

The Era After Benedict XVI: The Papacy of Pope Francis (2013-2025) — A Break with Tradition and Idolatry

The papacy of Pope Francis (2013–2025) marked a **profound departure from the unchanging truths** of the Catholic faith, steering the Church into uncertain theological waters. While the Pope was legitimate in his office, many faithful and theologians have raised concerns that his actions led to **doctrinal confusion** and a break from the faith's true teachings. His apparent **idolization of interfaith dialogue**, especially with Islam and Judaism, raised the risk of **syncretism** and **idolatry**, undermining the exclusive role of Christ as the one true path to salvation.

The Idolatry of Interfaith Dialogue: A Dangerous Shift

1. **Syncretism and the Blurring of Doctrinal Lines:**

Pope Francis's approach to interfaith dialogue, particularly with **Islam** and **Judaism**, was seen by many as dangerously close to **syncretism**—the blending of religious beliefs in a way that compromises the unique truths of each. His meetings with religious leaders from these faiths, including the signing of the *Document on Human Fraternity* with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in 2019, were hailed as milestones in promoting peace. However, critics argue that these actions were **idolatrous** in nature, as they placed the doctrines of other religions on equal footing with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Such actions appeared to diminish the Church's teaching that **salvation is found only in Jesus Christ** and opened the door to a relativistic view of salvation, where all religions could be seen as equally valid paths to God.

2. **The Danger of Religious Pluralism:**

Pope Francis repeatedly emphasized the **dignity and respect** owed to Muslims and Jews, even going so far as to declare that **Muslims worship the one true God** and **Jews are still God's chosen people**. While the Pope's intent was to foster peace and cooperation, his words and actions risked misleading the faithful into thinking that **Islam** and **Judaism**—and by extension, all religions—could be valid paths to salvation. This is not only a break from Catholic teaching but also a form of **idolatry**—placing the beliefs of false religions on par with the exclusive truth revealed through Christ and the Church.

The **Catholic Church teaches unequivocally** that salvation is found **only through Jesus Christ** and that **no other religion** provides the means to eternal salvation. By participating in interfaith actions that appeared to place Christ alongside the falsehoods of other religions, Pope Francis risked fostering a sense of **religious relativism**, which undermines the Church's divine mission and teachings.

3. **The Danger of Religious Pluralism:**

Pope Francis repeatedly emphasized the **dignity and respect** owed to Muslims and other religious groups, even going so far as to declare that **Muslims worship the one true God**. While the Pope's intent was to foster peace and cooperation, his words and actions risked misleading the faithful into thinking that **Islam**—and by extension, all religions—could be valid paths to salvation. This is not only a break from Catholic teaching but also a form of **idolatry**—placing the beliefs of false religions on par with the exclusive truth revealed through Christ and the Church.

The **Catholic Church teaches unequivocally** that salvation is found **only through Jesus Christ** and that **no other religion** provides the means to eternal salvation. By participating in interfaith actions that appeared to place Christ alongside the falsehoods of other religions, Pope Francis risked fostering a sense of **religious relativism**, which undermines the Church's divine mission and teachings.

Is Islam a Path to Salvation? NO.

I. Salvation is Through Christ Alone

We affirm without compromise that salvation is found in no one else but Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, fully God and fully man, crucified and risen for our justification. As Scripture declares:

**“Neither is there salvation in any other:
for there is none other name under
heaven given among men, whereby we
must be saved.”**

— Acts 4:12

Jesus Himself testifies:

**“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no
man cometh unto the Father, but by
me.”**

— John 14:6

Therefore, any religion, teaching, or system that rejects Christ as the incarnate Son of God, the crucified Savior, and risen Lord is not a path to salvation, but a path of error and death.

II. Islam Rejects the Essentials of the Gospel

Islam, as taught in the Qur'an and followed by its adherents, explicitly denies the following core truths of salvation:

- The Sonship of Christ

"It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son."
— *Surah 19:35*

- The Crucifixion

"They killed him not, nor crucified him, but it was made to appear so to them."
— *Surah 4:157*

- The Trinity

"Say not: 'Three.' Cease! It is better for you. Allah is only one god. Far be it from His glory that He should have a son."
— *Surah 4:171*

- Salvation by Grace
Islam teaches a system of merit-based salvation, not the unmerited grace of God offered through the blood of Christ.

Because Islam denies the divinity of Christ, His atonement, and the Triune nature of God, it rejects the only possible way to be saved.

III. The Allah of the Qur'an is Not the God of the Bible

Although the Arabic word "Allah" simply means "God," the identity of Allah in the Qur'an is radically different from the God revealed in the Torah, the Tanakh, and the New Testament.

- The Allah of the Qur'an has no Son.
- The Allah of the Qur'an denies the crucifixion and rejects grace.

- The Allah of the Qur'an condemns the Trinity and curses those who confess Christ (*Surah 9:30*).

Therefore, the god of Islam is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—He is a false god, formed from a man-made revelation that contradicts all the foundations of biblical truth.

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."
— *1 John 2:22*

IV. No True Worship Without Christ

Jesus said to the Samaritans who worshipped without proper revelation:

"Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews."
— *John 4:22*

So also, Muslims may worship sincerely, but not truthfully. Sincerity cannot save when it is directed to a false understanding of God.

"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father."
— *1 John 2:23*

Islam denies the Son; therefore, Islam does not have the Father.

V. Respect for Persons, Not for Doctrinal Error

We affirm that Muslims are fellow human beings made in the image of God and deserving of dignity, compassion, and evangelism. However, respect for the person must never be mistaken for acceptance of their religion.

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."
— *Ephesians 5:11*

Interfaith pluralism is a lie. Islam is not an alternate covenant, a partial revelation, or a parallel way to God. It is a false religion—a man-made system that blinds souls to the truth and leads them away from the Savior.

Final Declaration

Islam is not a path to salvation.

It is a rejection of the Gospel, a denial of the true God, and a barrier to eternal life.

Salvation is through Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone—to the glory of God alone.

1. Idolatry and the Risk of False Worship:

By participating in religious ceremonies with Muslims and engaging in symbolic gestures of unity, Pope Francis opened the door to the **idolatry of false worship**. Catholic doctrine teaches that while Muslims are to be treated with respect, their worship of a god they call "Allah" is not the same as the God revealed by Jesus Christ. To equate the two is to risk **false worship**, which is condemned by the First Commandment: "**You shall have no other gods before Me**" (Exodus 20:3).

Modern Judaism: A Faith Rooted in the Pharisees' Rejection of Christ

1. Modern Judaism is Not the True Faith of God:

While the Jewish people have a unique and important role in God's plan of salvation, **modern Judaism**, in its post-Christian form, is no longer the **faith of God**. After the **coming of Jesus Christ** and the **establishment of the New Covenant**, the true worship of God must be through Christ, who is the fulfillment of the promises made to the **Israelites**. Modern Judaism, as practiced today, is rooted in the **traditions of the Pharisees**—those who rejected Christ as the **Messiah**—and as such, it cannot be considered the true path to salvation.

The Pharisees, who were the Jewish religious leaders at the time of Christ, are often regarded in the **New Testament** as embodying a legalistic and outward form of piety that missed the **true spirit of God's law**. The teachings of the Pharisees were based on the **oral tradition** and **rabbinic interpretations** of the Torah, which, after the destruction of the **Second Temple** in 70 AD, evolved into **Rabbinic Judaism**, which continues to this day. Modern Judaism, therefore, remains a faith largely shaped by the **Pharisees' rejection of Christ** and their reinterpretation of the **Old Covenant** after the **New Covenant** was inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection.

2. The Church's Teaching: Salvation is Found Only in Christ:

According to **Catholic doctrine**, **salvation is found only through Jesus Christ**, the **fulfillment of the Old Covenant**. The Church teaches that the **Old Covenant**, which was established between God and the Jewish people, was **fulfilled and transcended** in the **New Covenant** with the coming of Christ. Therefore, the practices and beliefs of modern Judaism, which reject Jesus as the Messiah and fail to recognize His role in salvation history, are seen as **incomplete** and no longer part of God's plan of salvation.

The Catholic Church has always maintained that **Christ is the fulfillment of the law** (Matthew 5:17) and that, while **Jews are the chosen people**, they must now turn to **Christ** to complete their faith. The Church has no intention to **disrespect** or **demonize the Jewish people**, but it cannot **affirm Judaism**—in its current form—as a legitimate path to salvation. **The Jews**—while deeply honored as the people of the Old Covenant—**must also recognize Jesus Christ** as the Messiah to fulfill their faith and enter into the **fullness of salvation**.

3. Idolatry and the Rejection of Christ:

For many Catholics, **modern Judaism**, with its rejection of **Jesus Christ**, represents a **form of idolatry**. While Jews are respected for their history and their role in salvation history, the **refusal to acknowledge Christ** as the true and final revelation of God is seen as **idolatrous**. Judaism, post-Christ, is rooted in the **Pharisaical rejection of Christ**, and as such, it continues in a form of **false worship** that cannot lead to salvation.

By failing to assert the need for Jews to **accept Christ** as the Savior, Pope Francis risks suggesting that the **Old Covenant** is still active, and that Jews do not need Christ for salvation. This is a **grave theological error**, as it denies the **central tenet of Christianity: salvation is through Jesus Christ alone**.

Pope Francis and the Idolization of False Religions

1. The Apostolic Duty of the Papacy:

The role of the Pope is to safeguard the teachings of Christ and the Church. When Pope Francis sought to build bridges with other religions, especially **Islam** and **Judaism**, some saw his actions as a form of **idolatry**, or at least a grave error, by **treating false religions as legitimate expressions of truth**. The Pope's desire for peaceful coexistence and dialogue with other faiths, though well-intentioned, risked

misleading the faithful into thinking that **conversion to Christ is unnecessary** for those outside the Church. The **Church's mission is to bring them the gospel of Christ**, and this cannot be done while treating their faith as equal to the fullness of truth found in Christianity.

2. **The Idol of Unity at the Cost of Truth:**

For Pope Francis, unity with other religions seemed to take precedence over doctrinal clarity. The repeated focus on peaceful coexistence and mutual respect risked making **interfaith unity** an **idol** in itself, at the expense of fidelity to the **exclusive truth of Christ**. Unity without truth is not the unity that Christ prayed for in the garden (John 17:21); it is a false unity that leads people away from the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis's papacy will be remembered as a period of **pastoral care mixed with doctrinal confusion**, especially regarding interfaith dialogue and the relationship with **Islam** and **Judaism**. While his intentions were peace-driven, his actions were perceived by many as fostering **idolatry**, by diminishing the exclusive truth of **Jesus Christ** as the **only path to salvation**.

The **Catholic Church's mission** is to **proclaim Christ alone** as the only way to salvation. **Modern Judaism** is not a path to salvation, and the Church must continue to evangelize all nations and peoples, including Jews, with the truth that **salvation is found only in Jesus Christ**. The **Pope's duty** is to lead the Church in fidelity to this truth, without compromise or syncretism, and to reject any **idolatry** that equates Christ with false gods.