



Written by [Patrick J. Buchanan](#) on March 30, 2018

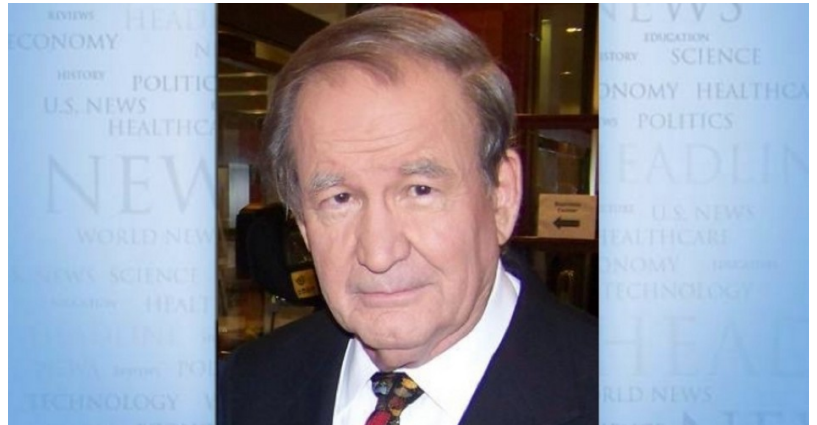
Does the Pope Believe in Hell?

“Pope Declares No Hell?”

So ran the riveting headline on the Drudge Report of Holy Thursday.

Drudge quoted this exchange, published in *La Repubblica*, between Pope Francis and his atheist friend, journalist Eugenio Scalfari.

Scalfari: “What about bad souls? Where are they punished?”



Bad souls “are not punished,” Pope Francis is quoted, “those who do not repent and cannot therefore be forgiven disappear. There is no hell, there is the disappearance of sinful souls.”

On the first Holy Thursday, Judas betrayed Christ. And of Judas the Lord said, “Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed; it were better for him if that man had never been born.”

Did the soul of Judas, and those of the monstrous evildoers of history, “just fade away,” as General MacArthur said of old soldiers? If there is no hell, is not the greatest deterrent to the worst of sins removed?

What did Christ die on the cross to save us from?

If Francis made such a statement, it would be rank heresy.

Had the pope been speaking *ex cathedra*, as the vicar of Christ on earth, he would be contradicting 2,000 years of Catholic doctrine, rooted in the teachings of Christ himself. He would be calling into question papal infallibility, as defined in 1870 by the Vatican Council of Pius IX.

Questions would arise as to whether Francis is a true pope.

The Vatican swiftly issued a statement saying the pope had had a private conversation, not a formal interview, with his friend Scalfari.

The Vatican added: “The textual words pronounced by the pope are not quoted. No quotation of the aforementioned article must therefore be considered as a faithful transcription of the words of the Holy Father.”

Sorry, but this will not do. This does not answer the questions the pope raised in his chat. Does hell exist? Are souls that die in mortal sin damned to hell for all eternity? Does the pope accept this belief? Is this still the infallible teaching of the Roman Catholic Church?

However one may applaud Francis’ stance on social justice, on matters of faith and morals he has called defined doctrine into question and created confusion throughout the Church he heads.

In his letter *Amoris Laetitia*, “The Joy of Love,” the pope seemed to give approval to the receiving of Holy Communion by divorced and remarried Catholics, whose previous marriages had not been annulled, and whom the Church holds to be living in adultery.

Relying on the pope’s letter, German bishops have begun to authorize the distribution of Communion to divorced and remarried couples.



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Cardinal Gerhard Muller, former prefect of the Vatican office for the Doctrine of the Faith, the position once held by Pope Benedict XVI, says this contradicts Catholic doctrine as enunciated by Pope John Paul II.

Said Cardinal Muller, "No power in heaven or on earth, neither an angel nor the pope, not a council, nor a law of the bishops has the faculty to change it."

Four cardinals, including Raymond Burke of the United States, in a formal letter, asked the pope to clarify *Amoris Laetitia*. The pope did not, nor has he addressed the cardinals' concerns.

Indeed, when asked early in his papacy about the immorality of homosexuality, the pope parried the question, "Who am I to judge?"

But if not thee, who? Is not the judging of right and wrong part of the job description?

Nor is it only in the realm of doctrine that the pope has sown confusion among the faithful.

To legalize the underground Catholic Church in China, the pope and the Vatican have agreed to ask Catholic bishops to stand aside for bishops approved by the Communist Party that seeks tighter control of Christian faiths.

The Vatican has also agreed to approve the consecration of a bishop named by Beijing, whom Rome previously regarded as illegitimate.

The capitulation is necessary for the Catholic Church in China to survive and prosper, argues the Vatican. But what kind of church will it become, asks retired Archbishop Joseph Zen Ze-kun of Hong Kong.

The Vatican is "selling out" the Church in China, says the archbishop: "Some say that all the effort to reach an agreement is to avoid the ecclesial schism. How ridiculous! The schism is there, in the Independent Church!"

Archbishop Zen concedes his criticism of the Communist Party and the Vatican's diplomatic efforts are causing problems in closing the rift between the underground Church and the Communist Party-sanctioned church, but makes no apology: "Am I the major obstacle in the process of reaching a deal between the Vatican and China? If that is a bad deal, I would be more than happy to be the obstacle."

There is a division inside Catholicism that is widening, between a Third World and traditional church that are growing, and a mainstream Church in Europe and here that is taking on aspects of the Anglican Church of the 20th century.

And how did that turn out, Your Holiness?

Happy Easter!

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Patrick J. Buchanan is the author of a new book, Nixon's White House Wars: The Battles That Made and Broke a President and Divided America Forever. To find out more about Patrick Buchanan and read features by other Creators writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators website at www.creators.com.

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