Pope Francis’s Growing Global Influence

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In my report on the Compass website I outline how end-time prophecy is being fulfilled before our eyes.

Read the rest of this article now!
Pope Francis’s Growing Global Influence

Valmy Karemera

Today, Sept. 24, 2015, will go down in the annals of history as the day the tide shifted. Never in the history of the Republic has a pope or any other religious leader addressed a joint session of the U.S. Congress.

In his approximately 50-minute speech, Pope Francis moved many members of Congress to tears as he invoked the need to listen to the “voice of faith” while addressing many controversial issues such as immigration, climate change, the death penalty, and respecting the sacredness of life.

Read Pope Francis’s speech to Congress

Earlier this year, a Pew Research Center poll found that 70% of all Americans had a favorable view of the current pope. Significantly, 74% of white mainline Protestants also expressed a positive view of the Catholic Church’s leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trends in Papal Favorability, by Religion</th>
<th>Favorable</th>
<th>Can’t rate</th>
<th>Unfavorable</th>
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<td>Catholic</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>White mainline Protestant</td>
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<td>March 2013</td>
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<td>Unaffiliated</td>
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<td>March 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>White evangelical Protestant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>March 2013</td>
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</tbody>
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Survey conducted Feb. 18-22, 2015

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Yesterday’s New York Times went further to emphasize that “Pope Francis’s Popularity Bridges Great Divides.” From secular humanists to Muslims and Jews, many find the pope’s message appealing. However, when you consider the various contradictions the church presents, there appears to be a cognitive dissonance within the public. Consider just these few examples: child abuse scandals that have rocked the church from the Americas to Europe; the Frontline documentary highlighting the rampant homosexuality and money laundering within the Roman Curia; and most recently the pope’s encyclical on climate change contrasted with U.S. Catholic churches leasing oil-drilling rights. These past and ongoing moral leadership failures at all levels of the church’s hierarchy cannot and should not be passed over lightly.

To some, Pope Francis’s reconciliatory and socially reforming message seems to have phased out doctrinal
differences that for ages have separated papal powers from Protestant nations. Has the Roman Catholic Church changed? Well, while Pope Francis has “changed the music,” says Nancy Gibbs of *Time* magazine, “he has not changed the words.” Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, perceptively concurs that the pope’s ascension to the helm of the Roman Catholic Church has provided “a change in the tune, [but] not the theology.”

**A New Roman Empire**

What then is the pope’s objective? Increasing his political and economic influence.

*Time* is right in titling one of their recent articles “Pope Francis and the New Roman Empire.” Contrary to the founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ, this pope is vying for more global influence and “political popularity” with his “progressive economics,” quips *The Wall Street Journal*. Today’s speech before Congress is another testimony of how far this pope is prepared to go to gain a leading voice in the current controversial and complex world of politics and economics.

More than a century ago, one of America’s most prolific religious writers, Ellen G. White, wrote this startling warning:

> Romanism is now regarded by Protestants with far greater favor than in former years. In those countries where Catholicism is not in the ascendancy, and the papists are taking a conciliatory course in order to gain influence, there is an increasing indifference concerning the doctrines that separate the reformed churches from the papal hierarchy; the opinion is gaining ground that, after all, we do not differ so widely upon vital points as has been supposed, and that a little concession on our part will bring us into a better understanding with Rome. The time was when Protestants placed a high value upon the liberty of conscience which had been so dearly purchased. They taught their children to abhor popery and held that to seek harmony with Rome would be disloyalty to God. But how widely different are the sentiments now expressed….

> Romanism as a system is no more in harmony with the gospel of Christ now than at any former period in her history. The Protestant churches are in great darkness, or they would discern the signs of the times. The Roman Church is far-reaching in her plans and modes of operation. She is employing every device to extend her influence and increase her power in preparation for a fierce and determined conflict to regain control of the world, to re-establish persecution, and to undo all that Protestantism has done. Catholicism is gaining ground upon every side. See the increasing number of her churches and chapels in Protestant countries. Look at the popularity of her colleges and seminaries in America, so widely patronized by Protestants….

> The Roman Church now presents a fair front to the world, covering with apologies her record of horrible cruelties. She has clothed herself in Christlike garments; but she is unchanged. Every principle of the papacy that existed in past ages exists today. The doctrines devised in the darkest ages are still held. Let none deceive themselves. The papacy that Protestants are now so ready to honor is the same that ruled the world in the days of the Reformation, when men of God stood up, at the peril of their lives, to expose her iniquity. She possesses the same pride and arrogant assumption that lorded it over kings and princes, and claimed the prerogatives of God. Her spirit is no less cruel and despotic now than when she crushed out human liberty and slew the saints of the Most High.

> The papacy is just what prophecy declared that she would be, the apostasy of the latter times. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4. It is a part of her policy to assume the character which will best accomplish her purpose; but beneath the variable appearance of the chameleon she conceals the invariable venom of the serpent. “Faith ought not to be kept with heretics, nor persons suspected of heresy” (Lenfant, volume 1, page 516), she declares. Shall this power, whose record for a thousand years is written in
the blood of the saints, be now acknowledged as a part of the church of Christ?

It is not without reason that the claim has been put forth in Protestant countries that Catholicism differs less widely from Protestantism than in former times. There has been a change; but the change is not in the papacy. Catholicism indeed resembles much of the Protestantism that now exists, because Protestantism has so greatly degenerated since the days of the Reformers....

God’s word has given warning of the impending danger; let this be unheeded, and the Protestant world will learn what the purposes of Rome really are, only when it is too late to escape the snare. She is silently growing into power. Her doctrines are exerting their influence in legislative halls, in the churches, and in the hearts of men. She is piling up her lofty and massive structures in the secret recesses of which her former persecutions will be repeated. Stealthily and unsuspectedly she is strengthening her forces to further her own ends when the time shall come for her to strike. All that she desires is vantage ground, and this is already being given her. We shall soon see and shall feel what the purpose of the Roman element is. Whoever shall believe and obey the word of God will thereby incur reproach and persecution. (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, Chapter 35 – “Liberty of Conscience Threatened”)

Pope Francis’s speech today is nothing but a fulfillment of the prophecy of Revelation 13. To all serious Bible students I ask, What more evidence do we need? History and prophecy unfolded before our eyes today. If we ever doubted the genius of Adventist prophetic teaching, may today’s images remove all the lingering skepticism in our minds.

[Photo from Wikimedia Commons: President Barack Obama meets with Pope Francis during a private audience in the Vatican, March 2014.]