

Pope Francis Stirs Debate Yet Again With Interview with an Atheist Italian Journalist

By Michelle Boorstein and Elizabeth Tenety – October 1, 2013

Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: The Pope might be Catholic, but it is now perfectly clear that he is not a biblical Christian (or a believer in the biblical Jesus). I am actually thankful that this Pope is making these kinds of statements because it exposes the deception of the Catholic Church and will therefore help people see that there is “something rotten in Rome” and prevent those seeking truth from falling for their false gospel (Galatians 1:6-10).

Pope Francis cranked up his charm offensive on the world outside the Vatican on Tuesday, saying in the second widely shared media interview in two weeks that each person “must choose to follow the good and fight evil as he conceives them” and calling efforts to convert people to Christianity “solemn nonsense.”

The Vatican’s head seemed intent on distancing himself from its power, saying church leaders “have often been narcissists” and “clericalism should not have anything to do with Christianity.”

The interview with atheist Italian journalist Eugenio Scalfari set off another round of debate about what the pope meant: Was he saying that people can make up their own minds, even if they disagree with church teachings? Or was this self-described “son of the church” just using casual language to describe classic church teaching about how people need to come to Catholic doctrine of their free will?

A top official with the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, took the unprecedented step of rebuking Francis, writing that the pope’s interview was “a theological wreck” and that Francis was dabbling dangerously in relativism.

“What these interviews seem continually to do is what evangelical theologian Carl Henry warned Protestants of in the 20th century, of severing the love of God from the holiness of God,” wrote the Rev. Russell Moore, a past dean of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and head of the convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. “We must speak with tenderness and gentleness, but with an authoritative word from God.”

Some conservative Catholics were also taken aback by the interview. “My e-mail is filled with notes from people who need to be talked off the ledge,” wrote the Rev. John Zuhlsdorf, author of one of the more popular blogs for Catholic conservatives.

In what is quickly becoming classic Pope Francis, the back story of the interview was dramatically simple. The leader of the largest church in the world apparently picked up the phone and called Scalfari, founder of La Repubblica, who had requested an interview.

“Why so surprised?” the pope asked Scalfari (after being patched through by a shaky secretary at the newspaper). “You wrote me a letter asking to meet me in person. I had the same wish, so I’m calling to fix an appointment. Let me look at my diary: I can’t do Wednesday, nor Monday; would Tuesday suit you?”

After they set the time...

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