples: if they found themselves 'among the Saracens and other nonbelievers', without renouncing their own identity they were not to 'engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake'" (FT 3).

While the information provided thus far is technically correct, it is woefully incomplete. Pope Francis quotes from the Franciscan Rule of 1221 regarding how friars should conduct themselves "among the Saracens and other unbelievers," but he only gives *one* of the "two manners" of conduct specified in the Rule (Chapter XVI):

> "One manner is that they cause no arguments or strife, but be subject 'to every human creature for God's sake' (1 Pet. 2:13) and confess themselves to be Christians. *The other manner* is that, when they have seen that it pleases God, they *announce the word of God*, so that they [infidels] may believe in God the Omnipotent, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator of all things, (and) in the Redeemer and Savior, the Son, and that they [infidels] may be baptized and become Christians, because 'unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God' (John 3:5)."[2] (Emphasis added)

Why would Pope Francis omit this crucial text? Apparently, because it doesn't jibe with the feel-good (and false) narrative he wants to convey via his encyclical: "Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood

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that 'God is love and those who abide in love abide in God' (1 Jn 4:16). In this way, he became a father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society. … Francis has inspired these pages."[3]

Correcting the False Narrative on Islam

The problem of Catholics receiving a false or incomplete narrative from their leaders has become endemic over the past several decades, particularly when it comes to Islam. They have been told *ad nauseum* by popes, bishops, theologians, and others that Catholics and Muslims both worship one God, that they share the same basic morals and values, and thus have plenty of common ground on which to build a good relationship. Never mind that the Koran (Islam's sacred text) *explicitly rejects* the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation as blasphemous, that Mohammad (Islam's false prophet) married a six-year-old girl (while also married to adult women) and consummated their union when she was nine (according to Islamic sources), or that modern-day Islamic "terrorists" are simply putting into practice the instructions and example found in the Koran, the Hadith (oral traditions associated with Mohammad), and the Sira (biography of Mohammad recognized as authoritative by Muslims).

Thankfully, there are still some Catholics who have (1) studied the history and teachings of Islam in depth and (2) are willing to tell the whole truth about it. One of those rare individuals is William Kilpatrick, a graduate of both Harvard (M.A.) and Purdue (Ph.D.) universities who taught in the education department at Boston College for over 30 years. He is the author of several books, including *Christianity, Islam, and Atheism: The Struggle for the Soul of the West* (Ignatius Press, 2012) and *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Jihad* (Regnery, 2016). His numerous articles on Islam have appeared in *FrontPage Magazine*, *JihadWatch*, *Crisis Magazine*, *Catholic World Report*, the *National Catholic Register*, and other publications.

Most recently, Professor Kilpatrick has published a wide-ranging collection of his essays on Islam and related issues under the title, *What Catholics Need to Know about Islam* (Sophia Institute Press, 2020). As readers may recall, CFN has also reprinted some of Professor Kilpatrick's articles on our website with his kind permission.

The good professor has graciously agreed to answer a few questions about his latest book and the ongoing problem of Islam for the Church and the world.

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***Catholic Family News* (CFN): Thank you, Professor, for taking the time to conduct**

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this interview. If I understand correctly, your professional background is in education and psychology. Perhaps you could begin by describing how you became interested in the topic of Islam. Did you ever think you would end up writing on the subject?

William Kilpatrick (WK): No, I never thought that I'd end up writing about Islam. Not until 9/11, that is. And even then, I didn't feel a sense of urgency about jumping into the subject.

However, the official narrative that arose in the wake of 9/11 raised some red flags for me. The public was being told that "Islam means peace", and that "terrorism has nothing to do with Islam." That didn't jibe with what little I could remember about Islam from my college history courses.

On the other hand, that rosy narrative did mesh with trends in education and psychology that were popular at the time—and still are.

Decades prior to 9/11, educators had become enamored of self-esteem psychology, and with the idea that feelings are more important than facts. When applied to cultures, the high value placed on self-esteem implied that every member of every culture ought to be able to feel good about their culture. Thus, you had a kind of affirmative action on behalf of neglected cultures.

So, because Islamic culture was a prime example of the neglected multicultural "other," educators leapt to its defense. Rather than examine the facts, educators at all levels presented students with feel-good narratives about Islam. And this one-sided positive view of Islam was quickly reflected in media treatment of Islam.

In short, the rule of sensitivity to diversity demanded that reporters and journalists avoid subjects that might be offensive to Muslims.

My familiarity with the ways that diversity education had been misused to sell damaging forms of sex-education to school children made me suspicious of the one-sided view of Islam that was being sold to the public by the diversity crowd.

The problem was capsulized a few years ago by Naz Shah, a Muslim member of the British Parliament. She was upset that young English girls from the city of Rotherham were testifying against members of Muslim rape gangs who had victimized more than 1,400 girls over the course of a number of years. Shah said the girls should "shut their mouths for the good of diversity."

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There are more important values than diversity, and one of them is truth. In regard to Islam, we've been shutting our mouths for the sake of diversity for far too long.

CFN: You state in the Introduction to your new book, "Ever since Vatican II, a great many bishops have held to a Pollyannish view of Islam. I call it the common ground approach."[4] This is a recurring theme in several of your essays throughout the book, as well. Would you say that the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) itself (i.e., certain statements found in Council documents) contributes to this "Pollyannish view"?

WK: *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican II statement on non-Christian religions, shows that the Church had been deeply influenced by the same self-esteem psychology that had swept through the schools. As Pope Benedict XVI once observed, *Nostra Aetate* focused on the positive forms of religion and neglected the "sick and distorted forms."

Thus, *Nostra Aetate* emphasizes the surface similarities between Islam and Christianity, and avoids talking about the deep differences. For example, the document says that Muslims "revere" Jesus but fails to note that it's not the same Jesus that Christians know, but rather a "Jesus" manufactured by Muhammad to suit his own purposes.

Likewise, *Nostra Aetate* informs its readers that Muslims "value the moral life." But, again, it's not the same moral life that Catholics value. The Islamic moral code provides for polygamy, wife beating, child marriage, easy divorce (for men), and cruel and unusual punishments (such as amputation for theft). Moreover, Sharia law denies the right to freedom of religion. The penalty for leaving the Islamic faith is death. In short, the notion that Catholics and Muslims share the same moral values is highly deceptive.

Nostra Aetate presents a whitewashed picture of Islam that has the effect of seriously misleading Catholics about the nature of the Muslim faith. As a result, Catholics have been lulled into a dangerous complacency about Islam.

CFN: Elsewhere in your new book's Introduction, you explain, "The main focus of this book is not on armed jihad, but on another kind of jihad that is even more threatening. I call it 'cultural jihad,' but it's also referred to as 'stealth jihad.'" Could you explain this concept? Did it originate within Islam itself? For example, is it comparable to the sort of cultural Marxism taught by Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)?

WK: Stealth Jihad is the Islamic version of Gramsci's "long march through the institutions." It aims to influence and even co-opt key social institutions such as schools, media, courts,

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corporations, big tech, and political parties.

After 9/11, many Islamist leaders realized that large-scale violent jihad (such as the 9/11 attacks) had the effect of awakening people to the threat from Islam. Stealth jihad, on the other hand, is more difficult to detect and resist precisely because it is less obvious.

Many people are unaware of the existence of stealth jihad because they're not meant to know. That doesn't mean that stealth influence operations are completely hidden from sight. More often, they are disguised as civil rights campaigns. These campaigns tend to portray Muslims as victims of discrimination who are not only deserving of our sympathy, but also of special protections.

One of the most successful of these operations is the anti-Islamophobia campaign. Just as Black Lives Matter and other leftist groups claim that our society is inherently racist, Muslim groups claim that our society is guilty of widespread Islamophobia—an irrational fear of Islam. And just as no one wants to be accused of racism, no one wants to be accused of Islamophobia. The charge can result in demotion, job loss, and even lawsuits.

As a result, there have been several well-documented "lone-wolf" jihad attacks that could have been prevented except that colleagues, employers, and even police decided not to report their suspicions for fear of being labeled Islamophobic. For example, colleagues of Major Nidal Hasan, the Fort Hood killer, considered him to be a "ticking time bomb" but were afraid to speak up.

The anti-Islamophobia campaign stifles free speech and results in self-censorship. One of the reasons we know so little about Islam is that few in the media have the courage to speak honestly about the subject. Ironically, Islamists have enlisted important elements of the Catholic leadership in their speech-stifling Islamophobia campaign. Georgetown University, for example, has been instrumental in spreading the Islamophobia narrative to the rest of the Catholic world. Many bishops, meanwhile, seem more concerned about the supposed plague of Islamophobia than about the ongoing massacres of Christians in Africa and the Middle East. To bring up the subject of Christian persecution by Muslims would, of course, be considered Islamophobic. And so, a considerable number of bishops both here and in the Vatican keep silent.

CFN: In his book-length interview, *Christus Vincit* (Angelico Press, 2019), Bishop Athanasius Schneider devotes a chapter to "Islam and the Dechristianization of Europe". Therein, His Excellency laments the "massive influx and presence of Islam and its effect in supplanting, and in some cases overtly opposing, what remains of Christian European culture. … Anti-Christian forces inexorably seek concrete tools

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to destroy Europe, and Islamization can be viewed as a useful tool in their grand designs."[5] Do you agree with Bishop Schneider's assessment? Has Islam been co-opted by anti-Christian (and one might say *globalist*) forces?

WK: Many others, such as historian Bat Yeor, have argued that European elites have long encouraged Muslim immigration in order to replace Europe's native population and traditional culture. Moreover, as Europe became more secular, the birth rate declined, thus providing justification for bringing in more immigrants to fill the workforce and support the welfare system.

Of course, as the birth rate falls, the native population ages. And as they age, they tend to lose their "fighting spirit" and the will to resist. Part of the problem is that many are childless and thus have little stake in the future. What happens after they're gone is of less concern to people who have no children or grandchildren to worry about. So, yes, in many ways the European elites have created a population vacuum and a spiritual vacuum, and Islam is quickly filling up the vacuum.

However, I'm not sure who is co-opting whom. Islamists have their own purposes. And although they may temporarily ally themselves with leftists and secularists, they will eventually turn against them—as they did, for instance, in the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Islamic leaders, including Muhammad, have a long history of breaking alliances when it becomes convenient. And, speaking of Muhammad, it's worth noting that he looked upon migration as a form of invasion long before the idea occurred to the European elites. His first conquest—the occupation of Medina—began as a *migration* to Medina.[6]

CFN: Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has shown particular solicitude for Muslims and Islam. As you note in your book, he "has energetically promoted the migration of Muslims and, thus, of the Islamic faith into Europe."[7] He defends the religion as being inherently peaceful,[8] despite abundant evidence from Islamic sources and history to the contrary. Why do you think Francis is so sympathetic to Islam?

WK: Unlike previous popes, Francis seems uninterested in defending the Catholic Faith. Instead, he seems more interested in creating a one-world humanistic religion of which Catholicism is only a part. He seems to subscribe to the relativistic idea that all religions are essentially equal and all are equally benign. And he has on several occasions drawn a moral equivalence between Catholicism and Islam.

It's true that Christianity has had a humanizing effect on the world, but Christ clearly did not intend it to found a humanistic religion. It is, of course, even more absurd to think of

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Islam as a humanistic faith. If anything, it has had a brutalizing effect on the world. Is Francis simply naïve about history and current events? Can anyone in his position be that naïve? I think it more likely that he is practicing a kind of willful blindness. For the sake of his humanistic narrative, he is willing to ignore obvious facts about both Christianity and Islam.

Defenders of Francis would, of course, reject my view of him as essentially a humanist. They could point to the many orthodox beliefs that he holds, such as his belief in the devil and his emphasis on following the Holy Spirit. Francis does speak earnestly of the need for discernment so that we can know "if something comes from the Holy Spirit or if it stems from the spirit of the world or the spirit of the devil." Yet, he consistently seems to confuse the Holy Spirit with the spirit of the times. His views on the environment, on sexuality, on socialism, and on Islam seem much more in tune with the spirit of the world than with the Holy Spirit.

As I note in my book, "Pope Francis has not been very discerning about the men he has elevated to key positions in the Church. Why should we suppose that he has correctly discerned the promptings of the Holy Spirit in other vital matters?"

CFN: On February 4, 2019, during a visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Pope Francis jointly signed a "Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together" with Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque and University (Cairo, Egypt). The document, which includes the controversial claim that "[t]he pluralism and the diversity of religions…are willed by God in His wisdom," opens by stating, "Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved." And yet, the Koran instructs Muslims, "O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: They are but friends and protectors to each other. And he among you who turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily, Allah does not guide an unjust people" (Surah 5:51). How do you account for the Grand Imam's willingness to sign a document that seemingly contradicts core tenants of the Islamic faith? Could it be related to the Islamic doctrine of *taqiyya* (deception)?

WK: As I said in my previous response, it's absurd to think of Islam as a humanistic faith. Yet, the document is full of blather about "humanity", "equality," diversity", and "fraternity."

I don't know why the Grand Imam signed it. It could be, as you suggested, a matter of *taqiyya* (Muslims are allowed to lie if the lie will further the cause of Islam). In this regard, it's helpful to Islam from a PR point of view to have the support and backing of the Catholic

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Church. The Pope's endorsement lends a certain legitimacy to the Grand Imam's faith. So, Al-Tayyeb might be willing to lie for the greater glory of Islam.

On the other hand, some have suggested that Al-Tayyeb is under pressure from Egyptian president El-Sisi to work with the Pope. El-Sisi has expressed concern that Islam has become an extremist religion—a source of danger and fear to the rest of the world. So, he may be actively trying to push Islam in Egypt in a more moderate direction. If so, there is plenty of precedent for that course of action. In the last century, several Muslim leaders such as Kemal Ataturk, the Shah of Iran, President Nasser of Egypt, and Saddam Hussein managed to severely curtail the power of the imams.

CFN: Your new book ends on a hopeful and Marian note. In the final essay, "Our Lady of Victory", you draw from *The World's First Love* (1952) by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen (1895-1979), noting his belief that "Mary, Our Lady of Fatima, was the key to converting Muslims."[9] You also mention the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531) and the famous Battle of Lepanto (Oct. 7, 1571), including the significance of Our Lady treading upon a crescent moon in the miraculous image of Guadalupe. Do you agree that devotion to Our Lady is critical for converting Muslims and ultimately overcoming the threat of Islam?

WK: Yes, I believe that devotion to Mary is the key to the conversion of Muslims. But Archbishop Sheen's prediction needs to be qualified. He believed that *Muslim* devotion to Mary would lead Muslims to her Son, but my guess is that Muslim devotion to Mary is nowhere near as strong as it was in Sheen's day. Sheen lived and wrote in the time period I described in my previous answer—a time when secular strongman-type leaders managed to relax the hold of Islam over Muslims. In those days, Muslims were freer to cultivate a devotion to Mary. I don't have the data to prove the point, but I suspect that nowadays devotion to Mary among Muslims has declined. With the resurgence of fundamentalist Islam, devotion to Mary is probably a more dangerous practice.

However, it does seem clear that Our Lady will be involved in the conversion of Muslims. The great victory of the Christian fleet over the Muslim fleet at Lepanto is often attributed to Our Lady's intercession. Prior to the battle, Pope St. Pius V asked all European Christians to pray to Mary for victory. On board the Christian ships, every fighter was given a rosary, and tellingly, one of the lead ships carried a banner with an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This is the image in which Mary appears with a crescent moon beneath her feet. The crescent moon, of course, is the symbol of Islam, and the Christian commanders undoubtedly understood the image to be a symbol of Our Lady's eventual victory over Islam.

Given the current weak leadership in the Church, Our Lady's intercession is certainly

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needed. Many among the Church's leadership won't even acknowledge the desirability of Muslims converting away from Islam. It's likely that only a divine intervention can overcome such folly.

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[1] *Admonitions* 6, 1 (https://www.capdox.capuchin.org.au/francescanea/the-writings-of-saint-francis-of-assisi). English translation: "Let us all, brothers, consider…" (note that St. Francis was referring to "all" *his* brothers in the Order of Friars Minor, not all of humanity).

[2] Quoted by Frank M. Rega in *St. Francis of Assisi and the Conversion of the Muslims* (Charlotte: TAN Books, 2007), p. 87.

[3] For more on this false version of St. Francis of Assisi and the real reason for his trip to Egypt (i.e., to convert the Sultan), see John Vennari (RIP), "The 'Spirit of Assisi' vs. Saint Francis of Assisi," *Catholic Family News*, Apr. 2002 issue (https://catholicfamilynews.com/blog/2019/10/07/the-spirit-of-assisi-vs-saint-francis-of-assisi).

[4] William Kilpatrick, *What Catholics Need to Know about Islam* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 2020), p. 2.

[5] Bishop Athanasius Schneider and Diane Montagna, *Christus Vincit: Christ's Triumph Over the Darkness of the Age* (Brooklyn: Angelico Press, 2019), pp. 71, 73.

[6] For more on this subject, see Andrew Bieszad, "The Final Hijra: A Warning on the Refugee Crisis," *OnePeterFive*, Sept. 11, 2015 (https://onepeterfive.com/the-final-hijra-a-warning-on-the-refugee-crisis). – Ed.

[7] Kilpatrick, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

[8] For example, Pope Francis claims in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (Nov.

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24, 2013) that “authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Koran are opposed to every form of violence” (n. 253).

[9] Kilpatrick, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

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