

THE LEGITIMACY OF THE PAPACY²

Abstract

Since he became pope, Jorge Mario Bergoglio seems to have started a new era in the Vatican. As is usually said, he is the first Jesuit and the first South American in history to govern the Catholic Church. Francis, as it will be argued here, raises many interesting questions to political theory. His figure is now globally accepted in a world where politicians lack of popularity or lose it very soon. ¿Will he solve the deep legitimization crisis of the Church he received? Besides, his critics from within and from outside the Church, accused him of being a populist. They say he comes from a country with a deep inclination to populism. ¿How much has Argentine political culture, and recent history, influenced Francis's political strategy? Francis has also changed the bulk of the Church discourse towards society, insisting in subjects like social inequality, motivating priests to go with joy where the people are and denouncing the tragedies of migrants as well as the sadness and solitude of those living in contemporary world, even if they are not poor. This article will address those topics and offer an answer to the theoretical questions they pose.

Keywords: Legitimacy, Crisis, Church, Modernism, Populism, Inequality

I.

For fifteen years prior to his election on 13th March 2013 as the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church under the name Francis, Jorge Mario Bergoglio was the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, a metropolis of three million inhabitants (with a further nine million residents in its urban hinterland). One close observer of Vatican affairs has highlighted that Francis is the first pope to have been born and to have lived in a major city (and, like John Paul II, to have been an employee at some point in his life).³ A biographer has also emphasised that he is the first pope

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2 Translated from the Spanish into English by Sarah Wilson.

3 Politi Marco, *Francesco tra i lupi. Il segreto di una rivoluzione*, Laterza, Roma, 2014, p. 82.

to have been ordained as a priest after the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II).⁴ Other distinctive elements of Francis' image are well known: he is the only pope to have taken this popular and symbolic name, the significance of which is clear to all, and not only to Italians, for whom Francis of Assisi is a patron saint. He is also the first Jesuit pope, and the first from the Southern Hemisphere to accede to Peter's throne.

These facts are not merely anecdotal; they imply certain positions taken both by the cardinals who elected him, and by Francis himself. Notably, they indicate a move towards the 'option for the poor', a doctrine rooted in Latin American theology. As such, they suggest a re-orientation of Vatican power towards building stronger bridges with local parishes and cutting down on imperial pomp, as well as a geopolitical turn towards Latin America where the majority of the world's Catholics currently live -mostly in cities, some of which are enormous. According to UN data, Latin America is the second major world region to have more people living in urban rather than in rural areas (80% as against 73% of the population in Europe). Two of the world's largest megalopolises are in Latin America. Respectively, Mexico City and São Paulo occupy the fourth and fifth spots in the ranking list of the world's largest cities. For its part, Argentina, like Japan and Belgium, is one of the most highly urbanised countries with 92% of its population resident in cities.⁵

II.

The complex political biography of this urban pope is marked by the turbulent history of his native land. Bergoglio was fated to live through particularly difficult times in Argentina. Soon after he took up his position as Archbishop, the country was hit by economic catastrophe. At the end of 2001, after a severe recession and external debt crisis, the country lacked sufficient international credit to maintain the policy which had artificially tied the value of the Argentine peso to that of the US dollar. The banking system collapsed and, in the wake of waves of spontaneous protest, the government fell. Over a period of less than two weeks, five presidents came and went until one of them, Eduardo Duhalde, managed to consolidate his position. The Church supported this process of stabilization without playing a major role therein.

A year later, Duhalde was forced to resign in the wake of his brutal repression of continuing street protest. He called elections for 2003 and supported the candidacy of Néstor Kirchner, who had been unable to defeat his opponent, Carlos

4 Vallye, Paul Pope Francis. *Untying the Knots*, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, p. XI.

5 Megalopolis: in 2050 two out of every three people will live in a city. *La Nación*, 11 July 2014, Buenos Aires: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1708896-megalopolis-en-2050-dos-de-cada-tres-personas-viviran-en-ciudades> (accessed 11.7.2014). Also see: World Urbanization Prospects. The 2014 Revision. New York: United Nations, 2014: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Highlights/WUP2014-Highlights.pdf> (accessed 28.7.2014).

Menem, also a Peronist, in the first round of voting. The latter had been president for a decade (1989-1999) during which time he had imposed arguably the most radical neo-liberal programme of the period just after the collapse of the communist world, when this doctrine seemed to sweep all before it. Menem had enjoyed an initial period of popular approval because he had managed to rein in Argentina's chronic inflation and, even if his government had been surrounded by corruption scandals, he was no longer in power during the worst period of economic and social crisis.

In 2003, however, Menem decided to withdraw his candidacy in the second round, since, although he had received the most votes in the first round, it became clear that he would never be able to beat his rival in the second. Kirchner was thus declared president with only 22% of the votes cast, a very feeble margin of victory in a national political culture accustomed to leaders with mass electoral support. For most Argentinians, Kirchner was an unknown quantity. Previously the governor of one of the country's southernmost provinces, he seemed to appear from the ends of the world.

Once installed, Kirchner started his mandate with a clear lack of legitimacy, but managed to consolidate the foundations of his power within a very short space of time. He made himself popular through taking bold decisions, adopting a modest persona in public and appealing to the electorate rather than first deferring to influential political interests. In particular, he implemented a series of unexpected and popular measures while resisting calls by the local and international establishment to impose harsh economic restructuring programmes. In this way he gained mass support and the necessary credibility to negotiate with the powerful institutions of international finance. Kirchner's policies bore fruit. Unemployment and poverty rates declined, while economic growth was propelled by increases in the prices for the agricultural raw materials that Argentina exports. Kirchner's government's weak *legitimacy of origin* was more than compensated for by the *legitimacy of exercise* it subsequently acquired.

III.

It is probable that Francis drew to some degree on this recent history of his native land when he took control of a Church buffeted by the worst crisis of legitimacy in its contemporary history, the climax of which was signalled by the resignation of Benedict XVI.⁶ The new pope's *legitimacy of origin* was provided by

6 In a document prepared for the synod, released in June 2014, which includes the results from an international survey of all Catholics, commissioned by the Vatican, one important dimension of this crisis is recognized "Sex scandals significantly weaken the Church's moral credibility, above all in North America and northern Europe. In addition, the conspicuously lavish lifestyle of some of the clergy points to inconsistencies between their teaching and their conduct". III Extraordinary General Assembly. The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization. *Instrumentum Laboris*, Vatican City, 2014, § 75. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20140626_instrumentum-laboris-familia_en.html (accessed 12.07.2014).

the Council's vote. In this sense his legitimacy was incontrovertible. However, it remained insufficient in and of itself to repair the damaged image, or to re-build the battered moral authority, of the Church in the eyes of believers and unbelievers alike.⁷ In order to achieve these aims, Francis needed to bend over backwards to improve the popular image of the institution itself by nurturing a *legitimacy of exercise* and he took on this challenge without delay. Right from his first official introduction on the balconies of St Peter's, his policies have focused on regaining the credibility that seemed lost in the aftermath of Ratzinger's troubled pontificate, itself the epilogue of a long institutional crisis.

Francis' first speech aimed to seduce the masses. Emotive speeches by leaders from the balconies of the seats of political power to huge crowds in the public squares below also have a long history in Argentina, famously inaugurated in 1945 by Juan D. Perón who would come to power one year later. Such public spectacles are an integral element of the classic choreography of the Peronist tradition, which has survived for over seven decades, in spite of interruptions by various military coups, electoral bans and defeats, and the death of Perón himself over forty years ago. The pope seemed to take a leaf out of the book of the historical events he had observed at close hand when he appeared before the world and spoke the first at once sober, innovative and warm words of his pontificate. Employing a necessarily less expansive style than that of Perón, Francis was aiming for a no less emotional effect. His aims were foundational: he was trying to build bridges towards 'the people', whose blessing he first sought simply as the humble bishop of Rome.

The speech made a great impression. Something new was afoot; the Vatican was taking on a new body language and (spoken) vocabulary. The somewhat eccentric papal Baroque theatricality and jargon were being abandoned in favour of something of the language (and dress) of the parishes. Equally importantly, Francis announced a radical change of programme, subsequently explained in more detail in his homilies and documents. If Ratzinger had emphasised the need to strengthen the Church doctrinally through a retreat from worldly matters and an emphasis on tradition, Francis aimed to re-launch its missionary spirit. The Church was to come out of its shell, throw off any sense of inferiority, abandon its morbid self-involvement and face up to the lacerations of modernity, not to mention the grave social consequences of globalization.

This programme produced almost immediate results. The claim that, soon after his accession, Francis had converted himself into the European leader with the greatest legitimacy is not an exaggerated one. He had inherited an institution in decline and the sudden and major change in fortune he inspired presents a challenge to political theorists. The influence of the media that has continually

7 In a way, this represented a practical solution to a theoretical challenge for Catholicism since Catholic tradition had never distinguished between legality and legitimacy, as one Catholic thinker has explained: Schmitt Carl, *Legalidad y legitimidad*, Aguilar, Madrid, 1971, pp. XXIV-XXV.

broadcast his image and praised his style, has transformed him into something of a pop star. Soon after the first anniversary of his accession, President Obama paid him a visit to bask in the limelight. A few weeks later in May 2014, the European elections highlighted the scale of the contrasting deficit in political legitimacy across the continent through the low voter turnout, the weakness of the traditional parties, where they still exist, and the rise of extreme political movements of both the left and, more frequently, of the right. The latter's success has been founded on eurosceptic policies, and has often employed xenophobic language. In the context of a prolonged global crisis, with grave consequences for many European societies, the media has highlighted the challenge posed to the continent's democracies by their electorates' pronounced turn towards right-wing 'populism'.

IV.

Pope Francis' rivals within the Church also criticised the 'populism' of his words and approach, attributing it to his origins and evoking the emergence of what they termed left-wing populist governments in some Latin American countries at the start of the new century. However, while much of the media roundly condemned European populism as a backwards step for its political culture, Francis' critics have remained very discreet. These conservative elements, both within and outside of the Roman curia, are acutely aware that their views enjoy little support and indeed are seen as among the main causes of the crisis within the Church that they had controlled in recent decades. Benedict's resignation left them vulnerable; in a weakened and defensive position.

In contrast, the enthusiasm of the foremost world leaders, of the communications media and of world audiences for the new Pope has kept growing. It is the case that his 'populism' does not pose a major problem for the major alignments of world powers. While Francis might make some irritating, rhetorical statements on the management of the world economy, he is not in a position to take any concrete measures beyond the internal re-organisation of the Vatican itself (another important aim). The implementation of social policy and oversight of public finances fall well outside his powers; he is not responsible for managing a national debt, nor can he raise funds by privatising public companies. While Francis has criticised the predominant ideology of market fundamentalism, he has neither the means nor the intention to regulate the operation of the financial markets.

Francis' populism has had little resonance beyond the media therefore. The latter, however, is not insignificant, since access to a global audience has greatly expanded the reach of his ideas. Certainly, the conservative media reacted against the economic definitions he adopted in his first important, and entirely personal,

document, the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*.⁸ In the United States, Fox News journalists spread the word that the Pope was a socialist who considers capitalism a form of tyranny.⁹ Adopting a less extreme view, *The Economist* reproduced the eloquent words of an analyst from a pro-market think-tank who also emphasised Francis' Latin American origins and the resentment generated by the chequered history of capitalism in the region. Francis, then, was a man 'who has experience of the highly regulated, state-controlled pseudo-capitalist systems of South America'. For *The Economist*, the capitalism that operates in this region is not true capitalism but a distorted Catholic and Latin version: "...surely there are other varieties of capitalism, whose merits and failings would be worth examining. And whatever makes the more rigid, fossilized economies of the Latin world (where a lot of Catholic thinking is done) into impossible places for young people to make a living, it is certainly not an excess of free-market ideology".¹⁰

In Italy, similar arguments were made. One journalist, for whom it would be better if the Pope were to avoid any political intervention, presented Francis as an advocate of a 'populist pauperism' and of the criminalization of the market and profit.¹¹ Almost inadvertently, this reproach reproduced Ratzinger's criticisms of Liberation Theology, the current to which Francis was now mistakenly linked by some critics. Such critiques, as Marco D'Eramo explains,¹² reflect the general Italian and European rejection of populism. Populism has become another European spectre, one currently more real than the communism announced by Marx in 1848, and neo-liberal discourse has drawn on the traditions of the Enlightenment to discredit it.¹³ It is certainly the case that 'populism' has become something of an empty concept in political theory, since few are willing to identify themselves in such terms. Rather it has become a term used to discredit opponents, a handy political insult.¹⁴ At the same time, it is difficult to pin down the concept itself, as Isaiah Berlin declared almost half a century ago in a famous symposium dedicated to the theme: it turned out that in the 'real world', the shoe that Cinderella

8 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, § 53 and 54. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed on 03.07.2014).

9 Capehart Jonathan, "The Far Right's War on Pope Francis", *The Washington Post*, 10.12.2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2013/12/10/the-far-rights-war-on-pope-francis> (accessed 22.07.2014).

10 "Monopolies, Markets and the Pope", *The Economist*, 28.11.2013. <http://www.economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2013/11/monopolies-markets-and-pope> (accessed 12.07.2014).

11 Ostellino Piero, "Troppa retorica su papa Francesco. Diffidate dei suoi incauti imitatori", *Corriere della Sera*, 03.04.2013. http://www.corriere.it/opinioni/13_aprile_03/ostellino-incauti-imitatori-laici-papa_22c896b2-9c2d-11e2-aac9-bc82fb60f3c7.shtml (accessed 01.07.2014).

12 D'Eramo Marco, "Populism and the New Oligarchy", *New Left Review*, 11/82, London, July-August 2013, pp. 5-28. Available at: <http://newleftreview.org/11/82/marco-d-eramo-populism-and-the-new-oligarchy> (accessed 13.07.2014).

13 Zanatta Loris, *El populismo*, Katz, Buenos Aires, 2014. This book, by a distinguished Italian Latin-American, provides a recent example of this argument.

14 "But if no one defines themselves as populist, then the term populism defines those who use it rather than those who are branded with it. As such, it is above all a useful hermeneutic tool for identifying and characterizing those political parties that accuse their opponents of populism". D'Eramo, "Populism and the New Oligarchy", p. 8.

left behind did not fit anyone's foot.¹⁵

Currently, the term 'populist' is often used to damn economic programmes considered irresponsible. Further, critics of populism maintain that its roots are to be found in the nineteenth century Romanticism from which the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century drew many of their substantive ideological arguments. Until the end of the Second World War, 'populism' was an acceptable term linked to the notion of the people. However, D'Eramo argues that the term was appropriated by communism during the Cold War, thus coming to be opposed to the concept of 'freedom', which itself had come to be monopolized by the capitalist world. From this time on, 'populism' became a stigmatized term, primarily associated with 'Third World' movements, with weak or non-existent links to democratic cultures. As a result, during the Cold War, even the word 'people', which had been so central to the rhetoric of both the French and American Revolutions, became marginalized in Western political discourse. D'Eramo further argues that in spite of the fact that the American constitution itself opens with the words, 'We, the people', a century and a half later, around the time of the Second World War, the term '*middle class*' had started to replace 'the people' as the embodiment of the nation. Today, D'Eramo observes that not even protest movements such as Occupy Wall Street employ this term, arguing that its disappearance from the political lexicon is a direct reflection of the taint associated with 'populism'.¹⁶

This particular semantic minefield is further complicated for the Church given that it defines itself as the 'people of God', while the word 'people' recurs many times in the Bible. These strong authorities do not imply –however– that the use of 'the people' is commonplace in the contemporary Church. In fact, the term was revived by John XXIII at the beginning of Vatican II, and started to be used more frequently in Latin America at the end of the 1960s. A 'Theology of the People' was developed in Argentina, and Latin American bishops have made regular use of the term since this time. Bergoglio himself was associated with the most characteristically Argentine, and probably the most resilient form of populism in contemporary history: Peronism.

V.

During the tempestuous decade of the 1970s in Argentina, Bergoglio came into informal contact with the Peronist group, 'Iron Guard' (Guardia de Hierro).¹⁷

15 Berlin Isaiah, *To Define Populism*, 1967, London, p. 6. <http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/lists/bibliography/bib111bLSE> (accessed 18.9.2014).

16 D'Eramo, "Populism and the New Oligarchy", p. 15.

17 "Exclusivo: El jefe de Guardia de Hierro habló sobre Bergoglio", *Informe digital*, 22.4.2013. <http://www.informedigital.com.ar/secciones/politicas/62625-exclusivo-el-jefe-de-guardia-de-hierro-hablo-sobre-bergoglio.htm> (accessed 10.07.2014). Tarruela Alejandro, *Guardia de Hierro. De Perón a Kirchner*, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 2005. For references on Bergoglio, see pp. 87, 218, 225-227. Also see Cuchetti Humberto, *Combatientes de Perón, herederos de Cristo. Peronismo, religión secular y organización de cuadros*, Prometeo, Buenos Aires, 2010.

This provocative name evoked the *Garda di Fier*, a fascist Romanian faction, although it is not suggested that these Argentinians approved either of anti-semitism or of the systematic use of violence, and may well have been unaware of this historical antecedent. Iron Guard was a group that combined nationalist arguments with absolute loyalty to Perón's leadership. The group was strongly linked to the Church, particularly in the later period of its existence. In 1975, as Provincial Superior of the Argentine Jesuits (1973-1979), Bergoglio transferred control of the University of El Salvador in Buenos Aires, which was funded and governed by the Jesuits, (as was the case for several other similar institutions in Latin America as of 1955), to members of Iron Guard.¹⁸ In 1977, this same university awarded an honorary doctorate to Eduardo Massera, a member of the military junta that had ousted the Peronists a year earlier. Massera was known for his sadism and for founding, in the Army Mechanical School (ESMA), the largest extermination camp of the last Argentinian military dictatorship (1976-1983), the bloodiest in the country's history. He had previously been received by Pope Paul VI. The political ambivalence of Bergoglio, and of his acolytes the Iron Guard, reached its apogee with this shameful episode, a manoeuvre which may have been aimed at providing the organisation with a protective, if monstrous, godfather.¹⁹

Bergoglio never made his sympathies for Peronism explicit. Known for his reserved personal style and for great public discretion, Bergoglio also demonstrated a flair for diplomacy, wrong-footing observers with an often disconcertingly ambiguous approach, while following local political developments closely and maintaining discrete contacts with its principal protagonists.²⁰ In a secret 2007 cable to the State Department, revealed by 'Wikileaks', the US Embassy in Buenos Aires characterised him as the 'leader of the opposition to Kirchner's Peronist government'.²¹ The cable employed the exact same terms used by President Kirchner himself to refer to Bergoglio. The tension between the two led to Kirchner's decision to stop attending the religious ceremonies traditionally organised in Buenos Aires Cathedral on national holidays. Since Perón's bitter conflict with the Church in 1955, prior to his being overthrown in a military coup, no other Argentine President had ever placed so much distance between themselves and the Catholic Church.²²

The diplomatic cable mentioned above was prompted by the criminal con-

18 Larraquy Marcelo, *Recen por él. La historia jamás contada del hombre que desafía los secretos del Vaticano*, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 2013, p. 126. It seems that the decision to cut ties with the university came from the General of the order in Rome, Pedro Arrupe. The Jesuits maintained control of the Catholic University of Córdoba, Argentina's second largest city.

19 In spite of this manoeuvre "around 150 active members of the Iron Guard are listed by human rights organisations as disappeared". Tarruela A, *Guardia de Hierro*, p. 278.

20 Bello Omar, *El verdadero Francisco*, Noticias, Buenos Aires, 2013. This biographical essay by one of Bergoglio's non-Church collaborators is the best portrait of the then cardinal in Buenos Aires.

21 O'Donnell Santiago, *PolitiLeaks*, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 2014, pp. 143-149.

22 Caimari Lila, *Perón y la Iglesia Católica. Religión, Estado y sociedad en la Argentina (1943-1955)*, Emecé, Buenos Aires, 2010.

viction of a Catholic priest, Christian von Wernich, for his role in human rights violations committed during the dictatorship. Von Wernich was the first religious figure convicted of such offences after the Kirchner government removed legal obstacles to the prosecution of the perpetrators of the brutal repression of 1976 to 1983. The ecclesiastical hierarchy did not react decisively to this conviction, taking no measures against von Wernich who continued to officiate mass in his prison cell. In the cable, the US Embassy wondered whether or not Bergoglio would be able to overcome the loss of prestige that this conviction represented for the institution of which he was the leader.

VI.

Soon after taking office therefore, Kirchner initiated the reopening of criminal cases against those involved in the military repression. The monstrous crimes committed in the ESMA led to the biggest subsequent trial in terms of the numbers of victims and defendants. Bergoglio was cited as a witness in the case of two Jesuits who were abducted and tortured at the ESMA while under his protection. (They were later freed and left the country). Bergoglio invoked ecclesiastical privilege and did not testify before the court itself but in his palace. The prosecuting lawyer²³ argued not only that Bergoglio had not publicly denounced these abductions, but that he had not told the priests' families; indeed he claimed that it was Bergoglio himself who had informed on them to the military as they had not followed his orders.

The Provincial Superior was 36 years old at this time, and the youngest leader of the Jesuits in Argentine history. During this politically complex and violent period, his difficult mission consisted of re-establishing his authority over an unruly congregation influenced by left-wing political currents.²⁴ Under his controversial leadership, around one hundred Jesuits left the order.²⁵ Bergoglio had experienced a meteoric rise within the Church, but, after being relieved of this position as Provincial Superior, and after spending some years as director of the Jesuit seminary, fell into a kind of political exile within the Church until 1992 when Antonio Quarracino, the conservative Cardinal Primate of Argentina, named him Bishop, an unusual position for a Jesuit. This move positioned Bergoglio as Quarracino's likely successor. As of 1993, Bergoglio drove forward the development of a 'social pastoral' agenda in the poorest neighbourhoods, and later, supported the fight against sex trafficking.²⁶ He was now certain to succeed Quarracino.

23 The part of Bergoglio's witness statement in which he is cross-examined by Luis Zamora, the lawyer for the victims, is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaYF70MIS2A> (accessed 22.07.2014). Zamora was the first Trotskyist Member of Parliament (1989-1993, re-elected on the eve of the major crisis of 2001) and has a long history as an advocate for human rights under the dictatorship.

24 Larraquy Marcelo, *Recen por él*, p. 78.

25 Ibidem, p. 138.

26 Ibidem, p. 171.

Whether as Bishop, Archbishop or Cardinal, Bergoglio never received the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo who were searching for grandchildren sequestered by the orchestrators of the repression in which the children's mothers were murdered. Nor did he receive the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo who were campaigning for information on their children's disappearances. In his role as leader of the Argentine Church he kept his contact with the press to a minimum. A lay person who worked very closely with him has suggested that this was part of a strategy to focus journalistic attention on his very carefully calculated homilies.²⁷ However he did give a long interview to two journalists with close links to the Church that appeared as a book in 2010. Some observers have interpreted this interview as part of a campaign to improve his image, with one eye on the papacy.²⁸ In this book, Bergoglio reveals that early on his career when he was working as a laboratory technician, his much respected boss had been a militant Communist who later disappeared during the dictatorship.²⁹ Nevertheless, he emphasises that while he had known about instances of military violence, he had only learnt about human rights abuses much later on.³⁰ This claim is somewhat difficult to believe for someone in his position and with his contacts in the Argentina of that time. Many testimonies affirm the contrary. Further, Bergoglio highlights the two acts of penance undertaken by the Church in recognition of its shameful institutional role during the dictatorship; one in 1996 (a full 13 years after the return of democracy and a decade after the trial of the members of the military junta had revealed the full scale of the repression to the country as a whole) and the other, even later, in 2000. The future Pope asks whether any other institution has repented publicly in such a way. But it might also be asked whether any other institution bears comparable blame or has remained so indifferent to the casualties in its own ranks. This conversation with two friendly journalists in *The Jesuit* also refers to the most specific allegations made against him during this time, without ever mentioning his principal accuser, Horacio Verbitsky, by name. Bergoglio, of course, denies all responsibility.

Verbitsky, Argentina's foremost investigative journalist, has researched the complicity of the Church with the military régime in depth, and has produced

27 Bello Omar, *El verdadero Francisco*, p. 111. Francis emphasised the particular importance of homilies in *Evangelii Gaudium*, § 137-159.

28 Rubin Sergio and Ambrogetti Francesca, *El jesuita. La historia de Francisco, el papa argentino*, Vergara, Buenos Aires, 2013, (first edition 2010). The authors of this book present themselves as a recipient of the Saint Claire of Assisi prize and as a contributor to Vatican Radio respectively.

29 Her remains were recovered from a common grave and identified by forensic anthropologists years after she had been thrown, alive, into the sea from a navy plane and her body found on a beach. Bergoglio allowed them to be buried in the Church from which she was abducted in 1977 alongside other people who had gathered there to try to look for family members and friends, among them two French nuns and the founder of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. After being detained, they were taken to the ESMA. In *The Jesuit*, Bergoglio omitted these details, in spite of the gratitude he expresses for his former boss. Later on (p. 148) he emphasises that he regrets not having done more to try to help her find her two disappeared children and that she had asked him to intercede on their behalf.

30 Rubin S. and Ambrogetti F., *El jesuita*, p. 140.

documents highlighting Bergoglio's ambivalent attitude towards the abduction of the two priests under his protection.³¹ Both denounced Bergoglio's conduct after their release. The Provincial Superior had expelled them from the order, made sure that no secular bishop would accept them as priests in their dioceses and also intervened to make sure that the passport of one of these men was not renewed while he was outside of the country. The latter, Oraldo Yorío, died in 2010; the other, Francisco Jalics, who is of Hungarian origin, now lives in a monastery in Bavaria. He has made restrained, but favourable statements in relation to the new Pope, emphasising that Bergoglio had nothing to do with his abduction. Yorío and Jalics were only released by the military after the Episcopal Conference reaffirmed its condemnation of Marxism.³²

A Vatican spokesman reacted to Verbitsky's claims by alleging that they were influenced by the 'anticlerical left' and accusing him of diffamation.³³ Employing a more subtle strategy, the journalist Nello Scavo wrote a book refuting Verbitsky's arguments. The book was rapidly translated into Spanish by a Catholic publishing house and published with a prologue by Argentinian Nobel Peace Prize winner, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, himself a victim of the military repression. Scavo lists Bergoglio's interventions on behalf of people persecuted under the dictatorship.³⁴ In his prologue, Pérez Esquivel, a committed Catholic, argues that Bergoglio is a doctrinal conservative, and that while never complicit with the military, he, like most bishops at the time, also never participated in the struggle for human rights during the dictatorship. Pérez Esquivel does recognise that the Argentine Church was complicit with the abuses committed during this period but emphasises that its members were also victims of the repression. As British historian John Lynch has pointed out: 'between 1974 and 1983, 17 Catholic priests were assassinated or disappeared'. Lynch further argues that the Church 'was incapable of protecting its own people (...) There were some protests against the worst excesses of the military repression, but as an institution the Church remained silent and avoided taking a position. How might this be explained? The Argentine Church has a long history of conservatism, public caution and subordination to the state, the economic support of which it has accepted to pay for salaries, seminaries and education'.³⁵

31 Verbitsky Horacio, *Doble Juego*, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 2006. From the same autor see: *El silencio. De Paulo VI a Bergoglio*, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 2005, and: *La mano izquierda de Dios. Historia política de la Iglesia Católica*, IV, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 2005.

32 Larraquy Marcelo, *Recen por él*, p. 115.

33 "El Vaticano acusa a una 'izquierda anticlerical' de difamar a Francisco con denuncias", *La Nación* 15.3.2014. <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1563470-el-vaticano-acusa-a-una-izquierda-anticlerical-de-difamar-al-papa-francisco> (accessed 27.06.2014).

34 Scavo Nello, *La lista de Bergoglio*, Claretiana, Buenos Aires, 2014. Verbitsky denounced the book in an article "Mucho ruido y pocas nueces", *Página 12*, 23.3.2014, Buenos Aires. <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/subnotas/1-67329-2014-03-23.html> (accessed 02.06.2014).

35 Lynch John, *Dios en el Nuevo Mundo. Una historia religiosa de América Latina*, Crítica, Buenos Aires, 2012, pp. 353 and 351. As Pope, Bergoglio ordered that Vatican documentation in relation to bishop Enrique Angelelli's case should be handed over, leading to the

Other explanations have placed less emphasis on the economic links between Church and state, than on the ideological symbiosis between the Church, the traditional political right and the military hierarchy. In the 1930s, a concept of 'national Catholicism' had emerged in the Argentine church. Underpinned by a variant of neo-Thomist philosophy that opposed all forms of modernism, this alliance promoted a fundamentalist *ethos*. This current, dominant amongst the Church hierarchy, later resisted the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II remaining closely linked to the papal Curia. In contrast to the Church in other Latin American countries, including Chile and Brazil, the Argentine church was characterised by its extreme conservatism and its close links with both the country's economic élite and its armed forces. After the second Perón government was brought down in 1955, the largest military clergy in all of Latin America was established.³⁶ The armed forces came to be considered the Catholic party of the Nation, the repository of national values threatened by youthful rebellion and by the left-wing movements that grew exponentially in the 1960s.

The reactionary attitudes of the ecclesiastical hierarchy led to inter-generational conflict within the Church itself. Even by the end of the 1950s, the crisis in religious vocation and ever diminishing unifying power of the bishops, who resisted all change and were preoccupied by any erosion of their authority, had become obvious. Faced by what they considered to be a threat to their power base, the bishops took refuge in the *establishment*, but at the cost of much of their pastoral influence. They resisted the new doctrines accepted by the Conference of Medellín in 1968, at which the preferential option for the poor was adopted and institutional violence condemned. The power struggles between Argentine Catholics became ever more bitter as a result. According to Di Stefano and Zanatta, the stubborn traditionalism of the Church leadership fuelled the radicalisation of the progressives, and in response, in 1967, the Movement of Priests for the Third World (MSTM) emerged in Argentina. At its most influential, ten percent of all priests belonged to this movement, the largest such organisation in the history of the Argentine clergy. These priests aimed to save society through the redemption of its poorest members, were opposed to a Church that acted on behalf of power, and adopted a strong anti-liberal stance. Accused by some of being a Marxist movement, the MSTM saw itself as closer to Peronism; in fact its primary historian argues that the group provided an alternative position that prevented the progressive clergy from turning to the non-Peronist left.³⁷

In this context, the Vatican promoted policies aimed at reinforcing discipline

conviction of military defendants, as state prosecutors have recognised. *Bulletini Ailén*, "Fue un homicidio premeditado/ It was Pre-meditated Murder", *Página 12*, 22.06.2014. <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/subnotas/249124-68461-2014-06-22.html> (accessed 03.07.2014) and "Fue uno de los blancos de la dictadura", *Página 12*, 28.06.2014. <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-249589-2014-06-28.html> (accessed 03.07.2014).

36 Di Stefano Roberto and Zanatta Loris, *Historia de la Iglesia argentina. Desde la Conquista hasta fines del siglo XIX*, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 2009, p. 543.

37 Martín José Pablo, *El movimiento de Sacerdotes para el Tercer Mundo*, UNGS, Buenos Aires, 2010, pp. 185-188.

within the Church and at preserving its severely threatened unity. A central objective was to eradicate all left-leaning theoretical or political currents, whether Peronist or not. In Argentina an original doctrinal variant had emerged, the Theology of Culture (or of the People). According to Di Stefano and Zanatta, this strand represented a moderate alternative to Liberation Theology which was more strongly influenced by Marxism. The Theology of the People aimed to sublimate sociological and political categories – such as the people, liberation and revolution – doctrinally, and to establish more conciliatory terms that eschewed the discourse of class struggle. This group proposed a dialogue with the modern world, although it rejected the secularism of Liberation Theology, which it criticised as ‘sociological’.³⁸ The message of salvation was not to be confused with human emancipation; the existence of poverty was not to be understood in terms of social class. However the poor and the oppressed were to be considered privileged members of the Church or of ‘God’s people’. Lucio Gera, the Peronist-influenced principal theorist of this current, argued that, above and beyond their authentic link with the Church, the people were Catholic. The Church should therefore draw closer to the people in order to nourish itself from this rejuvenating, religious source. According to Di Stefano and Zanatta, the Theology of the People provided an urban alternative to the myth of the Catholic nation long espoused by the conservative hierarchy of the bishops alongside the armed forces.³⁹ Its followers were harassed by the military and censured by the hierarchy of their own Church. As a consequence, its principal figures produced few written documents and few public doctrinal sources of this current remain.

VII.

From the start of his papacy, John Paul II also pursued the objective of re-establishing cohesion and authority within an Argentine Church threatened by rebellion. The Church was split by a doctrinal and institutional struggle over the potential Marxist influence on its grassroots and its hierarchy’s cover up of the military repression that had claimed victims within the clergy itself. The Vatican refused to denounce the military before the Argentine bishops did. It is clear that right from the start, the latter had direct knowledge of the scale of the atrocities committed under the dictatorship. However, unlike other Latin American bishops, they kept silent as a body in order to maintain their special relationship with the armed forces, whose repressive acts they supported. Adopting an “ecclesio-centric” attitude they prioritised the preservation of the institution itself and of its multiple contacts with the most powerful sections of society.⁴⁰ Even in 1981, after a split vote, the Episcopate still declined to receive the Mothers of the Plaza de

38 *Ibidem*, p. 546.

39 *Ibidem*, p. 565.

40 *Ibidem*, p. 559

Mayo. Only a minority of Argentine bishops opposed this position. In its official declarations, the Episcopate repeatedly called for reconciliation, forgiveness and forgetting, and towards the end of the dictatorship the bishops also swallowed a military document that attempted to justify the genocide. No other representative social institution adopted such a position.

Bergoglio took up an intermediate position in relation to the Argentine tragedy, typical of his political trajectory.⁴¹ By the time he was made a cardinal by John Paul II in 2004, the left no longer presented a serious political challenge either within or outside of the Church. It was at this juncture that he initiated the development of a pastoral agenda concerned with the poverty and social marginalisation wrought by Menem's radical neo-liberal economic programme. The danger posed to socially-engaged priests by right-wing paramilitaries who in 1973, even before the dictatorship, had assassinated Father Mujica, a priest active in a shanty town in the very centre of Buenos Aires, had also abated. However, a threat of a more diffuse kind had emerged from the drug traffickers entrenched within the poorest neighbourhoods who even threatened the priests carrying out pastoral work there.

The risk of the political radicalisation of the priesthood had passed; but the cardinal faced other cultural challenges. In the southern summer of 2004-2005, an exhibition by a well-known Argentinian artist, León Ferrari, outraged right wing Catholics, some of whom attacked its installations, vandalising several pieces. Others applied for injunctions to close the show down.⁴² The bishops said nothing about these attacks but did criticise Ferrari. Meanwhile, the Catholic judicial offensive against the exhibition did not bear fruit; the Argentine judiciary was no longer as docile as in the past when faced by pressure from the Church. Ferrari's exhibition received enormous support from artists and intellectuals and became a hit with the general public. This was a bitter blow for the Church, a kind of symbolic testimony to the loss of its former influence over Argentine society, everyday life and cultural activity.

Later, in 2010, on the initiative of the government that had succeeded Néstor Kirchner, led by his wife Cristina Fernández, the Argentine Congress ratified one of the first laws in the Americas that provided for same-sex marriage. Cardinal Bergoglio declared this law to be the work of the Devil. However, in a characteristically sinuous move, he prevented the mobilisation of Catholic schools against the law, a tactic which was called for by the ecclesiastical right, and which proved so successful years later in the very secular French republic.⁴³ Bergoglio understood that in Argentina the cause was already lost, although this did not stop him from giving his support to an association of Catholic lawyers who tried, unsuccessfully, to stop the first marriage scheduled for after the law came into

41 Larraquy Marcelo, *Recen por él*, p. 108.

42 For an analysis of this episode, see: Fernández Vega José, *Lugar a dudas*, Las cuarenta, Buenos Aires, 2011, pp. 75-90.

43 Bergoglio clarifies his position on this question in Rubin S. and Ambrogetti F., *El jesuita*, pp. 89-91.

force. These cultural setbacks highlighted not only a decline in the influence of the Argentine Church but also reflected the decline of its leader Bergoglio's influence over social life.

Bergoglio's collaborators of the time characterised him as an austere and even dark personality. He had never promoted his personal image in Argentina. Indeed, at the age of 75, he resigned from his role, under siege from the Conservative opposition within the Argentine Church, the Church's distant relationship with the new government of Cristina Fernández, and the afore-mentioned setbacks in the local cultural field. A modest room in the Buenos Aires Priests' Home had been prepared for Bergoglio's retirement. Many were speculating that Héctor Aguer, the Archbishop of La Plata, the second largest diocese in Argentina, and Bergoglio's ultra conservative rival, was the favourite of the Roman Curia to succeed him. However, in order to avoid drawing attention to its weakened position, the Vatican calculated that it was not the right time to accept his resignation or to remove him from his functions. And then in March 2013 a Council was called in Rome, and Bergoglio's history - and not only his - changed forever.

VIII.

One of its foremost representatives, the Brazilian Leonardo Boff, has written that many associated with the Church had harboured the hope that Liberation Theology would disappear with the fall of communism. Bergoglio counted himself among this number.⁴⁴ In a 2005 text, Bergoglio recognised that Liberation Theology, like other similar currents of thought within the Church, had made some significant contributions. However he argued that it offered only reductive concepts linked to overly ideological sociological frameworks.⁴⁵ Since the 1980s, the influence of all these movements had started to decline; the end of the 'totalitarian empire of "real socialism"', he wrote, had dealt a historical blow that had left its adherents disoriented.

For the generation of Latin American priests to which Bergoglio belongs, the controversies surrounding Liberation Theology constitute a focal point of debate. On becoming Pope, he engineered an about-turn that illustrated his fine diplomatic nose, steering through the recognition of this current, something that Ratzinger, for both ideological and political reasons, had long blocked as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly the Inquisition). At the request of John Paul II, Ratzinger had produced two documents in which he argued that the scope of the notion of liberation employed by liberation theologi-

44 Bergoglio Jorge Mario, Prologue, in: Carraquiri Guzmán, *Una apuesta por América Latina*, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 2005. Carraquiri, an Uruguayan lay person, was promoted by Francis in 2014 to the position of Vice President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

45 Boff Leonardo, "Opción por los pobres, teología de la liberación y socialismo hoy", in: *La opción por los pobres*, Vigil Jorge (ed.), Sal Terrae, Santander, 1991, pp. 119-121.

ans drew on Marxist rather than Christian roots, and that while the Church valued their commitment to the poor, it rejected their emphasis on political engagement as incompatible with the teachings of the Church's social doctrine. Emancipation from sin and from the fear of death were other names for redemption, Ratzinger added; and the word "liberation" could not be restricted to notions of social emancipation.

However, Ratzinger's successor and current head of the Congregation, Gerhard L. Müller, is a disciple of the Peruvian, Gustavo Gutiérrez, a leading Liberation Theologian, who was interviewed by the official Vatican newspaper after Francis' accession. In this interview, he emphasised the continuing relevance of Liberation Theology.⁴⁶ Gutiérrez, Boff and others linked to the history of Liberation Theology have made their enthusiasm for the new Pope clear. Indeed, over the last few years, Liberation Theology has become a political ally of Francis rather than an ideological opponent. In a 2005 text Bergoglio had anticipated the reasons for this shift when he asserted that as of the 1990s, the greatest challenges have been posed not by the weakened left-wing clergy but by a now rampant neo-liberal right.

In Argentina, Bergoglio had witnessed the tragic consequences of the neo-liberal experiment of the 1990s. Nonetheless, the Church's problem was that the principles of economic neo-liberalism had come to be accepted as common sense by many Latin American élites. In the light of its geographical spread, one critic has gone so far as to claim that "whatever limitations persist to its practice, neo-liberalism as a set of principles rules undivided across the globe: the most successful ideology in world history".⁴⁷ The scale of its victory, in both cultural and political terms, has forced the Church to make both theological and pastoral changes.

One of the continent's foremost Catholic lay intellectuals, the Uruguayan Alberto Methol Ferré, formerly an important assessor of Latin American bishops and an influence on Bergoglio's thinking since the 1970s, argues that the decline of Liberation theology, the principles of which he himself had previously rejected for the same orthodox reasons as Ratzinger, has had some negative consequences for the Church. The first of these was the consequent marginalization of its teachings on poverty. For Methol Ferré, it is important to recognise that these theologians had succeeded in politicising theology, and that this was the fundamental reason for their official rejection. However, through its opposition to the rather complacent neo-Thomism prevalent among the bishops, Liberation Theology had prompted a healthy reflection on the lived experience of diverse Latin American peoples. Subsequently, however, no group had taken on Liberation Theology's mantle within Catholic Latin American discourse, apart from the

46 Sartorio Ugo, "Siamo stati liberati pero restare liberi", *Osservatore Romano*, CLIII (207), 11.11.2013, p. 5, Roma.

47 Anderson Perry, "Renewals", *New Left Review*, II, 1, January-February 2000, London, § 7. <http://newleftreview.org/II/1/perry-anderson-renewals> (accessed 03.07.2014).

Theology of the People, which was active -exclusively and only on the margins- in Argentina.

The Theology of the People had defended some of the positions associated with Liberation Theology however, and specifically its analysis of the way in which the varied customs of the continent's different peoples were moulded by their particular histories. They argued that without abandoning its universalist essence, the Christian message, should be flexible enough to adapt to very different cultural contexts; including those reflecting social inequality as well as diverse national and regional traditions. It was on this flexibility that the 'in-culturation', on which the Theologians of the People placed such emphasis, depended. There was no other way to communicate the Catholic message to, and to unify, all of its different peoples with their diverse customs, in the Church as the one true and universal People of God.

Methol Ferré emphasises that the figure of the enemy is a recurrent theme in the gospel because evil is a constant presence on Earth. In his view, some theologians have been confused by this and have therefore emphasised a primarily social understanding of emancipation in this world of sin. For Methol, the gospel is not concerned with the elimination of enemies, but advocates their conversion -as neighbours- rather than their annihilation. This was the starting point that liberation theologians had never quite understood. In the "conflict of the faculties" that, intentionally or not, they had left in their wake, their theology had become enslaved to Marxist-inspired sociology, the primary philosophical root for which lay with the denial of God, and with the possibility of a heaven on earth created through the overthrow of the dominant classes. Reproducing, perhaps inadvertently, one of the core arguments of nineteenth century reactionaries, Methol Ferré implies therefore that at the root of social revolution is a heresy that denies the existence of God.

In a long interview in 2006, subsequently published as a book,⁴⁸ Methol Ferré argues that the ideological enemy of the Church has changed over time. These arguments are reflected in the line taken by Bergoglio first as Cardinal and later as Pope. From the end of the 1960s this enemy had been the class-based understanding of society so central to Liberation Theology. This understanding was inspired by the Marxist messianic materialism that had fired the first atheist political movements. Its doctrinal positions logically implied political action and, in Latin America at least, some of its adherents had fallen into the temptation of promoting political violence, contrary to the spirit of the gospel. However, in the 21st century, the new enemy is clearly neo-liberalism, a far more dangerous adversary given its quasi-organic spread. The internal dynamic of the neo-liberal market drives people towards a hedonistic materialism and exalts a narcissistic obsession with the body, rooted in individualism, obsessed with consumption

48 Methol Ferré Alberto and Metallí Alver, *El papa y el filósofo*, Biblos, 2013, Buenos Aires, pp. 105-107.

and indifferent to any concern for justice. Methol Ferré concludes that nothing in contemporary history is more anti-religious than neo-liberalism.

If in the 1970s, the concern was to resist liberation theology and to wrest control of the word 'revolution' from the latter's class-based and materialist imagination of it, since the 1990s, the challenges have become even more acute. Atheism is no longer a risk attributable to false doctrinal sources, but a structural effect of people's everyday lives in which little space remains for theoretical discussion. The final 'death of God', foretold so many times by philosophers, seems to be the inseparable bedfellow of the neo-liberal revolution. For Methol Ferré it is clear that the threat of Marxism has been vanquished but that the final victor is not Christ but a sort of nihilist spiritual inheritance. Its fundamental components are an over-weaning technology, a generalised indifference to religion and the psychic sway of acquisitive consumption under runaway global capitalism.

According to Methol Ferré, this 21st century global adversary of the Church lacks the characteristic ideological contours of 19th century anticlericalism, as embodied by the old Latin American liberal élite. These local oligarchies fought for European-style modernisation and to liberate themselves from popularly rooted Church traditions. Inclined towards a conservative liberalism, they were also often anti-nationalist. They looked down on any political demands made by indigenous peoples, just as they did on their cultural practices. In the current era of neoliberal hegemony however, the global élites no longer require further arguments to support their actions beyond the neo-classical economic dogma now universally considered to be the normal scientific paradigm.

The sway of narcissistic consumption has spread across Latin America as it has across the entire globe. For Methol Ferré, one consequence has been that the inexhaustible religious consciousness of the people has strayed from the Catholic path towards the short cut promised by Evangelism, an 'off-the-peg' faith and variant of individualism. The latter is spreading rapidly and aggressively across the region, attracting followers through the 'erotization of the feast (*agape*)', and aided by the diminished Catholic pastoral presence caused by the Church's vocational crisis and consequent decline in the number of priests. However, Methol Ferré does not confront the topic, much discussed within the Church, particularly since Francis' accession, of the inadequacy of its doctrines in relation to the visceral experience of poverty. Nor does he discuss its irrelevance to modern life in general, or the inflexibility of the Church's interventions including the programme of 'political inculturation' defended by the Theologians of the People and adopted as official policy by the Conference of Latin American Bishops at a meeting in Puebla in 1968.

Hedonistic individualism and its religious flipside, Evangelism, now serve establishment power, according to Methol Ferré. In contrast, Liberation Theology, in spite of its faulty foundations, constituted an intellectual position the aim of which was to change the world. Belatedly and after resisting it for so long, it

seems that many members of the Church, and not only Methol Ferré, may have come to appreciate its great merits.

IX.

Under Francis, the social discourse of the papacy has gained prominence therefore. Notably, the negative effects of unemployment on people, deprived of the dignity attained through work, has been emphasised. This discourse also condemns social marginalisation and urban poverty, as well as the spiritual destitution of what it terms the “existential peripheries”. Francis highlighted the hidden tragedy of immigration on his first trip away from Rome, to the Italian island of Lampedusa; he has also emphasised the suffering of broken families. A particular preoccupation has been the effects of the economic crisis and, as such, his concerns resonate with an emerging social agenda, which has even reached the meetings of the world’s most powerful figures. In recognition of his popularity and message, the Davos Forum asked the Pope for an opinion, a request to which he responded, albeit only in the form of a purely rhetorical text.

In one of its own briefing documents, the Davos Forum also recognises inequality as a key problem in the contemporary world.⁴⁹ Today’s young people are faced by unemployment or marginalisation, especially –but not exclusively– in the developing countries, where most of them live. If fortunate, they may find informal work; but two thirds of young people in these countries cannot fulfil their potential. At the same time, in developed countries, young people can no longer count on the safety net on which previous generations relied. Overall, one quarter of the world’s young people cannot find productive work. For the new generations, unemployment is no longer a moment in the economic cycle, but part of the economic structure. This development represents a threat to global stability, because it leads to “distrust in current socio-economic and political systems” while young people “are vulnerable to being sucked into criminal or extremist movements”. Further, in many societies, there are marked income disparities and increasing pressure from a “middle class” for greater transparency in the workings of state institutions and for improvements to basic services such as education, transport and health. Social cohesion is threatened and, according to the Davos document, the new generations seem increasingly indifferent to politics. Politics itself seems to be increasingly focused on electoral periods and lacks strategic vision; the motto of politicians today may be summed up by the acronym NIMTOF (not in my term of office). These concerns are not limited to meetings of the world’s richest people in Davos. A succession of economists, from the Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz to Thomas Piketty, the author of a bestseller on inequality, not to mention reports by the UN and the World Bank and other institutions,

49 World Economic Forum, *Global Risks 2014*, 9th Edition, Geneva, 2014. <http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-risks-2014-report> (accessed 17.7.2014).

have also focused on these matters. Another report highlights, for example, that the world's 85 wealthiest people own as much as half of the world's population. The wealth of the richest has risen over the last three decades, while, seven out of every ten people now live in countries in which inequality has increased. Such conditions have inevitably led to a decline of trust in politics among populations, and to social tensions.

Francis is attempting to shift the focus of the Church's public pronouncements. He has, for example, downplayed the obsessive emphasis on themes related to sexuality and to a rigid model of the Catholic family, which have been so central to its discourse over the last few years, leading to much resentment among Catholics whose lifestyles could rarely comply with the inflexible models stipulated by doctrine. Issues such as the prohibitions on abortion and homosexuality, not to mention the ban on remarried divorcees receiving communion, have led Catholics across the world to leave the Church in droves, particularly in developed countries. Francis appears disposed to relaxing conditions relating to divorcees, while remaining inflexible on abortion. He has responded to those who criticise the Church for its complicity with authoritarian régimes that torture and assassinate opponents, by repeating the argument that human rights must be rooted in the defence of the unborn child, and that for the Church the foetus has the same rights as the pregnant woman. It is difficult however for secular society to accept this parallel between human rights violations in times of political repression, and the denial of a woman's freedom to choose in relation to her pregnancy. And it is even less probable that such arguments will allow the Church to recover the respect lost due to its historical complicity in human rights violations by the military.

It was John XXIII who introduced the theme of poverty at Vatican II (1962-1965) surprising the conservative Latin American bishops in attendance. Later, Paul VI highlighted the importance of support for the poor to the bishops attending the 1968 Medellín conference, even though he emphasised that this aim should be pursued through charitable means, rather than by taking part in the violence that then characterised Latin American social protest. The tragic story of Camilo Torres, a Colombian priest who had died alongside guerilla fighters two years previously was still fresh in every mind. Paul VI rebuked the bishops for their apparent insensitivity to this crucial problem, which subsequently became a recurrent theme in his publications (the Latin American bishops being the only bishops to produce their own documents during conferences).

This increasing Church focus on social concerns is not rooted in a political programme. Methol Ferré argues that poverty cannot be eliminated through protest, but only through work and cultural dignification.⁵⁰ Bergoglio employed almost identical terms in *The Jesuit*.⁵¹ Poverty is also a key theme of the document

50 Methol Ferré Alberto and Metallí Alver, *El papa y el filósofo*, p. 188.

51 Rubin Sergio and Ambrogetti Francesca, *El jesuita*, p. 38.

produced by the last Episcopal Conference in 2007 in Aparecida (Brazil) which opened with a speech by Benedict XVI.⁵² Bergoglio led the editorial commission in the preparation of this text and, when he took office as Pope, gave copies of it to each of the 30 heads of state that visited him in the first year alone to inform them of his thinking. Alongside the bishops, the theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez contributed ideas to one of its chapters.⁵³ The influence of the Aparecida document on the Church's change of direction not only in Latin America but also its central administration since Francis came to power, cannot be over-exaggerated. The presence of Ratzinger, Bergoglio and Gutiérrez' names on this one text highlights a significant sequence of events, one that almost anticipates the course the Church would take over the next few years. It also sets out Francis' change of strategic direction as compared with Ratzinger. While the latter fought for a retreat into fundamental doctrine to protect and strengthen a Church under the cosh of neo-liberal postmodernity; Bergoglio saw such a course as only prolonging the institution's agony. In contrast, in *Evangelii Gaudium* he proposes a general missionary mobilisation, a vigorous and joyous opening up to the world to avoid the institution being consumed by its own internal crisis, isolated from the social movements surrounding it and with which it had little contact. The contrast between these two papal visions could hardly have been more pronounced.

In his inaugural speech in Aparecida, Benedict claimed that the Church would not gain new members through evangelical missions, but through the allure of its teaching. Bergoglio does not reject this argument in theoretical terms, but considers that it does not follow from this position that the Church should remain permanently in its shell. On the contrary, it should throw itself into actively spreading its message, and rather than emphasising the contradictions between its teaching and the diverse lifestyles of late modernity, it should highlight those messages that societies devastated by neoliberalism want to hear. The affective and cultural shortcomings of modernity are obvious; the social misery caused by economic growth cannot be ignored. The Church has accumulated teachings that could satisfy an intermittent and confused but real demand; the hour has come for papal teaching to confront these challenges directly.

The key term in the Aparecida document is 'a missionary Church'.⁵⁴ This was the slogan that Bergoglio introduced to the cardinals in a speech made prior to the Council, a speech that was, according to several observers, decisive, in terms of his promotion to Pope. The contents of this speech are known because the future Pope entrusted his notes to the Cardinal of Havana and authorised him

52 Iglesia Católica. Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, *Aparecida: V Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe. Documento Conclusivo*, Conferencia Episcopal Argentina. Oficina del Libro, Buenos Aires, 2007.

53 Fernández Víctor Manuel, *Aparecida. Guía para entender el documento y crónica diaria*, San Pablo, Buenos Aires, 2008. The author was one of Francis' closest collaborators in Buenos Aires and was the first Argentine archbishop named by him. He is the Rector of the Catholic University of Buenos Aires and participated in the Aparecida conference.

54 The number of times that this word is mentioned in the document is only superceded by 'Christ' and in its different forms. Fernández Víctor Manuel, *Aparecida*, pp. 173, 203, 548 and 551.

to disseminate them. In this brief intervention, Bergoglio both diagnosed the problems and proposed solutions. He argued that the Church was self-obsessed and ran the risk of becoming mired in mundane issues while also exacerbating its 'theological narcissism'. The antidote to these evils would be a return to the Church's original evangelical mission directed to the 'peripheries', in both geographical and existential terms.⁵⁵ This clear, 'back to basics' programme impressed the cardinals, who ultimately backed his candidacy to the succession of Peter in Rome.

An article by one journalist who attempted to provide a profile of Bergoglio contends that his trajectory reflects "a complicated man, conservative and radical, charitable and intransigent, a mass of contradictions".⁵⁶ Undoubtedly, this conclusion can be linked not only to the Pope's own personality but also to that of the political culture of the country from whence he came.

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⁵⁵ El cardenal Ortega revela el texto que abrió el papado a Bergolio, *Cuba Libre Digital*, La Habana, 13. 3. 2013.

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⁵⁶ Guillermprieto Alma, "Francis's Holy War", *Medium.com*, 24.06.2014.

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Хосе Фернандес Вега

ЛЕГИТИМИТЕТ ПАПСТВА

Сажетак

Изгледа да је почела нова ера у Ватикану од како је Хосе Марио Бергољо постао папа. Како се обично каже, он је први језуита и први латиноамериканац на челу Католичке цркве. У овом раду се тврди да је Фрања упутио много интересантна питања политичкој теорији. Он је прихваћен на светском нивоу и то у свету у којем политичари немају толико велику популарност, или је веома брзо губе. Да ли ће он успети да реши дубоку легитимизацијску кризу унутар цркве коју је затекао? Такође, његове критичари из и ван цркве га оптужују да делује као популиста. Они кажу да он долази из земље у којој је популизам веома присутан. Колико је аргентинска политичка култура, и скорија историја, утицала на Фрањину политичку стратегију? Фрања је такође променио и централни дискурс цркве према друштву, инсистирајући на друштвеној неједнакости, мотивишући свештенике да шире радост онамо где људи осуђују трагедије миграната, али и тугу и усамљеност према онима који живе у савременом свету, па чак и ако нису сиромашни. Овај чланак ће се бавити тим темама и понудити одговоре на питања које оне постављају.

Кључне речи: легитимитет, криза, црква, модернизам, популизам, неједнакост

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