

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 *Corinthians* 10:3-6)

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Francis: Stalwart Reformer or Diehard Pontiff? by Richard Bennett

Editor's Note: Pope Francis has recently been named by Time magazine as "The Man of the Year," because of his so-called "reforms," some of which are stated below. Francis also issued a papal exhortation, "Evangelii Gaudium" – "The Joy of the Gospel," continuing the Roman Catholic Church-State's attack on capitalism. Is the Jesuit Francis really a Reformer, or is he continuing Rome's attack on the Gospel and the Word of God?

Across the world, many people are perplexed regarding the character of Pope Francis. Many think that he is a stalwart reformer while others think that he is just clever diehard Pontiff. Thus it is necessary to understand just what Francis has said and written since he was elected. Some writers have pinpointed this perplexity.

Pope Francis has launched nothing short of a revolution in the Catholic Church.... Will he make it? or Will he pull it off?...everyone, it seems, knows that Francis is trying to engineer "a Catholic glasnost."¹

In the late 1980s, Soviet Union Prime Minister Mikhail Gorbachev elevated glasnost into policy. Linked to "perestroika" or restructuring, Gorbachev used that double-blade to curb embedded corruption in the Kremlin and communist party....

Francis' lifestyle—from lodging in spare Casa Santa Marta quarters to spurning limousines—has rippled out. Cardinals are shedding titles and crimson-laced vestments. Work patterns in Vatican

institutions, from the change-resistant Curia to the troubled Vatican Bank, have radically altered.²

The Teflon and Extraordinary Pope

Then there are metaphors used about Francis and descriptions of his actions that were never before used referring to a Pope.

Francis [i]s a "Teflon pope." Nothing bad sticks. ... "Francis is giving rise to a 'new culture of accountability.'" That means somebody actually gets fired. He accepted the resignation of two Vatican Bank officials. And he did not shield Msgr. Nunzio Scarano of the Vatican Bank from a \$30-million laundering charge.... Francis seeks to enhance the role of the layman—not just in ceremonial ways, but in the nuts and bolts of reforming and governing the Church. And he is repositioning the Church in the political center, after a lengthy period where it drifted to the right.³

Moreover, Damon Linker of the *New Republic* stated,

In a blog post titled "This Extraordinary Pope," Andrew Sullivan, an outspoken homosexual Catholic, expressed the sentiments of many like-minded Church members: "What's so striking to me is not *what* he said, but *how* he said it: the gentleness, the humor, the transparency. I find myself with tears in my eyes as I watch him. I've lived a long time to hear a pope speak like that,"

¹http://www.episcopalcafe.com/lead/leadership/pope_francis_and_the_catholic.html, August 6, 2013, (cf. <http://nronline.org/news/vatican/revolution-underway>), August 5, 2013, accessed September 23, 2014.

² Juan Mercado, "Teflon Pontiff?" *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 12, 2013, <http://opinion.inquirer.net/58763/teflon-pontiff>, September 23, 2013.

³ Mercado, "Teflon Pontiff?" September 23, 2013.

Sullivan wrote. “Everything he is saying and doing is an obvious, implicit rejection of what came before.”⁴

Pope Francis – “Who Am I to judge?” and the First Pope to Speak “Off the Cuff”

On July 29, 2013, Pope Francis spoke to reporters on his flight back from Brazil. He was asked if there was a “gay lobby” in the Vatican. He allowed the issue to come up and tackled it with his own question, which has become well known, “If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge?”⁵ Pope Francis is very much aware that according to Catholic dogma, “The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful...he proclaims with a definitive act that a doctrine of faith or morals is to be held as such.”⁶ That said, he skillfully managed the whole issue of sodomy, and the secondary question of whether there is a gay lobby within the Curia, by addressing it informally rather than from the Chair of St. Peter, all the while knowing that the power of the papal position is being brought to bear through his evasive answer. Thus, he has protected the sodomite lobby inside the Roman Catholic Church without ruling on it from his official position. As a result, Pope Francis set wheels in motion within the Vatican that will make it difficult for the Cardinals of the Vatican Curia to stop.

Then on August 28, 2013, at 4 p.m., Pope Francis spoke to the youth from the Italian Diocese of Piacenza. The Catholic News Website, *Zenit*, made an unusual statement concerning Francis’ improvised talk, “Pope Francis addressed the youth in an off the cuff discourse.”⁷ He began his talk with,

Thank you for this visit! The bishop said that I made a great gesture in coming here. But I did it out of selfishness. Do you know why? Because I like being with you! So this is a selfishness. I wanted to tell you this, to tell you: courage, go forward, make noise. Where there is youth, there should be noise.

Then, we’ll adjust things, but the dreams of a young person always make noise. Go forward! In life there will always be people with proposals to curb, to block your way. Please, go against the current. Be courageous, courageous: go against the current. And that there will be someone who says: “No, but this...I drink a bit of alcohol, take some drugs and I’m getting ahead.” No! Go against the current of this civilization that is doing so much harm. Do you understand this? To go against the current; and this means to make noise, to go forward, but with the values of beauty, of goodness and of truth. This is what I wanted to tell you. I want to wish you all well, a good work, joy in the heart: joyful youth!⁸

A Clear Exposé of the Character of Francis

This “off the cuff” address of Francis gives insight into his own philosophy. Within the Vatican, he is seen as being courageous and as going against the current. Francis is the man who apparently is initiating a revolution in the Roman Catholic Church; at least he is making some noise about it by disturbing superficial bits of the status quo here and there. Pope Francis has chosen the title “Bishop of Rome” in the Vatican’s annual directory, instead of the large number of the formal titles normally given to the Pope by the Vatican. Then on Holy Thursday, Pope Francis washed the feet of two women in juvenile detention, one of which was a Muslim. With this action, Francis broke the Vatican tradition that restricts the ritual to men. In the words of a writer for the AP, “No pope has ever washed the feet of a woman before, and Francis’ gesture sparked a debate among some conservatives and liturgical purists, who lamented he had set a ‘questionable example.’ Liberals welcomed the move as a sign of greater inclusiveness in the church.”⁹

All Show and No Substance

Do all these revolutionary deeds mean that Pope Francis may be a Martin Luther or a John Calvin in the making? He is anything but! What he has written regarding questions of Vatican doctrine is totally in conformity with traditional Roman dogma. An example of this is the new encyclical letter that he has published titled, “The Light of Faith.” The language of the encyclical letter is not like the comments and talks that Francis constantly gives. Rather, the long sixty-paragraph document has the stilted Vatican expressions found in previous Pontiffs’

⁴ Damon Linker, “Pope Francis Versus the Vatican: The Battle to Remake the Church,” *New Republic* online, August 18, 2013, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/114333/pope-francis-versus-vatican>, September 23, 2013.

⁵ <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2013/07/29/if-a-gay-person-seeks-god-who-am-i-to-judge-him-says-pope/>, July 29, 2013, accessed September 23, 2013.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC* hereafter), paragraph 749.

⁷ “Pope’s Address to Youth from the Diocese of Piacenza,” *Zenit*, August 29, 2013, <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-s-address-to-youth-from-the-diocese-of-piacenza>, September 23, 2013.

⁸ “Pope’s Address to Youth from the Diocese of Piacenza,” *Zenit*, August 29, 2013.

⁹ Nicole Winfield, “Pope Washes Women’s Feet in Break with Church Law,” AP website, May 28, 2013, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/pope-washes-feet-young-detainees-ritual>, September 23, 2013.

encyclical letters. Thus, Francis continues to present to his audience two *persona*, as it were. There is the flamboyant revolutionary from the New World who seemingly pits himself in opposition to the Old World Vatican: an outsider confidently shaking up corrupt insider alliances; a modern man from South America, confidently breaking the antiquated formalities and traditions, tossing them aside by speaking casually and moving informally among the ordinary people. All this shrewd acting is targeted toward the naive and the youth, in particular, in a manner presumably calculated to charm them into a malleable personality cult. What is the goal? Behind all this appealing drama, his first encyclical (his words that truly count) shows him to be the subservient-compliant-traditional servant of the Vatican Curia. With this in mind and from the Biblical perspective, we will analyze his encyclical.

Francis' Source and Foundation of "Truth" is Apostolic Tradition

Francis is forthright in presenting his perspective on how truth is known. He states, "It is through the apostolic Tradition preserved in the Church with the assistance of the Holy Spirit that we enjoy a living contact with the foundational memory."¹⁰ This same dogma is taught in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, to wit, "...the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."¹¹ The Church of Rome goes so far as to state, "Still, the Christian faith is not a 'religion of the book.' Christianity is the religion of the 'Word' of God, 'not a written and mute word, but incarnate and living.'"¹²

Only men devoid of the Holy Spirit could have published such a distorted view of Holy Scripture. The Bible alone, God's written Word, shows the brightness of the truth, holiness, majesty, and authority of God, given to it by its Author, the Holy Spirit. Sacred Scripture has the stamp of God's excellence upon it, distinguishing it from all other writings. This is evidenced by the many fulfilled prophecies in the Bible,

written hundreds of years before the actual events, many pointing to Jesus Christ. Fulfilled prophecy is God's way of authenticating the Bible as the one and uniquely inspired Book. Divine inspiration is revelation given in written word, "All scripture [graphe] is given by inspiration of God..." (2 *Timothy* 3:16). "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..." (*Hebrews* 1:1-2). Thus Francis' statement, "It is through the apostolic Tradition preserved in the Church with the assistance of the Holy Spirit that we enjoy a living contact with the foundational memory" is an attempt to take control of the Bible so that the Church of Rome can give predominance to its traditions.

Encyclical Lacks Essential Factor of the Gospel: Man is a Sinner

Francis never mentions sin in his encyclical. Moreover, he does not simply tone down the teaching of Scripture about human depravity; he completely fails to mention the issue. In contrast, the effect of human depravity is clearly expressed in Scripture as being "dead in trespasses and sins" (*Ephesians* 2:1), and "you, being dead in your sins..." (*Colossians* 2:13). Because of Adam's sin, each of us is born into this world spiritually dead. Thus the Apostle Paul clearly states, "As it is written, 'there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God'" (*Romans* 3:10, 11). Moreover, there is the universality of sin, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (*Romans* 3:23). Thus, every person under the Law has fallen short of the glory of God and thereby is possessed both of an evil heart: because of one's sin nature, and a bad record: because of one's personal sin. Until the sinner repents and comes by God's grace alone through faith alone to believe on Lord Jesus Christ alone, "the wrath of God abideth on him" (*John* 3:36). The Apostle Peter speaks of Jesus Christ giving forgiveness of sins: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (*Acts* 10:43). Until a person really beholds the destructiveness of sin, and his own in particular, he cannot comprehend his need for the Lord Jesus Christ's great sacrifice for sin.

However, Pope Francis fails to even mention that it is both from one's sin and one's sin nature that an individual must be saved. He circumvents the centrality of this issue by stating,

The beginning of salvation is openness to something prior to ourselves, to a primordial gift that affirms life and sustains it in being. Only by being open to

¹⁰ "Lumen Fidei 40," August 14, 2013, <http://catholicsensibility.wordpress.com/2013/08/14/lumen-fidei-40/>, September 23, 2014. Compare Francis I, *Lumen Fidei*, paragraph 40, July 29, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei_en.html, September 23, 2013. All references to *Lumen Fidei* are from this website.

¹¹ CCC, 82.

¹² CCC, 108.

and acknowledging this gift can we be transformed, experience salvation and bear good fruit. Salvation by faith means recognizing the primacy of God's gift. As Saint Paul puts it: "By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (*Eph 2:8*).¹³

Such is Francis' studied attempt to cloud the issue of justification by God's grace alone. His teaching is wrong: nobody of himself is "open to" any "primordial gift that affirms life and sustains it in being." Rather, the beginning of salvation is *God* who calls each of His own out of darkness into the marvellous light of Jesus Christ. Nobody can come to Jesus unless God calls him. To the last individual, including the Pope, all who do not know God through the one Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus, remain enemies of God. They are all "dead in trespasses and sins" (*Ephesians 2:1*). They do not seek Him. Rather they hide from Him, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (*John 3:19, 20*). This is why each has to be called by God's merciful grace alone and by Him given to believe by faith alone that Jesus Christ alone has paid for his sin.

Nor does salvation by faith mean recognizing "the primacy of God's gift." Justification by faith alone is a specific divine action by God alone. It means that God alone in His gracious mercy has given that individual a new heart so that he is alive spiritually, rather than dead spiritually as he was previously. He has called him out of the darkness of a depraved heart, mind, and will into the marvellous light of Jesus Christ so that the individual is as *Ephesians 1:3* states, "in Christ." To even frame the issue of justification in such obtuse terminology as Francis has, reeks of deception – particularly since the *Ephesians 2:1-9* passage from which he quotes makes the issue of being dead in trespasses and sins totally clear.

Francis' Church Mode of Faith

While Francis mentions the word "faith" 385 times in his encyclical, the focal point of his teaching is stated in paragraph 22. The heading for this paragraph is, "The ecclesial form of faith." He begins by stating,

In this way, the life of the believer becomes an ecclesial [church] existence, a life lived in the Church. When Saint Paul tells the Christians of Rome that all who believe in Christ make up one

body, he urges them not to boast of this; rather, each must think of himself according to the measure of faith that God has assigned" (*Rom 12:3*).... Faith is necessarily ecclesial; it is professed from within the body of Christ as a concrete communion of believers. It is against this ecclesial backdrop that faith opens the individual Christian towards all others.... Faith is not a private matter, a completely individualistic notion or a personal opinion: it comes from hearing, and it is meant to find expression in words and to be proclaimed.... Faith becomes operative in the Christian on the basis of the gift received, the love which attracts our hearts to Christ (cf. *Gal 5:6*), and enables us to become part of the Church's great pilgrimage through history until the end of the world. (*Lumen Fidei*, 22)

Thus, Francis, in deceptively clever words, changes the personal nature of faith into his ecclesial / church form of faith. In Scripture, faith is personal as the Apostle Paul's testimony demonstrates,

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. (*Philippians 3:7-9*)

Martha, the sister of Lazarus, individually said, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (*John 11:27*). The Philippian Jailer personally cried out "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house'" (*Acts 16:30, 31*). And that he did. Then the Lord personally opened Lydia's heart and she personally believed: "Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened" (*Acts 16:14*). The Apostle Paul uses the second person pronoun "thee" to personally address individuals in his letter to the *Romans*: "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (*Romans 10:8, 9*). Again, the personal nature of faith in the Lord Jesus is seen, confessing with one's mouth and believing in one's heart. How utterly different to Francis' words, "Faith is

¹³ *Lumen Fidei*, 19.

necessarily ecclesial.... It is against this ecclesial backdrop that faith opens the individual.... Faith is not a private matter.... Faith...enables us to become part of the Church's great pilgrimage through history until the end of the world."

Consequently, Francis is again expressing in his encyclical the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. For example, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, "It is the Church that believes first, and so bears, nourishes and sustains my faith" (Paragraph 168). As a result, the *Catechism* officially teaches, "Salvation comes from God alone; but because we receive the life of faith through the Church, she is our mother..." (169). Thus, a person is taught to believe in "Mother Church" and not on the Lord Jesus Christ. The official words of the *Catechism* are

Believing is an ecclesial act. The Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith. The Church is the mother of all believers. No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother. (181)...[T]he Church our Mother teaches us the language of faith in order to introduce us to the understanding and the life of faith. (171)

Thus Francis is consistent with the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, which is to focus a person's faith for salvation on the Roman Catholic Church herself; as she declares, "It is in the Church that 'the fullness of the means of salvation' has been deposited. It is in her that 'by the grace of God we acquire holiness'" (CCC, 824).

When we wade through the deceptive words of Francis and his Roman Catholic Church on the topic of faith, the message is that "the ecclesial form of faith" means specifically that faith is faith in "holy Mother Church." With no mention of sin or human depravity from which to be saved, Francis, demonstrating a faith based in traditional human imaginations, takes pride in "Mother Church" and ends by pointing us to its idol, Mary. Thus, the title of the encyclical, *Lumen Fidei*, which means "Light of Faith," is in reality the "Darkness of Tradition."

Church Sacraments and Eternal Life

In his encyclical, Francis addresses the Roman Catholic sacraments, especially in paragraph 40, "The sacraments and the transmission of faith":

Faith, in fact, needs a setting in which it can be witnessed to and communicated, a means which is suitable and proportionate to what is communicated.

For transmitting a purely doctrinal content, an idea might suffice, or perhaps a book, or the repetition of a spoken message. But what is communicated in the Church, what is handed down in her living Tradition, is the new light born of an encounter with the true God, a light which touches us at the core of our being and engages our minds, wills and emotions, opening us to relationships lived in communion.

To make a place for his Tradition, Pope Francis uses the same old Roman Catholic formula of mixing justification and sanctification. His position is that Scripture alone is not a sufficient source to witness to and communicate the reality of faith, *Hebrews* 11 notwithstanding. Therefore, he casually pushes aside the fact that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (*Romans* 10:17), and that John concludes his *Gospel* by stating, "But these [things] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (20:31). Francis then attempts to replace Scripture by embracing Tradition as the way to justification. Next, he moves his argument forward by introducing the sacraments, the "special means" by which faith is purportedly passed down. He states,

There is a special means for passing down this fullness, a means capable of engaging the entire person, body and spirit, interior life and relationships with others. It is the sacraments, celebrated in the Church's liturgy. The sacraments communicate an incarnate memory, linked to the times and places of our lives, linked to all our senses.... While the sacraments are indeed sacraments of faith, it can also be said that faith itself possesses a sacramental structure. The awakening of faith is linked to the dawning of a new sacramental sense in our lives as human beings and as Christians, *in which visible and material realities are seen to point beyond themselves to the mystery of the eternal.* (*Lumen Fidei*, 40, emphasis added)

Thus, concerning the sacraments, Pope Francis states, "'visible and material realities' are seen to point beyond themselves to the mystery of the eternal." Looking to "visible and material realities...to point beyond to the mystery of the eternal" is the same lie told by Satan in the Garden of Eden, where Satan promised Eve, "[I]n the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (*Genesis* 3:5). Satan offered the reality of the fruit [material reality] as the efficacious means of "knowing good and evil" [*i.e.*, mystery of the eternal]. Eve was beguiled into

believing in the inherent efficacy of the physical objects to open her eyes to the knowledge of good and evil. In the same way, Francis presents the Roman Catholic sacraments as the physical objects “to point beyond themselves to the mystery of the eternal.” Unequivocally and un-Biblically, he states, “The transmission of faith occurs first and foremost in baptism” (*Lumen Fidei*, 40).

The fact remains that Biblical faith and life are not by baptism or any physical rite, rather as the Lord Himself said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death into life” (*John* 5:24). After a person is justified by the All Holy God alone, he is to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, taking His yoke upon him and learning of Him, so that he drinks deeply from His written Word and begins to follow what the Scripture teaches. Having been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, a person lives to do the good works as a consequence or fruit of his justification, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (*Ephesians* 2:10, emphasis added). Therefore, we look to Jesus because He is the Author and Finisher of our faith, its beginning and end. True life is that which is lived in personal, intimate communion with Christ; as the Apostle Paul so eloquently stated, “For to me to live is Christ” (*Philippians* 1:21). In spite of this truth, Francis teaches that visible, material sacraments transmit grace. Thus, we see the lie of Pope Francis regarding the Roman Catholic Church’s sacraments in his claim that, “visible and material realities are seen to point beyond themselves to the mystery of the eternal.” This teaching is also official Vatican dogma: “The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*. ‘Sacramental grace’ is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament” (*CCC*, 1129). Such horrendous Papal dogma attempts to nullify the Biblical doctrine of man’s redemption.

Francis’ Conclusion in Paragraph 60 Turns to Mary in Prayer

The final words of Pope Francis in his encyclical are a prayer to Mary. He prays thus, “Let us turn in prayer to Mary, Mother of the Church and Mother of our faith. Mother, help our faith!” The light of Francis’s faith is Mary. Rather than the Lord Jesus Christ, whose life is the light of men and is the object of the true believer’s faith, Mary turns out to be the object of “the ecclesial form of faith.”

Papal Rome encourages mankind to contact the dead, especially in prayer to Mary. The Bible forbids communicating with the dead; this pagan practice is called necromancy. Despite this, the Vatican publicly teaches people to have communion with the dead, stating,

Communion with the dead. “In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and ‘because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins’ she offers her suffrages for them.” Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective. (*CCC*, 958).

Supposed communion with the dead and deification of the dead has held a prominent place in nearly every system of paganism. Prayer to “Mary” is a prime example. In Scripture the question is asked, “and when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards...should not a people seek unto their God? ... To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (*Isaiah* 8:19, 20). Thus, the verdict of the Lord according to His written Word is true for Francis, and for all who attempt to call up the dead. They do so “*because there is no light in them!*”

Conclusion

We have clearly seen that Pope Francis, who portrays himself as a Reformer, is just a clever traditionalist upholding the Papal system in his lengthy and devious first encyclical. True believers in the Lord Jesus Christ live in the world as He did. They are in the world, but they not of the world. In contrast, the Pontificate of Francis is very much of this world, as he allures the world and the media into portraying him as an appealing Reformer.

In contrast to Pope Francis’s statements, we rejoice that the Lord God is almighty; that there is good news for all those still “dead in trespasses and sins” (*Ephesians* 2:1). In the light of God’s Word, we know “the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth...” (*Romans* 1:16). Despite our sin nature and personal sins, the Lord God has given His beloved Son for all true believers. The Lord Jesus Christ declared, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.... He that

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believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (*John* 3:16, 18). The Lord will always be merciful to you who turn to Him in faith for the remission of your sins. Clearly the Lord Jesus Christ says to you, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (*Matthew* 11:28). Before the all holy God,

according to the Bible, you are made right with Him by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Following on this, all glory and praise is to the Lord God alone! “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.... Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies” (*Psalms* 103:2, 4).