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Letters to the Editor of the Belfast Newsletter regarding the proposed visit of the Pope to N. Ireland

The following is in response to Rev. Foster's original letter.

Ben Lowry got a good roasting from the Rev Ivan Foster (Ret), along with His Holiness, Pope Francis, in the News Letter ('**Lowry saying NI should welcome Pope is example of ignorance of Rome's teachings,' May 7**).

The Rev Foster writes: "...Ben Lowry believes we should all welcome to Northern Ireland (is) one who exceeds all other deceivers. He (Pope Francis) claims to be God on earth!" and "Mr Lowry's stance is an indication of the gross ignorance that exists on the historic position of the Reformed Church on the teachings of Rome."

The Rev Foster also says that "None can welcome him here (Northern Ireland) without giving credence to his (Pope Francis) claims."

It is a non sequitur to suggest that inviting His Holiness to Northern Ireland implies acceptance of the Catholic Church's Creed; the suggestion appears to be mischievous.

He says that Mr Lowry, who has lived and grown up in Northern Ireland, is ignorant regarding the Reformed Church on the teachings of Rome.

Perhaps, this accusation can be levelled at the Rev Foster.

For example, the Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther, wrote, "There is not one of our Evangelicals, who is not seven times worse than before he belonged to us, stealing the goods of others, lying, deceiving, eating, getting drunk, and indulging in every vice, as if he had not received the Holy Word.

"If we have been delivered from one spirit of evil, seven others worse than the first have come to take its place."

Even Erasmus of Rotterdam, who had at first favoured Martin Luther's Protestant Reformed movement, was soon disillusioned. Erasmus wrote, "The New Gospel has at least the advantage of showing us a new race of men, haughty, impudent, cunning, blasphemous — quarrellers, seditious, furious, —".

Am I alone in detecting that at least one of these condemnatory words of Erasmus might be applied to the Rev Foster's letter?

To suggest, as does the Rev Foster, that Popes claim to be God is inaccurate. Let me quote the British Catholic Convert, Cardinal (the Blessed) John Henry Newman's (died 1890) description of the papacy; he says:

"Now St Peter, who first occupied it (the Holy See) was the Vicar of Christ. You know well, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who suffered on the Cross for us, thereby bought for us the kingdom of heaven" and:

"And what our Lord, the Supreme Judge, is in heaven, that was St Peter on earth; he had those keys of the kingdom, according to the text (Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whosoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven)."

Finally, and more recently, Pope Benedict XVI in the foreword of his book Jesus of Nazareth, 30 Septem-



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ber 2006, writes (clearly implying that he is God's servant — not God), "This is the point around which I will construct my own book (Without anchoring in God, the person of Jesus remains shadowy, unreal, and unexplainable).

"It sees Jesus in light of his communion with the Father, which is the true centre of his personality; without it, we cannot understand him at all, and it is from this centre that he makes himself present to us today."

Micheal O'Cathail, Fermanagh

A further reply from Rev. Foster

Mr Editor,

Having just returned from a day-long visit with friends, I was notified of the letter which was published in your newspaper today. I would like to briefly reply if I may.

It is customary before replying to a letter that you first read the letter. That is all the more necessary when you are setting out to refute what is stated in the letter.

I quoted in my letter the statements of a number of popes, who according to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, must all concur on any theological subject, being "infallible"!

Those quotes were claims, whereby it was either directly stated or very definitely implied that the popes claim to be God.

Would Mr. O'Cathail care to tell me which of the popes' claims I quoted were untrue and perhaps explain why he made no reference whatever to them?

As for his quotations from Luther and Erasmus, both men in these quotations were merely pointing out that mingling amongst those who embraced the gospel in the days of the Reformation there were those who claimed to be followers of the Reformation but who lived quite contrary to all that the Reformers taught from the Bible.

A much better example of this mingling of the devil's crowd with the people of God and the resultant shame brought upon the cause of Christ by the sinful lives of these counterfeits, may be found in the words of the Saviour as recorded in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. The parable of the tares and the wheat clearly indicates what is to be expected from the devil whenever good men seek to do a work for God. As counterfeiters do harm to an economy even so the devil's counterfeits cause great harm to the cause of TRUTH!

Had Mr. O'Cathail cared to have referred further to the Bible he would have seen that this scheme of infiltration by the devil's agents into the professing Church of Christ goes back to very early times indeed.

Amongst the people God led out of Egypt there was the "mixed multitude" (Exodus 12:38) whose complaining and murmurings so offended God. They were still unbelievers, having never forsaken the follies of pagan Egypt but adhered to that which God had forbidden and thereby caused many difficulties for Moses.

Mr. O'Cathail could also have referred to the difficulties Nehemiah and Ezra encountered from similar infiltrators who were but shams.

Coming to the New Testament era, Mr. O'Cathail could have mentioned Judas, who as the servant of the devil infiltrated the Apostolic band. Then again, he might have referred to the difficulties that the apostles encountered with false 'Christians', epitomised by those about whom Jude wrote his epistle in order to warn believers generally in his day that "there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only



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Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," Jude 1:4.

So, Mr. O'Cathail, fake Christians are no new phenomenon which emerged with the Reformation. They are but the emergence of one of the devil's weapons which he has employed since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

While I have indulged you by answering your slanders against the Reformation, I would have the readers of The Newsletter to understand that your comments about Luther and Erasmus, even if they were true, are utterly irrelevant.

Were I the greatest villain in Ireland, my quotations of what the popes claim about themselves would still have to be answered rather than avoided.

I would also have your readers note that I said that to WELCOME the pope is to endorse his teachings. To 'welcome' means to 'accept, to approve of' which Mr. O'Cathail would find were he to consult any good English dictionary.

Regards,

Rev Ivan Foster (Rtr)

16th May 2018.